



GOD'S WISDOM IS

UNKNOWN

PROVERBS SERIES STARTS 20 MAY

Integrated sermon series, bible studies
and daily reading guide

20 May – 10 June 2018

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WELCOME

I've really enjoyed my study of Proverbs in recent months and I'm excited about doing this series together as a church. I've discovered that Proverbs is a book much loved by Christians, not so much by preachers because of its unusual structure. As such, I'd appreciate your prayers that we'd do it well.

We're told in the opening chapter in v.2 that Proverbs are given to us "for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight" (NIV). We are set up in verse 7 to understand that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction".

As such Proverbs helps us to live as those who know and understand who God is, with Him occupying the right place in our lives. With God in His right place, Proverbs then shapes our world view, trains us, shapes our character, helps us to truly understand reality, reject folly and embrace wisdom.

My prayer for this series is that, if you don't already, you'll come to love the book of Proverbs and use it regularly. I've been asking God to help each one of us read and understand it well, so we can all be blessed by having our, character, thoughts, actions and world view shaped by it.

Please join me in this prayer, your brother in Christ,



Matt Lehmann

Senior Pastor



OUR FOUR WEEKS IN PROVERBS

Our main goal for the series is to help everyone at Trinity Inner South, personally and in their households, use Proverbs well for the rest of our days. As such the sermons will focus on the structure and world view put forward in Proverbs. We'll spend the first sermon, the first weeks' bible readings and study, as well as sermon two on chapters 1-9 as they prepare us to use Proverbs well as we hit chapter 10 and beyond.

Then in sermon three as well as the next two studies we'll look at some different approaches to using Proverbs well. The fourth sermon will bring the book to it's conclusion in chapters 30-31. After that there's a further study for groups to have a go at apply Proverbs 25-29 having understood the world view of Proverbs and the tools we've learned along the way. Here's a summary then of how the series, fits together:

	DATE	PASSAGE
Sermon 1	Sunday 20 May	Proverbs 1-3
Bible study 1	Week commencing 21 May	Proverbs 4-7
Sermon 2	Sunday 27 May	Proverbs 8-9
No group studies this week due to the CMS Dinner		
Sermon 3	Sunday 3 June	Proverbs 10:17-21
Bible study 2	Week commencing 4 June	Proverbs (various)
Sermon 4	Sunday 10 June	Proverbs 30:1-9 & 31
Bible study 3	Week commencing 11 June	Proverbs on wealth
Bible study 4	Week commencing 18 June	Proverbs 25-29

Alongside this there's a daily reading guide to get our whole church community into Proverbs each day of the week.

READING PROVERBS AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

In this study guide my goal has been to help you see the value of Proverbs and encourage you to use it regularly as a follower of Jesus. As you work through the bible studies you'll note I haven't taken the opportunity to use Proverbs as a launching point to the New Testament and to Jesus.

This is a deliberate choice, as a starting point to explain this, have a listen to the apostle Paul wrestling with wisdom and how it relates to Jesus in 1 Corinthians 1:20-24 & verse 30 (NIV):

“²⁰Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²²Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”³⁰It is because of him [God the Father¹] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

We could spend many sermons unpacking this passage but this quote from Lindsay Wilson expresses my view of how Proverbs and Jesus interrelate, “Every proverb must ultimately be read in the light of Christ. This does not mean that we need to read Christ into the book of Proverbs ... but acknowledges that all Scripture climaxes in Christ, even though the wisdom books do not focus on God's saving rescue of his chosen people. Christ,

¹ My addition for context

READING PROVERBS AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

however, is the Lord of all creation as well as the Lord of redemption ... in addition, Christ is also the wisdom of God”²

Now there’s much we could mull over about this all and if you want to think about it further Goldsworthy’s “Gospel and wisdom” is a good next step (shown on the next page). In the end however, I think the way forward for us as Christians is quite simple. After studying the book of Proverbs set yourself a goal to read the gospel of Luke.

Approach it with the view of seeing Jesus as God’s wisdom embodied, lived out and in its fullest expression. You’ll see that much of what Jesus says builds on, and brings out the full meaning and implications of, wisdom literature. As you read Jesus words it will enhance your view of the wisdom of Proverbs. Proverbs, in turn, will help you love Jesus more and see Him as He is declared in scripture to be, ‘the wisdom of God’.

