Thanks for your interest in

Wisdom of the Ages – Pt 1

It is my hope that this information will give you a greater hunger for God’s amazing wisdom
About the Author

Chris Losey grew up in Calistoga, California. He received his Bachelor of Science degree from the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, in 1973. After serving for five years as an infantry officer in the Army, he resigned his commission and returned to school receiving his Master of Divinity degree from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, Oregon in 1982. After graduation Chris returned to the military where he served as a chaplain in the Air Force retiring in 1994. Since then he and his wife Sharon have ministered at Valley Baptist Church in San Rafael, California, where Chris serves as senior pastor. Chris and Sharon have been married for over 30 years and have two children, Christine and Rob, and two grandchildren, Soren and Belen.
Dedicated to those who hunger for God’s life-changing truth
Introduction

Dear Friend,

Several years ago I learned that a person could read through the whole book of Proverbs by reading a chapter a day – 31 days in the month, 31 chapters in Proverbs. This wasn’t rocket science. The plan was simple enough so I tried it. And it worked. I now call it “The Proverbial Habit.”

As I read and re-read Proverbs each month, the truth contained in its pages jumps out at me and sinks into my heart. It is just what I need.

Also, I’ve noticed that the book addresses a myriad of subjects like:

- adultery
- anger
- counsel
- children
- contentment
- discernment
- discretion
- discipline
- drinking
- endurance
- friendship
- finances
- fear
- fools
- generosity
- honor
- humility
- integrity
- justice
- judgment
- kindness
- laziness
- loyalty
- marriage
- moderation
- obedience
- parenting
- patience
- pride
- purity
- righteousness
- reproof
- sin
- sluggards
- testing
- the tongue
- training
- understanding
- unity
- unrighteousness
- vengeance
- violence
- vision
- wickedness
- wisdom
- wives
- work
- youth

For my own edification, I’ve been creating an ever-increasing coded index of topics at the start of the book. In the column of my Bible I write these codes next to the verses that contain the topics. I put “An” next to verses on anger, “D” next to verses on discipline, and “Pa” next to verses on parenting. I even find myself identifying key verses and memorizing them. I am having fun, and God is making His truth part of my life.

If you haven’t tried the “Proverbial Habit,” it is a great way to discover what I call “Wisdom of the Ages.” This thirty-one day devotional is my attempt to give a brief summary of some of the wisdom found in each chapter. Before reading the devotional for the day, I encourage you to read the Proverb for the day. The devotional will then help pull the material together.

Every Christian needs God’s “Wisdom of the Ages” because it is “Wisdom for ALL Ages.” It applies to young and old alike.

Happy Reading,

Chris
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Proverbs 1
“Wise Up and Live”

Many people feel they can figure out life on their own, and sometimes they can. Even so, a little help goes a long way. And there is no greater help in the area of “wisdom for life” than the book of Proverbs. This little book, nestled in the pages of the Old Testament, is God’s “Wisdom of the Ages” or what may be called “Wisdom for ALL Ages.” Its truth, covering countless areas of life, is there for the taking. It is God’s special gift to point people toward the path of blessing.

The Book of Proverbs has held great fascination for me through the years. I have spent much time practicing what I call The Proverbial Habit – reading the Proverb for the day. The Lord has made this habit quite simple. There are thirty-one chapters in the book and often thirty-one days in the month. If a person reads the Proverb corresponding to the day, the Proverbial Habit will be part of his or her life. It is such an easy plan that brings profound blessing.

The benefits promised to those who study and apply the wisdom from Proverbs are astounding – (v2) knowing wisdom and instruction; gaining discernment in the sayings of understanding; (v3) receiving instruction in wise behavior, righteousness, justice and equity; (v4) gaining prudence (handling practical matters judiciously), knowledge and discretion. Who doesn’t want some of that! I certainly do.

The Proverbs familiarize us with various kinds of people: wise, righteous, fools, naïve (simple), scoffers, wicked, and evil. As we see them, we can’t help but ask ourselves, “What kind of person am I? Am I wise or a fool, a scoffer or naïve?” Verse five tells us about the wise man (also called ‘a man of understanding’), “A wise man will hear and
increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel.” The fool is described in verse seven, “Fools despise wisdom and instruction.” From the beginning, the book makes it clear that if we seek wise counsel, study and increase our learning, we are wise. If we reject wisdom and instruction, we are fools. Only a fool would look at Proverbs and say, “No thanks, this isn’t for me.”

Everyone wants foundational truth, and Proverbs delivers. It gives the cornerstone, the most basic life-principle, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (v7). If people choose to “fear the Lord” (to have a deep, reverent respect for the things of God), and to honor Him with their lives, they will discover the key to successful living.

God loves us and wants the very best for us. When we choose to do His will His way, He pours out His blessings. The problem comes if we think we can run our lives better than God can. Such thinking is a sad mistake that often brings tragic consequences.

The Book of Proverbs also tackles tough issues like peer pressure. Verse ten says, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.” The passage goes on to describe a person being tempted to join a group that plans to rob innocent people (vv11-16). If the person joins these violent folks, they promise to let him share in the spoils. Verses 17-19 speak of the foolishness of such plans. Verse 19 gives this warning, “So are the ways of everyone who gains by violence; it takes away the life of its possessors.” In other words, giving into negative peer pressure may cost a person his life. Eventually, evil actions catch up with a person.

Everyone who goes through life is faced with one profound choice, “Will I choose God’s wisdom or will I become my own god and run my own life.” In verses 22-23 God says, “How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded? And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing and fools hate knowledge? Turn to my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.” God wants to bless people, but He doesn’t force Himself on them. On the other hand,
He lets them live with the consequences of their choices. For those who reject God, He says in verses 30-33, “They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof. So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices. For the waywardness of the naïve will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But he who listens to me shall live securely and will be at ease from the dread of evil.” What a sober warning to those who reject God, but what a great promise to those who follow Him!

I hope you will develop the Proverbial Habit, and allow the book of Proverbs to ignite your soul to follow God. He really wants to bless you!

**Reflection**

1. How has God’s truth helped you better run your own life?

2. When have you felt peer pressure? How did you respond? What did you learn?

3. Have you ever done the Proverbial Habit? Would you consider trying it? If so, make plans to do it in conjunction with this devotional.

4. What truth from Proverbs chapter one stands out most to you?
Proverbs 2
“*You Gotta Want It*”

Every father hopes his son becomes a person who makes wise decisions and receives God’s blessing. This is one reason King Solomon compiled the book of Proverbs – to encourage his son.

As Proverbs chapter two begins, the first words are “My son.” These are words of endearment. Solomon dearly loved his son and desperately wanted him to have the best life possible. But the best would come at a price. It was conditional on his son doing certain things. Solomon sets out these conditions using the words “if” and “then.”

**“If” his son would**
- receive his words – v1
- treasure his commandments – v1
- make his ear attentive to wisdom – v2
- incline his heart to understanding – v2
- cry out for discernment – v3
- lift his voice for understanding – v3
- seek wisdom like hidden treasure – v4

**“Then” he would**
- discern the fear of the Lord – v5
- discover the knowledge of God – v5

“Discerning the fear of the Lord” means understanding how important it is to respect God. “Discovering the knowledge of God” means seeing the world through God’s eyes, and living life accordingly. But Solomon’s son would “have to want it.” Getting God’s blessings wouldn’t be easy. It would take following God wholeheartedly. The same is true today. If we want a life full of God’s blessings, we have to take Solomon’s advice to heart. Is that what you and I want? It should be. Sometimes we think we know how to run our lives better than God.
does, but we don’t. It is only as we trust and follow Him that we find true meaning, joy and fulfillment.

