

A large, stylized number '31' is centered in the background. The '3' is composed of two thick, rounded strokes, and the '1' is a single thick vertical stroke. Both are rendered in a gradient of colors from light orange to dark purple.

PROVERBS *for* LIFE

A STUDY IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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FRIENDSHIP

& LAUGHTER

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

LEADER NOTE:

This section is about introducing the overall topic and giving an overview of the concepts we'll discuss in this series in Proverbs. Highlight the topics that will be covered in the series, but be careful not to go into great detail, because you'll do that in the next few weeks. This is simply an introduction to the main elements of the series. Also, this is a good opportunity to emphasize that "Proverbs" is a 5-week study. "Friendship and Laughter" is only the first week, but each will help learners gain practical helps for life today.

FRIENDSHIP AND LAUGHTER

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. - Proverbs 18:24

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. - Proverbs 17:22

WISDOM AND WEALTH

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. - Proverbs 1:1-7

Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. - Proverbs 3:9-10

PLANNING AND WORK

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all

your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. - Proverbs 3:5-6

In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty. - Proverbs 14:23

ANGER AND WORDS

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. - Proverbs 19:11

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits. - Proverbs 18:21

PARENTING AND SEX

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it. - Proverbs 22:6

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. - Proverbs 5:15-19

Which of the proverbs above stands out to you the most right now? Why?

FRIENDSHIP

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 18:24

²⁴ A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

How many close friends would you say you have?

Does Proverbs 18:24 mean your friendship circle should be closed at some point? What, then, does it mean?

No matter how many people you know, the number you truly count on daily to have your back and love you well is limited. It's possible you have many acquaintances, but few friends. This doesn't mean we shouldn't extend friendship to everyone; it just means the kind of friend who feels like family is a rare treasure.

KEY VERSES ABOUT THE BUILDING OF FRIENDSHIP

PROVERBS 12:26

One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.

PROVERBS 22:24

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man.

PROVERBS 25:19

Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips.

PROVERBS 16:28

A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

What guidelines about building friendships can you ascertain from these proverbs?

Which stands out to you the most right now? Why?

Friendship is God's design. From the beginning, God determined it wasn't good for people to be alone (Gen. 2:18). We need each other—and not just in times of desperate, obvious need. We need to live with each other on a daily basis. We need each other for accountability. We need each other's honesty, companionship, understanding, love, help, and laughter. These types of relationships require effort and sacrifice from both sides. We must actively seek to build those types of friendships by:

- Choosing friends and being the kind of friend who doesn't lead others astray.
- Choosing friends and being the kind of friend who is level-headed, loves the Lord, and seeks to emulate His character and the fruit of His Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23).
- Choosing friends and being the kind of friend other people can count on to follow through and keep commitments.
- Choosing friends and being the kind of friend whose words are true and uplifting, never intending to ruin or damage others.

What are some other qualities you look for and seek to demonstrate in friendships?

Based on all of the above qualities, how would you rate the quality of your friendships? How good of a friend have you been to others? Where do you need to improve?

KEY VERSES ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF FRIENDSHIP

PROVERBS 13:20

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

PROVERBS 17:17

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.

PROVERBS 27:6, 9

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy....Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.

PROVERBS 27:17

Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.

What benefits of friendship can you ascertain from these proverbs?

Which stands out to you the most? Why?

Wisdom, love, honesty, counsel, and personal growth are all great benefits we experience in the kind of friendship God designed and desires for us. The thing about the Proverbs is that they're not pie in the sky idealism—these are promises of what will occur when true friendship takes place. **Godly friends lead to personal growth. Would others say they are regularly growing because of you?**

LAUGHTER

LEADER NOTE

This section explores another benefit of friendship—laughter! As you examine the Scriptures provided, help learners see that God wants them to be full of joy. It's not that life is always funny; clearly, it's not! But laughter is meant to aid in the difficulty. Laughter reflects the heart of God and those who find joy in Him.

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 17:22

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

When have you experienced this in your own life?

How do you know if your heart is truly full of joy, or if the laughter you experience is the kind that “dries up the bones”?

It's tricky—laughter is a gift from God, but in and of itself, laughter isn't always a reflection of true joy. The Bible is explicit that there are some things we shouldn't laugh about:

PROVERBS 24:17

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles.

EPHESIANS 5:4

Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.

What does it say about a person if their primary cause for laughter is the failure or faults of others? What types of friendships do you imagine that person is building?

What's the big deal with crude jokes? How would you respond to someone who says, “It's only words”?

KEY VERSES ABOUT OUR REASONS FOR LAUGHTER

PSALM 126:2

Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

Name just one of the great things the Lord has done for you.

From this verse, in what ways is laughter a form of witnessing?

ECCLESIASTES 3:1, 4B

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven...a time to laugh.

What does this tell you about God's view of laughter?

Do you think you're currently enjoying God the way He intended? Why or why not?

NEHEMIAH 8:10

Then he said to them, "Go your way. Eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready, for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength."

When have you found God's strength as reason for joy? Where do you need that strength and joy now?

HABAKKUK 3:17-19

Though the fig tree should not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will take joy in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the deer's; he makes me tread on my high places.

LUKE 6:21

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

JOHN 16:33

I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

How do these three passages inform you about what is reason for laughter and what is not?

How does it help you in your struggles on earth to know that there will be laughing in heaven?

1 THESSALONIANS 2:19

For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you?

Who is the type of person who thinks about Jesus' return and finds cause for joy and laughter?

Are there people who will be laughing with you in heaven because of the gospel investment you made in them on earth?

Jesus was a man of sorrows, but He was also a man of joy. After telling the parable of the lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son Jesus said, "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents," (Luke 15:10). God is the one rejoicing! Even in the midst of hard circumstances, we can take an eternal view and rejoice through them. The eternal view is this:

- He has done great things for us.
- God created and ordains laughter.
- His joy gives us strength and reason to find joy in and through our circumstances.
- What Jesus has done for us in His work of redemption on the cross and what He promises to do for us in His future return is reason for great joy.
- We find joy and laughter in deep relationships with others now, and there is unending joy to be had in the future for those who trust in Christ.

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD FRIENDSHIP AND LAUGHTER

LEADER NOTE

Regardless of where a person is in his or her friendships and level of joy, everyone has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to experience God's gifts of friendship and laughter more fully.

FRIENDSHIP

Identify a few ways you can demonstrate true friendship to the people God has put in closest relationship to you.

Identify a few ways you can demonstrate true friendship to a few people with whom healthy relationship is a struggle.

In your own words, what steps do you need to take to build godly friendships?

In light of what God is calling you to do, how can this group be a friend to you this week?

LAUGHTER

How difficult or easy is it for you to find joy in life? Explain.

Based on today's passages, when you do laugh, are you laughing for the right reasons?

Respond to the following statement: Without relationship with Jesus Christ, a person lacks a lasting reason for true joy and laughter. What does this tell us about one way every believer should apply today's lesson?

COMMENTARY

PROVERBS 18:24

The first friends are neighbors or companions, who may be attracted by money (19:4). The second kind of friend is literally "one who loves." Jesus is such a friend to His followers (Jn 15:13-14).

PROVERBS 12:26

The righteous man literally "spies out" (Num 13:2) or "investigates" (Ecc 7:25) his neighbor to make sure he will not mislead him.

PROVERBS 22:24

A hot-tempered man is constantly in trouble (15:18; 19:19; 29:22); his companion could get trapped (12:13; 18:7; 29:6).