As Christians the foundation of our relationship with God is Jesus sacrificial death on the cross for us (Romans 5:8, 6:23 and Col 1:21-22). We actively seek to live under the lordship of Jesus (Col 2:6-7) as the Spirit seeks to transform us to more into the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18), growing us in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)³. Proverbs doesn’t use that language, but rightly understood it marries together beautifully with Proverbs call to live as those who fear the Lord, seeking to embrace God’s wisdom, rejecting folly and have our very characters transformed. As such I don’t think we have to ‘make’ Proverbs and Jesus fit together, they already do.

² Wilson, L. Proverbs, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (TOTC) 2017, p.46

³ Wilson, Proverbs (2017) p.46

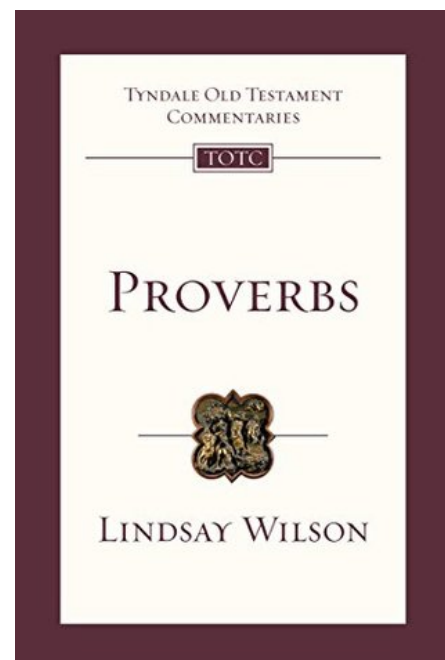
THANKS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

A VERY BIG THANKYOU

A very big thankyou to Katy Smith who helped me get my head around the book and try to approach it well as a preacher. This was especially helpful as not many preachers have attempted to teach Proverbs as a whole.

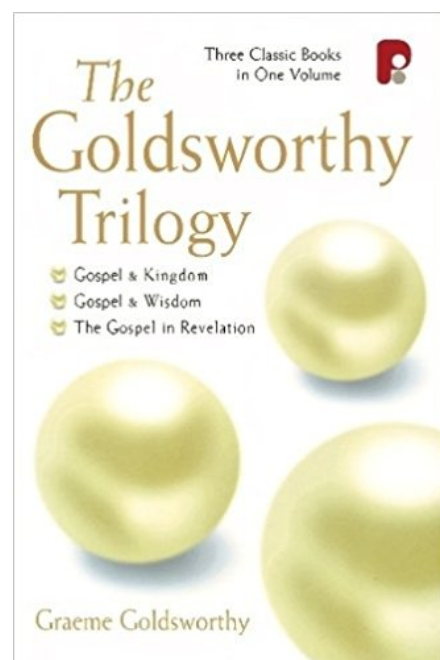
A GOOD COMMENTARY FOR THE LIBRARY

I've used Lindsay Wilson's commentary on Proverbs as part of the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series published 2017. I rarely fall in love with commentaries but I certainly did with this one and have used it extensively. If such things appeal to you it is very approachable and practical and would be a worthy addition to your library.



ANOTHER GOOD BOOK TO STRETCH YOU

I've only skim read this one but many really helpful quotes have made quite an impact. I'll certainly be going back for a full read and I'm sure there'll be a few quotes used in the series. It's a bit more stretching but from what I've seen so far, it's good stuff. Its title is Gospel and Wisdom, published in 2000 by Graeme Goldsworthy and it's often sold as part of 'The Goldsworthy trilogy'.



PERSONAL READING – WEEK 1

Monday 21 May

Read: Proverbs 4:1-27

1. What are the benefits and costs of wisdom put to us in verses 1-9?
2. What are the contrasts between the wise and the wicked v.10-19?
3. How comprehensive is the Father's call in v.20-27, what does it include?

Tuesday 22 May

Read: Proverbs 5:1-23

1. What are some of the consequences of embracing folly?
2. How does the imagery of the chapter strike you regarding adultery?
3. How does verses 21-23 drive the point home?

Wednesday 23 May

Read: Proverbs 6:1-19

1. How does this chapter broaden the picture out of what it means to embrace folly from the imagery of chapter 5?
2. What do verses 16-19 teach us about what it means to fear the Lord?

