

POWER I N T H E PROVERBS



a monthly devotional

POWER IN THE PROVERBS

The purpose of this handout is to help you work through the book of Proverbs in one month. This is a devotional that you can do one month per year or do every month. For millennia, the book of Proverbs has proved to be a fount of wisdom for God's people. One does not have to have a seminary degree or many years of Biblical training to understand the book of Proverbs. For example, Proverbs 25: 17 says "Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you." Now where can you get that type of wise sage advice in the modern world?

Proverbs is written by the wisest man that ever lived, Solomon. In 1 Kings 3: 13 God tells Solomon, "Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you." (ESV) If the wisest person ever known were to offer you free advice, would you at least listen to it? Here is someone who has tried and done nearly anything and everything possible (read Ecclesiastes). His insights not only represent God-given wisdom but are topped with the clarity that comes from living in a very real world. Instead of reading the latest self-help book why not read from wisdom that is God-given and has stood the test of time?

When reading Proverbs remember that not all of the book contains short, concise statements. Proverbs 1:1-7 discusses the value of wisdom, and then chapters one through nine praise wisdom and talk about how to get it and live it. This material is very powerful but is not in the form of "one liners" that make us smile and think and then realize truth. In other words, they are not as "proverbial" as we might expect in Proverbs! The first section of actual proverbs begins in chapter ten and runs through 22:16. In this section of Proverbs you will find the short pithy wise sayings that will stay with you for some time. Those proverbs are broken at the end of chapter twenty-two through chapter twenty-four with longer discussions on the way of wisdom. Chapter twenty-five starts again with those powerful short proverbs, and they continue through the book's end.

My prayer is that this guide will help you in your daily devotionals and prayer time. Each day there is a chapter from Proverbs to read along with thoughts to go along with your reading. There are thirty-one days of readings and thoughts in this package. If the month only has thirty days, you will need to 'double up' somewhere along the way to stay on track. Each day in this devotion will have the text of the Proverb from the ESV, things to think about, a memory verse, and prayer suggestions. I hope this guide will help you grow wiser, and in that wisdom grow to love the One who gives us that wisdom.

God bless,
Chris

Proverbs 1:1-33

DAY 1



- 1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,
- 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
- 4 to give prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the youth—
- 5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
- 6 to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.
- 7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of
knowledge; fools despise wisdom and
instruction.
- 8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
and forsake not your mother's teaching,
- 9 for they are a graceful garland for your head
and pendants for your neck.
- 10 My son, if sinners entice you,
do not consent.
- 11 If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for
blood; let us ambush the innocent without
reason;
- 12 like Sheol let us swallow them alive,
and whole, like those who go down to the pit;
- 13 we shall find all precious goods,
we shall fill our houses with plunder;
- 14 throw in your lot among us;
we will all have one purse"—
- 15 my son, do not walk in the way with them;
hold back your foot from their paths,
- 16 for their feet run to evil,
and they make haste to shed blood.
- 17 For in vain is a net spread
in the sight of any bird,
- 18 but these men lie in wait for their own blood;
they set an ambush for their own lives.
- 19 Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy
for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its
possessors.
- 20 Wisdom cries aloud in the street,
in the markets she raises her voice;
- 21 at the head of the noisy streets she cries out;
at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:
- 22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being
simple? How long will scoffers delight in their
scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"
- 23 If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out
my spirit to you; I will make my words known
to you.
- 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen,
have stretched out my hand and no one has
heeded,
- 25 because you have ignored all my counsel
and would have none of my reproof,
- 26 I also will laugh at your calamity;
I will mock when terror strikes you,
- 27 when terror strikes you like a storm
and your calamity comes like a whirlwind,
when distress and anguish come upon you.
- 28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not
answer; they will seek me diligently but will
not find me.
- 29 Because they hated knowledge
and did not choose the fear of the Lord,
- 30 would have none of my counsel
and despised all my reproof,
- 31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way,
and have their fill of their own devices.
- 32 For the simple are killed by their turning away,
and the complacency of fools destroys them;
- 33 but whoever listens to me will dwell secure
and will be at ease, without dread of disaster."

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

As you read the first Proverb, you'll see two themes that run throughout the book. First, pay attention to "Wisdom." The whole book, of course, is about wisdom; but the first Proverb sets the table for everything to follow. What do you think wisdom is? Where does it come from? How is biblical wisdom different from secular knowledge?

Second, be sure you notice the key phrase, "Fear of the Lord," that occurs in this first Proverb (you'll find many more times throughout the book). What does that mean to you? How do you experience the fear of the Lord? What role do you think the fear of the Lord plays in your everyday life decisions? How can you cultivate a greater sense of the fear of the Lord in your heart? How do you balance the fear of the Lord with the invitation the Lord gives to us to know him as our loving heavenly Father?

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Wisdom isn't a function of education or academic achievement – it's a choice you make to look to God's Word to guide your life decisions. Pray today that the Holy Spirit would so illuminate God's Word in your heart that you will choose to obey it.

Proverbs 2:1-22

DAY 2

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- 1 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
 - 2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
 - 3 yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
 - 4 if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
 - 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God.
 - 6 For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and
understanding;
 - 7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
 - 8 guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.
 - 9 Then you will understand righteousness and
justice and equity, every good path;
 - 10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
 - 11 discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,
 - 12 delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech,
 - 13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
 - 14 who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil,
 - 15 men whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.
 - 16 So you will be delivered from the forbidden
woman, from the adulteress with her smooth
words,
 - 17 who forsakes the companion of her youth
and forgets the covenant of her God;
 - 18 for her house sinks down to death,
and her paths to the departed;
 - 19 none who go to her come back,
nor do they regain the paths of life.
 - 20 So you will walk in the way of the good
and keep to the paths of the righteous.
 - 21 For the upright will inhabit the land,
and those with integrity will remain in it,
 - 22 but the wicked will be cut off from the land,
and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

The second Proverb continues the focus on wisdom. You'll notice that the words "wisdom" and "knowledge" are used interchangeably – verse 10 is an example. Other synonyms for wisdom throughout the chapter are "insight" and "understanding."

Another point in this chapter is how the Lord gives wisdom to those who seek it. Then, in verse 16, you'll encounter a theme that will play out over the next few chapters. There are two levels to this theme, so let's take a moment and unpack it. On the surface level, verse 16 begins a teaching on the dangers of adultery. In other words, it talks about how adultery begins and where it leads. On a deeper level, though, the adulterous woman spoken of is not just sexual, it's also a deliberate contrast between the wisdom of God and the folly of the world – which is compared to adultery.

Both levels are true, but the overall teaching of Proverbs is how those who embrace the so-called wisdom of the world at the expense of the wisdom of God are falling into spiritual adultery.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints." (Proverbs 2:6-8)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that you would begin to recognize the difference between the wisdom the Lord gives you through his Word, that leads to life; and the wisdom the world gives, that leads to death.

Proverbs 3:1-35



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- 1 My son, do not forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep my commandments,
 - 2 for length of days and years of life
and peace they will add to you.
 - 3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake
you; bind them around your neck;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
 - 4 So you will find favor and good success
in the sight of God and man.
 - 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
 - 6 In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
 - 7 Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
 - 8 It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.
 - 9 Honor the Lord with your wealth
and with the firstfruits of all your produce;
 - 10 then your barns will be filled with plenty,
and your vats will be bursting with wine.
 - 11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline
or be weary of his reproof,
 - 12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves,
as a father the son in whom he delights.
 - 13 Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
 - 14 for the gain from her is better than gain from
silver and her profit better than gold.
 - 15 She is more precious than jewels,
and nothing you desire can compare with her.
 - 16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left hand are riches and honor.
 - 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
and all her paths are peace.
 - 18 She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her;
those who hold her fast are called blessed.
 - 19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth;
by understanding he established the heavens;
 - 20 by his knowledge the deeps broke open,
and the clouds drop down the dew.
 - 21 My son, do not lose sight of these –
keep sound wisdom and discretion,
 - 22 and they will be life for your soul
and adornment for your neck.
 - 23 Then you will walk on your way securely,
and your foot will not stumble.
 - 24 If you lie down, you will not be afraid;
when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.
 - 25 Do not be afraid of sudden terror
or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes,
 - 26 for the Lord will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from being caught.
 - 27 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is
due, when it is in your power to do it.
 - 28 Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come
again, tomorrow I will give it" – when you have
it with you.
 - 29 Do not plan evil against your neighbor,
who dwells trustingly beside you.
 - 30 Do not contend with a man for no reason,
when he has done you no harm.
 - 31 Do not envy a man of violence
and do not choose any of his ways,
 - 32 for the devious person is an abomination to the
Lord, but the upright are in his confidence.
 - 33 The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked,
but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.
 - 34 Toward the scorners he is scornful,
but to the humble he gives favor.
 - 35 The wise will inherit honor,
but fools get disgrace.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs isn't a narrative; it doesn't tell a single story. Instead, the book circles around continually to different themes, each of which is an essential component of Godly wisdom. In chapter three, we find a couple of new teachings that we'll revisit a few more times in the coming month. Notice, for instance, in verses 9-10 the principle of giving: "Honor the Lord with your wealth ... then your barns will be filled with plenty."