PROVERBS 25:19

Unreliable is literally "treacherous" (2:22; cp. 20:6).

PROVERBS 16:28

A contrary man is one who distorts speech, who turns things upside down, who "says perverse things." It may be that he speaks his own lies or that he subverts others' speech by the way he spins it. A gossip is someone who grumbles (Dt 1:27; Ps 106:25; Isa 29:24) or finds fault but avoids open discussion or confrontation.

PROVERBS 17:17

The purpose of a brother is to uphold a family member in a difficult time. The Hebrew word can be used generally of relatives (Gen 13:8; 29:15; Jdg 14:3). An unlikely, but possible interpretation is that a friend is better because he loves at all times, not just in difficult times.

PROVERBS 27:6,9

A friend imparts constructive criticism out of love, but an enemy gives kisses (24:26) with deceit in mind. Being anointed with oil and enjoying incense were ancient pleasures. The second line could be saying that the sweetness of a friend comes from sincere counsel.

PROVERBS 27:17

As a file sharpens an ax or a sharpening steel a carving knife, good friends encourage one another to grow in wisdom and godliness, even if it requires painful criticism (v. 6).

PROVERBS 17:22

In 15:13 a joyful heart causes a good face; here it is a good cure. A sad heart produces a broken spirit. Dried-up bones represent people who have lost their vitality (Ezek 37:11). The opposite would be bones saturated with marrow or oil (Job 21:24; Ps 109:18).

PROVERBS 24:17

It is literally "evil in the eyes" of God when someone gloats over another person's misfortune (Job 31:29; Ps 35:11-14; Lk 6:27,35; Rm 12:20-21).

EPHESIANS 5:4

All of God's gifts are to be subjects for thanksgiving, not of crude joking.

PSALM 126:2

God's intervention on Israel's behalf testifies to His omnipotence and sovereignty (96:3; 113:4; Isa 61:9; 66:19; Jer 31:10; Ezek 36:23).

ECCLESIASTES 3:1,4B

These verses, the most famous text in Ecclesiastes, must be read from the context of the fundamental claim of the book: that we are mortals, doomed to perish, and that our work will perish with us. No human work is eternal, and our activities, whether building or tearing down, must change as the situation dictates. We naturally prefer to stay on the positive side of the list—to laugh rather than to weep, to love rather than to hate, and to have peace rather than war—but as long as we live in a world of change, conflict, and death, we must accept the fact that we cannot have unchanging bliss. Even so, as verse 11 says, everything is "appropriate in its time." Mourning and separation are

painful, but there is a time when it is right and even beautiful to mourn. We must accept the fundamental fact of mortality: we are creatures who live in time. We must respond appropriately to the seasons of life as they come.

NEHEMIAH 8:10

Rather than mourning, the people were commanded to go and eat what is rich, drink what is sweet. The term "rich" translates a Hebrew word (mashmannim) found in the OT only here in this verse but clearly related to the verb "to make fat, to be fat." It refers to choice foods appropriate for a celebration. The "sweet" drink (Hb mamtaqqim) mentioned here may have been wine mixed with honey, a popular drink long before the time of Christ. The people were to stop grieving because their strength came from the joy of the Lord . True security was found in Yahweh alone.

HABAKKUK 3:17-19

But come what may, the prophet will trust in God, finding his strength and sure footing through faith. Yahweh is God's personal name in the OT. It is usually rendered Lord, though that rendering would be awkward here where Yahweh is also called my Lord. The prophet applied to his own life the message of 2:4: "The righteous one will live by his faith."

JOHN 16:33

Jesus' farewell discourse ends on a note of triumph (1 Jn 2:13-14; 4:4; 5:4-5).

1 THESSALONIANS 2:19

The reference to a "crown" carries the image of a laurel wreath worn on the head in reward for victory at a Greek athletic contest. Paul viewed the Thessalonian church as his crown of boasting, which would be evident at Jesus' coming.

WISDOM

& HEALTH

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

FRIENDSHIP AND LAUGHTER

In our first session in the book of Proverbs, we discovered the Bible has much to say on the topics of friendship and laughter. There are biblical keys to building friendship, and numerous benefits in having and maintaining close relationships with other believers. Laughter is a benefit of friendship and a natural outcome of relationships centered on the joy of the Lord. Laughter reflects the heart of God and serves as a testimony of His grace in the lives of those who are committed to Him.

Name one takeaway from last week's lesson that stuck with you through the week.

How did you build friendships this week? Do you think the joy of the Lord was displayed through your life this week? Why or why not?

The purpose of Proverbs is to give us wisdom, which is the right use of knowledge. This week we'll continue our study of the wide range of subjects Proverbs addresses as we examine wisdom and wealth.

WISDOM

LEADER NOTE

This study on wisdom impacts every other topic we'll examine in Proverbs. Use this section to overview what wisdom is, where it comes from, how to get it, and what it looks like when we live with it. You'll want to relate back to this general study about wisdom as you discuss future topics like wealth, planning, work, anger, words, parenting, and sex. Help adults see their need for wisdom in every area of their lives.

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 1:1-7

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.

Over the course of your life, would you say you've been mostly teachable or unteachable? When you have had an unteachable attitude, what was the cause of it (i.e., I was a teenager and I wanted to figure it out on my own, etc.)?

What is a subject about which you openly seek to gain knowledge? Why?

Young Solomon was going to be taking over for his father David. God told Solomon He'd give him whatever he asked for, so Solomon asked for wisdom. He knew he'd need it! We do, too. Wisdom—insight for the people and problems in our lives— is the one thing we need more than anything else. Wisdom is different than knowledge. Knowledge is acquiring information. Understanding is knowing which information is true and which is false. Wisdom is applying those truths to life. Wisdom offers insight, hindsight, and foresight.

Who is the wisest Christian you know? How do you think he or she became so wise?

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 14:8

The wisdom of the prudent is to discern his way, but the folly of fools is deceiving.

PROVERBS 13:20

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

PROVERBS 1:20-23

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."

What do you learn about wisdom from these verses?

What is the relationship between introspection and wisdom? Between friendship and wisdom? Between listening to God and being wise?

Have you ever felt like wisdom was elusive in a certain situation? Describe that situation. How does Proverbs 1:20-23 challenge and/or encourage you?

God is not silent. He speaks through His creation, His commands, Jesus Christ, your conscience, and through godly companions. He speaks to us so that we might have wisdom to understand why we do the things we do, see life from His eternal perspective, and make right choices with that big picture in mind. Foolish people don't seek God's wisdom in prayer, His Word, in self-examination, in Jesus' example, or in other believers. Simply seeking God's wisdom in humility can change the trajectory of a person's life.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 2:1-9

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.

Respond to the following statement: "The wiser you become, the more you realize how much you don't know." Have you found this to be true in your own life? Explain.

In your own words, what was Solomon saying is the benefit and worth of wisdom?

COLOSSIANS 2:2-3

That their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the

knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

What is the danger of believing wisdom is simply gained with age and experience? How does it challenge this idea to view wisdom as a person (Jesus Christ)?

Wisdom says we must avoid both fear of the future and the return to the past. Wisdom is knowing what God is doing in our time. One of the greatest areas where we need wisdom for today is the area of wealth.

WEALTH

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 3:9-10

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.

How do the first three words of Proverbs 3:9 inform you about the purpose of your life?

