BIBLE GATEWAY Proverbs 23:2 :: NASB.

A person receives an invitation to a formal meal with the head of state of his country. For most people, the invitation would be considered an honor, but it would also be accompanied with some anxiety.

“How should I act?”

“What should I person wear?”

“What if I pick up the wrong spoon or make some embarrassing mistake?”

Proverbs 23:1-3 may not cover all the details of etiquette, but it does describe how a person should conduct himself.

> *“When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are a man of great appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for it is deceptive **food**.”*

The point of this passage is that the invited guest should conduct himself with restraint and moderation.

Unusual and unusually good food could tempt a person to excess. Wine was often served at such functions, and excess could lead to loud or crude comments. Instead, the guest should focus on the host and the time with the host rather that the food.

The delicacies of the meal are soon gone, but the consequences of ill-advised actions will remain.

A Christian may not end up eating with the ruler of a nation, but there may come times where that person will be invited to a dinner with someone that is wealthier and has more influence.

A Christian is a follower of Jesus Christ, and as such, a Christian's actions and attitude will reflect on the Lord. Therefore, a Christian will conduct himself in a way that honors the Lord.

Verses 4-5 state,

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"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on
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> *it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.”*

The Bible does not condemn a person for trying to improve his/her life. Abraham was wealthy as was David. But making wealth the primary goal in life is not only wrong but foolish.

Jesus warned of this in ***Matthew 6:19-21***,

> *“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”*

Yes, encountering a much richer lifestyle can be a little surprising and shocking. Looking at a wealthier person’s home and then comparing it to where a person’s modest home can lead to thoughts of envy.

“I want to live like this!”

“I want to have money!”

“I want this more than anything else!”

Oh yes, the worldly nature looks at physical pleasures and things of life with approval. But, all such enticements are never permanent. Wealth can disappear overnight. Property can be destroyed by fire or storm. Ultimately, death will bring an end to all such efforts to get just a “little more”.

Paul wrote in ***Colossians 3:1-2***,

> *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”*

Verses 17-18 are closely related.

> *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but live in the fear of the Lord always. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”*

The envy of sinners and their life-style is literally a dead end. The key to a righteous life rests with the second half of that statement, “*…live in the fear of the Lord always.*” Any Christian knows that the “fear” described here is not based on terror or despair. Instead, it is a continual awareness of the power and perfection of the Living God, and the sure knowledge that He loves His children. As long as is the focus of a Christian’s life, then *“Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.”*

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Verses 6-8 state,

> *“Do not eat the bread of a selfish man or desire his delicacies; for as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, ‘Eat and drink!’ but his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsel*

> *you have eaten and waste your compliments.”*

There are times when the best option is to decline an invitation. This is especially true when the invitation is not based on hospitality.

In these verses, the host is described as selfish. Other translations use the word miser. This is a person that will begrudge every morsel of food eaten. Any compliment will be wasted on such a person. He/she has given the invitation because there is a hidden agenda. Jesus faced this during His ministry.

On one occasion, recorded in ***Luke 7:36-49***, a Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him. Other people had been invited.

> *“And He went to the Pharisee’s house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.*

Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, ‘This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’

And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’ So he said, ‘Teacher, say it. ’There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?’ Simon answered and said, ‘I suppose the one whom he forgave more.’ And He said to him, ‘You have rightly judged.’

Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore, I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.’”

Clearly, the Pharisee invited Jesus to see what he was like and to test Him. The common courtesies offered a guest were ignored as a not so subtle insult to Jesus. The Lord obviously knew their motives beforehand and accepted the invitation to make His point to the Pharisee and his other guests.

But as a Christian, such an invitation may best be left alone. Paul wrote in ***Colossians 3:17***,

> *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*

Verses 19-21 give the advice of a loving father to his son.

> *"Listen, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way. Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the heavy drinker and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe one with rags."*

How many times have parents cautioned young adult sons or daughters to use care in dealing the world. Of course, the reply is often, “Don’t worry, I’ll be fine!” That statement may be true IF that son or daughter remembers to *“direct your heart in the way.”* In other words, to life a life based on the righteous teachings of God.

Unfortunately, some will want to finally “be free to have some fun”, and they enter a world of excess. Much like the prodigal son, there is too much drink, too much food, and too much of everything else. New “friends” encourage such activities.

Excess becomes the routine, and that lifestyle affects other parts of his/her life. That young person will no longer be considered dependable and may be fired from a job or dismissed from a school. Money becomes scarce, and the new “friends” vanish. That person’s fun turns into a life of darkness.

Verses 29-35 all cover the same subject – drunkenness and its effects. Verses 29-30 state,

> *“Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long over wine, those who go to taste mixed wine.”*

Too often family members will come together for a family party or reunion. There is food and alcoholic drinks. Some begin to drink too much, and an argument begins over some minor event. Possibly other family members get involved in the argument on opposite sides.

Then someone takes out a knife or pistol and kills one or more of the family. What was supposed to be a time of celebration ends as a tragedy. This is what drunkenness can lead to.

Nothing good can come from drunkenness. How many people have been killed or hurt in vehicle accidents where one of the drivers was drunk? Some will insist that drinking alcohol is not forbidden in the Bible and the sin is becoming drunk.

How many alcoholics have made that same claim?

How many have said, “I can quit anytime I want”?

Seemingly pleasant people can become angry and very physically or verbally abusive while drunk. Alcohol is a depressant. The trials of life become bigger, and the person becomes more depressed. Paul told Christians to “Rejoice!”, but there is no real rejoicing while under the power of alcohol.

Verses 33-35 vividly describe the effects of alcohol.

> *“Your eyes will see strange things and your mind will utter perverse things. And you will be like one who lies down in the middle of the sea, or like one who lies down on the top of a mast. ‘They struck me, but I did not become ill; they beat me, but I did not know it. When shall I awake? I will seek another drink.’”*

A person that becomes drunk will lose his/her equilibrium. Laying down only makes it worse as the room begins to spin around. The feeling of pain is diminished while drunk. The entire experience is unpleasant and contemptuous. And the sad result can be found in the last part of verse 35 “…*When shall I awake? I will seek another drink*.” There was no lesson learned. There was no repentance, and no desire to change.

If a person wants to argue that drinking alcohol is not sin but becoming drunk; that person would do well to remember John’s words in ***1 John 2:15-17***,

> *“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”*

For a faithful Christian, it seems that the answer is obvious. Is a drink, that could lead to drunkenness and alcoholism, worth more than the hope of eternal life?