Thursday 24 May

Read: Proverbs 6:20-35

1. Adultery is declared wrong in God's law. How do these verses seek to persuade us this is a good thing as well as protect us from adultery?
2. For those of us who have never committed adultery, do you think the right response is to say "I've never done it, I'm okay, let's move on" or are there broader implications and learning to be found here?

Friday 25 May

Read: Proverbs 7:1-27

1. In chapter 8 wisdom is personified with a clear call and passionate call to follow then in chapter 9 a clear decision is called for between Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly. How does chapter 7 set us up for this?
2. How do the opening verses of chapter 7 seek to keep us from embracing extreme folly, in this case adultery?

BIBLE STUDY 1

TITLE: LET ME PERSUADE YOU TO CHOOSE WISDOM NOT FOLLY

PASSAGES: Proverbs chapters 4-7

Quote: "It is not enough to **do** wise things, one must **love** wisdom"⁴

1. What do you make of the above quote, discuss
2. In chapter 4 we have three 'father to son' speeches seeking to persuade us to choose wisdom. Read through each one separately and discuss what images or words you find the most persuasive to embrace wisdom.
(4:1-9)

(4:10-19)

(4:20-27)

Quote: "In chapters 1-4 there is a continual call for the formation of a godly character that transforms every aspect of life. The sentence sayings (what they should do) cannot be dipped into by themselves, but are based on what

⁴ Fox, M.V. (2000), Proverbs 1-9, AB 18A (New York: Doubleday) p.174

BIBLE STUDY 1

kind of people they should be (their character). The real intention of Proverbs is to train a person, to actively form character, to show what life is really like, and how best to cope with and manage it. To miss this key insight is to miss the heart of the book. God, through wisdom, is active in this shaping process.” (Lindsay Wilson)⁵

3. In what ways do we and others usually use Proverbs? How does this summary from Lindsay help us approach Proverbs in a better way?

4. Chapters 5-7 change tone with an extended warning not to pursue folly, often by depicting folly personified as an adulterous woman. Have a quick read of chapter 9 (don't worry we'll cover it on the sermon on Sunday) but note the competing calls from Lady Wisdom verses 1-12 and Dame Folly verses 13-18, how would you contrast the two?

NOTE: Given this strong contrast between wisdom personified and folly personified, I think this guides our reading of chapters 5-7. I suspect then we are to read chapters 5-7 as not 'nearly all about adultery' but as a strong encouragement not to pursue folly with adultery being a clear and very powerful illustration of the dangers of embracing folly.

⁵ Wilson, L. (2017), Proverbs - TOTC, Inter Varsity Press USA p.95

BIBLE STUDY 1

5. With that in mind let's have a quick look at chapters 5-7. Have a read of the following sections and discuss, one at a time, how they seek to persuade us to reject folly and/or embrace wisdom.

(5:1-10)

(6:6-11)

(6:20-29)

(7:1-10)

APPLICATION

6. Proverbs 1-9 paints a vivid picture of wisdom calling out to us asking us to embrace her. It also paints a picture of the seductiveness of folly wanting us to grasp hold of her and follow her into sin. How do you think this tension plays out today in our lives as Christians?

BIBLE STUDY 1

7. Discuss together and summarise in your own words what we've learned so far in chapters 1-9 about:
 - (a) What it means to fear the Lord (from Sunday's sermon).
 - (b) The urgency with which we are to embrace wisdom & reject folly.
 - (c) Have our character transformed by God's wisdom.
8. How can we corporately (as a community group, or a whole church) encourage each other to fear the Lord, embrace wisdom and have our character transformed?
9. Returning to our quote "It is not enough to **do** wise things, one must **love** wisdom"⁶ discuss if and why you think this is realistic/necessary ...or not.

⁶ Fox, M.V. (2000), Proverbs 1-9, AB 18A (New York: Doubleday) p.174

PERSONAL READING – WEEK 2

Monday 28 May

Read: Proverbs 10

1. Many of the Proverbs in chapters 10-15 make a strong link between character and consequences, how many can you spot in this chapter?
2. How, both positively or negatively, have you seen this play out in your life or others around you? How does this encourage you to live?