The biblical teaching on giving is given in so many places throughout the Bible that you can't miss the point that people who give are blessed of God. Later in the chapter, we discover the first few nuggets about how we live in relationship with others. What we're already learning is how wisdom is a multi-faceted gift that affects every area of life.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"This chapter contains one of the great passages in the Bible and it merits memorization: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that God would reveal to you how to more fully "trust in the Lord with all your heart" and that you would be willing to take whatever leap of faith that might require of you.

Proverbs 4:1-27

DAY 4

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- 1 Hear, O sons, a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,
 - 2 for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.
 - 3 When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother,
 - 4 he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.
 - 5 Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.
 - 6 Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.
 - 7 The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.
 - 8 Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.
 - 9 She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown."
 - 10 Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.
 - 11 I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.
 - 12 When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble.
 - 13 Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.
 - 14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil.
 - 15 Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.
 - 16 For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.
 - 17 For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.
 - 18 But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.
 - 19 The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble.
 - 20 My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.
 - 21 Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.
 - 22 For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.
 - 23 Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.
 - 24 Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.
 - 25 Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.
 - 26 Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.
 - 27 Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.


NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter four of Proverbs is about intentionality. In other words, it calls us to choose wisdom – remember how we said earlier that wisdom isn't the result of education but instead is a choice?

This chapter calls us to make that choice. As you read through it today, pay attention to the many verbs challenging you to simply choose God's wisdom over the many alternative life perspectives available to you. Notice also the awesome description of wisdom in verses 5-9.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



Like the previous chapter, chapter four has a verse that deserves committing to memory. This verse will sink into your spirit and provide encouragement and strength in so many ways! It also is spiritual wisdom in its purest form.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray Proverbs 4:23 today – just use this single verse as the outline of your prayer as you seek the God's guidance and strength on maintaining the integrity of your life by monitoring the state of your heart.

Proverbs 5:1-23

DAY 5

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- 1 My son, be attentive to my wisdom;
incline your ear to my understanding,
 - 2 that you may keep discretion,
and your lips may guard knowledge.
 - 3 For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,
and her speech is smoother than oil,
 - 4 but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
sharp as a two-edged sword.
 - 5 Her feet go down to death;
her steps follow the path to Sheol;
 - 6 she does not ponder the path of life;
her ways wander, and she does not know it.
 - 7 And now, O sons, listen to me,
and do not depart from the words of my
mouth.
 - 8 Keep your way far from her,
and do not go near the door of her house,
 - 9 lest you give your honor to others
and your years to the merciless,
 - 10 lest strangers take their fill of your strength,
and your labors go to the house of a foreigner,
 - 11 and at the end of your life you groan,
when your flesh and body are consumed,
 - 12 and you say, "How I hated discipline,
and my heart despised reproof!
 - 13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers
or incline my ear to my instructors.
 - 14 I am at the brink of utter ruin
in the assembled congregation."
 - 15 Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
 - 16 Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
 - 17 Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for strangers with you.
 - 18 Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
 - 19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love.
 - 20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a
forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of
an adulteress?
 - 21 For a man's ways are before the eyes of the
Lord, and he ponders all his paths.
 - 22 The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him,
and he is held fast in the cords of his sin.
 - 23 He dies for lack of discipline,
and because of his great folly he is led astray.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs 5 brings back the image we saw earlier of the adulterous woman. While we pointed out the two levels of this woman, in our present chapter the focus is clearly on the adulterous act itself. Remember that the Bible doesn't dance around the painful experiences of life! It confronts sin and all the pain it brings – honestly speaking of divine judgment, human suffering and the reality of forgiveness. Just listen to the pain of a man who falls into adultery, reflected in verses 11-14! Then notice the warning of verses 21-23. This chapter has particular impact on anyone struggling with faithfulness in their marriage.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“For a man’s ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths.” (Proverbs 5:21)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Sexual purity is a big deal to God; unfortunately, and tragically our modern culture doesn't understand that. As you pray today, ask for a renewed sense of sexual purity in your actions, thoughts and attitudes.

Proverbs 6:1-35



- 1 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger,
- 2 if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth,
- 3 then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor.
- 4 Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber;
- 5 save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.
- 6 Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise.
- 7 Without having any chief, officer, or ruler,
- 8 she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.
- 9 How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?
- 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,
- 11 and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.
- 12 A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech,
- 13 winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger,
- 14 with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord;
- 15 therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing.
- 16 There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him:
- 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
- 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil,
- 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.
- 20 My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.
- 21 Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck.
- 22 When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you.
- 23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life,
- 24 to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.
- 25 Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;
- 26 for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.
- 27 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?
- 28 Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?
- 29 So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.
- 30 People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry,
- 31 but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house.
- 32 He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.
- 33 He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.
- 34 For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge.
- 35 He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs 6 deals with two of the main issues that people struggle with: money and sex. And in both areas, we're given the opportunity to choose God's wisdom over the world's wisdom.

Regarding money, verses 1-5 we're told to be wary of encumbering ourselves with other people's debt. Later on, notice the condemnation of laziness! Solomon also discusses the issue of a person that would sow discord. God is not pleased with those that cause trouble and try to divide their brethren.

Then, verse 20 revisits the issue of adultery. In the areas of the heart that are so fraught with danger, when we choose God's wisdom, we can live blessed lives.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech ... with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing.” (Proverbs 6:12-15)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray that in the core issues of the heart – money, sex and power – you'll be faithful to your commitment to follow Jesus.

Proverbs 7:1-27

DAY 7

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- 1 My son, keep my words
and treasure up my commandments with you;
 - 2 keep my commandments and live;
keep my teaching as the apple of your eye;
 - 3 bind them on your fingers;
write them on the tablet of your heart.
 - 4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
and call insight your intimate friend,
 - 5 to keep you from the forbidden woman,
from the adulteress with her smooth words.
 - 6 For at the window of my house
I have looked out through my lattice,
 - 7 and I have seen among the simple,
I have perceived among the youths,
a young man lacking sense,
 - 8 passing along the street near her corner,
taking the road to her house
 - 9 in the twilight, in the evening,
at the time of night and darkness.
 - 10 And behold, the woman meets him,
dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.
 - 11 She is loud and wayward;
her feet do not stay at home;
 - 12 now in the street, now in the market,
and at every corner she lies in wait.
 - 13 She seizes him and kisses him,
and with bold face she says to him,
 - 14 "I had to offer sacrifices,
and today I have paid my vows;
 - 15 so now I have come out to meet you,
to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.
 - 16 I have spread my couch with coverings,
colored linens from Egyptian linen;
 - 17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,
aloes, and cinnamon.
 - 18 Come, let us take our fill of love till morning;
let us delight ourselves with love.
 - 19 For my husband is not at home;
he has gone on a long journey;
 - 20 he took a bag of money with him;
at full moon he will come home."
 - 21 With much seductive speech she persuades
him; with her smooth talk she compels him.
 - 22 All at once he follows her,
as an ox goes to the slaughter,
or as a stag is caught fast
 - 23 till an arrow pierces its liver;
as a bird rushes into a snare;
he does not know that it will cost him his life.
 - 24 And now, O sons, listen to me,
and be attentive to the words of my mouth.
 - 25 Let not your heart turn aside to her ways;
do not stray into her paths,
 - 26 for many a victim has she laid low,
and all her slain are a mighty throng.
 - 27 Her house is the way to Sheol,
going down to the chambers of death.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter 7 completes the first section of Proverbs, and in it we see once again the warning against adultery. But here, there's also the sense of the deeper level of meaning, that of the adulterous acceptance of worldly wisdom over God's wisdom.

Verses 25-26 say, "Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain a mighty throng." Notice how this passage calls to mind both the physical adultery as well as the spiritual adultery with which Proverbs is much concerned.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live" (Proverbs 7:1-2)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

The alternative between God's wisdom and the world's wisdom is only clear when we know and obey God's Word. Pray for strength to choose God's wisdom in every decision you face today.

Proverbs 8:1-36



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- 1 Does not wisdom call?
Does not understanding raise her voice?
- 2 On the heights beside the way,
at the crossroads she takes her stand;
- 3 beside the gates in front of the town,
at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud:
- 4 "To you, O men, I call,
and my cry is to the children of man.
- 5 O simple ones, learn prudence;
O fools, learn sense.
- 6 Hear, for I will speak noble things,
and from my lips will come what is right,
- 7 for my mouth will utter truth;
wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
- 8 All the words of my mouth are righteous;
there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
- 9 They are all straight to him who understands,
and right to those who find knowledge.
- 10 Take my instruction instead of silver,
and knowledge rather than choice gold,
- 11 for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that
you may desire cannot compare with her.
- 12 "I, wisdom, dwell with prudence,
and I find knowledge and discretion.
- 13 The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil.
Pride and arrogance and the way of evil
and perverted speech I hate.
- 14 I have counsel and sound wisdom;
I have insight; I have strength.
- 15 By me kings reign,
and rulers decree what is just;
- 16 by me princes rule,
and nobles, all who govern justly.
- 17 I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.
- 18 Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and righteousness.
- 19 My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
- 20 I walk in the way of righteousness,
in the paths of justice,
- 21 granting an inheritance to those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.
- 22 "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his
work, the first of his acts of old.
- 23 Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
- 24 When there were no depths I was brought
forth, when there were no springs abounding
with water.
- 25 Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth,
- 26 before he had made the earth with its fields,
or the first of the dust of the world.
- 27 When he established the heavens, I was there;
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
- 28 when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
- 29 when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his
command, when he marked out the
foundations of the earth,
- 30 then I was beside him, like a master
workman, and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
- 31 rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the children of man.
- 32 "And now, O sons, listen to me:
blessed are those who keep my ways.
- 33 Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
- 34 Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
- 35 For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the Lord,
36 but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death."

