

Discipline
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Proverbs 29 (selected verses)

Meet Mr. Rotten! Actually, you've already met him (or her); we all have! We've seen him in movies, literature, history, at work, and sadly even in family and the church. Here are some of the characteristics of Mr./Ms. Rotten from Proverbs 29:

- Won't listen to anyone about anything; the classic know-it-all
- Shoots off his mouth with no thought and no restraint
- A philanderer who is financially strapped because of sexual sin
- A manipulator who flatters people only for an ulterior motive
- A hothead who can't control his anger
- Heaven help us when Mr. Rotten becomes the "boss" and they often do.
- He surrounds himself with slimy, dishonest sidekicks.
- He's a disgrace to his parents because sometimes the parents know it all started with a lack of correction in childhood.
- He exploits those he could help with no care about their standard of living.
- He loses jobs because of his mouth, lack of integrity, and refusal to listen.
- One day, good people will rejoice when Mr. Rotten gets his just desserts.

How does a person get to be this way? Did things go awry in childhood? Were the parents lax? Or did they try their best but this one was just bullheaded beyond correction? It would be accurate to say that the root cause of this toxic personality is sin, but Proverbs 29 gets more practical and tactical than that. The way Mr. Rotten got here boils down to a refusal to submit to godly discipline.

Big Idea: When it comes to living wisely, fear of the Lord is the path (Prov. 1:7), but discipline is the door. Wise living comes from submitting to godly discipline.

- Let's "meet" Mr. Rotten based on the words of Proverbs 29:

Proverbs 29:1 (ESV) ¹He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.

- This verse speaks of someone who can't be told or taught anything.
- Stiffening the neck is the picture of an animal refusing a harness or yoke.
- A person who continually sins and won't heed repeated warnings has a clock ticking in the background of their life.
- Did you ever play "hot potato?" The stiff-necked person holds on to the potato believing they are exempt from the consequences of the "potato" exploding. They are so smart they can hold it until the last second.
- Just like "hot potato," suddenly it all comes crashing down because they refused to listen and change their ways. This behavior can have both earthly and eternal consequences.

Proverbs 29:3 (ESV) ³He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.

- Mr. Rotten is often "wasted" financially because of sinful conduct.

Proverbs 29:20 (ESV) ²⁰Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.

- If you're smarter than everyone else, why control your tongue?
- An unrestrained tongue and uncontrolled anger result in destruction.

Proverbs 29:8 (ESV) ⁸Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.

Proverbs 29:11 (ESV) ¹¹A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

Proverbs 29:22 (ESV) ²²A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.

- What happens when Mr. Rotten becomes the "boss?" They often do!

Proverbs 29:2 (ESV) ²When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.

- God blesses a country, business, organization, or family when the leaders fear and submit to Him. Even an unsaved leader who has fear of God can realize God's blessing on the people they lead. The opposite is true.

Proverbs 29:4 (ESV) ⁴By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gifts tears it down.

- A culture of bribery or heavy taxation is unjust and destructive.

Proverbs 29:5 (ESV) ⁵A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

- Rotten leaders flatter to manipulate. It's all about an ulterior motive.

Proverbs 29:12 (ESV) ¹²If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.

- Tolerate lying in your organization and everyone will be dishonest.
- The first lie dishonest advisers tell is that Mr. Rotten can do no wrong.
- Mr. Rotten is often an exploiter and oppressor of the less fortunate.

Proverbs 29:13 (ESV) ¹³The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.

Proverbs 29:14 (ESV) ¹⁴If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever.

Proverbs 29:7 (ESV) ⁷A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.

- God sees the poor and their oppressor as equal in His eyes.
- Unfortunately, rotten leaders often exploit and oppress those beneath them with no regard for their situation. In fact, history has proven if you keep them poor and dependent they will usually follow you anywhere.

Proverbs 29:18 (ESV) ¹⁸Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.

