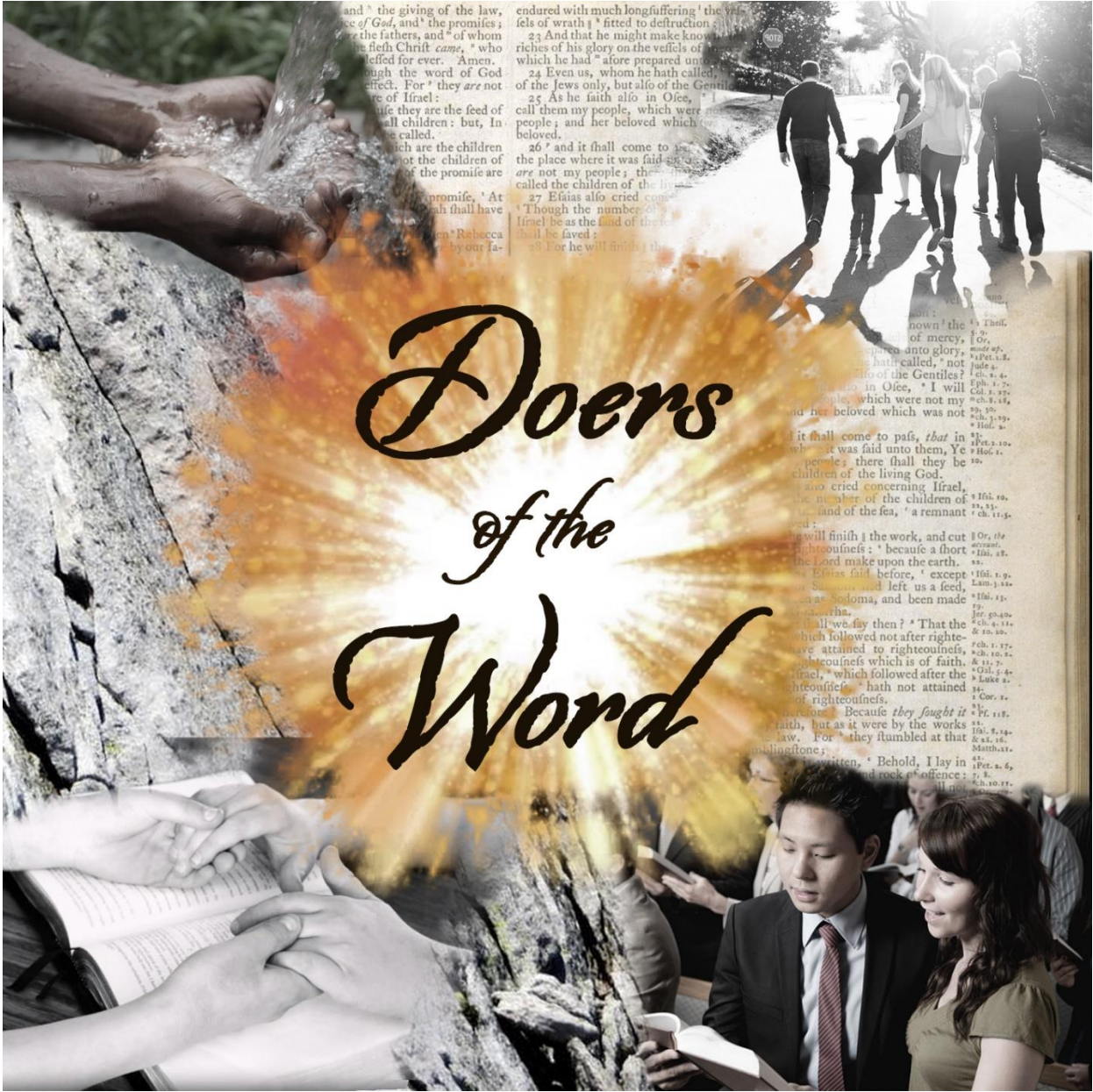

PROVERBS: GOD'S INSTRUCTION MANUAL

Becoming Wise Servants of the Word



Prepared by Jonathan Caldwell
3rd Quarter 2020
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INTRODUCTION

The book of Proverbs is all about life—real life. It addresses everyday situations and decisions that must be made. It is a practical book (similar to the epistle of James) and we would do well to spend time with it. It is always beneficial when the owner/maker/designer of a product gives you a manual on how to use it. We should thank God for the book of Proverbs – it is a manual on life. And we can use this manual to be better servants of God and one another.