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

The eighth chapter of Proverbs is one of the most famous portions of the entire book. That's because in it the notion of wisdom – which as we've seen already is the central theme of the book as a whole – and elevates it to a much higher level. In fact, "wisdom" in this chapter is spoken of as almost an independent figure.

Verses 12 and following are a prime example. To complicate matters even further, "wisdom" is a feminine noun, and in the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, that noun is Sophia. There have been people throughout history who have misunderstood what is meant by Sophia and have actually believed it to be a feminine goddess working alongside God! That's nonsense, of course, and the church fathers knew exactly how to interpret this chapter.

"Wisdom" in this Old Testament passage in fact points to the New Testament truth that Jesus Christ is himself the Word or Wisdom of God. A primary New Testament passage bears out this truth. John 1:1-2 says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God." So, as you read through this passage, you should keep in mind that the pre-incarnate Jesus lies behind it.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"Whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD."
(Proverbs 8:35)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Focus your prayer today on Jesus, who is the Word of God and the Wisdom of God. The more intimate your relationship is with him, the more Godly wisdom you will receive.

Proverbs 9:1-18

DAY 9

-
- 1 Wisdom has built her house;
she has hewn her seven pillars.
 - 2 She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed
her wine; she has also set her table.
 - 3 She has sent out her young women to call
from the highest places in the town,
 - 4 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!”
To him who lacks sense she says,
 - 5 “Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.
 - 6 Leave your simple ways and live,
and walk in the way of insight.”
 - 7 Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse,
and he who reproves a wicked man incurs
injury.
 - 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you;
reprove a wise man, and he will love you.
 - 9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be
still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will
increase in learning.
 - 10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of
wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is
insight.
 - 11 For by me your days will be multiplied,
and years will be added to your life.
 - 12 If you are wise, you are wise for yourself;
if you scoff, you alone will bear it.
 - 13 The woman Folly is loud;
she is seductive and knows nothing.
 - 14 She sits at the door of her house;
she takes a seat on the highest places of the
town,
 - 15 calling to those who pass by,
who are going straight on their way,
 - 16 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!”
And to him who lacks sense she says,
 - 17 “Stolen water is sweet,
and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”
 - 18 But he does not know that the dead are there,
that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

We mentioned early on in this devotional how much of Proverbs is a deliberate contrast between wisdom and folly. In fact, much of the book personifies these two characteristics as two separate women.

Chapter 9 continues this contrast but also introduces a crucial point to the difference. Verse 10 expresses a vital truth for anyone who would live a life of wisdom. “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Note how wisdom isn’t the result of education or experience or even position in the world.

Wisdom is a choice. That’s so hard for us to grasp! But every time we choose to base our decisions on the Word of God because we have in our heart the fear or respect of God, then we’re choosing wisdom.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” (Proverbs 9:10)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

The fear of the Lord isn’t a sense of terror that drives you away from God. It’s instead a respect for the holiness of God that invites you into his embrace. In your prayers today, take time to simply rest in the presence of God.

Proverbs 10:1-32

DAY 10



- 1 A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.
- 2 Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death.
- 3 The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.
- 4 A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.
- 5 He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame.
- 6 Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
- 7 The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.
- 8 The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin.
- 9 Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.
- 10 Whoever winks the eye causes trouble, and a babbling fool will come to ruin.
- 11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.
- 12 Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.
- 13 On the lips of him who has understanding, wisdom is found, but a rod is for the back of him who lacks sense.
- 14 The wise lay up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool brings ruin near.
- 15 A rich man's wealth is his strong city; the poverty of the poor is their ruin.
- 16 The wage of the righteous leads to life, the gain of the wicked to sin.
- 17 Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof leads others astray.
- 18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.
- 19 When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.
- 20 The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is of little worth.
- 21 The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.
- 22 The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.
- 23 Doing wrong is like a joke to a fool, but wisdom is pleasure to a man of understanding.
- 24 What the wicked dreads will come upon him, but the desire of the righteous will be granted.
- 25 When the tempest passes, the wicked is no more, but the righteous is established forever.
- 26 Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.
- 27 The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be short.
- 28 The hope of the righteous brings joy, but the expectation of the wicked will perish.
- 29 The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the blameless, but destruction to evildoers.
- 30 The righteous will never be removed, but the wicked will not dwell in the land.
- 31 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off.
- 32 The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs provides wisdom on so many levels! The tenth chapter gives counsel on two issues with which many people especially wrestle. In the first portion of the chapter we're warned against laziness and encouraged toward hard work – this is a vital truth we must internalize if we're going to succeed in life.

Look at verse 3: "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich." More practical advice is given later in the chapter, regarding how we talk with one another. Verses 20-21 say, "The tongue of the righteous is choice silver ... the lips of the righteous feed many."

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses." (Proverbs 10:11-12)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that the Lord would give you control over the words you speak and the attitude with which you speak them. Your words have the power to bless or to curse. It's your choice.

Proverbs 11:1-31



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- 1 A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.
 - 2 When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.
 - 3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.
 - 4 Riches do not profit in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.
 - 5 The righteousness of the blameless keeps his way straight, but the wicked falls by his own wickedness.
 - 6 The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the treacherous are taken captive by their lust.
 - 7 When the wicked dies, his hope will perish, and the expectation of wealth perishes too.
 - 8 The righteous is delivered from trouble, and the wicked walks into it instead.
 - 9 With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor, but by knowledge the righteous are delivered.
 - 10 When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices, and when the wicked perish there are shouts of gladness.
 - 11 By the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is overthrown.
 - 12 Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent.
 - 13 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.
 - 14 Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.
 - 15 Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer harm, but he who hates striking hands in pledge is secure.
 - 16 A gracious woman gets honor, and violent men get riches.
 - 17 A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself.
 - 18 The wicked earns deceptive wages, but one who sows righteousness gets a sure reward.
 - 19 Whoever is steadfast in righteousness will live, but he who pursues evil will die.
 - 20 Those of crooked heart are an abomination to the Lord, but those of blameless ways are his delight.
 - 21 Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered.
 - 22 Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman without discretion.
 - 23 The desire of the righteous ends only in good; the expectation of the wicked in wrath.
 - 24 One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.
 - 25 Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered.
 - 26 The people curse him who holds back grain, but a blessing is on the head of him who sells it.
 - 27 Whoever diligently seeks good seeks favor, but evil comes to him who searches for it.
 - 28 Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.
 - 29 Whoever troubles his own household will inherit the wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise of heart.
 - 30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.
 - 31 If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

We continue in the vein of general counsel about real-life issues. Notice in chapter 11 how much emphasis is placed on relationships. Verse 1 warns businessmen against false standards. Several verses encourage us in how to treat – and how not to treat – our neighbors. The people closest to us merit special consideration! Remember how Jesus himself said to treat our neighbors as we treat ourselves.

Also, there's a direct and necessary explanation of the spiritual dynamic at work in how we give of our financial resources. We would all do well to keep in mind verse 25: "Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered." That is an agricultural metaphor with direct application to how we give. When we give to the Lord's work, we're blessing others; when we "water" with our generosity, we're connecting with the Kingdom principle of sowing and reaping.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but the humble there is wisdom." (Proverbs 11:2)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

The Holy Spirit's work in our lives is to bring every portion of life into obedience to God. Allow the Holy Spirit today to bring to your mind whatever area of your life – relationships, money, speech, business – is out of alignment with God's Word.

