



Proverbs is different than what we have read before. We read Acts which was a narrative account of the Holy Spirit's work in the early church, and then Philipians, which was an actual letter written by Paul to that church. Proverbs falls into the category of Old Testament wisdom literature. It is poetry that uses a variety of forms, patterns, and rhetorical devices. It is in a category of 5 Old Testament books known as "The writings" that includes Job, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon.

The point of scripture is not only to lead us to repentance and saving faith in Christ, but also to instruct and nurture believers with truth and wisdom to transform our lives. This is not something in addition to faith in Christ, but part of what it means to continue to walk and grow in maturity in our life with Jesus. The power of the Holy Spirit lives in you us as believers, and not only forgives us of sin but empowers us to walk in a manner worthy of Christ who himself is the fulfillment of all wisdom!

Proverbs represents a commonsense approach to life and faith. It deals very much with the question of "What is a life well lived?" Or "How ought we then to live in light of the truth of God?" It is important, very important, to note that the book of Proverbs does not contain "laws" or "promises" that "if you do this, everything works out perfectly as it should." It is about teaching principles that are generally true, and that help develop wisdom for living a good and purposeful life. The book is very practical in nature, but also poses many challenges to wrestle with and meditate on in the pursuit of wisdom.

So dive in and let's learn what a life well lived is all about!
Wade Byington



WEEK ONE

Day 1 – Proverbs 1:1-19

Big Idea: Introduction of the book. Contrasting the pursuit of wisdom with the foolishness of sin. Summed up best in verse 7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and knowledge.”

Question to Ponder: Solomon gives the instruction to pursue wisdom. How do you pursue wisdom in your career, family, money and other relationships? Do you think of wisdom as a choice or a path? Who are your sources of wisdom?

Day 2 – Proverbs 1:20-33

Big Idea: Wisdom personified. She takes on a personality calling out for all to come and partake. But if you refuse, there will be consequences, with wisdom herself laughing at your expense.

Question to Ponder: Solomon says wisdom is not hidden. Do you believe remaining foolish is an active pursuit?

Day 3 – Proverbs 2:1-22

Big Idea: If...will. The promise of wisdom here is laid out so that if you seek it with all your heart, you will receive it and reap all its benefits.

Question to Ponder: How have you pursued and received the benefits of wisdom? What does it look like in your relationships, family, work, or purchases?

WEEK ONE

Day 4 – Proverbs 3:1-35

Big Idea: Wisdom was with God as He created heaven and earth. In seeking wisdom, you are seeking God, and you can trust in His wisdom over your own understanding to guide your life.

Question to Ponder: How might living wisely help to avoid anxiety and eliminate certain fears in our lives?

Day 5 – Proverbs 4:1-27

Big Idea: Like a father teaching a son, we see an appeal to diligently seek wisdom and God's word. Prize it! Take hold and don't let go! Keep God's word in your heart and you will find life.

Question to Ponder: Solomon talks about wisdom as an investment and an investment worth guarding because it leads to life! Name all the important relationships and purchases in your life. How do you continue to invest in them and what do you do to guard them at all cost?

WEEK TWO

Day 1 – Proverbs 5:1-23

Big Idea: The foolishness of sexual sin. Is this a poetic contrast to “Lady Wisdom?” Maybe so. However, the principle is the same – the path of sexual sin is unwise and leads to destruction.

Question to Ponder: In ancient Israel, it was critical for a family to live and work together. It meant protection and flourishing. For someone to leave the family was to leave it in ruins, and sometimes put them in danger of poverty or starvation. The idea was that if a person was willing to endanger others with selfish choices, they can't be trusted. Do you believe this ancient wisdom is timeless? How would this situation look today? What would be the consequences?

Day 2 – Proverbs 6:1-19

Big Idea: Sometimes wisdom comes in the form of seeing sin so that we can aim to avoid fostering these qualities in our hearts. Don't be a lazy sluggard. Don't have a lying tongue and sow discord. Also, beware of those who are these things!

Question to Ponder: Can you name an example of someone that consistently modeled for you wisdom in a circumstance or relationship that you were determined to apply? Can you name an example of someone who consistently modeled foolishness in a circumstance or relationship that made you aware to apply the exact opposite? Think on examples of both.

Day 3 – Proverbs 6:20-35

Big Idea: More warnings against sexual sin. But the contrast of a wise life and a key weapon against sexual sin is laid out in verses 20-23 – meditate on and live by God's wisdom.