Tuesday 29 May

Read: Proverbs 11

1. How do Proverbs like v.22 strike you? Without giving a clear lesson they yield a great deal by what they imply, what do you take from it?
2. If you read verses 23-31 together what impression does it make on you, how might it apply as you think about wealth, security and generosity?

Wednesday 30 May

Read: Proverbs 12

1. There's much in this chapter about the power of words, read again verses 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23 and 25, what stands out to you?
2. Pray and ask God for wisdom so that our words may be well considered, and trustworthy and also that we may listen well, and be discerning.

Thursday 31 May

Read: Proverbs 13

1. What does this chapter teach us about wealth and poverty?
2. How does verse 23 nuance the general teaching in Proverbs that righteousness leads to prosperity and other good things?

Friday 1 June

Read: Proverbs 14

1. Does verse 20 seem fair to you? Have you considered before that some Proverbs help us understand how the world works without declaring it right or wrong? How does this help you read Proverbs well?
2. How does the following verse (v.21) build on the previous verse?

PERSONAL READING – WEEK 3

Monday 4 June

Read: Proverbs 15

1. There are lots of strong contrasts here in chapter 15, how does this help sharpen the choice before us to embrace wisdom or suffer under folly?
2. What contribution does verses 25-33 make to our understanding of what it means to fear the Lord?

Tuesday 5 June

Read: Proverbs 16

1. How do verses 1-9 speak to regarding the plans of our hearts, how important our motives are and our trust in God's sovereignty?
2. How do verses 20-24 instruct us to think about how well we listen, how we use our words and how important the motives of our heart are?

Wednesday 6 June

Read: Proverbs 17

1. Many of the Proverbs in chapters 16-22 have themes of retribution, e.g. verses 5 and 11. How does this shape our world view in an unjust world?
2. What kind of picture is developed contrasting wisdom and foolishness as you read verses 2, 6, 10, 21, 24, 25, 26 and 27?

Thursday 7 June

Read: Proverbs 18

1. How do verses 10 and 11 work together to help us consider where true safety is found? How does that speak to our current western culture?
2. How do the many facets of verses 12-15 speak to you about the various aspects of our character and how they are linked to our actions?

Friday 8 June

Read: Proverbs 19

1. Proverbs reveal their true depth when they are weighed against other proverbs. How do verses 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 17, 22 & 26 build a deep picture and nuance the wisdom of each other?

BIBLE STUDY 2

TITLE: ENGAGING WITH PROVERBS

PASSAGES: Various

INTRO: Now that we've understood the opening chapters of Proverbs (1-9) and seen that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, that Proverbs actively seeks to shape our character and amidst the calls of wisdom and folly we're urged to pursue wisdom, we're ready to get into Proverbs 10-29.

We're going to look at some various ways Proverbs work and how can engage with them, wrestle with their meaning and learn from them⁷.

1. What problems could you foresee (or have you had) if you treat Proverbs like a lucky dip and just pick them at random to reflect on?
2. Some Proverbs seem to contradict each other, perhaps the clearest example is 26:4-5, have a read then discuss what this teaches us about Proverbs and how we should read and apply them.
3. How does 26: 7 & 9 fill out this picture?

⁷ Most of this I learnt from Lindsay Wilson in his Proverbs commentary p.48-51

BIBLE STUDY 2

4. It's always good to remember the framework of chapters 1-9 when weighing these things, according to chapter 1:7 who is the fool?
5. Sometimes Proverbs don't contradict as much as have a time and place where they would apply. Read Proverbs 15:1 and then 25:12 and discuss when each might apply, how would you know when to apply each?
6. Sometimes Proverbs jar with us and our first reaction is disbelief because we've experienced or observed the opposite. Have a read of Proverbs 15:6 and 15:19 and discuss what you think we are to take away from such Proverbs?
7. Sometimes Proverbs deeply challenge our world view and ask hard questions of us, our church and our culture. Discuss how the following Proverbs do this:
(15:15-17)

(19:21 and 21:30)

