

Opening comments overheard in a Family-Life Class at imaginary Quest Bible College

**Dr. Quest** (opening statements and the S. questions)

Proverbs as a whole and verses like 13:13 show that children and youth are teachable but also naturally resist good teaching. So what should we do? Well, rather than being discouraged and giving up, the next verse, 13:14, shows that we should be wise teachers. Do you all agree that these two verses should be studied together? *[This is the Size or S. question.]*

**Evan** (on parallels with gospel preaching today)

Sure! Both verses show that good instruction, like the good news of the gospel, is a matter of life and death. I think that is probably why these two verses were put together in the first place. The word and the commandment in 13:13 are like the gospel, and the wise teacher in 13:14 is like an evangelist whose message saves. Here is a simple two-sentence summary.

<b>The word</b> (or the command)	in Prov. 13:13	<b>is like the gospel.</b> (which gives life to those who receive it)
<b>The wise man</b>	in Prov. 13:14	<b>is like the evangelist.</b> (who has the life-giving message)

**Ed** (on Solomon as a moral teacher)

Since I'm a Christian education major, I love summary diagrams. So here's my four-part summary of our two verses. The focus on teaching fits well with Solomon's emphasis on the moral education of youth and his desire to save them from foolish speaking (13:2-3), laziness (13:4, 22-23), depression (13:12, 19), poverty (13:18), evil companions (13:20-21), and evil in general (13:19-21). This diagram has more detail than Evans'. Which one do you like better, Dr. Quest?

Prov. 13:13a	Prov. 13:13b	Prov. 13:14a	Prov. 13:14b
<b>The unteachable</b> will be destroyed.	<b>The teachable</b> will be rewarded.	<b>The TORAH</b> (law / teaching) <b>of the wise</b> is a fountain of life.	<b>The untaught</b> are in great danger.

**Dr. Quest** (on these two summary diagrams)

Oooh, that's a tough one. My favorite thing about Evan's summary is his fitting analogy. (There are many analogies drawn in Proverbs.) Solomon was not an evangelist in the New Testament sense, since the Messiah had not yet come. Nevertheless, Solomon rightly showed that the wicked who despise the Lord (14:2) also despise his word and pay the consequences (13:13).

Ed's summary diagram clearly shows various kind of people, including 'the untaught' in 13:14b who are easily overlooked. I also like the way God's message (TORAH) is stressed, since it is not the wise teacher himself who is a fountain of life (13:14a). It is his God-given message.

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### Dr. Quest (a step two question)

Let's move on to the second step in the S.E.E.D. study method and think about earthly (E) matters, the human sinfulness that is mentioned or implied in Prov. 13:13-14. What are your first thoughts?

### Theo (on the neglect of Proverbs in theology)

In theology class, we went through Genesis chapter three and Romans chapters one through three when we studied the doctrine of sin, but I don't remember using the Book of Proverbs at all. Apparently Proverbs is not considered theological enough.

### Dr. Quest (on the scant use of Proverbs in Erickson's theology)

Let's find out what Erickson did in his huge theology [*Christian Theology*, 2nd. ed., BakerBooks, Millard Erickson]. — The index shows that he quoted Prov. 20:6-9 to help show that sin is universal. In addition he used Pro. 15:26 to show that God hates sin and Prov. 29:10 to show that the wicked hate the righteous. That's about it.

Erickson apparently did **not** write about the need to correct children because of the Fall, in his five chapters on sin (96 pages in all). If he had been more practical and done so, I suspect he would have quoted verses like Prov. 13:13-14 and 13:24. Proverbs is wonderfully practical, isn't it? It is also far more theological in a practical way than many realize.

## S size & structure

How many verses should be studied? What's the structure?

### TWO VERSES

Verses 13:13 and 13:14 are closely linked. The word and the commandment in 13:13 are similar to the law [or teaching] in 13:14. In 13:14 the law [or teaching] had been internalized and was being passed on to others.

### COMMON THEME

The consequences of being teachable (or unteachable) and receiving (or not receiving) wise teaching are stressed. (Also see 13:1 & 13:18.)

### CONTRASTING LINES:

Both Prov. 13:13 and 13:14 contain two contrasting lines. (All verses in chapter 13 do.) There are no commands, but the contrasts present the reader with obvious good and bad choices with differing consequences.

### notes

## E earthly (sinful) things

What human weakness or sinfulness is seen in the text?

### CONSEQUENCES ARE OFTEN IGNORED.

People like to ignore the consequences of despising instruction. These verses (13:13-14) and all verses in chapter 13 are about good and / or bad consequences.

### THE LACK OF WISE TEACHERS

People do not naturally like to be corrected, whether by parents, teachers, or the Lord (13:13). So most do not want to become the kind of corrective teachers that are needed to help people avoid the snares of death (13:14b). This is even true of parents regarding their own children (13:24).

The order in 13:13-14 shows that one must be teachable in order to become a wise teacher. So most who reject parental instruction when young, do not become wise teachers of their own children and others later in life.

### notes

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### Dr. Quest (questioning why God is not directly mentioned)

Since Solomon was not an atheist, I believe that 13:13-14 is at least in part about the teaching of God's word rather than just wise teaching in general. Then why isn't God directly mentioned in these verses and the rest of the chapter for that matter? What do you think?