Proverbs is not *just* a collection of wise saying put together from a few smart people. It is mostly the product of the wisest man to ever live. Please read 1 Kings 3:3-14. Solomon’s divinely inspired wisdom has been passed down to us. But there is a lesson for us in considering Solomon. It is not enough for us to know the material of Proverbs; we must actually apply it to our lives. I have always struggled with the wisdom of Solomon since he made such foolish decisions in his life and reign. But we would be wise to learn from his negative example.

On Sunday mornings we will focus on Proverbs 1-9. These chapters are made up of discourses or lectures on wisdom. This study will be a verse-by-verse study. On Wednesday evenings we will focus on Proverbs 10-31. These chapters are made up of random proverbs addressing all sorts of topics. This will be a topical study, grouping all the proverbs related to certain subjects. You will notice that these lessons are different from past lessons. I have gone away from the typical question format to a more interactive format. I think this will help us better engage this book and its teaching.

Let’s spend this quarter learning how to better navigate life. In the process we will see more of how God advises us to live and treat one another. And that, after all, is our three year focus (***Doers of the Word***) and our 2020 focus (***Each Day I’ll Do a Golden Deed***). The more we integrate God’s wisdom into our lives, **the better we will be able to serve one another**. Think about how such a life might also appeal to those of the world. If we are hard workers, humble, good listeners, giving, etc., **not only might we help those around us, we might cause them to wonder how and why we live like we do and there is an opening to share the gospel**.

Jonathan Caldwell

Sunday Schedule of Lessons¹ – Proverbs 1-9

Sunday, July 5	1. Introduction	Proverbs 1-9
Sunday, July 12	3. The Purpose of the Book	Proverbs 1:1-7
Sunday, July 19	5. Avoid Evil Associations	Proverbs 1:8-19
Sunday, July 26	7. Do Not Resist Woman Wisdom	Proverbs 1:20-33
Sunday, August 2	9. The Benefits of Wisdom	Proverbs 2
Sunday, August 9	11. Trust in God	Proverbs 3:1-12
Sunday, August 16	13. Get Wisdom	Proverbs 3:13—4:9
Sunday, August 23	15. Stay on the Right Path	Proverbs 4:10-27
Sunday, August 30	17. Avoid Promiscuous Women	Proverbs 5, 6:20-35, & 7
Sunday, September 6	19. Wisdom's Admonitions	Proverbs 6:1-19
Sunday, September 13	21. Wisdom's Autobiography	Proverbs 8
Sunday, September 20	23. The Choice: Wisdom or Folly	Proverbs 9
Sunday, September 27	25. The Worthy Woman	Proverbs 31:10-31

Wednesday Schedule of Lessons – Topics in Proverbs 10-31

Wednesday, July 8	2. Speech
Wednesday, July 15	4. Anger
Wednesday, July 22	6. Hard Work and Laziness
Wednesday, July 29	8. Wealth and Poverty
Wednesday, August 5	10. Humility and Arrogance
Wednesday, August 12	12. Justice
Wednesday, August 19	14. Alcohol
Wednesday, August 26	16. Family: Parents and Children
Wednesday, September 2	18. Family: Marriage
Wednesday, September 9	20. Government
Wednesday, September 16	22. Personal Character
Wednesday, September 23	24. Friends, Neighbors, and Enemies
Wednesday, September 30	26. Review

¹ This breakdown and most of the titles come from Tremper Longman, *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006.

Introduction to Hebrew Poetry

When we think of poetry, we often think of lines of similar length which end with words which rhyme. “Roses are red, violets are blue. Sugar is sweet, and so are you.” I understand that this is not the defining characteristic of poetry, but it is a general quality which calls our attention to the poetic verse of what we are reading or singing.

