

PROVERBS | AN INTRODUCTION
2ND STREET COMMUNITY CHURCH
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Welcome to our first Sunday together of 2010! God has great things in store for us as a flock in this coming year, and I'm thankful for the opportunity to be yoked with you in the life and ministry of what God is up to in us and through us.

- We have a new student ministries director search on the horizon.
- We have a conversation about whether, after nineteen years of “building a church”, God is calling us as a flock to “build a building”?
- This coming fall we'll begin a search for a new worship arts director when Linnea retires in December.
- And we have the ongoing discussion of how God wants us to continue being a church that's reaching out to our city and the surrounding areas with the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

I believe the best, most productive years of our lives as a church are ahead of us. So at the turn of the 21st Century where did you think you'd be in these life areas? ...

- **RELATIONALLY?**
How are the relationships you have with your families, spouses, and friends, showing that you're a follower of Jesus, and that you want His character, thoughts, words, priorities, and actions to guide you?
- **FINANCIALLY?**
When it comes to your money, is it God's or yours? Are you living with “open hands” or “closed hands” when it comes to the resources God has entrusted you with?
- **PHYSICALLY?**
Are you taking care of your body as best as you can? I know that this is hard to do ... but we've got one shot at this, and I know from my experience this past year, that God can help us in this area of life.
- **EMOTIONALLY?**
Are you caring for yourself, by having healthy boundaries ... serving others without becoming codependent or enabling? God wants to teach us His plans about these critical self-care issues.
- **SPIRITUALLY?**
Is it the cry of your heart to live out the calling of our *MISSION* here at 2nd Street ... that you become more like Jesus Christ by loving God, loving people, and serving our world?

As we look at the year ahead of us, I'm excited about this phrase, “*Oh, The Places You Will Go*” ... and it's with this question firmly in mind, that this morning, we begin a four-month study of *The Old Testament* book of **PROVERBS** that I'm calling

“**PROVERBS: DIRECTIONS FOR LIFE**”. Here are some of the topics we’ll cover between now and Easter ...

- *Two Kinds Of Wisdom*
- *Jesus Christ - Wisdom Personified*
- *Financial Wisdom*
- *Moving Past Laziness*
- *God’s Instruction To Parents*
- *Wicked Men*
- *Wicked Women*
- *Foolishness vs. Wisdom*
- *The Virtuous Woman*
- *The Importance of Friendship*
- *Neighbors*

So many Christ-followers have talked themselves into believing that they’re at a level of obedience and maturity in their walk with God that they aren’t. And I’m not throwing stones at you, because pastors can be the worst offenders in the bunch when it comes to this. Listen to us talk sometimes and you’d think we’re bottomless spiritual repositories of God-given truth. But the truth is that we can all teach better than we can live. And in spite of all the knowledge we profess to have, there isn’t one of us here who hasn’t played the fool when it comes to some of the decisions we’ve make in this life. The words of Jesus’ brother James come to mind ...

JAMES 3:10 (NEW ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. These things should not be so, my brothers and sisters.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we live in two worlds ... the **NATURAL** and the **SPIRITUAL**. One of my close friends since growing up in Eugene is a Catholic monk, priest, and professor at the Mt. Angel monastery and seminary. And if monks and nuns have taught us anything through their lives of cloistered prayer and service, it’s that no matter how much spiritual knowledge we have in our hearts and minds, we still have to live out our faith in the day-to-day stuff of life. A couple of years ago now I asked Jerome about this. And here’s how our conversation went ...

ILLUSTRATION ... “Living out your life as a monk in prayer, study, service, and contemplation, do you ever find that it’s easier to be holy, and more like Jesus in all you think, say and do? I mean, do you ever glow with the presence of God like a human night light?”

To which Jerome replied, “Oh heavens, no. All of us here struggle with living out our faith in the exact same ways as everyone else. Our *callings* are different - but our hearts and minds are susceptible to the same pitfalls, detours, and wreckage as non-cloistered folks.”

And gang, this is where our need for the book of **PROVERBS** comes into focus. Oh, how you and I need to receive, chew on, and live out the wisdom of God in the day-to-day situations of life ... at work, in our relationships, with our money, in our thought lives, and with our friends.