BIBLE STUDY 2

8. Some Proverbs deeply challenge us (those with power) to consider those without power to advocate for them. We often ‘poo-poo’ so called “social justice Christians” how does Proverbs 14:31, 17:5 and 31:8-9 challenge our world view and seek to shape our character and actions?
9. NOTE: Keeping what we learned from chapters 1-9 in focus helps us access and find deeper meaning in the Proverbs in chapters 10-29. Take the Proverbs on friendship for example, the find deeper meaning in the context of knowing “the foundation of the fear of the Lord (1:7), the foolish choice to join with the wrong kind of friends (1:8-19), and the need to have our character strong enough to resist the lure of those who would lead us astray (2:1-15)”⁸ With that in mind then, read the following Proverbs and discuss the value of good friends:
Proverbs 17:17, 18:24, 27:5-6 and 27: 9-10

⁸ Wilson, Proverbs (2017) p.48

BIBLE STUDY 2

10. As we've seen it takes great skill to know how and when to apply some Proverbs and weigh them against another. How does Proverbs 2:1-6 encourage us to seek wisdom, where will our help come from?

APPLICATION

11. What benefits can you see in being people deeply shaped by God's word to us in the book of Proverbs?
12. From what you've learned so far in Proverbs so far in the sermons, studies and daily readings, how would a "Proverbs shaped Christian's" character and actions in relation to:
- (a) Friendship
 - (b) Use of money
 - (c) Concern for justice
 - (d) How they listen and how they speak
 - (e) Their work ethic
13. Pray that we and all those in our church would have their character transformed by Proverbs, embrace wisdom and fear the Lord.

BIBLE STUDY 3

TITLE: HOW ARE WE TO THINK ABOUT WEALTH AND POVERTY

PASSAGES: Various

INTRO: So far in this series we've avoided the "here's a sermon on; friends, wealth, family, justice" etc which is the way Proverbs is frequently taught. I take it that if we were meant to bunch all the proverbs together according to topic and study them that way, Proverbs' itself would be arranged like that by God. It is, however, important to grasp that as we read a proverb on wealth, for example, it is meant to be taken as one part of a larger picture. Proverbs are meant to nuance each other and reveal their depth as we, over and over again, read and familiarise ourselves with Proverbs as a book.

In this study then we're going to see how the picture around wealth and poverty is developed⁹ through Proverbs. The goal is for us to be good readers of Proverbs that don't formulate our theology by 'cherry picking'.

1. What is your understanding of prosperity doctrine in the church?
2. Read Proverbs 3:9-10, 8:18 & 10:4-5 and discuss what kind of theology we could form if this was all there was to say about wealth and poverty.

⁹ Modified from: Longman T. Proverbs (2006) quoted in Wilson L. Proverbs (2017) p.49

BIBLE STUDY 3

3. What do the following proverbs add to our understanding of wealth and poverty? Read and discuss.

(11:18)

(13:11 & 23)

(10:15, 12:27, 13:7, 19:14, 29:3)

(18:11-12)

(28:6)

4. At a given snapshot in time it appears that both the wicked and the righteous may possess wealth. Character determines whether it will be of lasting benefit or become a point of pride. The poor can also be defrauded of wealth via the injustices of the rich and powerful. Discuss then the dangers of making simplistic links between prosperity and righteousness as well as linking poverty to laziness?

5. How does this illustrate a broader point on being wise and discerning readers of the book of Proverbs?

BIBLE STUDY 3

6. What do you think then we are to take away from the many clear links Proverbs does make between righteousness and wealth as well as laziness and poverty?

7. Let's keep letting Proverbs build our picture for us, read the following verses and discuss how they add to our picture of wealth and poverty:
(28:27, 29:7 & 14)

(16:16)

(11:4 and 13:8)

(23:4-5 and 30:7-9)

APPLICATION

8. Where then do you think the dangers lie for us, in our church when it comes to how we think and act in regard to wealth and poverty?

BIBLE STUDY 3

9. Given what we have learned about Proverbs in chapters 1-9 think through the following questions (maybe break up into small groups or do this individually then share):
- (a) What does it mean to fear the Lord in regard to our wealth?
 - (b) Why is character important when it comes to using wealth and how is Proverbs trying to shape our character in regard to this?
 - (c) What might embracing wisdom and rejecting folly look like when it comes to how we use the resources God has given us?
10. Here's a broad sweeping statement that I acknowledge isn't always true, but hey, let's generate a few emails!! "I think we're really unhelpful to each other as Christians when it comes to how we use our wealth, how can we set each other up better to embrace wisdom on this? Discuss

PRAY FLOWING OUT OF TODAY'S PROVERBS AND DISCUSSION

PERSONAL READING – WEEK 4

Monday 11 June

Read: Proverbs 20

1. How do verses 5 & 6 shape the way we think about our relationships with each other and what we should value?
2. Why do you think some Proverbs are content to describe the world as it is without commending or criticising like verse 14?