After Solomon gave his son the “if-then” statements, he assured him just how much God wanted to bless him. Solomon revealed that:
- **the Lord gives wisdom, understanding and knowledge** – v6
- **God stores up sound wisdom for the upright** – v7

God has wonderful truth He wants to teach people: truth about business, relationships, marriage, happiness, finances, forgiveness, sex and raising children. But each person needs to study God’s Word to understand this truth. In Proverbs chapter two, Solomon shares some of the benefits of seeking the things of God.
- **God shields those who walk in integrity (who follow Him)** – v8
- **He guards their paths** – v8
- **God preserves their ways** – v8
- **He gives amazing discernment in righteousness and justice**... – v9
- **God’s wisdom will enter the hearts of those who seek Him, and His knowledge will be pleasant to their soul** – v10
- **the discernment they learn will guard them** – v11
- **the understanding they receive will watch over them** – v11
- **they will be delivered from the way of evil and the perverse person who would seek to make them stumble** – vv12-15
- **they will be delivered from harmful relationships** – vv16-19
- **they will walk with good men & keep to paths of the righteous** – v20
- **they will be upright and live in the land that God gives them** – v21

Solomon starkly contrasts the upright person with the wicked person. The upright will receive God’s blessing, but the wicked and treacherous will be judged (v22).

God is ready to bless us when we follow Him. But He does not force Himself into our lives. A person would be foolish, however, to reject God’s ways. Sadly, many people do, and suffer the consequences. God made the universe and all it contains. He knows best how everything
works, and has been extremely open to share this truth with us. The question remains, “How badly do we want the life He offers?”

I remember taking a seven-day cruise in Hawaii. At the beginning of the cruise we were told there would be an exercise competition. Whoever logged the most running-jogging-walking miles during the week would win a special award. I decided to enter. My tactic was to use my free time to go on deck and run. It was a tough seven days, but amazingly, I won the prize. Thinking back on my effort, I asked myself, “do I follow God with the same level of passion?” I need to, and so does everyone who claims the name of Christ. God doesn’t want us to burn out for Him, nor does He want us to rust out. Instead, He wants us to burn bright as we walk steadily with Him each day. Let’s commit ourselves anew to follow Christ more fully. We may be amazed at the results.

**Reflection**

1. What does the phrase, “You Gotta Want It!” mean?

2. What are some of the things people want in this life, and work hard to get? Do these always satisfy?

3. Have you ever wanted something really badly and worked hard to get it? Explain.

4. What benefits have you experienced from seeking God?

5. What can you do this week to seek God more fully?
Proverbs 3
“Don’ts and Do’s”

Some people feel that using the word “don’t” sends a negative message. Instead, people always should be told what to “do.” This is more positive. Solomon undoubtedly would disagree with such sentiment because he uses the phrase “Do not” many times in Proverbs chapter three. He warns his son what not to do, and often follows it up with what to do. In the process he shares the benefits of following the path of wisdom.

_Do not forget my teaching_ – vv1,2. Instead of forgetting his father’s teaching, Solomon’s son needed to keep his father’s commandments. If he did, he would add days, years and peace to his life. Who doesn’t want to reap those benefits? All of us do!

_Do not let kindness and truth leave you_ – vv3-6. Instead of forsaking kindness and truth, Solomon’s son needed to bind kindness and truth around his neck and write them on the tablet of his heart. If he did, he would find favor, and have a good reputation with God and men. Often, people camp at either end of the kindness-truth spectrum. Either they hammer people with truth and forget to be kind, or overflow with sentiment and neglect telling the truth. Both kindness and truth must be kept in balance in our relationships.

_Do not be wise in your own eyes_ – vv7,8. Instead of thinking he was overly wise, Solomon’s son needed to have a deep respect for God, and turn away from evil. If he did, it would bring healing and refreshment to himself.

_Do not reject the discipline of the LORD or loathe His reproof_ – vv11,12. When people are corrected for doing something wrong, it is
easy for them to view discipline as negative. Instead Solomon assured his son that discipline from the LORD or a caring parent was an act of love.

_Do not be afraid of sudden fear nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes_ – v25. Everyone will be confronted by wicked people from time to time. When it happens, the people need to let God be their confidence and deliverer.

Solomon shares a string of don’ts in verses twenty-seven through thirty one without any do’s. _Do not_ withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. _Do not_ say to your neighbor, “Go and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when you have it with you. _Do not_ devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you. _Do not_ contend with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm. _Do not_ envy a man of violence and _do not_ choose any of his ways.

On one occasion Solomon states the “do” before the “don’t.” _Do – Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding_ – vv5,6. If a person follows God in all he does, his paths will be straight!

Sometimes Solomon shared the “do” without mentioning the don’t. _Do - Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce_ – vv9,10. Why? Because, God will mightily bless those who financially honor Him.

In the middle of the passage, Solomon speaks about the blessings that come to those who find _wisdom_. _Wisdom_ is better than money or jewels (vv14,15). It gives long life, riches and honor (v16). Its ways are pleasant and peaceful (v17). It is like a tree of life and brings happiness (v18).
Wisdom and discretion also bring great benefits. They are life to the soul (v22). They bring security and keep a person from stumbling (v23). They take away fear and help a person sleep soundly (v24). Those who trust in God don’t need to be afraid of wickedness, they can live with great confidence knowing that God is with them.

Solomon closes the chapter showing God’s view of various types of people. Devious people are an abomination to the Lord, but God is close to the upright (v32). God’s curse is on the wicked, but He blesses the righteous (v33). God scoffs at scoffers, but He gives grace to the afflicted (v34). The last verse of the chapter states, “The wise will inherit honor, but fools display dishonor” (v35).

Indeed, grabbing hold of the don’ts and do’s of wisdom will bring blessing beyond measure!

**Reflection**

1. Why are don’ts and do’s both important when it comes to learning to be wise?

2. Which don’ts stand out to you as especially important? Why?

3. Which benefits of wisdom and/or discretion have you enjoyed in your life? Explain.

4. Based on this chapter, why do you think that God views various types of people the way He does?

5. Based on Proverbs 3, what changes do you need to make in your life?
Proverbs 4
“The Importance of Wisdom”

Every good father has the best interest of his children at heart. And every father has a lot of life-lessons to share. This information helps kids avoid “The School of Hard Knocks” which can be a painful teacher. There is, however, something in children that makes them want to figure out life on their own. They often fail to see the value of a parents’ advice or years of experience. Although children will learn on their own, they can save themselves a lot of heartache by listening to parents. The two paths – learning on ones own, and learning from parents, go hand in hand.

Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, encouraged his children to listen to him. He shared how his own father gave him advice. In Proverbs chapter four verse one, Solomon says, “Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father and give attention that you may gain understanding.” Solomon knew that children would learn enough the “hard way” and wanted to save them from needless bumps and bruises.

As he encouraged his son, Solomon ensured him that his (Solomon’s) teaching was solid (v2). He stressed the importance of not abandoning the instruction (v2). Solomon’s father had instructed Solomon in the same way. When Solomon was a child his father told him to hold fast to his words and to keep his commandments. They would bring him life (v4). Solomon needed to acquire wisdom and understanding. He must not forget or turn away from his father’s words (v5).

To emphasize the importance of listening, Solomon shared the benefits of gaining wisdom and understanding. These benefits had been shared with him by his father. Wisdom and understanding guard a person (v6).
They bring exaltation and honor (v8). They are a garland of grace and a beautiful crown (v9). They add years to a person’s life (v10). They keep a person from stumbling (vv11,12).