Proverbs 12:1-28

DAY 12

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- 1 Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.
 - 2 A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of evil devices he condemns.
 - 3 No one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved.
 - 4 An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rotteness in his bones.
 - 5 The thoughts of the righteous are just; the counsels of the wicked are deceitful.
 - 6 The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the mouth of the upright delivers them.
 - 7 The wicked are overthrown and are no more, but the house of the righteous will stand.
 - 8 A man is commended according to his good sense, but one of twisted mind is despised.
 - 9 Better to be lowly and have a servant than to play the great man and lack bread.
 - 10 Whoever is righteous has regard for the life of his beast, but the mercy of the wicked is cruel.
 - 11 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits lacks sense.
 - 12 Whoever is wicked covets the spoil of evildoers, but the root of the righteous bears fruit.
 - 13 An evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips, but the righteous escapes from trouble.
 - 14 From the fruit of his mouth a man is satisfied with good, and the work of a man's hand comes back to him.
 - 15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.
 - 16 The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult.
 - 17 Whoever speaks the truth gives honest evidence, but a false witness utters deceit.
 - 18 There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
 - 19 Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue is but for a moment.
 - 20 Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but those who plan peace have joy.
 - 21 No ill befalls the righteous, but the wicked are filled with trouble.
 - 22 Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight.
 - 23 A prudent man conceals knowledge, but the heart of fools proclaims folly.
 - 24 The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor.
 - 25 Anxiety in a man's heart weighs him down, but a good word makes him glad.
 - 26 One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.
 - 27 Whoever is slothful will not roast his game, but the diligent man will get precious wealth.
 - 28 In the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs is a very practical book. It's filled with direction that shows us how to please the Lord. But the counsel contained in Proverbs also has a material sense to it as well. In other words, when we take to heart what Proverbs teaches and align our lives with its counsel, we'll realize physical blessings as well as spiritual ones.

Chapter 12 makes this principle clear, whether it's talking about business or marriage or speech or work ethic. When we obey God's Word, we position ourselves for success in this life and the life to come. That's not to say that hard work or peaceful marriages or business acumen will get you into heaven – only Jesus can do that! It's just that the Kingdom principles God has established really do make a difference in how we experience life, whether we're living in faith or not.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“A good man obtains favor from the LORD, but a man of evil devices he condemns.” (Proverbs 12:2)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

So much of our daily walk with Jesus consists in precisely the daily issues with which Proverbs deals – things like marriage, work, speech, diligence. Pray today that God would give you grace to remain true to him in the daily tasks of life.

Proverbs 13:1-25



- 1 A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
- 2 From the fruit of his mouth a man eats what is good, but the desire of the treacherous is for violence.
- 3 Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.
- 4 The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied.
- 5 The righteous hates falsehood, but the wicked brings shame and disgrace.
- 6 Righteousness guards him whose way is blameless, but sin overthrows the wicked.
- 7 One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.
- 8 The ransom of a man's life is his wealth, but a poor man hears no threat.
- 9 The light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out.
- 10 By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom.
- 11 Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.
- 12 Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a desire fulfilled is a tree of life.
- 13 Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded.
- 14 The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
- 15 Good sense wins favor, but the way of the treacherous is their ruin.
- 16 In everything the prudent acts with knowledge, but a fool flaunts his folly.
- 17 A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a faithful envoy brings healing.
- 18 Poverty and disgrace come to him who ignores instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is honored.
- 19 A desire fulfilled is sweet to the soul, but to turn away from evil is an abomination to fools.
- 20 Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.
- 21 Disaster pursues sinners, but the righteous are rewarded with good.
- 22 A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children, but the sinner's wealth is laid up for the righteous.
- 23 The fallow ground of the poor would yield much food, but it is swept away through injustice.
- 24 Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
- 25 The righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

You'll notice as you read through Proverbs that most of what it talks about is black-and-white. Very little is grey. In other words, the choices we face on a daily basis really aren't as complicated or as difficult as we make them out to be. Chapter 13 really brings that principle to bear. Look, for instance, at Verse 10: "By insolence comes nothing but strife, but with those who take advice is wisdom." That's pretty clear, isn't it? Not much wiggle room.

If you're insolent – so sure of yourself that you respond to any advice with arrogance and pride – then you're setting yourself up for conflict on every hand. The clear alternative is to humbly receive counsel. And that will lead you to wisdom, which by definition is peaceable. And the list of clear choices and their consequences runs throughout this chapter. You can choose whatever you want, but you can never escape the consequences of your choices.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm." (Proverbs 13:20)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Be specific in your prayers today. Ask the Lord through his Word not only to show you the right way to go, but also the consequences of choosing the wrong way. That may be a hard prayer to pray, but it may also be one that has real impact.

Proverbs 14:1-35



- 1 The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.
- 2 Whoever walks in uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises him.
- 3 By the mouth of a fool comes a rod for his back, but the lips of the wise will preserve them.
- 4 Where there are no oxen, the manger is clean, but abundant crops come by the strength of the ox.
- 5 A faithful witness does not lie, but a false witness breathes out lies.
- 6 A scoffer seeks wisdom in vain, but knowledge is easy for a man of understanding.
- 7 Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.
- 8 The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.
- 9 Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance.
- 10 The heart knows its own bitterness, and no stranger shares its joy.
- 11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.
- 12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
- 13 Even in laughter the heart may ache, and the end of joy may be grief.
- 14 The backslider in heart will be filled with the fruit of his ways, and a good man will be filled with the fruit of his ways.
- 15 The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.
- 16 One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless.
- 17 A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.
- 18 The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
- 19 The evil bow down before the good, the wicked at the gates of the righteous.
- 20 The poor is disliked even by his neighbor, but the rich has many friends.
- 21 Whoever despises his neighbor is a sinner, but blessed is he who is generous to the poor.
- 22 Do they not go astray who devise evil? Those who devise good meet steadfast love and faithfulness.
- 23 In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.
- 24 The crown of the wise is their wealth, but the folly of fools brings folly.
- 25 A truthful witness saves lives, but one who breathes out lies is deceitful.
- 26 In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.
- 27 The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.
- 28 In a multitude of people is the glory of a king, but without people a prince is ruined.
- 29 Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
- 30 A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.
- 31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
- 32 The wicked is overthrown through his evildoing, but the righteous finds refuge in his death.
- 33 Wisdom rests in the heart of a man of understanding, but it makes itself known even in the midst of fools.
- 34 Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.
- 35 A servant who deals wisely has the king's favor, but his wrath falls on one who acts shamefully.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

The word “fool” is not one that we throw around lightly. Jesus, in fact, in the Gospels prohibits us from using the word to describe other people. In the New Testament, the English word “fool” translates a Greek word that means “empty-headed,” and Jesus’ prohibition was intended to keep us from setting ourselves up as judges of one another.

Still, Proverbs is filled with descriptions of people who act in such fashion as they can only be describes as “fools.” That’s not a judgment that we render but a pronouncement of God’s Word. This chapter lays out in detail what fools acts like; where their actions lead; and why we better steer clear of them.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“Leave the presence of a fool, for there you do not meet words of knowledge.” (Proverbs 14:7)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that the Lord would give you enough wisdom to avoid the entanglements of fools. Be wise in your friendships and associations!

Proverbs 15:1-33



- 1 A soft answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- 2 The tongue of the wise commends knowledge,
but the mouths of fools pour out folly.
- 3 The eyes of the Lord are in every place,
keeping watch on the evil and the good.
- 4 A gentle tongue is a tree of life,
but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.
- 5 A fool despises his father's instruction,
but whoever heeds reproof is prudent.
- 6 In the house of the righteous there is much
treasure, but trouble befalls the income of the
wicked.
- 7 The lips of the wise spread knowledge;
not so the hearts of fools.
- 8 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination
to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is
acceptable to him.
- 9 The way of the wicked is an abomination to
the Lord, but he loves him who pursues
righteousness.
- 10 There is severe discipline for him who forsakes
the way; whoever hates reproof will die.
- 11 Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord;
how much more the hearts of the children of
man!
- 12 A scoffer does not like to be reproved;
he will not go to the wise.
- 13 A glad heart makes a cheerful face,
but by sorrow of heart the spirit is crushed.
- 14 The heart of him who has understanding seeks
knowledge, but the mouths of fools feed on
folly.
- 15 All the days of the afflicted are evil,
but the cheerful of heart has a continual feast.
- 16 Better is a little with the fear of the Lord
than great treasure and trouble with it.
- 17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is
than a fattened ox and hatred with it.
- 18 A hot-tempered man stirs up strife,
but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.
- 19 The way of a sluggard is like a hedge of thorns,
but the path of the upright is a level highway.
- 20 A wise son makes a glad father,
but a foolish man despises his mother.
- 21 Folly is a joy to him who lacks sense,
but a man of understanding walks straight
ahead.
- 22 Without counsel plans fail,
but with many advisers they succeed.
- 23 To make an apt answer is a joy to a man,
and a word in season, how good it is!
- 24 The path of life leads upward for the prudent,
that he may turn away from Sheol beneath.
- 25 The Lord tears down the house of the proud
but maintains the widow's boundaries.
- 26 The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination
to the Lord, but gracious words are pure.
- 27 Whoever is greedy for unjust gain troubles his
own household, but he who hates bribes will
live.
- 28 The heart of the righteous ponders how to
answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out
evil things.
- 29 The Lord is far from the wicked,
but he hears the prayer of the righteous.
- 30 The light of the eyes rejoices the heart,
and good news refreshes the bones.
- 31 The ear that listens to life-giving reproof
will dwell among the wise.
- 32 Whoever ignores instruction despises himself,
but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.
- 33 The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom,
and humility comes before honor.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

We've noted from the beginning of our journey through Proverbs how the book often circles around to the same truths from chapter to chapter. Chapter 15 follows that pattern by bringing up once again the value of Godly counsel. Verse one says, "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Look at verse 7: "The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools." Here's another one in verse 22: "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." The very next verse affirms the same truth: "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!"