The main human author of this *Old Testament* book with 31 chapters and 915 verses is Solomon, one of the sons of King David, who apart from Jesus Christ, was the greatest man of wisdom who ever lived.

I'd like to challenge you to begin reading a chapter of the book of **PROVERBS** each day during our study. It has 31 chapters, so just read the chapter each day that corresponds to the date for that day, and on the months with less than 31 days, play catch up on the last day of the month, or on the first day of the next month.

If you'll read through the book of **PROVERBS** four times between now and the end of our study, I believe that your life will be built more solidly on the wisdom of God than ever before in your life. Oh, how God longs to teach us His mind, His precepts and His ways, so that when we come in to the difficult chapters of our lives ... whether those chapters are about temptation, loss, illness, or disappointment ... that the Holy Spirit will be able to do what Jesus said was one of His functions in our lives as Christians ...

JOHN 14:26 (NEW LIVING TRANSLATION)

²⁶ But when the Father sends the Counselor as My representative - [and by the Counselor I mean the Holy Spirit] - He will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I Myself have told you.

I love how *The Old Testament* character Job talks about the kind of wisdom God longs to pour into His followers. Most Bible scholars agree that **JOB** is the oldest book in the Bible - written by an unnamed Israelite about 1,500 B.C. Let's look into what **JOB** says about wisdom in **JOB 28** ...

JOB 28:12-15 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹² "But where can wisdom be found, and where does understanding live? ¹³ People do not understand the value of wisdom; it cannot be found among those who are alive. ¹⁴ The deep ocean says, 'It's not in me;' the sea says, 'It's not in me.' ¹⁵ Wisdom cannot be bought with gold, and its cost cannot be weighed in silver.

Job points out in **v. 13** that even though we can look for wisdom, no one can find it on their own. No way. And that not only can we not find wisdom on our own, but that we won't ever find it in another person, or in the writings of another person. So gang, let' take God up on His instruction- and just stop. Listen ... the writing of men and women can augment against the wisdom God has to offer, but it can't top it; because you can't compare a stream to the ocean. Job goes on in **vv. 14-15** to say that wisdom can't and won't be found in nature - and that it can't be bought either.

JOB 28:16-19 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁶ Wisdom cannot be bought with fine gold or with valuable onyx or sapphire gems. ¹⁷ Gold and crystal are not as valuable as wisdom, and you cannot buy it with jewels of gold. ¹⁸ Coral and jasper are not worth talking about, and the price of wisdom is much greater than rubies. ¹⁹ The topaz from Cush cannot compare to wisdom; it cannot be bought with the purest gold.

Friends, there isn't anything that can compare to the value of real wisdom. King David and his son Solomon seem to have been familiar with the book of **JOB** because they both quote from it quite a bit. **PROVERBS 3:11-26** is one such passage, and

we'll look into those verses in just a bit. But what Job and then Solomon teach in that passage is that there's a strong connection between you and I going through trials, correction, hard times ... and you and I gaining the wisdom that God wants to use as the building blocks of faith and trust in our lives.

PROVERBS 3:25-26 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

²⁵ Do not be afraid of sudden fear, nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes; ²⁶ for the Lord [and His wisdom] will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.

In other words, Solomon is saying that it's not just "being smart" that gives you and me confidence in times of "sudden fear". But that it's God's wisdom that gives us stability when going through tough times. So don't wrongly think that wise people won't go through difficult times. And here's our **FIRST FAITH LESSON** this morning ...

FAITH LESSON

Wisdom can help us avoid the troubles caused by making foolish decisions. But wisdom doesn't keep us from going through trials. Instead, what happens is that wisdom takes us *through* our trials and teaches us how to act while *we're in the midst of trials*.

JOB 28:20-24 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²⁰ "So where does wisdom come from, and where does understanding live? ²¹ It is hidden from the eyes of every living thing, even from the birds of the air. ²² The places of destruction and death say, 'We have heard reports about it.' ²³ Only God understands the way to wisdom, and He alone knows where it lives, ²⁴ because He looks to the farthest parts of the earth and sees everything under the sky.

Notice in **v. 23** that God is the only One who knows all about wisdom. I want to encourage you to remember this truth throughout our study of **PROVERBS**. And in *The New Testament* the Apostle Paul narrows the focus down even further, and tells us that it's the second member of the Triunity of God, Jesus Christ, Who is the source of all wisdom. Here are just two places where Paul teaches on this important truth ...