What does it look like, in daily life, for a person to honor the Lord with his/her wealth and “with the firstfruits of all your produce”?

How often in a typical day would you say honor for the Lord is the motivating factor in your decisions?

We honor God when we give Him the rightful place in our lives. This is what we were created for, and it should be the motive for everything we do. But many of us live our days honoring ourselves or other people. We see this clearly in the way we use our wealth—to eat what we want, enjoy the comforts we like, and to connect, fit in with, and impress other people.

How have you (either in the past or present) finished the following thought: If I could just get/have _____, then I would be happy?

There is more to life than accumulating wealth—more to life than feeling “financially secure.” God designed us to be generous, not to be hoarders. Life is not about being rich, but about being enriched by Him and for the benefit of others!

What is the importance of the word “firstfruits” in Proverbs 3:9-10? Why should our generosity to the Lord come before anything else?

What principles do you find in this passage about the priority of saving? The promise of blessing?

The Bible doesn't teach a prosperity gospel or a poverty gospel; it teaches a providential gospel. God wants our lives to be full and overflowing. Understanding that everything we have is from Him—every dollar, every material possession, every ability, every breath, every accomplishment—we are called to engage with Him in the process of His providential gospel. We do this in the way we handle our money matters. The way we view and treat the wealth God has given us is one of the most recognizable ways we can honor Him.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 22:7

The rich rules over the poor and the borrower is the slave of the lender.

PROVERBS 13:7

One pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth.

What wisdom about wealth do you gain from these two proverbs?

More doesn't make us happy. In fact, it has great destructive potential. It can cause us to become enslaved in continual pursuit of that which we don't yet have. It can destroy the contentment God wants us to live with. Wisdom leads us to avoid these traps and reminds us that true contentment is found in God alone.

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD WISDOM AND WEALTH

LEADER NOTE

The very nature of wisdom means that every person has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to experience God's gifts of wisdom and wealth more fully.

WISDOM

What are some ways you believe God has provided wisdom for you through His Word and prayer?

How might you seek to pass wisdom along to future generations, whether it be your children or the next generation of followers of Christ? Why is this important?

How might you pursue wisdom in new ways in light of this study?

WEALTH

How would you currently rate the way in which you honor (or do not honor) the Lord with your wealth and resources?

What needs to change?

What are the next steps you should take to pursue this change?

COMMENTARY

PROVERBS 1:1-7

The prologue challenges the reader to commit himself to the mastery of this book. It offers the significant benefit of acquiring the key to attaining capability in life. By this book, one can learn the principles that determine success or failure in the major arenas of human activity, including business, personal relationships, family life, and community life. Verses 2–6 describe the purpose of the book, that is, to teach wisdom to the reader. The primary purpose of Proverbs is the instruction of young people, those who have yet to learn wisdom (v. 4), but it is not only for children. Those who are already mature and learned (v. 5) also have a great deal to learn from this book, and they should not shun it as unworthy of their time.

The vocabulary of this section indicates four characteristics of biblical wisdom. First, it is practical. “Wisdom” includes the idea of “common sense” and the ability to cope with daily problems and can also refer to occupational skills (Exod 28:3; Ps 107:27). Second, it is intellectual. This is implied in words like “understanding” and “knowledge.” Solomon’s own fascination with natural history illustrates this (1 Kgs 4:33). Third, it is moral and involves self-control. This is indicated in words like “right and fair” and “discipline.”

Fourth, Proverbs draws the reader into the mysteries of life. This is implied in terms like “parables” and “riddles.” The ancients were intrigued at riddles (Judg 14:12–19), but more is involved here than casual entertainment. Biblical wisdom seeks to resolve or at least adjust to the ambiguities of life. It seeks the reality behind the appearances. Not only that, it affirms that the believer can understand mysteries that outsiders cannot and so may couch its teaching in enigma (Matt 13:10–17).

Verse 7 ties the fundamental principle of biblical wisdom (“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”) to recognition that many will reject wisdom and God (“fools despise wisdom”). A principle that believers must teach their children is that in their pursuit of wisdom they will be surrounded by others going the opposite direction who will be encouraging them to do likewise. In this fashion the polarity of the entire Book of Proverbs—the way of the wise and the way of the fool—is introduced. The reader faces the alternatives and is challenged to attain wisdom through the fear of God.

PROVERBS 14:8

This verse says literally the stupidity (Hb ewiyl) of fools (Hb kesiyl) is deceit. This could mean

that they deceive themselves through their own stupidity, or that their stupidity is evident in the deceit they practice on others.

PROVERBS 1:20-23

Verse 20. God's wisdom is personified as a woman seeking people who will heed her teachings. She raises her voice to attract the attention of busy people in the marketplace. Rather than staying in the quiet halls of scholars, wisdom plunges into the noisy hubbub of the streets and takes up a position at the gateways of the city where all traffic must pass. No one can claim that wisdom is inaccessible; she takes the initiative to offer her services.

Personification is a common literary device. The writer of Proverbs did not mean that God's wisdom was a separate deity. Rather, personification is a way of highlighting this attribute of God.

Verse 21. Lady wisdom attempts to be heard above many other noises. The commotion is so loud that some may not hear her teaching. In our society many voices compete for our attention. Advertisers desire that we buy their products. Politicians want us to vote for them. Entertainment figures seek fans.

Verse 22. God has made His wisdom available, but many have ignored or mocked it. Among these are foolish ones, mockers, and fools. The term foolish ones also can be translated "simple ones." These people are naive and uninformed about the realities of life. Such persons must receive wisdom if they are to reach moral and spiritual maturity. They love ignorance; they might subscribe to the popular saying that ignorance is bliss. The mockers are scoffers who more aggressively reject wisdom's teaching. Such mockers are described elsewhere in Proverbs as arrogant and proud (Prov. 21:24) and as hating rebuke (9:8; 13:1). The term fool in the Book of Proverbs generally refers to someone who is morally deficient. Foolishness is not the same as low intelligence. A fool makes wrong choices because he or she fails to follow

God's wisdom for life. Such an individual does not focus on what is right (17:24). God expects us to listen to and follow His wisdom.

Verse 23. All these people are going down the wrong path, so wisdom's words to them will be a rebuke. Proverbs reminds us often that it is vital to welcome reproof, not reject it (1:23, 25, 30; 3:11; 9:8; 13:1; 15:31; 17:10; 19:25; 25:12; 30:6). The fool needs to turn from his self-destructive ways and place himself under wisdom's tutelage. When he does, wisdom will pour out her heart (literally "spirit") and make known her thoughts (literally "words").

PROVERBS 2:1-9

Solomon was the author of the vast majority of the Book of Proverbs. He wrote this collection of proverbs during his 40-year reign as king over Israel (970-930 B.C.). Scripture is clear that Solomon's wisdom was given to him by God (see 1 Kings 4:29). A proverb is a brief and forcefully expressed saying that contains godly insight and advice about life. In the Old Testament, a proverb's main focus is on the various ways God's covenant people can best enjoy covenant life with Him. Proverbs 2:1-6 describes how a person receives wisdom from God. Solomon identified six conditions (signified by the word if) for receiving God's wisdom that He has provided through Solomon for His people. The first two are: if you accept my words and store up my commands within you. In this verse, words and commands are synonymous and refer to what God has revealed to us through Solomon about how He wants us as His people to live before Him. We must accept the truths of God's Word and store them in our minds and hearts so that we will not forget them.