Wise counsel from Godly people positions us for good decisions and successful lives. We often make decisions based on cultural promptings, personal preferences or immature reactions to circumstances. Godly wisdom comes through other means. What Proverbs teaches is that the Word of God interpreted by Godly people around us provides a more stable basis for life.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous." (Proverbs 15:29)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that you'd be alert to Godly wisdom. That wisdom may come from someone close to you. Pray that your heart will be open to humbly accept wise council from more mature Christians around you. Pray that your heart will be open to God's word from your reading of Proverbs.

Proverbs 16:1-33

DAY 16



- 1 The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.
- 2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit.
- 3 Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.
- 4 The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble.
- 5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished.
- 6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil.
- 7 When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- 8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.
- 9 The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.
- 10 An oracle is on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment.
- 11 A just balance and scales are the Lord's; all the weights in the bag are his work.
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness.
- 13 Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right.
- 14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it.
- 15 In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.
- 16 How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
- 17 The highway of the upright turns aside from evil; whoever guards his way preserves his life.
- 18 Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- 19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.
- 20 Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord.
- 21 The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.
- 22 Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it, but the instruction of fools is folly.
- 23 The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
- 24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.
- 25 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.
- 26 A worker's appetite works for him; his mouth urges him on.
- 27 A worthless man plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.
- 28 A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.
- 29 A man of violence entices his neighbor and leads him in a way that is not good.
- 30 Whoever winks his eyes plans dishonest things; he who purses his lips brings evil to pass.
- 31 Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained in a righteous life.
- 32 Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
- 33 The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

This chapter pulls aside the curtain and lets us see what's really going on behind the scenes. As you read pay attention to how the different verses – dealing with many different facets of life – all point to the same reality. God weighs our spirit and can see into our hearts to see our true motivation.

“All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit,” reads verse 2. Verse 9 reads, “The heart of a man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” This should not discourage us, but help us realize that God is close to us and cares so much that He wants to direct our very steps.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall.”
(Proverbs 16:18)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

As you pray today, keep in mind the unseen hand of God at work behind and beneath the circumstances of your life. Pray to be in His will for your life.

Proverbs 17:1-28

DAY 17



- 1 Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.
- 2 A servant who deals wisely will rule over a son who acts shamefully and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.
- 3 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and the Lord tests hearts.
- 4 An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.
- 5 Whoever mocks the poor insults his Maker; he who is glad at calamity will not go unpunished.
- 6 Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers.
- 7 Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a prince.
- 8 A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of the one who gives it; wherever he turns he prospers.
- 9 Whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.
- 10 A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.
- 11 An evil man seeks only rebellion, and a cruel messenger will be sent against him.
- 12 Let a man meet a she-bear robbed of her cubs rather than a fool in his folly.
- 13 If anyone returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house.
- 14 The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out.
- 15 He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the Lord.
- 16 Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?
- 17 A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.
- 18 One who lacks sense gives a pledge and puts up security in the presence of his neighbor.
- 19 Whoever loves transgression loves strife; he who makes his door high seeks destruction.
- 20 A man of crooked heart does not discover good, and one with a dishonest tongue falls into calamity.
- 21 He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy.
- 22 A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.
- 23 The wicked accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the ways of justice.
- 24 The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.
- 25 A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her who bore him.
- 26 To impose a fine on a righteous man is not good, nor to strike the noble for their uprightness.
- 27 Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.
- 28 Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter 17 gives a wide spectrum of counsel on everything from respecting the poor to Godly relationships to the value of friendship to the difference between wise people and fools. But there's one theme that has special significance for life in modern society.

Verse 1 says, "Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." Verse 14 picks up the same theme of strife by noting that "The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out." We're warned a third time in verse 19 against strife: "Whoever loves transgression loves strife."

Strife is defined as "vigorous or bitter conflict, discord or antagonism; a quarrel, struggle or clash; competition or rivalry." The way we live today – with open hostility and competition in business, education, sports, and politics – has a spill-over effect even in our churches. Strife has become a way of life throughout modern American culture. But Proverbs warns us against it. Instead of strife, believers are to be peacemakers.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity."
(Proverbs 17:17)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that the Lord would give you not just a sense of His peace, but also the willingness to extend your life in bringing peace to others.

Proverbs 18:1-24

DAY 18



-
- 1 Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.
 - 2 A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.
 - 3 When wickedness comes, contempt comes also, and with dishonor comes disgrace.
 - 4 The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.
 - 5 It is not good to be partial to the wicked or to deprive the righteous of justice.
 - 6 A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.
 - 7 A fool's mouth is his ruin, and his lips are a snare to his soul.
 - 8 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.
 - 9 Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys.
 - 10 The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.
 - 11 A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall in his imagination.
 - 12 Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.
 - 13 If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.
 - 14 A man's spirit will endure sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear?
 - 15 An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.
 - 16 A man's gift makes room for him and brings him before the great.
 - 17 The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him.
 - 18 The lot puts an end to quarrels and decides between powerful contenders.
 - 19 A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle.
 - 20 From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips.
 - 21 Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.
 - 22 He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.
 - 23 The poor use entreaties, but the rich answer roughly.
 - 24 A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter 18 gives counsel on such a diversity of topics that it's hard to identify a single theme. There is, though, a dramatic image that occurs three times that's worth remembering: It's the mental picture of a strong city. That image can be a good thing – as is the case when verse 10 says, “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.”

On the other hand, the image of a strong city (in the biblical world, a strong city would have been one surrounded by impressive walls) can call to mind a certain kind of pride. Verse 11 makes the point that “A rich man's wealth is his strong city, and like a high wall is his imagination.”

The third time the image is used has to do with the results of an offended spirit: “A brother offended is more unyielding than a strong city, and quarreling is like the bars of a castle.” (Proverbs 18:19). A passage in the New Testament applies this picture of a strong city to spiritual warfare: “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds.” (2 Corinthians 10:3-4)

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe.” (Proverbs 18:10)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that the Holy Spirit would give you victory in whatever challenges you may face, as you make the Lord your strong tower.

Proverbs 19:1-29



- 1 Better is a poor person who walks in his integrity than one who is crooked in speech and is a fool.
- 2 Desire without knowledge is not good, and whoever makes haste with his feet misses his way.
- 3 When a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.
- 4 Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend.
- 5 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will not escape.
- 6 Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.
- 7 All a poor man's brothers hate him; how much more do his friends go far from him! He pursues them with words, but does not have them.
- 8 Whoever gets sense loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will discover good.
- 9 A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who breathes out lies will perish.
- 10 It is not fitting for a fool to live in luxury, much less for a slave to rule over princes.
- 11 Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.
- 12 A king's wrath is like the growling of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass.
- 13 A foolish son is ruin to his father, and a wife's quarreling is a continual dripping of rain.
- 14 House and wealth are inherited from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.
- 15 Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.
- 16 Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die.
- 17 Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.
- 18 Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.
- 19 A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.
- 20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.
- 21 Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.
- 22 What is desired in a man is steadfast love, and a poor man is better than a liar.
- 23 The fear of the Lord leads to life, and whoever has it rests satisfied; he will not be visited by harm.
- 24 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.
- 25 Strike a scoffer, and the simple will learn prudence; reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.
- 26 He who does violence to his father and chases away his mother is a son who brings shame and reproach.
- 27 Cease to hear instruction, my son, and you will stray from the words of knowledge.
- 28 A worthless witness mocks at justice, and the mouth of the wicked devours iniquity.
- 29 Condemnation is ready for scoffers, and beating for the backs of fools.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Proverbs is full of counsel regarding money. While the economy of the biblical world was substantially different from our own, this portion of the Bible gives direction about our finances that apply to every age. Be generous to the needy. Don't look down on the poor. Work hard. Save. Stay out of debt.

Chapter 19 addresses stewardship in a variety of ways, but the underlying principle is that the Lord not only provides financial instructions, he's also responsive to how we respond to his instructions. When we obey them, we're blessed. When we ignore them, we expose ourselves to danger.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed.” (Proverbs 19:17)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

The Bible teaches throughout that since the Lord is concerned with the poor, we should be, too. There are many people in the city of Dothan and Houston County that are living in poverty. Pray that God will turn our heart to the poor and use us as His instrument in this community.