One of the main characteristics of Hebrew poetry is parallelism. The Anchor Bible Dictionary says that parallelism is “the most prominent rhetorical figure in ancient Near Eastern poetry...it can be defined as the repetition of the same or related semantic content and/or grammatical structure in consecutive lines or verses.” While this may sound technical it is very simple and also very important to understand for interpreting Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, and much of the prophets. There are two main forms of parallelism, with a third that is not as common, though we see it in scripture.

Synonymous Parallelism

The phrase “synonymous parallelism” is used when two lines express similar ideas with similar language. There is some debate over whether or not the second line adds to or builds upon the first. Some might refer to this as “synthetic parallelism” but it is just synonymous parallelism. For those who are more numerically inclined, we might express this as a math problem.

$$2+8=10$$

$$4+6=10$$

This is the basic structure of the proverbs:

- “Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right.” Proverbs 16:13
- “Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.” Proverbs 19:15
- “Plans are established by counsel; by wise guidance wage war.” Proverbs 20:18

You should be able to see how the second phrase is synonymous with the first. It might be helpful to separate the proverb into two lines. Consider Proverbs 23:12. I’ve divided it by phrase and emphasized the synonymous aspects of the proverb.

“Apply your heart to *instruction*
and your ear to words of *knowledge*.”

This proverb has an A-B-A-B pattern.

Sometimes the proverb might present itself as an inverse statement (A-B-B-A). Consider again Proverbs 16:13:

“Righteous lips are the *delight of a king*,
and *he loves him* who speaks what is right.”

Antithetical Parallelism

The phrase “antithetical parallelism” is used of two lines which express similar truths using oppositional language. Again, we can present this numerically:

4+4=8

12-4=8

The same point is being made, but the writer approaches it from both positive and negative sides. This is basically, the other half of the structure of the proverbs:

- “A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother.” Proverbs 10:1
- “The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.”
Proverbs 15:2
- “The way of the guilty is crooked, but the conduct of the pure is upright.” Proverbs 21:8

We can do the same breakdown with these proverbs. Consider Proverbs 28:5

“Evil men *do not understand justice*,
but those who seek the LORD *understand it completely*.”

The evil men are contrasted with “those who seek the LORD.” What is the difference between the two? The first group does not understand justice. The second group does.

A subgroup of antithetical parallelism is the **“better than” statements** we read in Hebrew poetry. Typically, these proverbs pair some righteous or wise behavior with a poor setting and proclaim that condition superior to a sinful or foolish behavior with a prosperous setting.

- “Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.” Proverbs 15:16
- “Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fattened ox and hatred with it.” Proverbs 15:17
- “It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.”
Proverbs 16:19
- “It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.”
Proverbs 21:9

Numerical Parallelism

Numerical parallelism follows an “X, X + 1” formula authors use to indicate that numerous examples could be provided but only a certain number will be. This is easier to understand with a biblical example:

- “There are ***six things*** that the LORD hates, ***seven*** that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.” Proverbs 6:16–19

Notice that seven things are listed. This device is also used to lists the sins of various nations in the prophets. Some argue that there is an emphasis on the final item in these types of lists. I am not sure that is always the case. Here are a few more examples:

- “Three things are too wonderful for me; four I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.” Proverbs 30:18f
- “Three things are stately in their tread; four are stately in their stride: the lion, which is mightiest among beasts and does not turn back before any; the strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king whose army is with him.” Proverbs 30:29–31

Acrostics

A final literary device that plays a role in the poetic sections of scripture are acrostics. This is a structure in which each line or section begins with a corresponding letter. Maybe you’ve seen this one before:

J – Jesus
 O – Others
 Y – Yourself

The original purpose of this feature seems to have been for memorization. This is seen in numerous Psalms, most famously Psalm 119. In most Bibles they will have the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet before each section. Each chapter of Lamentations is written as an acrostic. And in the book of Proverbs, the section on the “worthy woman” is an acrostic. This is a literary device which is typically lost in translation. However, it may help us see the author’s intended structure of the text.

Understanding the literary devices of Hebrew poetry is not essential to learn from the book of Proverbs but it can help us to understand better what the wise man of old had to say about living life. Any advantage we can get in understanding the word of God ought to be utilized and I hope to do some of this as we begin to explore the text of Proverbs together.