### Socie (on the society being theistic)

I believe there is a simple answer! The compiler of Proverbs did not need to mention God directly much, because his Jewish audience were people of the Book. Though there were many scoffers (Prov. 13:1, 13a, Rom. 3:1-3), the society as a whole was theistic (Prov. 3:5-12). So the teaching was not divided up into dozens of subjects from which God was excluded.

### Indy (on God holding individuals responsible)

Let's not forget the stress on personal responsibility in Proverbs. Just read through chapter 13 and notice all the references to individuals. Some did right before God, while others did not. Foolish individuals tried to avoid God, but they are not able to do so. Without fail, consequences follow their actions. So God is seen *in the consequences*.

### Dr. Quest (on Socie and Indy's points)

As usual, Socie and Indy stressed different things, but they both made valid points.

## E the Eternal One

How is the text connection with the Giver of life?

### KEY QUESTION #1

Are verses 13:13-14 about instruction from ordinary people or about instruction from God's Word? They are both, for two reasons. **(1)** Since wisdom begin with the fear of the Lord (1:7), the wise teacher in 13:14 can not be a humanist. **(2)** Yet, the law [or teaching] in Proverbs often clearly refers to parental teaching (1:8, 3:1, 4:1-2, 6:20, etc.) So ordinary people are involved as well.

### KEY QUESTION #1

Are the good or bad consequences in verses 13:13-14 simply the natural result of bad behavior? They are based on Solomon's observations of people in the world. So they seem natural and are natural to some extent (13:4). However, God is at work in the world (13:6, 21), even though He is not directly mentioned in chapter 13.

### notes

## D doing

What should we do and / or not do?

### BE TEACHABLE (13:13).

We should be teachable in order to avoid bad consequences: death, adversity, poverty, and discipline (13:9, 13-15, 18, 24), and in order to have a blessed life (13:13b, 14a, 21b). A fountain of flowing water (13:14) was and still is a great blessing in a dry land like Israel.

### BE A BIBLICAL TEACHER / PARENT (13:14).

Like the author of Proverbs, we should stress the contrasting, good and bad consequences of righteous and wicked behaviors (13:13, 21). In doing so, we should not just make legalistic 'You should...' and 'You should not...' statements. Following the Proverbs pattern, we need to talk about why certain behavior is called for and why sinful actions are prohibited. Righteous living is right in and of itself, but consequences must be stressed (13:21).

### personal applications

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**Dr. Quest** (asking the bottom-line D question)

So what should we do? This is the D question and asking it brings us to the final step in our S.E.E.D. study of Prov. 13:13-14. In a way, this is an easy question to answer. We should not despise good instruction (13:13). Rather, we should listen to and become wise teachers who can instruct others (13:14), but how exactly can this be done? What are your closing thoughts?

**Ed** (on the challenge of teaching difficult people)

This study has been challenging for me, because it shows that Christian education is more than teaching positive truth to teachable people. Ignorance is a problem (13:14b), of course, but the naturally dislike of correction (13:13a) is a bigger one. So I'm wondering how to deal with the willful rejection of the truth, without abandoning the positive teaching of it.

**Dr. Quest** (on Jesus' teaching being both corrective and positive)

Have you ever noticed how corrective the Sermon on the Mount is? The Lord repeatedly showed how superficial and wrong the popular assumptions of most Jewish people were, but in doing so he also showed what the blessed life truly is. So he did not choose between positive teaching and negative correction. He did both. In the beatitudes (Mat. 5:3-10), the Lord stressed positive consequences, and at the end of the sermon he stress the negative consequences of rejecting his message, with the parable of foolish builder (Mat. 7:26-27).

So how about thinking of each truth in the Bible, as a coin with a shinny, positive side and a contrasting dark, negative side? That's exactly what we find in verse after verse in Proverbs chapter 13. Obviously, we need to show both sides of the coin and stress the consequences.

**Ichiro** (on group pressure replacing God)

Much of the correction that is done in Japan involves group pressure. So I think many Japanese Christians misunderstand verses like Prov. 13:14 and 13:18. Since shame is stressed more than sin, Japanese people think of the group rather than God when they read about shame coming to those who ignore correction (13:18).

**Dr. Quest** (on why seeing God in Proverbs is so important)

That is why it is so important to talk about how God is involved in each passage in Proverbs (the second E question) before talking about what to do (the D question). Here in America too, professing Christians misunderstand Proverbs. Why? Well, the main reason is because they are more focused on worldly success than on pleasing God. Unlike in Japan, most do not think of shame or group pressure all that much, but God is still easily forgotten because of personal selfishness. Proverbs is not a godless book, but sadly godless people everywhere read it that way (13:13a).

**Ichiro** (on the need for a higher source)

In my home city of Kanazawa, Japan, we have a old fountain in a famous garden on a hill. The garden and fountain were made long before there were electric pumps. So the water for the fountain and the garden come from a river in the mountains. It comes through old pipes which work because the mountain source is higher than the hill with the garden.

I wish we had more teachers in Japan who are like our old fountain (13:14). For that to happen, we Japanese must turn to the God of the Bible as our higher Source of life. So I think I will write a tract about Prov. 13:14 and the old fountain. That's what I plan to do.