Proverbs 20:1-30

DAY 20

- 1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.
- 2 The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; whoever provokes him to anger forfeits his life.
- 3 It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.
- 4 The sluggard does not plow in the autumn; he will seek at harvest and have nothing.
- 5 The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.
- 6 Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?
- 7 The righteous who walks in his integrity – blessed are his children after him!
- 8 A king who sits on the throne of judgment winnows all evil with his eyes.
- 9 Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"?
- 10 Unequal weights and unequal measures are both alike an abomination to the Lord.
- 11 Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.
- 12 The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.
- 13 Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.
- 14 "Bad, bad," says the buyer, but when he goes away, then he boasts.
- 15 There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.
- 16 Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for foreigners.
- 17 Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be full of gravel.
- 18 Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.
- 19 Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbler.
- 20 If one curses his father or his mother, his lamp will be put out in utter darkness.
- 21 An inheritance gained hastily in the beginning will not be blessed in the end.
- 22 Do not say, "I will repay evil"; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.
- 23 Unequal weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good.
- 24 A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can man understand his way?
- 25 It is a snare to say rashly, "It is holy," and to reflect only after making vows.
- 26 A wise king winnows the wicked and drives the wheel over them.
- 27 The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his innermost parts.
- 28 Steadfast love and faithfulness preserve the king, and by steadfast love his throne is upheld.
- 29 The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.
- 30 Blows that wound cleanse away evil; strokes make clean the innermost parts.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter 20 takes us all over the place. There's counsel about drinking alcohol – verse 1 says, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." You'll also find good advice about parent/child relations and even incentives to hard work. One verse, though, stands out because it revolves around a key moral principle.

Verse 7 says, "The righteous who walks in his integrity – blessed are his children after him!" Integrity is a profound characteristic. It begins with high moral and ethical standards. But that's not all it is. Integrity is so highly thought of that it brings a multi-generational blessing. Your children will be blessed if you are a person of integrity!

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"The righteous who walks in his integrity—blessed are his children after him!" (Proverbs 20:7)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that your outer actions would match your inner convictions – that's what the Bible calls integrity.

Proverbs 21:1-31



- 1 The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.
- 2 Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.
- 3 To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.
- 4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.
- 5 The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.
- 6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.]
- 7 The violence of the wicked will sweep them away, because they refuse to do what is just.
- 8 The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright.
- 9 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.
- 10 The soul of the wicked desires evil; his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.
- 11 When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise; when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.
- 12 The Righteous One observes the house of the wicked; he throws the wicked down to ruin.
- 13 Whoever closes his ear to the cry of the poor will himself call out and not be answered.
- 14 A gift in secret averts anger, and a concealed bribe, strong wrath.
- 15 When justice is done, it is a joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.
- 16 One who wanders from the way of good sense will rest in the assembly of the dead.
- 17 Whoever loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich.
- 18 The wicked is a ransom for the righteous, and the traitor for the upright.
- 19 It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.
- 20 Precious treasure and oil are in a wise man's dwelling, but a foolish man devours it.
- 21 Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness will find life, righteousness, and honor.
- 22 A wise man scales the city of the mighty and brings down the stronghold in which they trust.
- 23 Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble.
- 24 "Scoffer" is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.
- 25 The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor.
- 26 All day long he craves and craves, but the righteous gives and does not hold back.
- 27 The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when he brings it with evil intent.
- 28 A false witness will perish, but the word of a man who hears will endure.
- 29 A wicked man puts on a bold face, but the upright gives thought to his ways.
- 30 No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the Lord.
- 31 The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the Lord.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Verses one and two of chapter 21 connect us with a continuing theme throughout Proverbs: “The king’s heart is a stream of water in the hand of the LORD; he turns it wherever he will. Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.”

The word “heart” should attract our attention today. In the Bible, your heart wasn’t the physical organ in our chest. Neither was it the seat of emotions, as we use the word today. The heart in the Bible is the seat of your thoughts and personality. It’s what makes you, you.

Proverbs reminds us continually of the central role the heart plays in our life. “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23) is just one of many examples. The point is that the Lord isn’t concerned nearly as much with how we look to others on the outside as he is with who we really are in our “hearts.”

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart.” (Proverbs 21:2)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Use Psalm 139:23-24 as a prayer guide today and pray the words as though they’re your own: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my anxious thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

Proverbs 22:1-29



-
- 1 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.
 - 2 The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.
 - 3 The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.
 - 4 The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor and life.
 - 5 Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them.
 - 6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.
 - 7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender.
 - 8 Whoever sows injustice will reap calamity, and the rod of his fury will fail.
 - 9 Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.
 - 10 Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.
 - 11 He who loves purity of heart, and whose speech is gracious, will have the king as his friend.
 - 12 The eyes of the Lord keep watch over knowledge, but he overthrows the words of the traitor.
 - 13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!"
 - 14 The mouth of forbidden women is a deep pit; he with whom the Lord is angry will fall into it.
 - 15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.
 - 16 Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.
 - 17 Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips.
 - 18 That your trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to you today, even to you.
 - 20 Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge,
 - 21 to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?
 - 22 Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate,
 - 23 for the Lord will plead their cause and rob of life nor go with a wrathful man,
 - 25 lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.
 - 26 Be not one of those who give pledges, who put up security for debts.
 - 27 If you have nothing with which to pay, why should your bed be taken from under you?
 - 28 Do not move the ancient landmark that your fathers have set.
 - 29 Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

The Bible as a whole is conscious of the disparity between the rich and the poor. While there's no sin in being rich – if the rich person is generous– the poor receive special consideration from the Lord. The reason is that poor people are often at the mercy of the rich, with little recourse when cheated, treated unjustly or in the depths of poverty.

Our modern culture is also conscious of the social and personal problems that occur when the gap between rich and poor grows too extreme. Chapter 22 points straightforwardly to the issue. Verse 16 says, “Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or give to the rich, will only come to poverty.” Verses 22-23 say, “Do not rob the poor, because he is poor, or crush the afflicted at the gate, for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob him.”

Economic issues are a hot topic of political dialogue today – and that's a necessary discussion to have. But God was concerned for the plight of the poor long before modern politicians.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the maker of them all.” (Proverbs 22:2)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray for the leaders of our country and city. Pray that they will make wise decisions so peace and prosperity may come to all. Also, pray that we will see the poor among us and have compassion for them. Pray that God will give Westgate opportunities to help the poor in our city.

Proverbs 23:1-35



- 1 When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you,
- 2 and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite.
- 3 Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.
- 4 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.
- 5 When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven.
- 6 Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies,
- 7 for he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, but his heart is not with you.
- 8 You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, and waste your pleasant words.
- 9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.
- 10 Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless,
- 11 for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.
- 12 Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.
- 13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.
- 14 If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.
- 15 My son, if your heart is wise, my heart too will be glad.
- 16 My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right.
- 17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.
- 18 Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.
- 19 Hear, my son, and be wise, and direct your heart in the way.
- 20 Be not among drunkards or among gluttonous eaters of meat,
- 21 for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and slumber will clothe them with rags.
- 22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.
- 23 Buy truth, and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding.
- 24 The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who fathers a wise son will be glad in him.
- 25 Let your father and mother be glad; let her who bore you rejoice.
- 26 My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.
- 27 For a prostitute is a deep pit; an adulteress is a narrow well.
- 28 She lies in wait like a robber and increases the traitors among mankind.
- 29 Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?
- 30 Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine.
- 31 Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.
- 32 In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder.
- 33 Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things.
- 34 You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.
- 35 "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

What a rich chapter this is! Two areas of critical concern rise to the surface. The first continues the economic issues we read about yesterday. Notice in verses 4-5 how we're warned not to pursue wealth at the expense of more important things: "Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven."

That image is so dramatic – and so true! Those people who seek wealth more than anything else end their lives in disappointment. They discover too late that the object of their pursuit has "sprouted wings" and flown away.

The second area this chapter addresses is alcohol. Today's attitude toward drinking is casual in so many ways – despite the multi-billion dollar alcohol industry that continues to persuade so many people into addiction. Verses 31-32 aren't fooled by the dangers: "Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder."

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day. Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off." (Proverbs 23:17-18)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today for the grace to see the issues of our world through God's eyes and not your own – things like poverty, alcohol, wisdom, and God's Word.

Proverbs 24:1-22

DAY 24

-
- 1 Be not envious of evil men,
nor desire to be with them,
 - 2 for their hearts devise violence,
and their lips talk of trouble.
 - 3 By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
 - 4 by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
 - 5 A wise man is full of strength,
and a man of knowledge enhances his might,
 - 6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war,
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.
 - 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;
in the gate he does not open his mouth.
 - 8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a schemer.
 - 9 The devising of folly is sin,
and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.
 - 10 If you faint in the day of adversity,
your strength is small.
 - 11 Rescue those who are being taken away to
death; hold back those who are stumbling to
the slaughter.
 - 12 If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?
Does not he who keeps watch over your soul
know it, and will he not repay man according
to his work?
 - 13 My son, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet
to your taste.
 - 14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
if you find it, there will be a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.
 - 15 Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the
dwelling of the righteous;
do no violence to his home;
 - 16 for the righteous falls seven times and rises
again, but the wicked stumble in times of
calamity.
 - 17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
and let not your heart be glad when he
stumbles,
 - 18 lest the Lord see it and be displeased,
and turn away his anger from him.
 - 19 Fret not yourself because of evildoers,
and be not envious of the wicked,
 - 20 for the evil man has no future;
the lamp of the wicked will be put out.
 - 21 My son, fear the Lord and the king,
and do not join with those who do otherwise,
 - 22 for disaster will arise suddenly from them,
and who knows the ruin that will come from
them both?