COLOSSIANS 2:3; FIRST CORINTHIANS 1:30 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

^{2:3} In Jesus, all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are safely kept. ^{1:30} Because of God, you are in Christ Jesus, Who has become for us wisdom from God. In Christ we are put right with God, and have been made holy, and have been set free from sin.

JOB 28:25-28 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²⁵ When God gave power to the wind and measured the water, ²⁶ when He made rules for the rain and set a path for a thunderstorm to follow, ²⁷ then He looked at wisdom and decided its worth; He set

wisdom up and tested it. ²⁸ Then He said to humans, ‘The fear of the Lord is wisdom; to stay away from evil is understanding.’”

People today don't like to hear the word **fear** connected to God. We want a God Who loves everyone and accepts every kind of behavior. A God Who's like a good friend, or a cool older brother. But a God who disciplines His children for sinful behavior, or corrects His children for their own good? We're not interested in that kind of God.

And yet **the fear of the Lord** is one of the main themes in the Bible ... in fact, it's an unarguable requirement for followers of Jesus Christ ... and the wellspring of all kinds of benefits. And Job says here that **the fear of the Lord** is closely related to wisdom, and to you and I learning how to live the kind of lives that are being equipped to move away from evil, and move closer toward the righteousness and holiness of God.

So the first thing we have to do to pursue wisdom and become rooted in it, is to recognize with Job that all wisdom comes from God. We can't see God with our physical eyes, but having just gone through the Christmas season, we've been reminded that when Jesus Christ came into the world, God became flesh (cf., **JOHN 1:14**). So if we want to become wise, we've got to reverence, submit to, and become sacrificially obedient to God's WORD. Please turn with me to **PROVERBS 1**.

PROVERBS 1:1-4 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹ The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: ² To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, ³ to receive instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; ⁴ To give prudence to the naive, to the youth knowledge and discretion,

The Hebrew word for **proverb** is **mashal**, and it refers to a **rule** or a **standard**. And as the word **mashal** is used throughout *The Old Testament* it literally means “**likeness**” or “**to be like.**” And so the sayings in **PROVERBS** are the **rules**, or the **standards** that God Himself wanted Solomon to pass down to you and to me so that we'd know God's best plans and best directions about how apply His WORD while we're living life.

The sayings found in **PROVERBS** were written down as Solomon's legacy of what his father David taught him. David failed to pass on the things he knew about God to his third son Absalom and to his fourth son Adonijah, and both of them became men who didn't want to have a thing to do with God. But then David got it right with Solomon.

But then, after getting it right with Solomon, Solomon failed to get it right with his son Rehoboam, and Rehoboam ended up destroying the kingdom he'd inherited from Solomon. And in the end, not only did Solomon's family turn away from living life in relationship with God, but Solomon's whole kingdom was lost. And I see a **SECOND**, important **FAITH LESSON** for us here ...

FAITH LESSON

Wisdom dies in the soil of **pride**, but it grows in the soil of **humility**. This is why it's so important for us to stay humble as we mature and grow up in our life of faith with God. We should be willing to pass on

what we've learned from God, especially to our own children.
Wisdom is built on wisdom and stays most alive as it's passed on.

Knowledge, **understanding**, and **wisdom** are three separate and distinct words found throughout the book of **PROVERBS**. **Knowledge** is taking God's WORD into our lives. **Understanding** is chewing on the portions of God's WORD that we've taken into our lives. And **wisdom** is living out the instruction of God's WORD that we've taken into our hearts and minds and then gained **understanding** about by studying it, meditating on it, praying through it, and asking God to teach us about it.

If you want to be **knowledgeable**, study God's WORD. If you want to be **wise**, apply God's WORD in the day-to-day circumstances of life. And when you and I make the choice to do both, we'll find ourselves coming to maturity in Jesus Christ without having to learn everything through trial and error.

PROVERBS 1:5-7 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁵ A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,

⁶ to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

ILLUSTRATION ... If a vegetable gardener wants her tomato plants to grow up straight instead of falling down into a knot onto the ground, she doesn't say to the vines, "I want you to grow tall, but I'm leaving it to up to you to get it right." If the gardener does that, she won't end up with too many tomatoes, because left on it's own devices, a tomato vine will take the path of least resistance, and head out in every direction.