To hammer home his point, Solomon declared in verse thirteen, “Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.” How vital it is to grab onto wise instruction? It can save a person’s life! This reminds me of the story of the parents who stressed the importance of careful driving. Rather than heeding the warning, their son continued to drive recklessly. It wasn’t long before he lost control of his car and died after hitting a tree. His failure to listen was fatal.

It is so easy to get off the right path. Solomon stressed the importance of avoiding the wrong path. He said “Do not enter the evil path. Do not proceed in the way of evil. Avoid it and turn away” (vv14,15).

He goes on to describe some of the qualities of evil people. Knowing these qualities would help his children avoid wickedness. Wicked people “love to do evil, delight in making others stumble, do wicked and violent things, and walk in darkness” (vv16-19).

On the other hand, righteous people are like the light of dawn that shines brighter and brighter until the full day has come (v18). What an incredible picture equating the upright with a beautiful sunrise.

At this point Solomon stresses the importance of his son listening to what he says. He says “given attention to my words, incline your ear to my sayings, and keep them in your sight and heart” (vv20,21).

He then shares the benefits of holding tightly to his instructions. They are life and they bring health (vv22,23).

Following the path of wisdom and avoiding evil is a matter of the heart. If a person guards his heart, he is on the right path. That’s why Solomon
said, “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (v23).

Do you guard your heart? Do you only allow things to enter it that honor God? Guarding ones heart is not easy. It involves guarding the pathways to the heart – the eye, ear, and mouth. When a person is selective about what he allows his eyes to see, what he allows his ears to hear, and what he allows his mouth to taste, he is well on his way to guarding his heart. This involves limiting the kind of music a person listens to. If he listens to crude music he will be tainted. It means being careful about the kind of television programs, movies, and printed material a person gazes upon. If a person looks at violent, vile, and sexually explicit content, his heart will be affected negatively. If he allows illegal drugs or excessive alcohol into his mouth, his life will be polluted. If, on the other hand, he honors God in these areas, he will remain pure.

In closing, Solomon gives more sound advice for staying on the path that leads to life - don’t have a deceitful mouth, keep your eyes looking in the right direction, watch the path of your feet - don’t turn to the right or left, and keep far away from any evil (vv24-27). All of these keep people heading in the right direction. I hope that is what you want!

**Reflection**

1. What are some reasons why listening to parents can be a good thing?

2. Is there ever a time when a person should not heed his parents’ advice? Explain.

3. What are some of the things that you have learned the hard way?

4. How can you better guard your eye, ear, and mouth gates?
Sexual temptation is as dangerous as bringing an open flame next to gasoline. The results can be disastrous.

In Proverbs chapter five, Solomon encourages his son to pay attention to “wisdom and understanding” in order to exercise discretion. Discretion may be defined as exercising caution when making choices. Most people have heard the phrase “discretion is the better part of valor.” This means it is better to stop and think when faced with danger, than to boldly rush forward and suffer harm. For example, a soldier might see his buddy get wounded by enemy gunfire. In anger the soldier might want to jump out of his foxhole and recklessly charge the enemy in order to save his fallen comrade. Although his action seems brave, it could cost him his life. A wiser decision might be to call for friendly artillery fire in order to suppress the enemy before attempting a rescue.

One of the greatest areas requiring discretion involves the opposite sex. God made women attractive to men, and visa versa. He also made sex exclusively for marriage. Every person needs to know and respect these truths. The problem comes when people succumb to sexual temptation outside of marriage.

In Proverbs chapter five, Solomon has much to say about sexual fidelity. Although all extramarital sex is sin, Solomon zeros in on perhaps the most prevalent sexual sin of his day – adultery. He begins by revealing the alluring power of sexual temptation. He says that the lips of an adulterous woman drip honey and her speech is smoother than oil (v3). She is almost irresistible.
Solomon quickly shares the dangers of getting involved in an adulterous relationship – it is bitter as wormwood, it is sharp as a two-edged sword, it leads a person toward death, those who do it are unstable, and it makes people blind to their own folly (vv4-6).

Solomon stresses the importance of avoiding sexual sin. Those who get involved in it – give their energy to others, experience financial loss, have great agony when they finally come to their senses, eventually regret their actions, and may come to utter ruin (vv9-14).

Rather than getting involved in sexual sin, Solomon gives his son another plan. This plan brings blessing. He says, “Drink water from your own well (v15).” In other words enjoy sex with your wife. To illustrate his point, Solomon uses the example of springs of water. He asks his son, “Should your springs be dispersed abroad; streams of water in the streets (v16)?” The obvious answer is “No!” A person shouldn’t waste his own water by uselessly letting it run in the street. If he does, he will not have enough for his household or crops.

If a person wants to enjoy sex, he must enjoy it at home with his wife. Each man is to rejoice in his own wife (v18). If a person doesn’t have a wife, he must abstain from sex until he does. If he has a wife he is to let her breasts satisfy him at all times. He is to be exhilarated always with her love (v19). It makes absolutely no sense for a person to be exhilarated with an adulterous woman (v20).

Although there will be times when all of us are tempted sexually, we don’t have to give in. After all, most people exchange sacred vows when they get married. Their vows include something like, “I take you to be my wife/husband – for better or worse, richer or poorer, in sickness and health, in adversity and prosperity. I vow to be true and loyal to you as long as we both shall live.” God expects people to keep their vows.

Solomon tells his son that the LORD sees all we do (v21). He rewards the faithful, and disciplines the disobedient. Unfortunately, some people
are ignorant of or disregard Solomon’s words. Rather than avoiding sexual sin they jump headlong into it, and find themselves captured and held by their own sin, dying because of their foolishness, and committing great folly (vv22,23).

The good news is that many men and women will heed Solomon’s words. In the end they will rejoice because they saved themselves from heartache and trouble.

Today the stakes in sexual sin are high – perhaps even higher than in Solomon’s day. Those who fall, risk a myriad of venereal diseases, AIDS and death. To avoid such calamities a person must exercise discretion. He must put his mind before his emotions. This includes avoiding any form of pornography, because it only fuels sensual thoughts and behavior.

Those who hear and obey Solomon’s words will be glad he did.

**Reflection**

1. Why is sexual sin so tempting?

2. Have you ever known anyone who gave into sexual sin and lived to regret it? Explain.

3. What can people do today to keep themselves from falling prey to sexual temptation?

4. Is there anything you need to change in your life to keep yourself pure?
In Proverbs chapter six, Solomon covers several topics that start with “S” – Surety, Sluggards, Seven Things God Hates, Stealing, and Sexual Sin.

**Surety** is when one person agrees to become financially responsible for another person’s debt. Scripture strongly warns against this. When I was a new 2nd Lieutenant in the Army, one of my soldiers came to me and said the bank would not give him a car loan unless he had a co-signer. Because the soldier seemed reliable, I co-signed his loan. By doing so, I obligated myself to pay the debt if he defaulted. At the time, I did not know what the Bible said about surety. Fortunately, the soldier paid off his loan. Others who co-signed were not so fortunate. Since learning the dangers of surety, I no longer co-sign loans, not even for family. If someone has a legitimate financial need, I give money if I can. If I don’t have the resources, I don’t give. By setting this standard I believe I have saved myself from financial grief. Regarding “surety” Solomon says, “My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger, if you have been snared with the words of your mouth...do this then, my son, and deliver yourself...go humble yourself, and talk to your neighbor...give no sleep to your eyes, deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter’s hand...” (vv1-5). In other words, a person who has become surety, must try to free himself from his misguided obligation. Better yet, don’t become surety in the first place!