Question to Ponder: If you've noticed by now, Solomon often gives the instruction or command of wisdom and its benefits before he gets to the consequences of not following the instructions. In other words, Solomon often begins with worship and obedience of the right things before the negative consequences of the wrong things. How is that order helpful in our walk with the Lord?

WEEK TWO

Day 4 – Proverbs 7:1-27

Big Idea: When we fall into sexual sin (or again, perhaps foolishness contrasted with “Lady Wisdom?”) It’s rarely a sudden thing, but it is slow, manipulative, and seductive. We should live on guard against sin by setting God’s wisdom as the apple of our eyes and writing it on our hearts.

Question to Ponder: Many of us may never physically engage in adulterous acts, but Jesus tells us, “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). Jesus raises the standard from our “physical acts” to our thought life and heart life. What do you believe Jesus was trying to convey by going beyond our actions?

Day 5 – Proverbs 8:1-36

Big Idea: “Lady Wisdom” is back! And she’s calling out to all who will listen to her! All that you desire cannot compare with her. Why? Because she was “with God from the very beginning.” Find her and you will find life!

Question to Ponder: Why do you think we search for God without searching for wisdom? Why do you think we may say we want wisdom, but without God attached to it? What does look like? God and wisdom seem to go hand-in-hand. So why does our searching for one or the other often in opposition?

WEEK THREE

Day 1 – Proverbs 9:1-18

Big Idea: "Lady wisdom" is again calling from the rooftops for all to come and learn the wisdom and knowledge of God. But we can always choose to reject this, as "The woman of Folly" is calling those to follow her instead in vs 13-18.

Question to Ponder: Sometimes the right choice is not always obvious. How do you take the time to ensure you are pursuing wisdom and not your own impulsive desires?

Day 2 – Proverbs 10:1-32

Big Idea: The Proverbs actually begin here after 9 chapters of laying the groundwork for wisdom. They cover many topics. One that comes up often in chapter 10 is the power of our words. Notice how often "mouth" "lips" "tongue" and "words" are used here in this chapter.

Question to Ponder: What is the relationship of our words and our wisdom? If you were to assess all of the words you spoke in a week, would wisdom or folly define those words?

Day 3 – Proverbs 11:1-31

Big Idea: The blessings of righteousness are contrasted with the consequences of wickedness. Remember these are not "laws" or "promises" but principles which are generally true! Sometimes it seems as if the exact opposite is true! Look at Psalm 73 for an example of that reality.

Question to Ponder: Does a pursuit of righteousness seem to be connected to relationships with others? If so, how would you interpret verse 14? Do you have a tendency to get advice from people who will tell you what you want to hear? Or what you need to hear?

WEEK THREE

Day 4 – Proverbs 12:1-28

Big Idea: Two major themes in Proverbs are the contrast between 1.) Diligent work/laziness, and 2.) Taking wise advice/being right in your own eyes. See here verses 1,11,14-15,24,& 27 as examples of these themes.

Question to Ponder: What are some other biblical passages that come to mind when thinking about the balance of diligent work and rest?

Day 5 – Proverbs 13:1-25

Big Idea: Many of the same themes continue, but two verses pack a particular punch. Vs 20 compels us to surround ourselves with wise friends, and vs 14 summarizes the point of ALL the proverbs, that is for wisdom to be a "fountain of LIFE, that one may turn away from the snares of death."

Question to Ponder: With access to knowledge at our fingertips, do you believe we are any wiser? What areas of temptations do you struggle in that oppose biblical wisdom?

WEEK FOUR

Day 1 – Proverbs 14:1-35

Big Idea: Being prudent, that is, acting with and showing care and thought for the future, is a key feature of wisdom. Verses 8, 15, and 18 all hit on that topic. Verse 27 reminds us again, like Proverbs 13:14, that "the fear of the Lord is a fountain of LIFE!"

Question to Ponder: In our daily decisions, do you think about the long-term cost and benefits? Or do you make decisions only for that moment in time? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

Day 2 – Proverbs 15:1-33

Big Idea: Wisdom is a skill acquired not just for oneself, but to bless others. The ability to offer a good word for example (vs1, 4, 23, 28) comes by seeking godly counsel as opposed to being one who refuses instruction (vs 5, 10, 12, 14, 22, 31-33).

Question to Ponder: What are some reasons you reject godly counsel? Do you have a personal example of accepting and following godly counsel?