INTRODUCTION

Text: Proverbs 1-9

As we prepare ourselves to study the book of Proverbs, we want to think about some introductory things: author, structure, literary devices, and definitions. This will help us to better interpret the lectures in chapters 1-9 and the individual proverbs in chapters 10-31.

- What is a proverb?
- Who wrote the book of Proverbs?
- What is parallelism?
- How does the book of Proverbs change from chapters 1-9 and chapters 10-31?
- How is wisdom different from knowledge?
- Who seems to be the main audience of the wiseman?
- Why does the wiseman describe wisdom and folly as women?
- What are the benefits of wisdom?

SPEECH

Text: Proverbs 10:14; 11:12, 13; 12:18; 13:3, 16; 15:1, 28; 17:27, 28; 19:1; 20:25; 26:4, 5

The wise man had much to say about our speech. How we speak tells others a great deal about us. Further, our tongue is one of the hardest things in the world to control. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

The Wisdom of Keeping Silent

Sins in Speaking

Foolish Talking Leads to Trouble

Dealing with Foolish Speech

What proverbs did you grow up hearing about your speech?

More biblical teaching on speech: Ecclesiastes 3:7; Matthew 12:36-37; James 1:19; 3:1-12

THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK

Text: Proverbs 1:1-7

I said in the introduction that I want this book to be more interactive. That will become apparent in this lesson. I am designing these lessons to help us work with the text. So we are going to do some things that are more closely related to study than just asking questions. I will print the text we will be studying and ask you to work through it with various instructions. I would advise getting some highlighters, color pencils, or markers to note the parallels in the text. You can use the space to the right of the text to take notes. The text provided is from the ESV. Read the text in other versions and make notes of the differences.

<p>“The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Use a Bible dictionary to define the following words:

Wisdom: _____

Insight: _____

Prudence: _____

Enigma: _____

ANGER

Text: Proverbs 12:16; 14:29; 15:1, 18; 16:14, 32; 19:11, 12, 19; 21:19; 22:24-25; 27:4 29:8; 29:11, 22; 30:33

Not everyone has a problem with anger. But for those who do, it is very real and extremely dangerous. The wise man knew this and instructed his son to keep his anger in check. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

The Wisdom of Controlling Your Anger

Anger Causes Strife

The Danger of Anger

What are some modern-day proverbs concerning anger?

More biblical teaching on anger: Matthew 5:21-26; Psalm 4:4 and Ephesians 4:26; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; James 1:19-20

AVOID EVIL ASSOCIATIONS

Text: Proverbs 1:8-19

Use markers to note the parallels in the text. You can use the space to the right of the text to take notes. The text provided is from the ESV. Read the text in other versions and make notes of the differences.

<p>Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.</p> <p>My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse” —</p> <p>my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.</p> <p>For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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- Verse 8 is an example of “antithetical parallelism.” How do both lines say the same thing in opposing ways?
- Define “Sheol”: _____

HARD WORK AND LAZINESS

Text: Proverbs 10:4, 5, 26; 12:11, 14, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 16:26; 18:9; 19:15; 20:4, 13; 24:27; 24:30-34; 28:19

To make a generalization, the last couple of generations to come to adulthood do not appreciate the value of hard work. Maybe this comes from parents doing too much for their children? Maybe it comes from the “everyone gets a trophy” mentality? Either way, the wise man is clear: if you are lazy, then you will go hungry. If you work hard, you can feed your family. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

Laziness leads to hunger

Laziness affects others

The danger of too much sleep

- Man was not created to be idle. The plan from the beginning was that man would work. However, because of sin, that work became harder. Where is this principle taught?
- What is the regular refrain of the author of Ecclesiastes when it comes to work? See Ecclesiastes 3:13, 22; 5:18; 8:15
- More biblical teaching on hard work and laziness: Ecclesiastes 4:5; 5:12; 9:10; Romans 12:11; Colossians 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-1f; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12; 2 Timothy 2:6

DO NOT RESIST WOMAN WISDOM

Text: Proverbs 1:20-33

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: “How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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WEALTH AND POVERTY