Solomon next moves to the subject of **sluggards**. This topic fits well with surety. Sometimes lazy people want others to co-sign for them because they have failed to work hard or have squandered their resources. In verses six through eight Solomon says, “Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise, which, having no chief, officer
or ruler, prepares her food in the summer and gathers her provision in the harvest.” Sluggards can learn a lot from ants. Ants have no leader, yet work diligently. Solomon goes on to warn lazy people in verses nine through eleven, “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and your poverty will come in like a vagabond, and your need like an armed man.” Laziness clothes people with rags. Rather than working hard to gain wealth, some people pursue dishonest gain (vv 12-15). They have perverse mouths and devious ways. Solomon calls their worthless and wicked, and says their sin will eventually destroy them.

Verses sixteen through nineteen list seven things that are an abomination to God. These things often mark the lives of wicked people. “There are six things which the LORD hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to Him; haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that run rapidly to evil, a false witness who utters lies, and one who spreads strife among brothers.” Of all the things God hates, notice that pride is listed first. When people are full of pride, the other negatives naturally follow. To help ensure that his son does not take part in the things God hates, Solomon tells him to observe his father’s commandments, and not to forsake his mother’s teaching (vv20,21). These principles must be kept close to his heart. They will guide him, watch over him, give him counsel, and provide light to his life (vv22-23).

As in chapter five, Solomon addresses the subject of sexual sin. He warns that the adulteress’ tongue is smooth. A person must not desire her beauty. She can reduce a person to poverty. She hunts for the precious life (vv 24-29). Solomon then asks, “Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not get burned?” (v27). The obvious answer is “No! If a man plays with fire, he will get burned.” Solomon goes on to say “So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; whoever touches her will not go unpunished” (v29).

At this point, Solomon inserts the subject of stealing. Stealing ties in with adultery because adultery equates to stealing another person’s
spouse. Regarding stealing food, Solomon says, “Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry; but when he is found, he must repay sevenfold; he must give all the substance of his house” (vv30,31). The penalty for stealing food is harsh, but the consequences of adultery are devastating. Solomon says the one who commits adultery lacks sense. He brings self-destruction. He causes wounds and disgrace. His reproach will not go away. He enrages the innocent spouse who may take revenge (vv32-35). Adultery must be avoided at all costs.

Solomon covers many critical topics in chapter six. His wisdom is not only practical, it preserves the lives of those who read and heed its timeless truth.

**Reflection**

1. Why is it dangerous to become surety for another’s debt?

2. Do you know any sluggards? What has their laziness cost them?

3. Explain why God hates each of the seven things mentioned in verses sixteen through nineteen?

4. After addressing adultery extensively in chapter five, why would Solomon mention it again in chapter six?

5. Are there any changes you need to make in your life based on the material from Proverbs chapter six?
Proverbs 7
“Allure and Danger”

If a biblical writer repeatedly stresses a topic, that topic must be important. So it is with adultery and sexual sin. Solomon touches on it in chapters two, five, six, and again in seven. Here he devotes the entire chapter.

Why is the subject of sexual purity so important? It is critical because of the potential negative impact on individuals, families and society. If people avoid sexual sin, they avoid huge problems. If they fall into sexual sin, they may inadvertently destroy themselves and others in the process.

To re-introduce this vital topic, Solomon reiterates the importance of wisdom. He says, “My son, keep my words and treasure my commandments within you. Keep my commandments and live, and my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, ‘You are my sister,’ and call understanding your intimate friend; that they may keep you from an adulteress, from the foreigner who flatters with her words (vv1-7).”

Next, rather than spouting theological truth, Solomon tells a story. He shares about seeing a man seduced by a harlot. “For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the naïve, and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her corner; and he takes the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness. And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She is boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home; she is now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner. So she seizes him and kisses him and with a brazen face
she says to him; ‘I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows. Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I have sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come let us drink our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, at the full moon he will come home (vv6-20).”

Solomon goes on to say, “With her many persuasions she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life (vv21-23).” Solomon then reemphasizes the importance of listening to his words. “Now therefore, my sons, listen to me, and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol (the place of the dead), descending to the chambers of death.” (vv24-27)

There are many truths in this chapter besides the obvious one that adultery is dangerous. First, adultery has great allure. It can easily pull a person into its deadly web. Rather than fleeing from temptation, the young man stopped and listened to the woman’s persuasive words. Soon he was captivated and on his way to self destruction. If we seek sexual sin in any form, we need to realize that we become our own worst enemy.

Second, adultery can happen with seemingly religious people. The woman in the story told the young man she had just paid her vows. She had made a peace offering at the temple. It seems incredible that anyone could make an offering to God, then turn around the same day and commit adultery, but this is exactly what happened. The woman’s relationship with God was shallow at best. All of us need to know that
just because we go to church, we are not immune from falling headlong into sexual sin. We must be on guard at all times.

Third, the future consequences of adultery are often unseen. We are not told how the young man was destroyed, only that he was (v23). Perhaps word got back to the woman’s husband and he subsequently killed the young man. Perhaps the young man contracted a disease and died. Perhaps he was married, and his own wife divorced him when she discovered his sin. If the naïve young man had known that his actions would cost him his life, he undoubtedly would have made a different choice.

We must not take the bait of sexual sin, no matter how tempting. By remaining pure, we save ourselves from untold heartache. How are you doing?

**Reflection**

1. In your opinion why does Solomon spend so much time addressing the subject of adultery and sexual sin?

2. Why is storytelling powerful when trying to make an important point? How did Solomon apply this technique in Proverbs chapter seven?

3. What practical advice does Solomon give in verse twenty five on how to avoid falling prey to adultery?

4. What steps have you taken or should you take to avoid becoming a casualty of sexual sin?
Proverbs 8
“Wisdom Personified”

Here is one way to define the terms knowledge, understanding and wisdom:

**Knowledge** – “Knowing the facts about something.” For example, a person might know that his own personal health can be enhanced through regular exercise.

**Understanding** – “Knowing how the facts apply.” Understanding goes one step beyond basic knowledge. For example, knowledge is knowing that health is enhanced through regular exercise. Understanding is knowing the specific exercises one needs to do to enhance his own health. These exercises must be tailored to his age, ability, and fitness level.

**Wisdom** – “Applying the facts to life.” For a person to be wise, he must go beyond knowledge (knowing the facts) and understanding (knowing how the facts apply). He must apply them to his life. Regarding exercise, he must implement an exercise program that helps him achieve a greater level of personal health.

Essentially every area of life requires wisdom. It is not enough to know raw truth, or even how the truth applies. It is only when a person actually takes knowledge and understanding, and integrates them into his life that he is truly wise.

Proverbs chapter eight is all about wisdom. It begins with, “Does not wisdom call, and understanding lift up her voice? On top of the heights beside the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gates at the opening to the city, at the entrance of the doors, she cries out; ‘To you, O men I call, and my voice to the sons of men” (vv1-4).
Solomon says that wisdom is everywhere, crying out to all who will listen. Wisdom wants people to receive the great benefits she offers. Solomon has wisdom crying out like a person. In essence, wisdom is “Personified.”

But what does wisdom offer? Here are a few benefits - noble and right things, truth, and righteousness (vv6-8). Her rewards are better than silver, gold or precious jewels (vv10,11,19). She dwells with prudence (careful living), and discretion (making wise decisions) (v12).

Next, wisdom shares a profound truth, “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.” Hate is a strong word. It means to loathe something. Wise people must hate pride, arrogance, evil, and perverted speech.

Wisdom is indeed powerful and beneficial. By wisdom rulers govern (vv15,16). Wisdom loves those who love it, and those who seek wisdom find it (v17). People who choose wisdom will be blessed with riches, honor, wealth and righteousness (v18, 20-21). Wisdom is better than pure gold and choicest silver (v19). The LORD, Himself, created wisdom and used it from the very beginning as a master workman in creating the natural world (vv22-31).