- This isn't about having a leadership vision for future growth; it's about neglecting the Word of God (prophetic vision.)
- "Casting off restraint" is a picture of the chaos that ensues when sin runs rampant because leaders have no regard for God and His word.
- Ultimately, this will lead to the end of the "empire." Just ask the Romans.

Proverbs 29:16 (ESV) ¹⁶When the wicked increase, transgression increases, but the righteous will look upon their downfall.

- How did Mr. Rotten become rotten? It may have started in the cradle.

Proverbs 29:15 (ESV) ¹⁵The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

Proverbs 29:17 (ESV) ¹⁷Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

- It could be that permissive or neglectful parents lit the fuse of rottenness.
- In fairness, some parents try their best and STILL raise Mr. Rotten.
- As that philosopher Johnny Paycheck sang, "*I turned out to be the only hell my mama ever raised,*" and Merle Haggard sang, "*Mama tried.*"
- Lack of discipline isn't just about poor parenting. This issue also applies to adults who are guilty of "casting off restraint" and "stiffening the neck" in response to godly discipline.
- Remember, fear of the Lord is the path but discipline is the door.
- You and I may not be as wicked as Mr. Rotten; but we might be equally hardheaded and hard-hearted about warnings in scripture. How about my anger, my mouth, or my regard for those less fortunate than me?
- Do I willingly submit to God's discipline and His word even when it's hard?

Hebrews 12:11 (ESV) ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

- What if I'm one of Mr. Rotten's "subjects;" His spouse, kid, or employee?
- This is where we have to trust God to correct what is rotten.

Proverbs 29:16 (ESV) ¹⁶When the wicked increase, transgression increases, but the righteous will look upon their downfall.

Proverbs 29:19 (ESV) ¹⁹By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond. [Remember, Mr. Rotten won't listen!]

Proverbs 29:23 (ESV) ²³One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.

Proverbs 29:25 (ESV) ²⁵The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

Proverbs 29:26 (ESV) ²⁶Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.

Proverbs 28:18 (ESV) ¹⁸Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.

So, What's The Takeaway?

- **How does this apply to us?** As we said above, we may not be as rotten as Mr. Rotten, but we might have some of his rotten tendencies.
- **Do professing Christians ever become Mr. Rotten?** I would respond to that question with another question: Are Christians human?
- Sadly, Mr. Rottens even exist in the church. This is why our modern lexicon contains terms like, "pastoral abuse" and "moral failure."
- In just the last few years some high profile pastor/leaders have been exposed (and deposed) for bullying, arrogance, manipulation, financial impropriety, sexual sin, and on and on it goes.
- One of those who fell very publicly said this about his fall: *"I hope and pray that the events in my own life over the past couple years serve as a warning to all who, like I did, believe*

*they are standing firm," He went on to confess, "Sin is deep. It is real. It destroys. It deceives. May this be an opportunity for all of us to examine our own hearts and beg God for the mercy and forgiveness we all need."*ⁱ

- Yes, even professing followers of Christ can drift toward "rotteness."
- **How can I avoid becoming Mr./Ms. Rotten?** Read and heed God's word and submit to God's discipline even when it is painful.
- **What if Mr. Rotten has authority over me?** Sometimes you run but sometimes you wait. You need God's direction on deciding that.
- In my own life and career there have been times I was ready to run but somehow God showed me I should stick it out.
- One Mr. Rotten told me I had no future in the organization and six months later I had HIS job. Sometimes staying in the "Rotten Kingdom" allows you to be a light and source of support and hope to other "subjects."
- Back to the original point: When it comes to living wisely, fear of the Lord is the path (Prov. 1:7), but discipline is the door.
- Wise living comes from submitting to godly discipline.
- Even if we're saved and on our way to Heaven, in our humanness we can resist the wisdom and discipline of God. Let's ask Him to reveal any "stiff-necked" tendencies before we are broken beyond healing.
- Let's strive to be Mr. or Ms. Righteous instead of Mr. or Ms. Rotten!

ⁱ <https://religionnews.com/2016/03/21/tullian-tchividjian-speaks-out-sin-is-deep/>