Text: Proverbs 10:2, 15; 11:4, 18, 25, 28; 13:7, 8, 11, 18, 22; 14:21, 31; 15:27; 16:16; 19:4, 14, 17; 21:17; 22:1, 7, 9; 23:4-6, 21; 28:6, 8, 27; 30:7-9

We all understand the necessity of money. We all understand the fear of poverty and the desire for wealth. An obsession with money can ruin our relationships—especially with God. But poverty can lead to neediness, hunger, and pain. How do we balance our attitude towards money? Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

General Statements about Wealth

Negative Statements about Wealth

Poverty

Giving

Ill-gotten Gains

Things Better than Money

What are some modern-day proverbs concerning money?

More biblical teaching on wealth and poverty: Ecclesiastes 4:6, 13; 5:10-11; Matthew 6:19-21; 19:24; Luke 12:24; 2 Corinthians 9:6; 1 Timothy 6:17-19

THE BENEFITS OF WISDOM

Text: Proverbs 2 (This lesson is two pages)

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked,</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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<p>and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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Use a Bible dictionary to define the following words:

Justice: _____

Integrity: _____

Righteousness: _____

Equity: _____

Discretion: _____

What does James 1 teach about getting wisdom?

Is the “forbidden woman” a literal woman or a figurative idea?

What did Jesus say about the paths we walk in Matthew 7?

HUMILITY AND ARROGANCE

Text: Proverbs 11:2; 15:25, 33; 16:5, 18, 19; 18:12; 21:4, 24; 22:4; 25:6-7; 26:12; 29:23; 30:13

In my opinion, humility is one of the most difficult characteristics to achieve because we want to be praised and recognized for our talents and successes. We often feel the need to lift ourselves up, pat ourselves on the back, and toot our own horns. Yet the wise man denounces such behavior. Read these passages and consider these questions:

- What is it about pride/arrogance that is so dangerous?
- What is the connection between humility and wisdom?
- What are the benefits of humility?
- Why is arrogance so repulsive to God?
- **Consider Proverbs 25:6-7:** What similar statement did Jesus make?
- What are some modern-day proverbs concerning pride and humility?
- More biblical teaching on pride and humility: 1 Kings 20:11; Isaiah 5:21; Matthew 5:3-5; Romans 12:10, 16; 1 Corinthians 10:12; James 4:6, 10

TRUST IN GOD

Text: Proverbs 3:1-12

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you.</p> <p>Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.</p> <p>So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.</p> <p>Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.</p> <p>In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.</p> <p>Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.</p> <p>It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones.</p> <p>Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.</p> <p>My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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What is the connection between Jeremiah 9:23 and this passage?

JUSTICE

Text: Proverbs 13:23; 14:31; 16:8; 17:5, 15, 23, 26; 18:5; 20:10, 23; 21:7, 28; 22:8, 16, 22-23, 28; 23:10-11; 24:23-25; 28:3, 8, 15, 16, 21; 29:27; 30:14; 31:8-9

We are living through a time of much injustice. We often equate justice and fairness. We may teach our kids to be fair, but at the same time we want them to understand that life is not always fair. Where this really rubs us the wrong way is when those in power are unjust. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

Justice in personal relationships

Justice in business relationships

Justice in the court

Justice in leadership

- Individually, what can we do about injustice?
- To what extent are we to accept personal injustice against ourselves?
- Consider Jeremiah 22:3. Search the Law to see how often God commands the people to aid the orphan, widow, and sojourner.
- More biblical teaching on justice: Ecclesiastes 8:14; Hosea 12:6; Amos 5:7, 12-15, 21-24; Micah 6:8; Isaiah 1:16-17; James 1:27; Luke 10:29-37

GET WISDOM

Text: Proverbs 3:13—4:9 (This lesson is two pages)

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed. The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew. My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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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 again, tomorrow I will give it”—when you have it with you.

Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you.

Do not contend with a man for no reason, when he has done you no harm.

Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways, for the devious person is an abomination to the LORD, but the upright are in his confidence.

The LORD’s curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the dwelling of the righteous.

Toward the scorners he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.

The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace.

CHAPTER 4

Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight, for I give you good precepts; do not forsake my teaching.