Verse 3 contains the third and fourth conditions: if you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding. The actions in verses 1-2 were internal, activities of the mind and the intellect. Next, Solomon stated that our thinking must turn into actions, at least in a metaphorical sense. This verse also emphasizes

the proactive nature of seeking godly wisdom for our lives. The imagery here is of someone yelling at the top of his voice, beckoning insight and understanding to come to his aid. The fifth and sixth conditions occur in verse 4: if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure. In this verse the search for wisdom uses the imagery of a treasure hunter who is persistent and doesn't give up until he finds the treasure he is seeking. We should value the truths of God's Word in an even greater way.

These six conditions indicate that we must do everything we can to attain the wisdom that only God can provide. Verse 5 explains what happens when we show diligence in the pursuit of wisdom: then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God. Notice that the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God are synonymous. One of the basic truths about God is that we should fear Him, and it is only when we turn to His Word again and again that we truly understand this and know what we must do to please Him. Verse 6 clearly indicates that such an understanding of God comes only from Him: For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. This wisdom is God-given. When God gives His wisdom to us, we should do everything we can to learn what He has done for us and what He demands of us as His people.

As we store up God's commands (v. 1), He stores up success as our reward. Success is competence (3:21; 8:14) or sound judgment (18:10). Upright means "corresponding to God's ethical instruction" (Hb yashar; see word study at 21:2). The Hebrew word for integrity implies genuineness and reliability; it is also translated "honorable" (10:29) and "honest" (29:10).

Understanding is a further result of seeking wisdom. A person can live ethically when he has wisdom in his mind (lit "heart") and heart. God's wisdom entering a person and making him delight in godly knowledge is regeneration (Jer 31:31-33; Ezek 36:27; 1Co 1:18).

COLOSSIANS 2:2-3

2:2. Paul's ongoing concern for believers who had not seen him was that their hearts (inner beings) might be encouraged or strengthened. They needed spiritual strength to reject the false teachings to which they were being subjected. In addition, believers needed to be joined together ("knit together" or "united") in love (agape, God's kind of love). That kind of unity would guard against divisions caused by false teachings.

2:3. False teachers claimed they had exclusive, superior knowledge people needed to experience salvation. Paul countered that in Christ all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. Paul was concerned that the Colossian Christians might fall victim to false teachers' glib presentations. The Greek term rendered deceive originally meant "to cheat by false reckoning" and then "to delude."

PROVERBS 3:9-10

Paul stressed that truthfulness was to be a mark of believers' lifestyle. The phrase "do not lie" can have the force of "stop lying." The Colossian believers' relationships with one another and their witness to unbelievers required truth and honesty. Lying, dishonesty, and deceit had characterized their pagan lifestyles; but because they had put off the old self (nature), they were to shed these practices (habitual actions) as they would discard old, ragged, filthy clothing. At conversion, believers had put on (as new, clean clothing) the new self (nature). In Greek, the tense of the verbs translated "put off" (3:9) and "put on" (3:10) convey once-for-all action. When believers placed their faith in Christ, He gave them a new nature governed by His grace. The new self is (continually) being renewed (transformed in quality) in knowledge. Christ works in believers to facilitate a process of renewal—of their continuing to gain new insights into and understanding of God's will. False teachers in Colossae offered secret knowledge they claimed was necessary for people to be fully Christian. Paul countered that Christ in believers was progressively

supplying them with the knowledge they needed. He was nurturing them in the process of spiritual growth.

PROVERBS 13:7

One person pretends to have the blessings that are reserved for the wise and righteous and demands social status that he does not deserve. The other covers up his blessings—perhaps so he doesn't have to share with the needy—and does not give God the glory.

PLANNING

& WORK

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This is the third week in our 5-week series in Proverbs. This section is a way to briefly review the previous two weeks before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach previous lessons; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the two before it.

In the last two weeks, we've looked at proverbs that teach us what wisdom is, where it comes from, and how to get it. We've talked about the wisdom in laughter and friendship and in honoring God with our wealth. All of us need God's wisdom regarding these topics and daily living. Solomon wrote, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7).

What is one takeaway God has given you in this study so far?

In which area have you most struggled to apply God's instruction lately: friendship, laughter (or joy), or wealth? How does Proverbs 1:7 speak to you about that?

What about planning and work? Where do you see your need for wisdom in those areas?

PLANNING

Do you have a clear sense of where you are going in life? Where do you want to be in 1 year? 5 years?

All of us have dreams and plans. We go to school so we can get degrees that enable us to have the jobs we want to have. We save money so we can buy the things we want to have. We invest time and attention in the person we want to marry. We search the Internet and read reviews so we can plan the perfect vacation. **Even people who tend to fly by the seat of their pants are forced to make some plans. But what about God's plans? Do you seek those out? Do you take His plans for your life into consideration as you're making your own?**

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

In your own words, what does Proverbs 3:5-6 teach about planning?

Think about our previous topics of friendship, laughter (joy), and wealth. How does Proverbs 3:5-6 apply to each?

On some level, every decision you make is about trust. Friendship is a huge trust—you want to know that you're not going to get burned, or that if you do get hurt, there will be means of reconciliation. Finding joy in difficult circumstances requires trust—you want to know that God is bigger than your problems. And honoring God instead of yourself with your wealth shows incredible trust that He will provide what you need. It boils down to this: to apply God's wisdom in daily life, you must believe God is fully trustworthy. With your whole heart, you must believe His wisdom is superior.

What part of your future do you struggle to trust God with the most (i.e., your children, your career, your finances, etc.)?

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 16:3

Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.

PROVERBS 16:9

The heart of man plans his way, but the Lord establishes his steps.

PROVERBS 21:5

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance, but everyone who is hasty comes only to poverty.

PROVERBS 19:21

Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand.

PROVERBS 15:22

Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed.

Which of these proverbs stands out to you the most? Why?

Based on these proverbs, which statement is most accurate: “planning is futile,” or “planning is beneficial”? Explain.

We need to understand—God’s plans always win over ours. His plans are always better than ours, too. It’s foolish, then, to carry on and hope He’ll go along with our plans. It’s not a matter of simply considering God from time to time as we make our own plans, but seeking to align our plans to His will in everything we do.

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 4:26

Ponder the path of your feet; then all your ways will be sure.

Based on all the proverbs we’ve studied today, what does it mean, practically speaking, to “ponder the path of your feet”? How will all your ways be sure?

WORK

LEADER NOTE

This section is not only about working hard, but also about working well. This is an issue that extends beyond any sort of earthly success and accomplishment. Be real with your group, and don’t water down the struggles we all face in work. Rather, address those issues, and direct learners to the point of it all—to honor God in our work and bring glory to Him.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 14:23

In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.

PROVERBS 19:15

Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger.

PROVERBS 19:24

The sluggard buries his hand in the dish and will not even bring it back to his mouth.

How would you characterize the attitude toward non-workers in these verses?

Describe the work ethic that was passed down to you. Is that still your same view, or has experience taught you something else?

Regarding work, there are two opposite extremes we must diligently seek to avoid. We must not be lazy, and we must not be workaholics. Neither laziness nor overwork honors the Lord (Gen. 2:2, 15). It's like planning. When we commit our work to the Lord (Prov. 16:3)—not to ourselves, another person, an ideal, or a pursuit—He shows us the way and blesses us.

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 6:6-8

Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, and gathers her food in harvest.