Tuesday 12 June

Read: Proverbs 21

1. As you read today try to spot the way Proverbs is seeking to encourage you to embrace wisdom and reject folly.
2. Verse 14 shows us the effectiveness of a bribe without affirming them nor rejecting it. How do verses 2, 3 and 15 help us wrestle with v.14?

Wednesday 13 June

Read: Proverbs 22

1. Verse 7 makes a statement about how the world works, how do verses 1, 2, 8, 9, 16, 22 & 23 and 26 & 27 keep shaping our world view?
2. What is the difference pastorally if we take verse 6 as an iron clad promise from God versus something that is generally true?

Thursday 14 June

Read: Proverbs 23

1. In the opening chapters of Proverbs, we were warned from picking bad company and having the strength to reject those who would entice us into sin, how does that knowledge bring much richness to this passage?
2. Pray for our church family that we'd have the wisdom and character to spot and reject those who would entice us to embrace folly.

Friday 15 June

Read: Proverbs 24

1. How do verses 1-6 encourage you to pursue wisdom?
2. How do you verses 10-12 challenge you as someone who knows Jesus?

BIBLE STUDY – WEEK 4

TITLE: OVER TO YOU

PASSAGES: Proverbs chapters 25-29

INTRO: This week is all about us applying what we have learned over the series to be good readers of the book of Proverbs. There are various ways you may break this up, if you're in a big group you might break up into smaller groups and do a chapter each in depth then report back to the group. You may choose to do a few chapters as a larger group, it's up to you.

Keep in mind always the lessons of chapters 1-9 which are:

- (a) What it means to live as someone who fears the Lord.
- (b) That Proverbs is actively seeking to change our character.
- (c) We constantly need to embrace wisdom and reject folly.

Pray, read Proverbs 2:1-5 together for encouragement from God, then have a look at some or all of chapters 25-29 and see what they show you and what kind of discussion they generate. Enjoy!

PERSONAL READING – WEEK 5

Monday 18 June

Read: Proverbs 25 & 26

1. Read Luke 14:10 and re-read Proverbs 25:6-7. Have you ever thought of Jesus being as being the personification of wisdom, soaked in Proverbs?
2. What does Proverbs 26:7 & 9 say to you about the nature of Proverbs and the need to be someone who fears the Lord to use them well?

Tuesday 19 June

Read: Proverbs 27

1. How many aspects of daily life are covered in ch.27, how can we use Proverbs to highlight an all-encompassing view of wise living?
2. What areas of life can you pray for God to shape your character in?

Wednesday 20 June

Read: Proverbs 28

1. There are many contrasts between what it looks like to embrace folly versus pursuing wisdom, how has Proverbs shaped your view of the need to make these kinds of choices daily?
2. Read Proverbs 2:1-5 and turn it into a prayer for you and our church.

Thursday 21 June

Read: Proverbs 29

1. As you read this chapter, ask yourself what kind of character God is seeking to develop in you as you read it.
2. How do you read verse 18 as a follower of Jesus?

Friday 22 June

Read: Proverbs 30 & 31

1. How has your view of the book of Proverbs changed over the series?
2. The final image of the woman thoroughly shaped by the book of Proverbs is a beautiful one to challenge both men and women. How have you felt Proverbs encouraging you to embrace God's wisdom.
3. Read Matthew 7:24-27 and pray.

FEEDBACK

I'd really appreciate feedback on the series, how helpful you found it and any suggestions for improvement. If you are able please send any feedback via email to: office@trinityinnersouth.org.au

Feedback on each aspect of the series would be helpful:

SERMONS

1. Do you think they were faithful to God's word?
2. How engaging were they?
3. Did you feel they were applicable to your life?

BOOKLET

1. Were the studies helpful?
2. How did you find the personal reading notes?
3. How can we make them better in the future?

OVERALL

1. Did the series help you grow in your relationship with God?
2. Do you have a better understanding of what it means to fear God, have our character shaped by Proverbs and embrace wisdom while rejecting folly?

Any other comments would be welcome.

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