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

We return in this chapter to the main theme of Proverbs as a whole – the need for wisdom. Verses 5-6 give a crucial direction for anyone seeking the kind of godly wisdom that keeps us in the ways of the Lord: “A wise man is full of strength, and a man of knowledge enhances his might, for by wise guidance you can wage your war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory.”

The last phrase may be familiar; but even if isn't, it's worth remembering. The more godly people we seek out, the more likely we are of making wise choices and being obedient to God. When faced with a major life decision, the surest way to choose wrongly is to rush off on our own. Instead, we should have enough wise counselors in our lives to be able to seek their wisdom and have them speak into our lives.

To be sure, there are times when the Lord leads us in a singular direction that others have no knowledge of (Abraham comes to mind as a prominent example); still, we should open ourselves to the trusted people around us in order to make sure we're following God's direction. Notice also in this chapter the concluding verses. They are clear and direct about the value of hard work and what happens to those who try to evade it.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“In abundance of counselors there is victory.” (Proverbs 24:6)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

We often don't seek counsel from others in our decision making because of pride. Today, ask the Holy Spirit during your prayer time to humble your heart and bring to mind one or two people to whom you may reach out in times when you need wise counsel. Also be open to friends or family members who may themselves be in need of wise counsel from you.

Proverbs 25:1-28

DAY 25



- 1 These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied.
- 2 It is the glory of God to conceal things, but the glory of kings is to search things out.
- 3 As the heavens for height, and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.
- 4 Take away the dross from the silver, and the smith has material for a vessel;
- 5 take away the wicked from the presence of the king, and his throne will be established in righteousness.
- 6 Do not put yourself forward in the king's presence or stand in the place of the great,
- 7 for it is better to be told, "Come up here," than to be put lower in the presence of a noble. What your eyes have seen
- 8 do not hastily bring into court, for what will you do in the end, when your neighbor puts you to shame?
- 9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not reveal another's secret,
- 10 lest he who hears you bring shame upon you, and your ill repute have no end.
- 11 A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
- 12 Like a gold ring or an ornament of gold is a wise reprove to a listening ear.
- 13 Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him; he refreshes the soul of his masters.
- 14 Like clouds and wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift he does not give.
- 15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.
- 16 If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.
- 17 Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor's house, lest he have his fill of you and hate you.
- 18 A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.
- 19 Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.
- 20 Whoever sings songs to a heavy heart is like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, and like vinegar on soda.
- 21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,
- 22 for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.
- 23 The north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.
- 24 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.
- 25 Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.
- 26 Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.
- 27 It is not good to eat much honey, nor is it glorious to seek one's own glory.
- 28 A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Chapter 25 circles back around to the key theme of speech. Proverbs – like so many other portions of the Bible – recognizes the way words shape our destiny as well as the destinies of the people around us. When we use words to bless others, then the course of their lives is altered. When we use words to curse, that has a devastating effect on them.

That principle is lived out every day in our marriages, our families, our workplaces and even in our churches. Verse 11 says, “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.” On the other hand, verse 18 says, “A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.” Our words either bless others or curse them. The choice is ours.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat, and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.” (Proverbs 25:21-22)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Ask the Lord today to give you a greater control over how you speak to those around you – to your family, friends, co-workers and others (even the girl at the grocery store check-out line!). Make the effort to be a blessing to others by how you speak.

Proverbs 26:1-28

DAY 26

- 1 Like snow in summer or rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool.
- 2 Like a sparrow in its flitting, like a swallow in its flying, a curse that is causeless does not alight.
- 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the back of fools.
- 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.
- 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.
- 6 Whoever sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.
- 7 Like a lame man's legs, which hang uselessly, is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
- 8 Like one who binds the stone in the sling is one who gives honor to a fool.
- 9 Like a thorn that goes up into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
- 10 Like an archer who wounds everyone is one who hires a passing fool or drunkard.
- 11 Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.
- 12 Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
- 13 The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!"
- 14 As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed.
- 15 The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth.
- 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.
- 17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.
- 18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death
- 19 is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, "I am only joking!"
- 20 For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
- 21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
- 22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body.
- 23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel are fervent lips with an evil heart.
- 24 Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips and harbors deceit in his heart;
- 25 when he speaks graciously, believe him not, for there are seven abominations in his heart;
- 26 though his hatred be covered with deception, his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
- 27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.
- 28 A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Our chapter today has a large section on fools – how to deal with them, how they act, where their character eventually takes them. By “fool,” the book of Proverbs refers specifically to people who are so wrapped up in their own counter-productive and disobedient ways that they refuse any direction by God’s Word. They’re held hostage by pride and their horizons don’t extend beyond their own desires. Those who are wise, on the other hand, are humble and know what it means to live according to God’s Word.

Verse 4 tells us not to even get into a conversation with a fool: “Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself.” Verse 11 describes a fool’s perspective on life in a most graphic way: “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.” Another verse in this chapter gives wise counsel on a different topic with such a hilarious image that we have to mention it: “Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.” (verse 17).

KEY MEMORY VERSE



Two verses today are worth meditation on. Both have to do with the nature of gossip.

“For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.” (Proverbs 26:20)

“A lying tongue hates its victims, and a flattering mouth works ruin.” (Proverbs 26:28)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Use Psalm 111:10 today as a guide to your prayer. Worship and wisdom go together, as this verse demonstrates.

Proverbs 27:1-27



-
- 1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring.
 - 2 Let another praise you, and not your own
mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.
 - 3 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.
 - 4 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who can stand before jealousy?
 - 5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.
 - 6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
profuse are the kisses of an enemy.
 - 7 One who is full loathes honey,
but to one who is hungry everything bitter is
sweet.
 - 8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is a man who strays from his home.
 - 9 Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
and the sweetness of a friend comes from his
earnest counsel.
 - 10 Do not forsake your friend and your father's
friend, and do not go to your brother's house in
the day of your calamity.
Better is a neighbor who is near
than a brother who is far away.
 - 11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad,
that I may answer him who reproaches me.
 - 12 The prudent sees danger and hides himself,
but the simple go on and suffer for it.
 - 13 Take a man's garment when he has put up
security for a stranger, and hold it in pledge
when he puts up security for an adulteress.
 - 14 Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud
voice, rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.
 - 15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a quarrelsome wife are alike;
16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp oil in one's right hand.
 - 17 Iron sharpens iron,
and one man sharpens another.
 - 18 Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
and he who guards his master will be honored.
 - 19 As in water face reflects face,
so the heart of man reflects the man.
 - 20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,
and never satisfied are the eyes of man.
 - 21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for
gold, and a man is tested by his praise.
 - 22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle
along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not
depart from him.
 - 23 Know well the condition of your flocks,
and give attention to your herds,
24 for riches do not last forever;
and does a crown endure to all generations?
 - 25 When the grass is gone and the new growth
appears and the vegetation of the mountains is
gathered,
26 the lambs will provide your clothing,
and the goats the price of a field.
 - 27 There will be enough goats' milk for your food,
for the food of your household
and maintenance for your girls.

NOTES

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

Since the ancient Jews lived an agrarian life, there are lots of simple proverbs that reflect the basic principles of life in that age. Others contain wisdom that's easy to discern. But others have two levels of meaning that need to be meditated on for a while, in order for the Holy Spirit to reveal the spiritual truths that lie behind the written word.

Chapter 27 has several like that. When verse 1 says, "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring", we can turn to James 4:13-17 to find the deeper spiritual teaching about submission to God's will. Verse 19 has a similar feel: "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man." When you read 2 Corinthians 3:7-18 – the account of how the Holy Spirit impacts us to the point of actually affecting our appearance – you get a whole different level of meaning.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." (Proverbs 27:17)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Spend a few minutes today mediating on whichever verse in this chapter that caught your attention, asking the Holy Spirit to bring out whatever deeper truth he wants you to learn.

Proverbs 28:1-28



- 1 The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.
- 2 When a land transgresses, it has many rulers, but with a man of understanding and knowledge, its stability will long continue.
- 3 A poor man who oppresses the poor is a beating rain that leaves no food.
- 4 Those who forsake the law praise the wicked, but those who keep the law strive against them.
- 5 Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it completely.
- 6 Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.
- 7 The one who keeps the law is a son with understanding, but a companion of gluttons shames his father.
- 8 Whoever multiplies his wealth by interest and profit gathers it for him who is generous to the poor.
- 9 If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.
- 10 Whoever misleads the upright into an evil way will fall into his own pit, but the blameless will have a goodly inheritance.
- 11 A rich man is wise in his own eyes, but a poor man who has understanding will find him out.
- 12 When the righteous triumph, there is great glory, but when the wicked rise, people hide themselves.
- 13 Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.
- 14 Blessed is the one who fears the Lord always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.
- 15 Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked ruler over a poor people.
- 16 A ruler who lacks understanding is a cruel oppressor, but he who hates unjust gain will prolong his days.
- 17 If one is burdened with the blood of another, he will be a fugitive until death; let no one help him.
- 18 Whoever walks in integrity will be delivered, but he who is crooked in his ways will suddenly fall.
- 19 Whoever works his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows worthless pursuits will have plenty of poverty.
- 20 A faithful man will abound with blessings, but whoever hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.
- 21 To show partiality is not good, but for a piece of bread a man will do wrong.
- 22 A stingy man hastens after wealth and does not know that poverty will come upon him.
- 23 Whoever rebukes a man will afterward find more favor than he who flatters with his tongue.
- 24 Whoever robs his father or his mother and says, "That is no transgression," is a companion to a man who destroys.
- 25 A greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched.
- 26 Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.
- 27 Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.
- 28 When the wicked rise, people hide themselves, but when they perish, the righteous increase.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

This chapter begins with a verse that is worth remembering: “The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” Righteousness – connected directly to wisdom since wisdom is nothing more than doing God’s will in real time – provides a kind of courage you can’t find anywhere else. Notice also through the verses of this chapter even more focus on the poor. “Whoever gives to the poor will not want, but he who hides his eyes will get many a curse.” (verse 27)

KEY MEMORY VERSE



“Blessed is the one who fears the LORD always, but whoever hardens his heart will fall into calamity.” (Proverbs 28:14)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today that the Lord will pour his courage and strength into whatever situation that is threatening to you.