What traits did Solomon see in ants that made them a good example of wise working?

What are some opportunities you have missed out on because you didn't work hard? What are some opportunities you have missed out on because you worked too hard?

Ants work as they should. They don't have superiors telling them what, when, where, and how to do their work. They don't need to attend motivational meetings. When it's time to work (for ants, it's in the summer) and opportunity is at hand (harvest time), they are busy doing beneficial work. Likewise, we should strive for beneficial work, not merely what is required to get by in a given situation.

KEY VERSES

JOHN 6:27

Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.

PROVERBS 22:9

Whoever has a bountiful eye will be blessed, for he shares his bread with the poor.

What do these two verses teach you about how you should view work?

How has God blessed your work? How can you bless others in return?

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD PLANNING AND WORK

LEADER NOTE

The very nature of wisdom means that every person has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to work in ways that honor the Lord.

PLANNING

Pastor Grant gave five practical helps for planning. Which of these do you do well? Which ones do you need to put into practice?

1. Write down your plan.
2. Plan some margin.
3. Accept the size of your plate.
4. Plan time to turn off your electronics.
5. Keep Jesus and the church at the top of your list.

What is a situation where you need to trust in the Lord with your whole heart and lean on Him, not on your own understanding? How can this group help you with that?

WORK

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His followers to go, and He promised He'd be with them as they went. As we go and work, we can be confident that Jesus goes with us and will be working in us for His purposes.

How can you leverage your vocation for the kingdom of God?

What struggles regarding work do you have that could keep you from leveraging your vocation for God's kingdom purposes?

COMMENTARY

PROVERBS 3:5-6

The command to trust God with all your heart means that the total personality is to be committed to God's care, although it emphasizes the mind and volition. The prohibitions against depending on one's own understanding and against intellectual pride (vv. 5b, 7a) implicitly reject a "secular" search for wisdom and look back to the thesis of the book (1:7). The commitment of the heart to God means that all the beliefs and decisions of life are to be submitted to Yahweh. Even very practical decisions are in view here, and not just matters of academic pursuit. But the text is no more opposed to academic research per se than to any normal activity of life. Also, "understanding" implies not just intellectual capacity but one's own moral standards. One's private vision of right and wrong must be submitted to God.

PROVERBS 16:9

This word for plans in Proverbs usually involves wicked schemes (v. 30; 24:8; cp. Ps 140:2; Nah 1:9), but it can also refer to good strategies and tactics (Pr 12:5; 16:3; 21:5) or thinking deeply about something (Ps 73:16; 119:59). Even good plans can only be established by the sovereign Lord (Pr 16:3; 19:21). On determines, see "established" in note at 4:25-27.

PROVERBS 21:5

The reckless person is literally "hasty" (19:2; cp. 29:20) or "in a hurry" (28:20); he lacks forethought and diligence.

PROVERBS 19:15,21,24

19:15. In a deep sleep, a person is unaware of what is happening around him (Gen 2:21; 1Sam 26:12).

19:21. Prevail is literally "stand" (cp. "succeed" in 15:22).

19:24. In ancient times, food was eaten by hand from a communal dish. The slacker does not have the gumption to bring food to his mouth,

which has physical consequences (6:9-11; 20:4; 21:25).

PROVERBS 15:22

On plans, see "schemes" in note at 16:9. Counsel is private, personal advice from intimate friends. In 3:32 God is a "friend" (same Hb word) "to the upright." Independent, selfish fools don't seek out advice (13:10; 18:1) and fail. Advisers (see "counselors" in 11:14) are generally advantageous, but those who speak contrary to the Lord's will bring failure (19:21; cp. Dt 13:1-3; 1Ki 12:13-15; 22:1-37).

PROVERBS 4:26

Undivided attention to the right path (cp. 17:24; 27:20) and a determination not to even sample evil (cp. vv. 13-15; 1:15) assure that your ways will be established. The passive voice implies that it is God who does it. "Established" is fixed and firm, secure, not subject to change or to destruction (12:3; "achieved" in 16:3; 24:3; 25:5). Right or... left expresses the whole range of evil paths. That is not to say that a middle road, a compromise, is the good way, but that it is important not to leave the only good way.

PROVERBS 14:23

Endless talk is literally "words of the lips"; it could also be translated "mere words" (2Ki 18:20). Hard work is labor that is physically or emotionally draining. Outside of the Lord's blessing, it is vain (10:22; Ps 127:1-2). But diligent work (Pr 6:6-11) is better than recklessness (21:5), idleness (10:4), fraud (13:11), or get-rich-quick schemes (28:20).

PROVERBS 6:6-8

The ants are models of diligence in that they work tirelessly in spite of having no taskmaster to goad them on, and they prepare for the winter in spite of having no administration to lay out economic plans.

Laziness leads to inescapable poverty and ruin. Instead of poverty coming "like a bandit"

and an “armed man,” it is better to translate v. 11 to say that poverty will come like a “vaga-bond” and a “beggar.” The point is not that it will attack suddenly, like armed robbers in ambush. Rather, poverty and indebtedness cling to the slothful like incorrigible beggars who always linger about the house and always want more. Laziness will siphon off resources until the indolent have nothing left.

JOHN 6:27

People misunderstood Jesus’ statement and asked about the works God required. Jesus said the only “work” required by God is faith in the Messiah.

PROVERBS 22:9

A generous person is literally “the good of eye”; the opposite is the “evil eye” of the “stingy” or “greedy” person (23:6; 28:22).

ANGER

& WORDS

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This section is a way to briefly review last week before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach last week's lesson; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the one before it.

PLANNING AND WORK

In last week's session, we took a look at numerous proverbs on the subjects of planning and work. We learned that in both areas, we are to honor the Lord by trusting and serving Him to the very best of our abilities and from the depth of our hearts. Here are two of the key verses we examined on planning and work:

PROVERBS 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

PROVERBS 14:23

In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.

What is one takeaway about planning and work that stuck with you throughout the week?

Today our study in Proverbs continues as we take a look at the topics of anger and words. Often, the two go hand-in-hand.

How often, on any given day, would you say you need God's wisdom regarding anger and words?

ANGER

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 16:32

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

In what way is the person who controls his or her anger better than those who are mighty in battle?

Which phrase best describes you: slow to anger or mighty in battle?

The way we respond to our anger reveals two different pursuits: humility and peace-making, or a pursuit of winning at any cost. This is why those who are slow to anger are better than the mighty; humility and peace-making honor the Lord, but prideful winning at any cost prioritizes self and sacrifices everything else. Each of us has the choice, and the effects of each are powerful.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 14:17

A man of quick temper acts foolishly, and a man of evil devices is hated.

PROVERBS 15:18

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

PROVERBS 14:29-30

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot.

PROVERBS 30:33

For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife.

PROVERBS 19:19

A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.

PROVERBS 22:24-25

Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man; lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

From the proverbs listed above, name the effects of misused anger.

If misused anger is so bad, why do so many of us allow it to rule us in certain circumstances?

Anger is an emotion we all experience, and it can turn to sin quickly and get us in a lot of trouble. Foolishness, hatred, strife, contention, folly, bad health, repeated penalties, friendlessness, tangled troubles...these are only some of the consequences of misused anger. As we learned in week two of this series, part of wisdom is understanding who we are, how we are tempted, and what consequences we'll face when we give in. The intent of these proverbs isn't only to inform us or to make us think about the angry people we know, but to offer insight, hindsight, and foresight to each of us about our own anger.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

PROVERBS 19:11

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

What are the benefits of being slow to anger? What does it mean that it is your “glory to overlook an offense”?