Wisdom is what all of us need if we hope to please God. The chapter ends with the following words, “Now therefore, O sons, listen to me, for blessed are they who keep my ways. Heed instruction and be wise and do not neglect it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life and obtains honor from the LORD. But he who sins against me injures himself; all those who hate me love death” (vv32-36).

Do you want a successful and prosperous life filled with God’s blessings? Then choose wisdom! Ask God to help you be wise. Start your day in God’s Word, the Bible. As you read, study, and meditate, ask God to show you the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom He has
for you. Ask Him to help you apply His truth to life. Ask Him to help you avoid life’s pitfalls. Ask Him to teach you from others’ mistakes. Ask Him to help you make right choices. If you do these things, God will guide and direct your paths.

How are you doing?

**Reflection**

1. How are knowledge, understanding, and wisdom defined in this devotional? How else might you define them?

2. Give examples of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in the following areas:
   - spending time with your spouse
   - child discipline
   - raising godly children
   - personal spiritual growth
   - personal finances
   - having a hard-work ethic

3. Do you agree with the following statement – In the world there are many people who know what they should do (knowledge), and even how to do it (understanding), but sadly there are fewer who actually do it (wisdom) on a regular basis. Explain.

4. In what areas of your own life do you need more knowledge, understanding, and wisdom? What will you do today to bring more of God’s knowledge, understanding and wisdom into your life?
Proverbs 9
“Being Wise for Yourself”

Proverbs chapter eight “personifies wisdom.” Chapter nine continues this same theme.

The chapter begins “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table; she has sent out her maidens, she calls from the tops of the heights of the city: ‘Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!’ To him who lacks understanding she says, ‘Come, eat of my food, and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding’” (Pr 9:1-6). Wisdom’s house has seven pillars (columns). It’s a grand house. The number “seven” speaks of perfection. The house is full of food and mixed wine. The table is set, and maidens have been sent out to invite all who will come. The naïve and those lacking understanding are especially welcome. By coming and learning, they can forsake their folly and live.

Next, Wisdom shares, “He who corrects a scoffer gets dishonor for himself, and he who reproves a wicked man gets insults for himself. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give instructions to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase his learning” (v7-9). Correcting scoffers (those who ridicule and mock others) or wicked people (those who do evil things), often results in a very negative response.

I’ll never forget an incident that happened at tennis camp when I was twelve years old. It illustrates what happens when scoffers are corrected. The camp was a fantastic experience. As campers, we not only played tons of tennis, we also did chores around the camp. One day, four of us were assigned to clean the men’s bathroom. The bathroom was large
with many sinks, toilets and urinals. Instead of cleaning it, we goofed off. When the head counselor unexpectedly walked in to check on us, he saw what was going on (or not going on), and gave us a few words of wisdom. One of the campers on the cleaning detail was an arrogant scoffer. He mocked counselors behind their backs. As soon as the head counselor turned to leave, the scoffer began a little dance with obscene gestures directed at the counselor. What the scoffer didn’t realize was that the counselor looked back through a crack between the door and the door jam. Upon seeing the dance and obscene gestures, the counselor re-entered the room and instructed the scoffer to follow him. The camper was subsequently sent home. The rest of us heeded the counselor’s instructions and finished cleaning the bathroom.

From the incident I learned two valuable lessons. First, scoffers mock those who correct them. Second, scoffing is a really bad idea. How much better it is to be wise and listen to correction! When people correct us, they do it for our own good. Rather than rebelling, we should thank them. If we listen and heed their instruction, we will become better people.

The writer of Proverbs goes on to say, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (v10). If a person wants to be wise, he must start with a deep reverence for God. As he seeks God’s wisdom, he becomes a wise man.

Next, Wisdom shares an important benefit, “For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you (v11).” Wise people tend to live longer. Verse twelve states what is arguably one of the most important truths in the entire passage, “If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.” In other words, wise people benefit from their wise decisions, while fools suffer from their foolish ones. This reality should be a strong motivation to live wisely.
Finally, the writer of Proverbs applies wisdom to the area of sexual purity. Only naïve or foolish people entangle themselves in sexual sin (vv13-17). They may think that “stolen water” (sex outside of marriage) is sweet, but sexual sin often destroys those who participate in it (v18).

The question remains, will we choose to be wise, and reap God’s blessing, or will we be foolish and suffer at our own hands?

**Reflection**

1. In your opinion, is wisdom available to everyone? Why or why not?

2. Describe Wisdom’s house (Pr 9:1-6). Why is Wisdom so eager for people to stop in?

3. According to Proverbs 9:7-9 what happens when someone corrects a scoffer or a wicked person? What happens when they correct a wise man? Have you ever seen these responses in day-to-day life?

4. According to Proverbs 9:10 what is the beginning of wisdom? Explain?

5. What benefits come from “wise living” according to Proverbs 9:11?

6. Explain Proverbs 9:12 in your own words. Can you give an example from your own life?

7. Describe the scene in Proverbs 9:13-18. Why must a person learn to be wise regarding sexual choices?
Proverbs 10
“Which Person are You?”

Referring to false prophets, Jesus declared “you will know them by their fruits” (Mt 7:16). In other words the fruit (the words and deeds) of their lives reveal who they are. This is true for all people. The things that people do and say, speak volumes about who they are. The lives of righteous/wise people are marked with righteousness and wisdom. The lives of wicked/foolish people are be marked with wickedness and foolishness.

In chapter ten, the writer of Proverbs contrasts the righteous/wise and the wicked/foolish. These descriptions not only help people see which category they fall into, but the contrast also shows God’s attitude toward, and the fate of these lifestyles.

The Righteous and Wise Person
- a wise son makes his father glad – v1
- righteousness delivers from death – v2
- God will not allow the righteous to hunger – v3
- the hand of the diligent makes rich – v4
- he who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely – v5
- blessings are on the head of the righteous – v6
- the memory of the righteous is blessed – v7
- the wise of heart will receive commands – v8
- the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life – v11
- on the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found – v13
- wise men store up knowledge – v14
- the wages of the righteous is life – v16
- he is on the path of life who heeds instruction – v17
- he who restrains his lips is wise – v19
- the tongue of the righteous is as choice silver – v20
- the lips of the righteous feed many – v21
- being wise is like sport to a man of understanding – v23
- the desire of the righteous will be granted – v24
- the righteous has an everlasting foundation – v25
- the fear of the Lord prolongs life – v27
- the hope of the righteous is gladness – v28
- the way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright – v29
- the righteous will never be shaken – v30
- the mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom – v31
- the lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable – v32

The Wicked and Foolish Person
- a foolish son is a grief to his mother – v1
- ill gotten gain does not profit – v2
- God rejects the craving of the wicked – v3
- poor is he who works with a negligent hand – v4
- he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully – v5
- the mouth of the wicked conceals violence – vv6,11
- the name of the wicked will rot – v7
- a babbling fool will be ruined – v8
- a rod is for the back of him who lacks understanding – v13
- with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand – v14
- the income of the foolish is punishment – v16
- he who ignores reproof goes astray – v17
- he who spreads slander is a fool – v18
- the heart of the wicked is worth little – v20
- fools die for lack of understanding – v21
- doing wickedness is like sport to a fool – v23
- what the wicked fears will come upon him – v24
- when the whirlwind passes, the wicked is no more – v25
- the years of the wicked will be shortened – v27
- the expectation of the wicked perishes – v28
- the way of the Lord is ruin to the workers of iniquity – v29
- the wicked will not dwell in the land – v30
- the perverted tongue will be cut out – v31
- the mouth of the wicked brings forth what is perverted – v32
Proverbs chapter ten also has some general principles that make perfect sense.