Day 3 – Proverbs 16:1-33

Big Idea: Planning our life with wisdom is part of what it means to be human. However, it is not to be done in a prideful way (vs 18) or right in our own eyes (vs 25), but humbly while submitting and committing our ways to God (vs 1-3).

Question to Ponder: What are some examples of being wise for the good of others?

WEEK FOUR

Day 4 – Proverbs 17:1-28

Big Idea: Here is more contrasting of those who are foolish and those who have understanding. In verses 27-28 though, even a fool is considered to be wise if they can grasp this concept: Knowing when to keep your mouth shut!

Question to Ponder: Knowing when to speak up and when to shut up. What process guides your decisions to do both?

Day 5 – Proverbs 18:1-24

Big Idea: Death and life are in the power of the tongue. Fools love to spout their isolated opinions (vs 1-2, 6-8), but fail to use their ears to be like the wise and hear life giving instruction and knowledge.

Question to Ponder: Why does Solomon say it's foolish to be in isolation? What are your experiences of building walls around yourself? Why is it better to be with others and listen than to a) be with no one or b) be with others and never listen?

WEEK FIVE

Day 1 – Proverbs 19

Big Idea: Living a wise and godly life not only glorifies God, but greatly benefits the person! When we live by God's wisdom, we "keep our life" (vs 16) & even prove to "love our own soul" (vs 8)! We should strive to live that way so we don't "rage against the Lord" when the inevitable consequences of our foolishness come (vs 3).

Question to Ponder: Proverbs 19:20 encourages us to plan for wisdom. Verse 21 tells us though we make plans, only the LORD's purpose will stand. How does this look in our everyday life?

Day 2 – Proverbs 20

Big Idea: A good life is established by wise godly counsel (vs 18). Living that life involves intentional integrity (vs 7), fairness (vs 10, 23), & steadfast faithfulness (vs 28). If we choose apathy & laziness instead of being intentional, we can plan on not reaping the benefits of a wise life (vs 4, 13).

Question to Ponder: Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"? (vs. 9) Who makes the heart pure and cleanses us from sin? How so?

Day 3 – Proverbs 21

Big Idea: Living a wise life in God's Kingdom also consists of being about the cause of Justice. The benefits of a wise life are not only for our good, but the good of our neighbors, especially the vulnerable ones. (Vs 3, 7, 13, 15, 21. Also see Micah 6:8)

Question to Ponder: How would it change your routine and perspective if you knew your wisdom in decisions benefited others? What decisions would be exposed that only benefit you?

WEEK FIVE

Day 4 – Proverbs 22:1-16

Big Idea: Living wise keeps us from two extremes. 1: Making hasty decisions without first considering the potential outcomes (vs 3). 2. Excusing oneself from ever making decisions due to fear (vs 13). To avoid these extremes we must seek wise counsel, & then trust God & act upon it!

Question to Ponder: Which one of these two extremes are you most prone to?

Day 5 – Proverbs 22:17-29

Big Idea: A break from Solomon's proverbs. His return again in chapter 25. Here through the end of chapter 24, we have "The words of the wise." The point is still the same, to apply our hearts to gain wisdom & understanding. By doing so, we prove to trust in the Lord.

Question to Ponder: Proverbs 22:23 says, "for the LORD will plead their cause and rob of life those who rob them." Does this seem like justice, mercy, or both? Why or why not?

WEEK SIX

Day 1 – Proverbs 23

Big Idea: What we pursue in life matters. Instead of striving after wealth and the world's idea of "the good life," we are to pursue truth, wisdom, & understanding (vs 23). We should pursue God in these things, and not envy those who seem to have all the world has to offer (vs 17-18).

Question to Ponder: How is godly wisdom at odds with worldly wisdom? In what area(s) of life are you currently battling those two extremes?

Day 2 – Proverbs 24

Big Idea: The theme from chapter 23 continues: Do not envy evil men (vs 1-2, 19-22), but pursue wisdom with all of your heart (vs 3-6, 13-14). The chapter closes with another warning of laziness leading to poverty. That can apply both physically & spiritually if we are lazy in pursuing wisdom!

Question to Ponder: Is there an area in your personal life where spiritual laziness has led to spiritual poverty? Or have you witnessed this in someone else? (For example, it could be as simple as not reading your Bible, disciple making, giving to the local church, etc.)