What is the difference between bottling up your anger and turning away wrath, or being slow to anger?

Anger is a choice. We are called to manage our emotions. We decide whether to live by the Spirit or live by our flesh (see Galatians 5:13-26). When it comes to anger, many of those decisions revolve around the words we use. We can decide to use words that build or words that destroy.

WORDS

LEADER NOTE

As you discuss the power of words, be cognizant of the fact that many adults are carrying the effects of destructive words spoken to them, whether long ago or in recent days. In those cases, it will be difficult to think about how God wants to speak to them about their own words, when their own word-inflicted wounds feel so fresh. Consider taking a few moments to pause and pray for healing and forgiveness and invite God to transform futures.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
and those who love it will eat its fruits.

What does it mean that, “death and life are in the power of the tongue”? Do you think that’s an overstatement?

What does it mean that, “those who love it [the power of the tongue] will eat its fruits”?

Words are powerful. All of us have felt that power both positively and negatively. It is no exaggeration to say that words lead to life or death. Our words can be life-giving when they encourage, teach, make vows, make apology, turn away wrath, and express love. Words can bring death to relationships when they express uncontrolled anger, express hatred and bigotry, refuse to forgive, break vows, deceive, teach falsehood, and discourage.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 16:28

A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.

PROVERBS 10:19

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

PROVERBS 11:13

Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets, but he who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a thing covered.

PROVERBS 6:16-19

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.

From these proverbs, what are the negative effects of destructive words?

How many of the “things the Lord hates” in Proverbs 6 are related to words? How does this answer the person who says, “It doesn’t mean anything. It’s just words”? Of all the things God could hate, why do you think deceitful and destructive words are listed in the seven?

Words are a gift from God, and they reveal whether our hearts are for Him or for ourselves. The power of destructive words is clear. They spread strife and separate friends. They lead to sin. They reveal secrets. They cause fights and create traps. They sow discord and inflict pain. God gave us words as a gift of creation, and it is an abomination to Him when we use them to destroy.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 18:4

The words of a man's mouth are deep waters; the fountain of wisdom is a bubbling brook.

PROVERBS 18:6

A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating.

PROVERBS 29:5

A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.

PROVERBS 12:18

There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

PROVERBS 15:1-2

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

PROVERBS 15:4

A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.

PROVERBS 13:3

Whoever guards his mouth preserves his life; he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.

PROVERBS 15:7

The lips of the wise spread knowledge; not so the hearts of fools.

From these proverbs, what are the benefits of using words constructively?

Which stands out to you the most personally? Why?

Words have the power to create and transform. Words aptly spoken to us at just the right time lift us up. They preserve life and spread knowledge. They give life. It is through believing the Word of God that we receive salvation, and it is by speaking the Word of God that we extend His offer of salvation to others. Because God is the author of words, there is no limit to the power found in them. He desires to use words to reveal His glory. The gift of words is a responsibility we should not underestimate or take lightly.

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD WISDOM IN ANGER AND WORDS

LEADER NOTE

There is no doubt that every person in your group struggles with anger and words on some level. As such, each one has a next step to take. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives, commit to honor God, and show love to people in the way they express themselves.

ANGER

What next step do you need to take regarding anger?

Is there someone you need to ask to forgive you for the way you have expressed anger?

WORDS

What is a situation where you tend to struggle to use words in a way that honors the Lord?

Name three practical steps you can take to use words more constructively.

COMMENTARY

PROVERBS 16:32

A person who does not let his passions control him is better than a powerful military hero who lacks such control.

PROVERBS 15:18

God hates the sacrifice of those who do not honor Him because they take an occasion for confession and reduce it to magic—the attempt to manipulate a god through ritual (1Sam 15:22; Isa 1:10-17; Jer 7:22-23; Hos 6:6; Am 5:21-24; Mt 23:23). The prayer of the upright is offered in faith and worship (Heb 11:6).

PROVERBS 14:29-30

Patient is literally "slow at becoming angry." Outside of Proverbs, the phrase is always used of God in the OT (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Isa 48:9; Jer 15:15; Joel 2:13; Jnh 4:2; Nah 1:3).

It is not wrong to be passionate or zealous for a proper cause (Num 25:11; 1Ki 19:10; Ps 69:9), but a person should not be envious or jealous of sinners (Pr 3:31; 23:17; 24:1,19) or of the assignment God has given to others (Ps 106:16; Ec Ecc 4:4; Jms 3:16).

PROVERBS 30:33

Churning, twisting, and stirring up are all the same word in Hebrew, which has to do with force or pressure and twisting or wringing. The scheming social climber is cautioned that his maneuverings will inevitably bring violence against him.

PROVERBS 19:19

A person with a hot temper should be left to pay the consequences—it is the only way he will learn.

PROVERBS 22:24-25

Pride is the key to the mocker's character. The slacker has selfish craving that is unfilled because he is too lazy; he will experience physical and spiritual death. Righteous people are generous yet contented (19:24).

PROVERBS 19:11

Virtue is literally a "beautiful adornment," translated "glory" in 20:29. When through insight a person gains patience, he gains the admirable capacity to overlook it when someone sins against him (10:12; 17:9; Mt 6:14-15).

PROVERBS 18:21

The tongue is powerful (Jms 3:1-12). Those who love the tongue and eat its fruit are those who choose to live or die under its power, like those who live by the sword (Gen 27:40; Mt 26:52), by the law (Neh 9:29; Ezek 20:11; Rm 10:5; Gal 3:12), or by faith (Hab 2:4; Rm 1:17; Gal 3:11). Prudent speech brings life (v. 20; 12:14; 13:2; 21:23), and wicked or excessive speech brings death (13:3; Mt 15:18-19).

PROVERBS 16:28

A contrary man is one who distorts speech, who turns things upside down, who "says perverse things". It may be that he speaks his own lies or that he subverts others' speech by the way he spins it. A gossip is someone who grumbles (Dt 1:27; Ps 106:25; Isa 29:24) or finds fault but avoids open discussion or confrontation.

PROVERBS 11:13

A gossip spreads slander (Lv 19:16; Jer 6:28; 9:4; Ezek 22:9).

PROVERBS 6:16-19

Arrogant is literally "raised high." It describes proud people who deny God's authority (21:4; 30:13; cp. 2Ki 19:22; Ps 18:27; 131:1; Isa 10:12; 37:23).

To be a lying witness and to give false testimony are the same; the two expressions are used for clarity (14:5; 19:5).

PROVERBS 18:6

Lips and mouth refer to what the fool (Hb kesiy) says, which causes trouble, escalating from strife and a beating to devastation (or terror) and ultimately to death.

PROVERBS 29:5

His feet could be the neighbor's or the speaker's own feet (see v. 6; cp. 26:28).

PROVERBS 12:18

Speaking rashly, without thinking, could involve either saying something inconsiderate (Num 20:10; Ps 106:33) or making reckless vows (Lv 5:4).

PROVERBS 18:4

This could be saying that good speech can be really deep and meaningful—a source of wisdom. Or it could mean that typical human speech is often useless (20:5), but wisdom's fountain is a useful, flowing river.