When I was a son with my father, tender, the only one in the sight of my mother, he taught me and said to me,

“Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom; get insight; do not forget, and do not turn away from the words of my mouth.

Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her. She will place on your head a graceful garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

ALCOHOL

Text: Proverbs 20:1; 21:17; 23:29-35; 31:4-6

What the Bible says about alcohol is not as black and white as we might like it to be. Many passages frown upon drinking while other passages use wine as a symbol of God's blessings. Some passages seem to condemn it outright, but then Paul tells Timothy to drink a little for his stomach's sake (1 Timothy 5:23). Let's note a few historical facts before we begin. "Wine" does not always mean fermented and, therefore, alcoholic. The water that the ancients drank was highly contaminated (this is why Timothy was told to use a little wine) and when mixed with alcohol it was safer to drink. Finally, the alcoholic content of ancient "wine" and our modern alcohol is not comparable. It appears that the real issue is less on the drink and more on the effect of the drink.

- According to these proverbs, what are the dangers of wine and strong drink?
- Why is "wine" a symbol of God's blessings?
- List the stories of the Bible involving drunkenness.
- What groups of people were forbidden from drinking?
- Other than alcohol, what might take away our sobriety? (i.e. power, money)
- What is the modern-day attitude towards alcohol and why is it so dangerous?
- More biblical teaching on alcohol and sobriety: Isaiah 5:11, 22; Ephesians 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8; 1 Peter 1:13; 4:7; 5:8

STAY ON THE RIGHT PATH

Text: Proverbs 4:10-27

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many. I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness. When you walk, your step will not be hampered, and if you run, you will not stumble. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of the evil. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble. For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence. But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day. The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know over what they stumble. My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you. Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure. Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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FAMILY: PARENTS AND CHILDREN

Text: Proverbs 10:1; 13:1, 22, 24; 15:5, 20; 17:6, 21, 25; 19:13, 18, 26; 20:7, 11, 20; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14, 15-16, 22-25; 27:11; 28:8, 24; 29:3, 15, 17

You will not see much of what Proverbs advises on the Parenting shelf at the bookstore. But we would be wise to heed the information given to us from our creator when it comes to our children. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

The dangers of not disciplining your children

The need to listen to your parents

The blessing of wise children

- We should not immediately equate discipline with spanking. What is discipline? What are various ways to discipline your children?
- Notice the number of proverbs about this subject. Might that speak to the need for consistency in discipline?
- How does our heavenly father discipline His children?
- More biblical teaching on parents and children: Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7; Psalm 78:4; 103:13; 127:3; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21; Hebrews 12:7-11

AVOID PROMISCUOUS WOMEN

Text: Proverbs 5; 6:20-35; 7

There is a lot of text for this lesson, but one main thought: avoid promiscuous women. The desire (especially for young men) is strong, but, the writer says, direct that energy towards your wife alone. For this lesson we will have some questions due to the length of the text.

- What is so appealing about this forbidden woman?
- What happens to those who go to her?
- What does the discipline of v. 12 have to do with this discussion?
- Sexual desire and urges are not sinful. They were given to us by God. What did God provide as a channel for those desires?
- How could we further apply 6:27-28?
- What does the forbidden woman promise?
- What does fornication/adultery deliver?

FAMILY: MARRIAGE

Text: Proverbs 12:4; 18:22; 19:13, 14; 21:9, 19; 22:14; 23:26-28; 25:24; 27:15-16; 29:3

The main issue the wise man addresses about marriage is the choice of spouse. Remember, he is speaking to his son—presumably unmarried and waiting for one. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

The trouble of a quarrelsome wife

A good wife is a gift from God

The danger of sexual immorality

- Why doesn't Proverbs address husbands?
- These proverbs are overwhelmingly about the troubles a wife can bring. Does Proverbs ever address the blessings a wife can bring?
- More biblical teaching on marriage: Genesis 2:24; The Song of Solomon; Matthew 5:27-30; 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7

WISDOM'S ADMONITIONS

Text: Proverbs 6:1-19

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor. Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler. Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man. A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord; therefore calamity will come upon him suddenly; in a moment he will be broken beyond healing. There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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GOVERNMENT