- *He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out* – v9
- *Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all transgressions* – v12
- *It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it* – v22

There is no doubt from this chapter that God sides with the righteous and wise, and opposes the wicked and foolish. The good news is that each person chooses which path to follow. People can be wise and receive God’s blessing, or they can be wicked and foolish, and suffer the consequences. Which path are you on?

**Reflection**

1. Is there anything about the righteous or wicked that especially stands out to you in this chapter? Why?

2. According to this chapter, what are some of the characteristics of righteous/wise people? Which of these have you seen in the lives of others?

3. According to this chapter, what are some of the characteristics of the wicked/foolish people? Which of these have you seen?

4. What verses reveal God’s attitude toward the two contrasting lifestyles?

5. Based on this chapter, which lifestyle marks your life? Do your attitudes, words and actions give evidence of righteousness and wisdom, or wickedness and foolishness? Ask God to help you be wise.
Proverbs 11
“Benefits and Liabilities”

Chapter eleven of Proverbs continues the contrast between the righteous and wicked. As a person reads and re-reads the chapter, two things become crystal clear: First, great benefits await those who live righteously. Second, living wickedly is a huge liability, and leads to trouble.

The Benefits of Righteousness
- *the integrity of the upright will guide them* – v3
- *righteousness delivers from death* – v4
- *the righteousness of the blameless will smooth his way* – v5
- *the righteousness of the upright will deliver them* – v6
- *the righteous is delivered from trouble* – v8
- *through knowledge the righteous will be delivered* – v9
- *by the blessing of the upright a city is exalted* – v11
- *he who sows righteousness gets a true reward* – v18
- *he who is constantly righteous will attain life* – v19
- *the descendants of the righteous will be delivered* – v21
- *the desire of the righteous is good* – v23
- *he who diligently seeks good seeks favor* – v27
- *the righteous will flourish* – v28
- *the fruit of the righteous is a tree of life (they win souls)* – v30
- *the righteous will be rewarded in the earth* – v31

The Liabilities of Wickedness
- *the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them* – v3
- *the wicked will fall by his own wickedness* – v5
- *the treacherous will be caught by their own greed* – v6
- *the wicked receives trouble* – v8
- *by the mouth of the wicked a city is torn down* – v11
- the cruel man harms himself – v17
- the wicked earns deceptive wages – v18
- he who pursues evil will bring about his own death – v19
- evil men will be punished – v21
- the wicked can expect wrath – v23
- he who seeks evil finds it – v27
- he who troubles his own house will inherit wind – v29
- the foolish will be the servant to the wisehearted – v29
- the wicked and the sinner will get what is coming to them – v31

Verse ten is a good summary regarding society’s view of righteous and wicked people, “When it goes well with the righteous, the city rejoices. And when the wicked perish, there is joyful shouting.” Verse twenty is a good summary of how God views wicked and righteous people, “The perverse in heart are an abomination to the Lord, but the blameless in their walk are His delight.”

Besides contrasting the wicked and the righteous, Proverbs eleven contains truth on a number of other subjects.

**How to Treat Your Neighbor**
Verses twelve and thirteen give great advice on how to treat a neighbor, “He who despises his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding keeps silent. He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy conceals a matter.” If you have a problem with a neighbor, don’t speak badly about him to other neighbors. Instead, work out the problem. No one likes a trash-talker, even if what he says is true.

**Sound Financial Advise**
Verse fifteen warns against guaranteeing someone else’s monetary debt. Doing so can bring financial ruin if the borrower defaults on his loan. “He who is guarantor for a stranger will surely suffer for it, but he who hates being a guarantor is secure.” Although guaranteeing someone’s financial note is dangerous, God’s people are called to be generous. Verses twenty four to twenty six make this clear, “There is one who
scatters, and yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered. He who withholds grain, the people will curse him, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.” There are times we have what others need. If we are generous and share our assets, those with whom we share may return the favor in our time of need.

Here’s one last financial tidbit, “Ruthless men attain riches” (v16). Undoubtedly a person can become rich through ruthlessness, but in the end “what goes around, comes around.” Ruthless people usually get what they deserve.

The wisdom contained in Proverbs eleven is profound. Don’t miss the opportunity to make it your own!

**Reflection**

1. What are some of the benefits of the righteous, and liabilities of the wicked mentioned in this chapter? Which benefits or liabilities have you observed in everyday life? Have you experienced any of them?

2. Summarize the insights from this chapter about how to treat a neighbor. Have you ever violated or obeyed this truth? Explain.

3. Summarize the financial advice given in this chapter. Have you experienced any of it? Explain.

4. What have you learned from chapter eleven?
Proverbs 12
“Righteous and Wicked People”

Proverbs chapter twelve reveals even more contrasts between righteous and wicked people. It is obvious that God wants us to have a clear understanding of the differences between these two categories. Seeing the blessings associated with righteousness and the problems associated with wickedness, should motivate folks to seek the former.

Truth about Righteous People
- a good man will obtain favor from the Lord – v2
- the root of the righteous will not be moved – v3
- the thoughts of the righteous are just – v5
- the mouth of the righteous will deliver them – v6
- the house of the righteous will stand – v7
- the righteous man has regard for the life of his animal – v10
- the root of the righteous yields fruit – v12
- the righteous will escape from trouble – v13
- wise men listens to counsel – v15
- prudent man conceal dishonor – v16
- the tongue of the wise brings healing – v18
- no harm befalls the righteous - v21
- a prudent man conceals knowledge – v23
- the righteous is a guide to his neighbor – v26
- in the way of righteousness there is life and no death – v28

Truth about Wicked/Evil People
- evil people will be condemned by the Lord – v2
- a man will not be established by wickedness – v3
- the counsels of the wicked are deceitful – v5
- the words of the wicked lie in wait for blood – v6
- the wicked are overthrown and are no more – v7
- a man with a perverse mind will be despised – v8
- the compassion of the wicked person is cruel – v10
- the wicked man desires the booty of evil men – v12
- an evil man is ensnared by the transgression of his lips – v13
- the way of a fool is right in his own eyes – 15
- a fool’s anger is known at once –v16
- a false witness is deceitful – v17
- deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil – v20
- the wicked are filled with trouble – v21
- the heart of fools proclaims folly – v23
- the way of the wicked leads neighbors astray – v26

**General Truth**
Not only does chapter twelve contrast the righteous and wicked, it also contains great, general truth.

**Marriage**
Verse four stresses the blessing of having an excellent wife, “An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him is like rottenness in his bones.”

**Humility**
Verse nine states, “Better is he who is lightly esteemed and has a servant than he who honors himself and lacks bread.” Some people like to shine the spotlight on themselves. God’s advice is simple, “Don’t!”

**The Importance of Words and Deeds**
Verse fourteen states, “A man will be satisfied with good by the fruit of his words, and the deeds of a man’s hands will return to him.” Do you want satisfaction in life? Then choose your words carefully. The things you say can encourage or enrage others, build them up or tear them down, make a friend or fuel an enemy. Words are powerful! Verses eighteen and nineteen confirm, “There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. Truthful lips will be established forever, but a lying tongue is only for a
moment.” Verse twenty-five further states, “Anxiety in a man’s heart weighs it down, but a good word makes it glad.”

Deeds, like words, are equally important. The second half of verse fourteen states, “The deeds of a man’s hands will return to him.” What we “do” is as important as what we “say”. How a person treats others will often determine how they treat him. A person’s good words should be supported by his good deeds. If a person wants a life full of God’s blessings, he must carefully choose his words and actions.