PROVERBS 15:1-2,4,7

The Hebrew word used to describe a gentle answer is related to that used to describe Josiah's "tender heart" in 2Ki 22:19. He demonstrated humility, not obstinacy. The word also describes how a wound is "soothed" or softened with oil (Isa 1:6). A soothing answer is not ineffective (Pr 25:15). Harsh word is literally "word of pain."

Heals could also be translated "is tranquil." The author may have intended both meanings. A tranquil tongue heals, and a healing tongue must surely be tranquil (v. 1). Both concepts are also the opposite of fracturing the spirit.

PROVERBS 17:28

In Egyptian wisdom, which shared some concepts of Israelite wisdom, to be cool or dispassionate was the ideal personality type. Jesus was the ultimate example of restraint (Isa 53:7; Mk 14:61). There is an implied a fortiori argument here: if even a fool (Hb ewiyl) is considered wise when... silent, how much more will an intelligent person be respected for restraint.

PARENTING

& SEX

REVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

LEADER NOTE

This is the final session in our 5-week series in Proverbs. This section is a way to briefly review the previous weeks before getting into today's lesson. Please be careful to keep it brief. We don't need to re-teach previous lessons; we want to help learners see how this lesson is related to the four before it.

FRIENDSHIP AND LAUGHTER

PROVERBS 18:24

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

PROVERBS 17:22

A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.

WISDOM AND WEALTH

PROVERBS 1:1-7

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.

PROVERBS 3:9-10

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.

PLANNING AND WORK

PROVERBS 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

PROVERBS 14:23

In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty.

ANGER AND WORDS

PROVERBS 19:11

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

PROVERBS 18:21

Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.

What have you learned about God so far in this series in Proverbs?

What have you learned about yourself?

In last week's session, we saw the relationship between anger and words, and the power for life or death the two have in our relationships. Oftentimes, the relationships with people closest to us are the most difficult to control our emotions and our tongues. In today's session, we'll explore God's wisdom regarding parenting and sex.

PARENTING

KEY VERSE

PROVERBS 22:6

Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

You may have heard this verse many times. What comes to mind when you think of the principle in this verse?

What difficulty is there in the interpretation that if you raise a child to know the Lord, he or she will always choose to obey God?

Pastor Grant explained this is not a promise that if you train up a child to do right, you are guaranteed that he or she will always choose to do right—it's a promise of the opposite. In the Hebrew, there is no description of "the way." English translations added the "right" way or "should" go. In Hebrew, it is: Train up a child in (his) way, even when he is old he will not depart from it. In other words, if you let a child have his way when he is young, then when he is old he will continue to insist on having his way!

How does it impact your view of parenting to know that children are sinful by nature, that they don't have to be taught to do wrong, and that is not your fault or even something you can prohibit?

So it's not your fault your children are sinful, but if you don't discipline them, they'll continue to make bad choices. **What, then, is a healthy view of the role of a parent?**

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 1:8

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,

How would you define a "teachable moment"?

PROVERBS 13:24

Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.

Why is it important for parents to take advantage of teachable moments? How have you experienced this in your own life?

We must love our children more than we love being liked by them. Sometimes that means having conversations they don't want to have. It means taking the time to communicate biblical truths regularly. It means being diligent to discipline so that you don't allow them to act out destructive patterns of behavior.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 19:18

Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death.

PROVERBS 23:13

Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.

PROVERBS 22:15

Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.

PROVERBS 29:15

The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.

How important is timing in parenting and discipline?

In what ways do these proverbs align with God's lovingkindness and His command for us to love each other?

What is the relationship between these proverbs and Ephesians 6:4, which says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord"?

Pastor Grant identified three types of parents—overprotective, permissive, and responsible. God's Word is clear; it is the role of the parent to discipline children in love, just as God disciplines us. God is neither overprotective nor permissive; rather, in love, He gives us the parameters in which to live for our good and He continues to teach us as He allows us to make choices and experience consequences. It's not about rules; it's about relationship.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 29:17

Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart.

PROVERBS 14:26

In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge.

What is the difference between parenting to raise good kids and parenting to raise godly kids?

The ultimate goal isn't that our kids would be well respected among their peers or successful in their careers one day. The ultimate goal is that they would have a loving relationship with their Creator. Our children are not really ours at all; they are on loan from God. They are gifts from God that have been entrusted to our care. This fact should direct our hearts and inform our words and actions in parenting at every turn.

SEX

LEADER NOTE

One of our children's greatest struggles will likely come in the area of sexual temptation. The first step in leading them well is to let God deal with you in this area so that you can live by godly example. Use this section to help learners explore Solomon's words to his son on the topic of sex, apply it to their own lives, and also to their parenting.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 5:15-21

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts

fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths.

What does this passage teach you about God's view of sex?

What principles about sex can you identify in Solomon's words to his son here?

How openly did your parents speak with you about sex?

As an adult, how do you feel about talking to your own family about sex?

Most of us feel at least a little awkward talking about sex, especially with our children! Sex is a gift from God, but Satan has perverted everything. We must reclaim the gift of sex that God gave us. To do that, we must talk about it in the home and in the church, not just at school or in secular media.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 18:22

He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.

PROVERBS 5:3-11

For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it. And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed.

PROVERBS 6:24-33

to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes; for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life. Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished. People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

Underline any phrases that especially stand out to you. Why do you think Solomon gave so much attention to this particular topic in his teachings?

What principles about sex can you identify in Solomon's words to his son in these passages?

How are Solomon's words here different from the current cultural view of sex and marriage?

We are all familiar with the sexual temptations the world throws our way. The only hope we have of remaining faithful to our spouses or sexually pure in our singleness is by living within the boundaries God has laid out. All of His boundaries are designed to benefit us. They protect us from damaging attitudes and actions we will inevitably regret. A promiscuous lifestyle may appear fulfilling, but it is hollow.

Solomon taught the positive lesson about faithfulness in marriage as the sole source of lasting and growing sexual fulfillment, but he didn't stop there. He spoke candidly about the consequences he would face if he committed adultery. In his warning to his son, Solomon gave some wise advice about not letting lust for another woman take root in his heart. As Solomon explained, the price to be paid would be the man's very life. Solomon used two visual images to impress the certain consequence of lust—being burned by fire and stealing food. As Solomon warned, lust always has certain, inevitable consequences.

KEY VERSES

PROVERBS 7:1-4

My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep 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 insight your intimate friend.

In this context, how is insight an "intimate friend"?

Why do you think so many people—even believers—reject God's wisdom on this particular subject and accept, instead, the "wisdom" of Satan, the world, and their own flesh?

YOUR NEXT STEP TOWARD WISDOM IN PARENTING AND SEX

LEADER NOTE

All of us either have parents, are parents, or will be parents. All of us also experience sexual desire and face temptation, so this lesson has important application for every person. Don't try to direct the application, but allow learners to find it for themselves. Use this time to help learners personally apply biblical truths to their lives and commit to experience God's gifts of parenting and sex more fully.

PARENTING

Pastor Grant gave us some ABC's of discipline for application in parenting with wisdom.

A | Authority over their attitude / actions

Ephesians 6:1-2 – Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"...

The issue in authority is respect for God's authority.

Do your children obey you, or do you obey your children?

B | Boundaries for their behavior

Proverbs 22:6 – Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Train means “instruct.” In the Hebrew language, it means “to narrow.” It is the picture of building a fence or boundaries for their protection.

Are your children learning to build parameters for themselves? What could happen if they never have to?