Proverbs 29:1-27

DAY 29

- 1 He who is often reprov'd, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.
- 2 When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.
- 3 He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.
- 4 By justice a king builds up the land, but he who exacts gifts tears it down.
- 5 A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.
- 6 An evil man is ensnared in his transgression, but a righteous man sings and rejoices.
- 7 A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.
- 8 Scoffers set a city aflame, but the wise turn away wrath.
- 9 If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet.
- 10 Bloodthirsty men hate one who is blameless and seek the life of the upright.
- 11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.
- 12 If a ruler listens to falsehood, all his officials will be wicked.
- 13 The poor man and the oppressor meet together; the Lord gives light to the eyes of both.
- 14 If a king faithfully judges the poor, his throne will be established forever.
- 15 The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.
- 16 When the wicked increase, transgression increases, but the righteous will look upon their downfall.
- 17 Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.
- 18 Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint, but blessed is he who keeps the law.
- 19 By mere words a servant is not disciplined, for though he understands, he will not respond.
- 20 Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him.
- 21 Whoever pampers his servant from childhood will in the end find him his heir.
- 22 A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.
- 23 One's pride will bring him low, but he who is lowly in spirit will obtain honor.
- 24 The partner of a thief hates his own life; he hears the curse, but discloses nothing.
- 25 The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
- 26 Many seek the face of a ruler, but it is from the Lord that a man gets justice.
- 27 An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous, but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

The distinction between wise people and foolish people – the main theme of Proverbs as a whole – is particularly evident in this chapter. We've been talking during the Sunday morning sermons about wisdom being, "the capacity to do God's will in real time." Fools, on the other hand, have neither the capacity nor interest in doing God's will.

We see that distinction throughout Chapter 29. Verse 3 says, "He who loves wisdom makes his father glad, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth." Verse 9 says, "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet." Verse 11 makes the same point: "A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man holds it back."

While other issues in the chapter are also important – we're given counsel about caring for the poor, how we discipline our children, and how to respond to political authorities – all these rest on the foundation of the essential choice we make for or against God's wisdom. In our daily lives, that choice still lies before us. Will we choose wisdom, and so position ourselves for godly success? Or will we choose foolishness and so set our feet on a road that leads into darkness?

KEY MEMORY VERSE



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

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Thank the Lord today for those times in your life where he has provided wisdom – through his Word, or godly counsel – in a decision or circumstance. Reflect on that experience as a template for future decisions.

Proverbs 30:1-33

DAY 30



- 1 The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle.
The man declares, I am weary, O God;
I am weary, O God, and worn out.
- 2 Surely I am too stupid to be a man.
I have not the understanding of a man.
- 3 I have not learned wisdom,
nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.
- 4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down?
Who has gathered the wind in his fists?
Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name, and what is his son's name?
Surely you know!
- 5 Every word of God proves true;
he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.
- 6 Do not add to his words,
lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.
- 7 Two things I ask of you;
deny them not to me before I die:
- 8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;
give me neither poverty nor riches;
feed me with the food that is needful for me,
lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the
Lord?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane
the name of my God.
- 10 Do not slander a servant to his master,
lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.
- 11 There are those who curse their fathers
and do not bless their mothers.
- 12 There are those who are clean in their own eyes
but are not washed of their filth.
- 13 There are those – how lofty are their eyes,
how high their eyelids lift!
- 14 There are those whose teeth are swords, whose
fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off
the earth, the needy from among mankind.
- 15 The leech has two daughters:
Give and Give.
Three things are never satisfied;
four never say, "Enough":
- 16 Sheol, the barren womb, the land never
satisfied with water, and the fire that never
says, "Enough."
- 17 The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey
a mother will be picked out by the ravens of
the valley and eaten by the vultures.
- 18 Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:
19 the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a serpent on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a virgin.
- 20 This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats and wipes her mouth
and says, "I have done no wrong."
- 21 Under three things the earth trembles;
under four it cannot bear up:
- 22 a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when he is filled with food;
- 23 an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
and a maidservant when she displaces her
mistress.
- 24 Four things on earth are small,
but they are exceedingly wise:
- 25 the ants are a people not strong,
yet they provide their food in the summer;
- 26 the rock badgers are a people not mighty,
yet they make their homes in the cliffs;
- 27 the locusts have no king,
yet all of them march in rank;
- 28 the lizard you can take in your hands,
yet it is in kings' palaces.
- 29 Three things are stately in their tread;
four are stately in their stride:
- 30 the lion, which is mightiest among beasts
and does not turn back before any;
- 31 the strutting rooster, the he-goat,
and a king whose army is with him.
- 32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself,
or if you have been devising evil,
put your hand on your mouth.
- 33 For pressing milk produces curds,
pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing
anger produces strife.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

This chapter is so fascinating! Notice that it's not written by King Solomon but instead by the otherwise unknown Agur son of Jakeh. Whoever Agur was, he expresses a world of counsel in these short 33 verses. But one section is especially provocative because it so directly connects with a well-loved passage from the New Testament. Verses 7-9 say, "Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the Lord?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."

Those verses express a simple but accurate truth; namely, that we should be satisfied with the necessities of life. But it remains for the New Testament to state both the foundation of that truth as well as the consequence of living it out. In Philippians 4:11-13 the apostle Paul shows us that contentment in life actually comes from knowing Jesus: "Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"Every word of God proves true; he is a shield for those who take refuge in him." (Proverbs 30:5)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Thank God today for his provision for you in your everyday needs, and seek a deeper level of contentment in whatever circumstance of life you're in.

Proverbs 31:1-31



- 1 The words of King Lemuel. An oracle that his mother taught him:
- 2 What are you doing, my son? What are you doing, son of my womb?
What are you doing, son of my vows?
- 3 Do not give your strength to women,
your ways to those who destroy kings.
- 4 It is not for kings, O Lemuel,
it is not for kings to drink wine,
or for rulers to take strong drink,
5 lest they drink and forget what has been
decreed and pervert the rights of all the
afflicted.
- 6 Give strong drink to the one who is perishing,
and wine to those in bitter distress;
- 7 let them drink and forget their poverty
and remember their misery no more.
- 8 Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
- 9 Open your mouth, judge righteously,
defend the rights of the poor and needy.
- 10 An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
- 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
- 12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
- 13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
- 14 She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
- 15 She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
- 16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a
vineyard.
- 17 She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
- 18 She perceives that her merchandise is
profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
- 19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
- 20 She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.
- 21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.
- 22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.
- 23 Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.
- 24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.
- 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.
- 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.
- 27 She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- 28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:
- 29 "Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all."
- 30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be
praised.
- 31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

THINGS **2** THINK ABOUT

You've made it to the last chapter of Proverbs! I hope this month you've spent in God's Word has blessed your life. I also pray it's made an impact in the way you live your life in obedience to his will. This last chapter is famous for the final verses because they're so evocative and profound regarding a godly wife. Verse 10 begins the section with a pointed question: "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels." The next verses describe what this kind of wife looks like, and while the language obviously is taken from a rural environment, the application to our own age is still apparent. "The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life."

Other verses in the Bible give even more detail regarding godly marriages (particularly Ephesians 5:21-33), but none is as beautiful and encouraging as this one. The relationship between husband and wife is the foundation to the family, and the home where that relationship is characterized by mutual love, trust and fulfillment is blessed. It's no accident that Proverbs – a book devoted to practical wisdom above all else – concludes with wise counsel regarding the most intimate of all our relationships.

KEY MEMORY VERSE



"An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life." (Proverbs 31:10-11)

PRAYER SUGGESTION

Pray today for your marriage, that it would be a place of joy, trust and blessing. If you are a young lady that is contemplating marriage, pray that you will become a Proverbs 31 woman. Wives, pray that you will become a Proverbs 31 wife. Husbands, pray that you will love your wife so much that she will flourish into this type of woman. Young men contemplating marriage, pray that God will send you a Proverbs 31 woman.



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