And this is why a good vegetable gardener will pound a stake or a trellis into the ground next to their tomato plants to give them the support they need as they grow. Because without a stake or a trellis to guide them, tomato plants will end up producing rotten fruit.

And what's true in the **NATURAL** is true in the **SPIRITUAL** ... and what's true for the tomato plant is true of us. If we want to grow to maturity in Jesus Christ, we've got to drive the WORD God into the soil of our hearts so that it becomes our standard, and our trellis - holding us up straight when the voices of this world tell us it's okay to just do whatever we want to do ... and that we can have our cake and eat it too ... that we can say we love God and then live like the devil. Because not only are those lies foolishness, they're in direct opposition to the instruction of God WORD.

Oh, how you and I need the WORD of God and the discipline that it brings into our lives! We won't ever take on the family-likeness of Jesus Christ without it! The WORD of God is what lasts. It's the standard that's eternal. Like God Himself, it never changes. Like the author of the book of **HEBREWS** writes ...

HEBREWS 13:8 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Do you see it? Oh glory to God! There is so much more here that we could look into. But I encourage you this week to read more about the ...

- THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON IN FIRST KINGS 4:29-34
- THE SOURCE OF SOLOMON'S WISDOM IN SECOND CHRONICLES 1:6-12

PROVERBS 3:13-17 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹³ How blessed is the man who finds wisdom and the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver and her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace.

Notice in v. 13 that while God is the source of all wisdom, we have to search for it. Also, notice in v. 15 that wisdom is referred to as "she." This is a common theme all through PROVERBS, and one we'll look into deeper in the coming weeks. But throughout PROVERBS, wisdom is often referred to as a beautiful, virtuous woman ... in direct contrast to human wisdom that is often referred to as a prostitute.

I love v. 16 ... Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. ... Solomon is saying what Jesus would say approximately 1,000 years later, as recorded in MATTHEW 6:33, that when it's our heart's desire to do God's will God's way, that God will add into our lives blessings that we won't know any other way.

MATTHEW 6:33 (PARAPHRASE)

³³ God will meet all your day-to-day needs when you live for Him and make seeking, finding, and following His plans for your life your primary concern and focus.

Throughout the book of PROVERBS there are five Hebrew words translated wisdom, wise, and wisely. But the most frequent one is the one used in PROVERBS 1:2 ...

PROVERBS 1:1-2 (NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE)

¹ The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: ² To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding,

The Hebrew word translated wisdom in v. 2 is *chokmah* ... and the root meaning of *chokmah* has to do with **pounding something in**. So for the wisdom of God to become a core part of our lives, we've got to have the **knowledge of God pounded into our minds and hearts**. And the more we read, study and meditate on the WORD of God, the more wisdom is **pounded into us**. Do you see it?

This is why it's so important for us to read the WORD of God daily ... to get into it, and to invite God to **pound it into us**. It's the beginning of a new year, so why not begin the year by starting one of the **READ THROUGH THE BIBLE** plans that you can find on

the *Bible Teaching* section of our 2nd Street website? There's a great plan printed in our bulletin each week, or there's an annual plan that fits onto one page that's also on the website, and that's available this morning at the Community Center.

And as you take me up on this challenge, and as you read God's WORD daily, ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate to your heart and mind the key truths of several verses so that you can meditate on them again and again throughout the day. This is how God's WORD is **pounded into** our hearts and minds and becomes God's instruction, correction and encouragement to us personally.

ILLUSTRATION ... Remember learning the *Multiplication Tables* in grade school? Getting into the WORD of God is like learning the *Multiplication Tables*. I don't know about you, but I didn't learn that seven times seven is forty-nine just by reading it or hearing my teacher tell me it was so. I went over and over the *Multiplication Tables* in my Pee Chee, until they were pounded into my mind. But I still can't remember the 8's very well. And don't even get me started on all the problems associated with the 9's!

And gang, it's the same with the WORD of God. Just reading a verse now and then, or using the "cramming before a test" method by reading a whole bunch of the Bible only when you're going through hard times won't work. We need to dwell on it, pray through it, memorize it, meditate on it, digest it, and let God **pound it into us** until it becomes a part of who we are, how we think, how we respond, how we feel, and how we prioritize our lives. We need to get into God's WORD to the place that not only can we remember it, but more importantly to the place that we can't forget it.