Day 3 – Proverbs 25

Big Idea: Solomon's (died 931 BC) proverbs make a return, recorded by the men of King Hezekiah (died 687 BC) - A life well lived always takes the neighbor into account. Notice how often Solomon speaks of how great a timely word can be to someone who needs it! Hopefully, wise words & loving actions can even turn enemies into neighbors! (Vs 21-22, see also Romans 12:20-21 & Matthew 5:44)

Question to Ponder: This chapter of Proverbs ends with a word of self-control. What are the dangers in lacking self-control?

WEEK SIX

Day 4 – Proverbs 26:1-12

Big Idea: Eleven verses open this section by pounding home again and again the folly of fools. But the twist, or perhaps the punch line of the whole section comes in vs 12, showing that a person who is wise in their own eyes is even more helpless than a fool!

Question to Ponder: Why do you think those who are more self-aware of their lack of wisdom often seem to live more wisely?

Day 5 – Proverbs 26:13-28

Big Idea: The sluggard is examined again and judged to be as helpless as the fool who is right in their own eyes. This is not just physical laziness, but spiritual as well, by a lack of pursuing wisdom & guidance (vs 13-16). The rest of the chapter focuses on the evil of those who use their words for strife, division, & deceit.

Question to Ponder: Can you name a recent occasion when you were tempted to deceive and join in division? What was the circumstance? What could you have done differently?

WEEK SEVEN

Day 1 – Proverbs 27

Big Idea: God centered friendships. They are essential if we are to live wisely. Sometimes those relationships must take the shape of faithful loving rebuke (vs 5-6), and sincere godly counsel (vs 9). It truly is like iron sharpening iron (vs 17)! Pursue these friendships and be that kind of friend!

Question to Ponder: Quickly glance over at James 4:13-15. Do you believe James might have been familiar with Proverbs? Is there a friend in your life that you've had to lovingly "wound" them to point them back to the Lord? Has someone done that for you?

Day 2 – Proverbs 28

Big Idea: In the middle of a chapter in a large book about wisdom, rewards, & consequences, comes a word about Grace. Grace is not cheap & should never be used as an excuse to keep living foolishly, but we know no one perfectly lives up to all these standards. In vs 13 we see that confession of sin & forsaking it leads to Mercy. We ultimately find this Mercy & Grace in the finished work of Jesus Christ!

Question to Ponder: Is there a particular sin in your life needs to be confessed? Gossip? Lying? Exaggerating the truth? Greed? The idol of family or work? Who can you confess it to today? If there is confession, there is mercy!

Day 3 – Proverbs 29

Big Idea: None of us will be Kings or Queens, however we can all learn and grow in leadership. Being a good leader involves righteousness (vs 2, 7), keeping the words of God (vs 18), & taking care of the "least of these" by seeking justice (vs 4, 14, 27). There is also ample warning of the type of people we shouldn't be: stubborn (vs 1), prideful (vs 23), & loose with our tongue (vs 11, 20)!

Question to Ponder: Are there several leaders that come to mind as you think about stubbornness, pride, and a loose tongue? Why do you think over time, the leaders that last and make a difference are ones seeking justice and wisdom?

WEEK SEVEN

Day 4 – Proverbs 30

Big Idea: Some words from Agur. Much of his proverbs are musings poetically arranged in groups of four (vs 15-31). But he begins with an acknowledgment that true wisdom comes from God alone (vs 1-6), and a plea for God to help him avoid the extremes of riches and poverty and the trappings both those extremes can produce (vs 7-9).

Question to Ponder: Reading the first 6 verses, what attributes of God jump off the page? Can you see 3 of them?

Day 5 – Proverbs 31

Big Idea: The book closes with words from King Lemuel, and the famous passage of the virtuous woman. These words are usually applied quite literally to the type of woman one should be or seek out. And they surely can apply to people in that way! However, some believe that this chapter is wisdom personified again. After the opening of the book with "lady wisdom" being praised in contrast with the foolishness of an adulterous woman, the book closes with the encouragement to find this virtuous woman "Wisdom" (the focus of the whole book) and to reap the benefits listed in the chapter!

Question to Ponder: If the point of Proverbs 31 means "wisdom" it applies to both genders. Male or female, how would you measure up to the kind of person Proverbs 31 describes? Where is your pursuit falling short?

Who didn't fall short of this pursuit? Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16. Why do you think Jesus is called the wisdom of God?