**Hard Work**

Nothing good comes easy. Hard work is an essential ingredient to success. Verse twenty-four states, “The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor.” Hard work helps people rise to positions of leadership and influence. Laziness (the slack hand) keeps people at the lowest level. Verse twenty-seven confirms the importance of diligence, “The precious possession of a man is diligence.” Diligence is precious because it brings great benefit.

**Reflection**

1. What are the benefits of the righteous and the liabilities of the wicked mentioned in this chapter?

2. Explain verse nine in your own words.

3. Why are words and deeds so important? What do the following verses teach - Proverbs 12:14,18,19, 25?

4. What does verse twenty-four teach about hard work? How does verse twenty-seven apply?

5. How are you doing in the areas of words, deeds, hard work, and diligence?
Proverbs 13
“More Contrasts”

Although Proverbs chapter thirteen touches on a number of other topics, it continues the theme of contrasting the righteous and wicked. Righteous people are also called wise, diligent, faithful and prudent. Wicked people are referred to as evil, scoffers, sinners, insolent, treacherous, and foolish.

More Truth about the Righteous
- a wise son accepts his father’s discipline – v1
- the righteous hate falsehood – v5
- righteousness guards people – v6
- righteousness brings joy – v9
- wise people receive counsel – v10
- wise teaching brings life – v14
- understanding brings favor – v15
- prudent people act with knowledge – v16
- faithful messengers bring healing – v17
- he who walks with wise men will be wise – v20
- the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity – v21
- righteous people have enough to satisfy them – v25

More Truth about the Wicked
- scoffers don’t listen to those who try to correct them – v1
- treacherous people like violence – v2
- wicked people act disgustingly and shamefully – v5
- wickedness subverts a person – v6
- the lamp of the wicked will go out – v9
- insolence causes strife – v10
- treachery brings hardship – v15
- fools display folly – v16
- wicked messengers fall into adversity – v17
- it is against a fools nature to turn away from evil – v19
- those who hang around fools will suffer harm – v20
- adversity follows sinners – v21
- the stomach of the wicked is in need – v25
In addition to addressing the ongoing themes of righteousness and wickedness, Proverbs chapter thirteen reveals other important truth.

**Right Speech**
Verse three states, “The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.” Controlling one’s speech is critical. Right words can calm a tense situation. Wrong words stir up trouble. Wise people choose their words carefully. Foolish people blurt out whatever comes to mind, and suffer for it.

**Diligence**
A diligent person is careful and industrious. He learns to work hard and smart. Lazy people are often careless and slack. Proverbs 13:4 states, “The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the soul of the diligent is made fat.” Lazy people want good things, but their desires often remain unfulfilled. Diligent people, on the other hand, find satisfaction when they achieve their goals through hard work. How much better to be diligent and satisfied, than lazy and in want!

**Financial Wisdom**
Several verses in Proverbs thirteen address finances. Verse seven states, “There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; another pretends to be poor, but has great wealth.” You can’t always tell who is rich by outward appearance. Many rich people live and dress modestly, while some poorer people put on airs.

Verse eight states, “The ransom of a man’s life is his wealth, but the poor hears no rebuke.” Having a lot of money is helpful if a person is kidnapped, but poor people don’t have to worry about being abducted.

Verse thirteen stresses the importance of gaining wealth through legal means, “Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it.”
Verse eighteen stresses the financial dangers of neglecting discipline, “Poverty and shame will come to him who neglects discipline, but he who regards reproof will be honored.”

Verse twenty-two stresses the importance of leaving an inheritance for grandchildren, “A good man leaves an inheritance to his children’s children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.”

**Hope**
Verse twelve states, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” Verse nineteen adds, “Desire realized is sweet to the soul.”

**Heeding God’s Word**
Verse thirteen warns, “The one who despises the word will be in debt to it, but the one who fears the commandment will be rewarded.”

**Child Discipline**
Verse twenty-four stresses the importance of child discipline, “He who withholds his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him diligently.” Love and discipline are closely connected.

**Reflection**
1. Explain verses ten, twelve and thirteen in your own words. Give real-life examples that illustrate these truths?

2. Have you ever experienced the truth of verse twenty? Explain.

3. Can you give an example of the truth contained in verse three?

4. What truth from chapter thirteen stands out most in your mind?
Proverbs 14
“Fools, Foolishness and Other Truth”

Proverbs chapter fourteen has much to say about fools and foolishness. The Hebrew words for fool mean silly, stupid and perverse. In other words, fools act in perverse, silly, and stupid (unwise) ways. What they do and say may seem funny, but in the end it often results in very unpleasant consequences.

Truth about Fools and Foolishness
- a foolish woman tears down her house with her own hands – v1
- in the mouth of the foolish is a rod for his back – v3
- leave the presence of a fool, or you will lack discernment – v7
- fools are deceived by their own foolishness – v9
- fools make fun of sin – v9
- fools are arrogant and careless – v16
- quick-tempered people act foolishly and exalt folly – v17, 29
- the naïve inherit foolishness – v18
- the folly of fools is foolishness – v24

I remember some kids in my elementary school that “played the fool”. They did and said silly and perverse things to impress fellow students. They made fun of teachers and mocked school rules. We all laughed at their antics, but more than once, their behavior landed them in the principal’s office where they received some very unpleasant discipline.

Wisdom is the opposite of foolishness and here is what is said about it.

Truth about Wise People and Wisdom
- a wise woman builds her house – v1
- the lips of the wise protect them – v3
- wise people understand the way they are going – v8
- the sensible (wise) person is crowned with knowledge – v18
- the crown of the wise is riches – v24
The “Fear of the Lord”
Verse two states, “He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord, but he who is devious in his ways despises Him.” Fear of the Lord motivates people to righteous living. Those who despise the Lord, live any way they want, and often suffer for it. Verses twenty-six and twenty-seven give more benefits of fearing (respecting) God, “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and his children will have refuge. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death.”

Financial Wisdom
Verse four reveals important financial truth, “Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much revenue comes by the strength of the ox.”

The Condition of the Heart
Verses ten states, “The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger does not share its joy.” Verse thirteen adds, “Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, and the end of joy may be grief.” Verse thirty reveals a key to heart health, “A tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion (envy and jealousy) is rottenness to the bones.”

The Way of Death
Verse twelve states, “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” If we want to avoid harm, we need to be sure we do what God says is right, rather than what we think is right.

Poor and Rich People
Verses twenty and twenty-one reveal the importance of being gracious to poor people. “The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many. He who despises his neighbor sins, but happy is he who is gracious to the poor.” Verse thirty one stresses the importance
of not oppressing the poor, “He who oppresses the poor taunts his Maker, but he who is gracious to the needy honors Him.”

Hard Work
Verse twenty-three states, “In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” Hard work pays off!

A Truthful Witness
Verse twenty-five stresses the importance of being a truthful witness, “A truthful witness saves lives, but he who utters lies is treacherous.”

Contrasting the Righteous and Wicked
- a trustworthy witness will not lie, but a false witness utters lies – v5
- the house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the upright will flourish – v11
- the wise man is cautious and turns away from evil – v16
- the evil will bow down before the good – v19
- those who devise evil go astray. Those who devise good receive kindness – v22
- the wicked is thrust down, but the righteous has a refuge when he dies – v32
- righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people – v34

Reflection

1. What does Proverbs chapter fourteen teach about fools in verses: 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18? Describe a foolish incident you know about. What did the foolish person do, and what were the consequences?