Text: Proverbs 14:28, 34; 16:10, 12, 14, 15; 19:12; 20:2, 8, 26, 28; 21:1, 15; 24:21-22; 25:1-7; 28:2, 15, 16; 29:2, 4, 12, 14, 26; 31:1-5

This may be a timely topic for us as it is an election year and there are many things going on that have caused people to think about and question governmental policies. But Proverbs does not have a lot to say about submitting to the ruler. If anything, it says more to the ruler. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

The danger of a bad king

The blessings of a good king

The king's role in justice

Approaching the king

- Consider the audience of this book. Why does the wise man say so much about how rulers should behave?
- More biblical teaching on government: Ecclesiastes 8:2-4; Matthew 22:15-22; John 19:11; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17

WISDOM'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Text: Proverbs 8 (This lesson is two pages)

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

<p>Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand; beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries aloud: “To you, O men, I call, and my cry is to the children of man. O simple ones, learn prudence; O fools, learn sense. Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right, for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her. “I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly.</p>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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I love those who love me,
and those who seek me diligently find me.
Riches and honor are with me,
enduring wealth and righteousness.
My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold,
and my yield than choice silver.
I walk in the way of righteousness,
in the paths of justice,
granting an inheritance to those who love me,
and filling their treasuries.

The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his
work,
the first of his acts of old.
Ages ago I was set up, at the first,
before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth,
before he had made the earth with its fields,
or the first of the dust of the world.
When he established the heavens, I was there;
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master workman,
and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him
always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the children of man.

And now, O sons, listen to me:
blessed are those who keep my ways.
Hear instruction and be wise,
and do not neglect it.
Blessed is the one who listens to me,
watching daily at my gates,
waiting beside my doors.
For whoever finds me finds life
and obtains favor from the LORD,
but he who fails to find me injures himself;
all who hate me love death.

PERSONAL CHARACTER

I am going to let you write this lesson. There are so many passages we could look at that I thought this might be a good opportunity to use your concordance or biblegateway.com. Do a search of the following words in the book of Proverbs and list the corresponding verses.

Remember, we are looking for proverbs in chapters 10-31.

- **Righteousness** _____

- **Wicked** _____

- **Just** _____

- **Crooked** _____

- **Upright** _____

- **Purity** _____

- **Fool** _____

- **Wise** _____

- **Envy** _____

THE CHOICE: WISDOM OR FOLLY

Text: Proverbs 9

Mark the parallels in the text. Note differences between various translations. Make notes to the right.

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

Text: Proverbs 11:9, 12; 12:26; 13:20; 14:20, 21; 16:7, 28, 29; 17:9, 17; 18:24; 19:4, 6, 7; 21:10; 22:24-25; 24:17, 28-29; 25:8-10, 17, 18, 19, 21; 26:18-19; 27:5-6, 9, 10, 14, 17; 29:5

As you can see, many proverbs deal with our personal relationships. The majority of these deal with friends and neighbors. It is interesting, then, that Jesus takes this behavior to another level in how we treat our enemies. Read the above verses and put them into the category you think they belong.

Friends

Neighbors

Enemies

- How do friends behave?
- As neighbors, what do we want to avoid?
- Jesus is clear in when He says “Love your enemies.” It is not a new concept, though it is emphasized more. How does Proverbs teach us to treat our enemies?
- What does the New Testament say about how we are to treat our enemies?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. • She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness. • Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: • “Many women have done excellently, but you surpass them all.” • Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. • Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates. 	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
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What are the “distaff” and “spindle”?

On what is the praise of this woman based?

What are the connections between the “Worthy woman” and “woman wisdom” in the first part of the book?

What is the relationship between this husband and wife like?

What is your main take away from this description of the worthy woman?

REVIEW

- Why do we find Proverbs so appealing?
- What do you find difficult in Proverbs?
- Why are chapters 10-31 so random?
- Who is the main audience of Proverbs?
- What topics are not addressed in this book that you find surprising?
- How is Proverbs similar to the Epistle of James?
- What other topics could we have covered on Wednesdays?
- Do you prefer chapters 1-9 or chapters 10-31? Why?
- How does studying Proverbs help us to be doers of the word?