A lot of the proverbs make sense at face value. They mean what they say, and they say what they mean. But other ones can be harder to figure out and apply to our daily lives because they're more like riddles. But in the end, the proverbs are more than just "simple sayings". They're the very wisdom of God put into everyday words. And as we study them, our goal will be to move past the "words of man", past the "words of Solomon" and get into the "mind of God" so that we can understand at deeper levels God's passions, plans, goals, and priorities for us as His people.

Let me tell you about the six main kinds of **PROVERBS** we'll encounter during our study of this glorious book.

The **FIRST** kind of proverb is called a **SYNONYMOUS** proverb. You probably know that a **SYNONYM** refers to two words that have very similar meanings. And so a **SYNONYMOUS** proverbs is one in which the first and second lines say about the same thing, but just a little bit differently. Here's an example of a **SYNONYMOUS** proverb ...

PROVERBS 11:29 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²⁹ Whoever brings trouble to his family will be left with nothing but the wind. A fool will be a servant to the wise. [cf., PROVERBS 11:15]

In this proverb Solomon says that if we don't know how to manage our own household, it won't take long before we lose everything we've got. And then this foolish, penniless person will end up serving the wise! This is a **SYNONYMOUS** proverb.

The **SECOND** kind of proverb is called an **ANTITHETICAL** proverb. In **ANTITHETICAL** proverbs, the first line makes a statement, and in the second line, the same idea is stated in the negative form. And yet the overall force of an **ANTITHETICAL** proverb is positive, not negative. Most **ANTITHETICAL** proverbs have the word **but** near the middle of them, and they follow this form: “**If you make this sort of a choice you’ll be blessed; but if you don’t make this sort of choice, here’s the lousy stuff that will happen to you.**” Here’s an example of an **ANTITHETICAL** proverb ...

PROVERBS 17:22 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²² **A happy heart is like good medicine, but a broken spirit drains your strength. [cf., PROVERBS 14:30]**

Solomon is saying in this proverb, “Cooperating with God and people will give life to us - but sowing discord sucks the life out of us.” This is an **ANTITHETICAL** proverb.

The **THIRD** kind of proverb is the most rare, and is called a **SYNTHETIC** proverb. Here’s what the Webster’s dictionary says about the word *synthetic* ... “**composition or combination of parts, which when combined make a whole**”. The two parts of a **SYNTHETIC** proverb seem to be saying something completely different from one another, and yet, when thought through, they share a common, or **SYNTHESIZED** theme. Here’s an example of a **SYNTHETIC** proverb ...

PROVERBS 10:18 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁸ **Whoever hides hate is a liar. Whoever tells lies is a fool.**

The first line of this proverb focuses on **hiding hate**, and the second line focuses on **telling lies**. But it’s a **SYNTHETIC** proverb because the person in the first line is hiding their true feelings; and the person in the second line doesn’t even try to hide their feelings. And even though the actions of these two people are different, the results are the same: hurt, pain, and injury. And the thread that ties the two parts of this **SYNTHETIC** proverb together is using our words in ways that hurt instead of heal. So this is an example of the **THIRD** kind of proverb ... a **SYNTHETIC** proverb.

The **FOURTH** kind of proverb is called an **INTEGRAL** proverb. In an **INTEGRAL** proverb, the second line completes the idea begun in the first line. This is the most common kind of saying in **PROVERBS**. Here’s an example of an **INTEGRAL** proverb ...

PROVERBS 19:20 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²⁰ **Listen to advice and accept correction, and in the end you will be wise. [cf., PROVERBS 22:6, 10; 13:14]**

I’ve got some **BAD NEWS** and some **GOOD NEWS** for us about this verse. The **BAD NEWS**: I bet you wish your kids knew this verse, ‘cause they probably don’t. The **GOOD NEWS**: Someday they will! If they don’t listen while they’re young, there’s coming a day when they’ll wish they would have listened. And we know that this true, because all of us used to be one of them! Isn’t it amazing how stupid and ignorant parents seem to become when their kids become teenagers! Mark Twain’s famous quote about this comes to mind ... maybe you remember it ...

“When I was a boy of 14, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be 21, I was astonished at how much he had learned in just seven years.”