C | Clear guidelines

Know where the boundaries are. Set limits. Discuss expectations and consequences. Allow your children to have some input in it. Listen to them.

Write down five expectations you have for your children.

What are the consequences of ignoring/disobeying these expectations?

SEX

There is a growing pattern regarding sex today. Many believers are practicing, effectively, sexual atheism. They believe God can speak to them on every subject except sex.

What about you? Do you allow God to speak to you and direct your life in this particular area?

Does your personal life align with Solomon’s wisdom on sex? How do you know?

How can you begin to open up the lines of communication with your children so that their own struggles with sexual temptation will never be because they couldn’t talk about it with you?

COMMENTARY

PROVERBS 22:6

"Teach" is literally to "dedicate" something, such as a building—to have a celebration commemorating the first time it is put to its intended use (Dt 20:5; 1Ki 8:63). Here, the youth is consecrated to a life of godly wisdom (4:11). "Youth" typically refers to pre-teen to late-teen years. The Hebrew words translated "about the way he should go" speak of orienting the initiation to fit the challenges of young people. Youth are known for foolishness and lack of discretion or sense (v. 15; 1:4; 7:7); left to themselves, they fall into disgrace (29:15,21). Thus, if a youth is initiated in a manner that is appropriate to his age (1:4; 23:13), it is likely to stick with him. However, this is not a promise, and it does not make the teacher responsible for the student (Ezek 18:20).

PROVERBS 1:8

Teaching implies a person of authority passing on moral guidelines; in other contexts the same word means "law" (28:4,7,9; cp. Dt 4:44). The reader should not make too much of the pairing of instruction with the father and teaching with the mother. Splitting them is merely an aspect of Hebrew poetry (Pr 4:3; 6:20; 19:26; 23:22; 30:11,17). Both parents participated in this homeschooling.

PROVERBS 13:24

Parents who love their children seek diligently to apply the best and most appropriate method of discipline (Heb 12:5-11). In some cases that is the rod (22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15), which is appropriate punishment for the fool (10:3; 26:3). Only a parent who hates his child would withhold discipline and permit him to remain a fool, knowing that foolishness leads to misery, shame, and ultimately death.

PROVERBS 19:18

The son who is not disciplined will remain a slacker or a fool and will perish—physically and spiritually. The parent should strive not to let this happen (3:12; 5:23; 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15; Heb 12:5-11). As long as a son is alive, there is hope.

PROVERBS 22:15

Tangled up means both "tied to" and voluntarily "wrapped up" (Gen 44:30). Foolishness (from Hb ewiyl) is an innate quality that youth cling to (Gen 8:21; Ps 51:5).

PROVERBS 23:13

Corporal punishment, properly applied, will actually save a youth from death. He will as a rule escape physical death by avoiding dangerous situations and escape spiritual death (symbolized by Sheol) by learning to fear God (19:18). But corporal punishment must be administered out of love, not dominance (Hos 11:4; Col 3:21; Heb 12:9).

PROVERBS 5:3-11

The forbidden woman with her smooth words seems attractive, but she is in fact deadly. Wormwood was a shrub that produced a bitter flavor (Lam 3:15,19). In Hebrew double-edged is literally "with mouths," a pun on the way she devours people (Isa 1:20). She is headed for eternal death, along with anyone she can entice to join her, because she does not focus her eyes on the path of life (4:25). She is unstable—wandering (Gen 4:12; Num 32:13; 2Sam 15:20; Ps 59:11; 109:10; Lam 4:15), staggering (Ps 107:27; Isa 24:20; Am 4:8)—and she doesn't even know it (see note at Pr 4:10-19).

The unwise son gives up his vitality; he is not overpowered and robbed (1:11). The others to whom he gives his resources may be the family of the adulteress (6:29-35). Vitality could also be translated "authority" (Num 27:20) or "splendor" (Hos 14:6); it describes a man in his prime. A cruel person shows no mercy (Jer 6:23).

At the end describes the outcome of a course of action—what happens later, the ultimate result (v. 4; 14:12; 19:20; 20:21; 23:32; 29:21).

PROVERBS 5:15-21

Verse 15 obviously means that a man should have sexual relations only with his wife, but the metaphors of v. 16 and the injunction of v. 17 are more

difficult. If the “cistern” and “well” are the wife, what are the “fountains” and “rivers of waters” of v. 16, and what is meant by “Let them be only thine own, and not strangers’ with thee”?

The best interpretation is that “fountains” and “rivers of waters” refer to the husband’s sexual affections as the “cistern” refers to the affections of his wife. The man should not take his love and desire to anyone else by going out into the street. The analogy implies that husband and wife fill and refresh each other, the one like a flowing stream and the other like a peaceful well. Sexual anarchy results when people cross over the bounds of fidelity. Verse 17 means that a man should never be willing to share a woman with another man. This naturally excludes visiting prostitutes and immoral women, since they belong to many men.

The blessing in v. 18 might appear to be a promise of many children, but again the passage emphasizes the sexual pleasure of marriage and not having offspring (v. 19). The command to “take pleasure in your first wife” implies negatively that a man should never have sexual relations with another woman (whether in adultery or by divorce on contrived grounds) and positively that marriage should include sexual joy and fulfillment.

Verse 19 brings out both the tender affection and the exuberant pleasure of love. She is a loving doe, and he will be drunken with satisfaction in the pleasure she gives. Verse 20 is linked chiasmatically to v. 19. The man should not stagger from the affection of another woman, nor should he embrace her “bosom.”

PROVERBS 6:24-33

The sixth exhortation begins typically with an appeal for the son to heed his father’s words (vv. 20-24). As in 3:3, the command to bind the teachings to the neck means that they are vital to the young man’s survival. The father’s teachings are personified as guide, guardian, and companion (v. 22) and objectified as a lamp and a way (v. 23). The last verse of the paternal appeal (v. 24) indicates that what follows will be a warning to avoid the adulteress.

If there is uncertainty regarding the identity of the strange woman in chap. 5, there is none here. She is the wife of another man. This does not mean that in every case where Proverbs discusses the immoral woman it means the adulterous wife (as opposed to the common prostitute), nor does the fact that the woman is another man’s wife exclude that she may also be a foreigner or a cult prostitute. The descriptions of the immoral woman of Proverbs are too diverse to allow her to be identified with a single category. The text does not conceal the fact that she is alluring and even beautiful to the young man (v. 25), but she is deadly. To embrace her is to embrace fire.

The man’s life, which the wayward woman hunts, is called “precious” (i.e., valuable) in contrast to meager payment the prostitute demands. This obviously is not meant to endorse going to a prostitute as opposed to having an affair with another man’s wife but to show the complete folly of getting involved with another man’s wife. Indeed, “whorish woman” in parallel here with the “the adulteress,” may well be one and the same person. She takes a small payment as prostitute from her victim but as adulteress steals away his very life. The price also indicates the degradation of this act to both man and woman; it is cheap. Going to the immoral woman is the quintessential self-destructive act.

The outraged husband will bring all his fury down upon the adulterer, who will be at least humiliated and beaten if not executed (implied in v. 35). Even if the adulterer is wealthy, that will do him no good. The comparison to the thief in vv. 30-31 is meant to bring home the point that there can be no escape for the adulterer once he is finally found out. People have compassion for a thief who steals out of hunger, but even so they require that he repay his victim seven times over. How much more will society bring down a harsh verdict on an adulterer, a man for whom they feel only contempt?