2. Describe a wise thing someone did. What was the consequence?

3. What is the “Fear of the Lord” and what are the benefits of fearing God?

4. What do verse 20, 21, and 30 teach about poor and rich people?

5. What truth covered in this devotional stands out in your mind? Why?
Proverbs 15
“*The Power of Words…”*  

**The Power of Words**
The words we use can heal or hurt, soothe or sting, comfort or cause trouble. Proverbs 15:1 states, “*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh words stirs up anger.*” How easy it is to lash out during a tense situation. Instead, Christians must learn the art of “gentle answers.”

Proverbs 15:2 continues, “*The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable, but the mouth of fools spouts folly.*” A wise person works hard to make the knowledge he shares acceptable to the hearer. He weighs his words carefully. Proverbs 15:28 states, “*The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.*” Pondering how to answer means engaging one’s mind before engaging one’s mouth. This takes self-control and sensitivity. When a person thinks before speaking, he can avoid using words that make a tense situation worse. Instead his words can bring peace and reconciliation. Proverbs 15:23 states, “*A man has joy in an apt answer, and how delightful is a timely word!*” Right words at the right time are right on! Proverbs 15:26 confirms the value of pleasant speech, “*pleasant words are pure.*”

To avoid conflict, some people sacrifice the truth. “Peace at all costs” is their motto. This is not God’s communication plan. Proverbs 15:7 states, “*The lips of the wise spread knowledge, but the hearts of fools are not so.*” God wants His people to be the spreaders of knowledge, but they must do it carefully. Proverbs 15:4 stresses, “*A soothing tongue is a tree of life, but perversion in it crushes the spirit.*” We must work hard at using words that sooth the soul rather than crush the spirit.

Speaking gently and sensitively is not easy, but it can be done with practice, great thought, and much prayer. Many times it is a matter of
keeping ones emotions in check. Proverbs 15:18 says, “A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but the slow to anger calms a dispute.” Let us learn to be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger (Js 1:19).

**Discipline and Reproof**
Chapter fifteen also touches on discipline and reproof. The way a person accepts or rejects discipline reveals much about him and his future.
- A fool rejects his father’s discipline – v5
- He who regards reproof is sensible – v5
- He who hates reproof will die – v10
- A scoffer does not love one who reproves him – v12
- He whose ear listens to reproof will dwell among the wise – v31
- He who neglects discipline despises himself - v32
- He who listens to reproof acquires understanding – v32

**Financial Wisdom**
Chapter fifteen contains nuggets of financial truth. “Great wealth is in the house of the righteous, but trouble is in the income of the wicked” (v6). Although the wealth in the house of the righteous may be monetary, it may also be peace and joy. Proverbs 15:16 declares, “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and turmoil with it.” Often, those who view life as a quest for money, do whatever it takes to make money. They sometimes get involved in shady business practices and wind up hurting themselves. Proverbs 15:27 confirms, “He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.”

**The Omnipresence and Omniscience of God**
Simply stated, God is everywhere and knows everything. Proverbs 15:3 states, “The eyes of the Lord are in everyplace, watching the evil and the good.” Verse eleven confirms, “Sheol and Abaddon lie open before the Lord, how much more the hearts of men.” God knows everything about us. He knows our innermost thoughts and feelings. This should motivate us to live for Him. We can’t pull the wool over His eyes!
Contrasting the Righteous and Wicked
- The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but the prayer of the upright is His delight. The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, but He loves one who pursues righteousness - vv8,9
- The Lord is far from the wicked, but He hears the prayer of the righteous – v29

Truth about Joy
“A Joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken” (v13). How good it is to have a joyful heart! Verse fifteen confirms, “All the days of the afflicted are bad, but a cheerful heart has a continual feast.” Verse thirty adds, “Bright eyes gladden the heart; good news puts fat on the bones.”

The Fear of God… Honor and Humility
The chapter ends on a profound note, “The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility.” Do you want to be wise? Then fear the Lord. Do you want honor? Be humble.

Reflection
1. What is taught about “the power of words” in verses 1, 2, 28, 23, 26, 7, 4 and 18? How have you experienced words that hurt or heal?

2. What do the following verses teach about discipline: 5, 10, 12, 31, 32?

3. What do verses 3 and 11 teach about God? What impact should this have on your life?

4. What is taught about joy in verse 13, 15 and 30?

5. What truth in this chapter stands out to you? Why?
Proverbs 16
“Kings, Plans, and Pride”

All about Kings
The New Testament teaches that God establishes governmental authority, “... For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God” Romans 13:1. It is God’s desire that those in authority (kings, presidents, rulers…) exercise their power in righteousness. Several verses in Proverbs sixteen address this topic. Verse ten states, “A divine decision is in the lips of the king; his mouth should not err in judgment.” Verse twelve explains, “It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness.” Verse thirteen declares, “Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved.” Kings aren’t looking for people to flatter them, but for those who will tell them the truth. Verse fourteen speaks of the dangers of making a ruler angry, “The fury of a king is like messengers of death, but a wise man will appease it.” Wise people know how to stay on a king’s good side. Verse fifteen reveals, “In the light of a king’s face is life, and his favor is like a cloud with spring rain.” If a king smiles, the person he smiles at has his favor.

The Ways and Plans of Man
Chapter sixteen says this about the ways and plans of man. “The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord” (v1). Men make their plans, but God gives the power to articulate and accomplish those plans. “The mind of man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps” (v9). Men make plans, but God directs their paths through various circumstances. “All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the Lord weighs the motives” (v2). People justify their plans and actions, but God examines their motives. “Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established” (v3). If a person seeks to please God, his plans will be on solid footing. Verses twenty-five and seventeen stress the importance of avoiding evil and following
God, “The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who watches his way preserves his life” (v17). “There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (v25).

The Dangers of Pride
“Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; assuredly, he will not be unpunished” (v5). “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling. It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud” (vv18,19). Arrogance is abhorrent to God, and pride can bring disastrous results. How much better it is to be humble!

Financial Wisdom
“Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice” (v8). “How much better it is to get wisdom than gold, and to get understanding is to be chosen above silver” (v16). Money pales in comparison to righteousness, wisdom and understanding.

The Persuasive Tongue
“The wise in heart will be called understanding, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness” (v21). “The heart of the wise instructs his mouth and adds persuasiveness to his lips. Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (vv23,24). Words well-chosen are great persuaders. On the other hand, perverse words stir up trouble and ruin friendships. “A worthless man digs up evil, while his words are like scorching fire. A perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends” (vv27,28).

Total Honesty
“A just balance and scales belong to the Lord; all the weights of the bag are His concern” (v11). When weighing goods for sale, some merchants use false weights, thus cheating their customers. God condemns such dishonesty. He wants honest businesspeople.
Paying Attention to God’s Word
“He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the Lord” (v20). God reveals Himself through His Word, the Bible, and a wise person studies and heeds biblical teaching! Verse twenty-two confirms, “Understanding is a fountain of life to the one who has it.”

Keeping Anger under Control
“He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a city” (v32). Controlling ones anger has immense value. It is better than might or victory over an enemy.

More of God’s Wisdom
The chapter includes other insightful wisdom – How hunger affects a worker - v26, the dangers of violence - v29, winking and perversity - v30, God’s view of gray hair - v31, and casting lots - v33.

Reflection
1. What do verses 10, 12, 14, and 15 teach about those in authority? How have you seen any of this truth verified in the world today?

2. Have you ever observed the truth of verse twenty-five in someone’s life? What happened?

3. Have you ever observed the truth of verse eighteen firsthand? How?

4. Explain verse eleven in your own words. Why is honesty important to God?

5. What truths in this chapter stand out most to you? Why?