The *FIFTH* kind of proverb is called a *PARABOLIC* proverb. In a *PARABOLIC* proverb the second line is an illustration of the first line ... the first line is the *analogy*, and the second line is the *teaching*. Here’s an example of a *PARABOLIC* proverb ...

PROVERBS 25:25 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

²⁵ Good news from a faraway place is like a cool drink when you are tired. [cf., PROVERBS 11:22; 20:26; 26:9]

What Solomon is saying here is that when you’re away from home for a long time, hearing the voice or reading the words of the person you love back home is like a long cool drink of water to a thirsty man. So that’s an example of a *PARABOLIC* proverb. And now the *SIXTH*, and last kind of proverb we’ll see in our study of PROVERBS ...

The *SIXTH* kind of proverb is called a *COMPARATIVE* proverb. And like this name suggests, a *COMPARATIVE* proverb is one that *compares* something with something else as a way to illustrate a common theme or characteristic. The main word you’ll find in nearly all *COMPARATIVE* proverbs is the word *better*. Here’s an example of a *COMPARATIVE* proverb ...

PROVERBS 15:16 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

¹⁶ It is better to be poor and respect the Lord than to be wealthy and have much trouble. [cf., PROVERBS 10:22; 15:17; 17:1; 21:9; 27:15]

Gang, if we lose our peace and our happiness along the road to gathering wealth, what have we gained? Wise people know that it’s better to have little in terms of the world’s “stuff” and lots in terms of knowing, loving, and serving God, than it is to have all the world has to offer, and possess just \$3.00 worth of God. So this is an example of a *COMPARATIVE* proverb ...

I hope that you take me up on my challenge that you begin reading one chapter of PROVERBS each day during this four-month study we’re going to take. Because if you do, I believe you’ll begin to see that these 915 verses haven’t just been thrown together randomly ... but that in fact, there’s an order and a reason to why they are were placed where they are in terms of the context of the whole Bible, and why each proverb appears where it appears in the book.

I’d like to close our time together this morning by going back to something I said during the beginning of this introductory teaching. And I’m doing this because I want us to have three words on our hearts and minds as we leave here ... and because I want us to be reminded of who and what is our source for all that God has for us as His followers. And the three words are *knowledge*, *understanding*, and *wisdom*. Again, to review ...

Knowledge is taking in God’s WORD. Understanding is chewing on and assimilating the truth of God’s WORD into our lives. And wisdom is

the correct and godly application of the knowledge and the understanding of God's WORD that we've taken into our hearts and minds in the day-to-day situations of our lives.

And here's what I want us to leave here thinking on this morning ...

WE DON'T NEED TO DEPEND ON OUR NATURAL SENSES FOR DIRECTION BECAUSE GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT HAS GIVEN US THE ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND THE WORD OF GOD AND BE GUIDED BY IT.

PROVERBS 3:5-6 (NEW CENTURY VERSION)

⁵ Trust the Lord with all your heart, and don't depend on your own understanding. ⁶ Remember the Lord in all you do, and He will give you success.

As followers of Jesus Christ, when you and I make the decision to trust in the LORD with **all our heart**, we'll begin listening to the Holy Spirit with new intensity and new consistency. In the **NATURAL**, our **understanding** is simply fed by our five senses. Our own **understanding** looks at what it sees, it listens to what it hears, and it reacts to what it feels. But gang, we've got to remember that our **NATURAL** eyes were designed for us to see **NATURALLY**, not **SPIRITUALLY**.

And likewise, our **NATURAL** ears were made for hearing, and not for us to believe with. In other words, God doesn't guide us into the places of greater maturity with Him, and into the places of deeper intimacy with Him through the sight of our eyes or the hearing of our ears. And so what Solomon is telling us in **PROVERBS 3:5-6**, is that when we need guidance, we don't need to look **OUTSIDE** to our eyes and our ears ... rather, we need to look **INSIDE**, and be guided by the Holy Spirit.

Oh friends, how God longs for us to become the mature Believers we will become when we start turning inward to the Spirit of the Living God as the source of all counsel, the source of all wisdom, and the source of all guidance in our lives.

NEXT SUNDAY ... PROVERBS 1:1-7; 9:7-9 ... TWO KINDS OF WISDOM. COME PRAYING AND EXPECTING!