

## Welcome to Walking Towards Wisdom

Have you ever been walking on a path and come to a divide? When you come to a fork in the trail, you're faced with a choice.

The same thing happens as we walk through life. We come to forks in the road and have to choose one way or the other. For these kinds of choices, we need wisdom. We need a wisdom that walks with us out the church doors and into everyday life.

If you sense a need for more wisdom in your life, then you'll want to join us for this journey. Along the way, you'll discover insights and gain skills that will help you in every area of life. You'll learn to speak, plan and work with greater wisdom. You'll find out how to relate wisely and well to your family and friends.

Here are four travel tips that will help you get the most out of this walk towards wisdom.

1. Begin praying regularly and earnestly that God would grow you in wisdom as you go through this study. Wisdom is given to those who ask God for it (James 1:5-6).
2. Do one chapter of the study guide each week. The daily study should take you about fifteen minutes. If you want to go "The Extra Mile", do the creative learning activities found on the backside of each day's study.
3. Get into a small group to discuss what you are learning. Proverbs 13:20 says that those who *"walk with the wise grow wise."* You'll learn more when you draw from the insights of others.
4. Listen to the sermons that go with each chapter. These messages will further enhance your learning and keep you "Walking Towards Wisdom." (Sermons can be downloaded at [www.metbiblechurch.ca](http://www.metbiblechurch.ca)).

Walking towards wisdom with you,

Rick and Linda Reed  
September 2009



## Introduction to the Book of Proverbs

The book of Proverbs is packed with wise advice for your journey through life. Here are four important features of the book you'll want to keep in mind.

### 1. Parallel Poetry

The Hebrew poetry found in Proverbs uses what we could call "pithy parallelism." Proverbs are pithy - they are brief and terse. Think of them as truth in concentrate form. Proverbs use the poetic technique called parallelism - one line of a proverb (called a 'colon') relates conceptually to the second line. While much could be written about parallelism, you'll do well to remember four common types of parallelism found in Proverbs.

#### **Opposites (Antithetic Parallelism):**

This is the most common type of parallelism in proverbs. Here the second colon is set in contrast with the first.

*The plans of the righteous are just  
but the advice of the wicked is deceitful (12:5)*

#### **Comparisons (Emblematic Parallelism):**

Here one line gives a simile or metaphor to explain the other.

*Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes  
so is the lazy one to those who send him (10:26)*

#### **Synonyms (Synonymous Parallelism):**

Here the second line reinforces the thought of the first line, often with a slight twist or nuance.

*A man of knowledge uses words with restraint  
and a man of understanding is even-tempered. (17:27)*

#### **Add-Ons (Synthetic Parallelism):**

This is similar to synonymous parallelism, except in this case the second line doesn't simply echo the first line, it adds new or additional information.

*The eyes of the Lord are in every place  
watching the evil and the good (15:3)*

## 2. Pixels Of A Bigger Picture

Ever wonder why there are so many proverbs? Part of the reason is that each proverb is just a pixel of a larger picture. Because of their brevity, individual proverbs cannot say all that needs to be said about money, work, marriage or any other important subject.

That's why it's wise to read and reflect on the various proverbs related to a given topic. As you study related proverbs, you'll see how the individual pixels create a "big picture".

## 3. Principles Rather Than Promises

In order to understand the meaning of a proverb, remember that they are more about principles than promises. For example Proverbs 16:7 says, *"When a man's ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him."* If you take this as an absolute promise, you'll have trouble making sense of Jesus' life. After all, who pleased the Lord more than Jesus? Yet His enemies hated Him to the end.

It's better to see proverbs as giving principles about the way God has created life to work. So Proverbs 16:7 is saying that when we live God's ways, we tend to enjoy peace—even with people who don't like us.

## 4. Practical More Than Theoretical

Derek Kidner, in his helpful commentary on Proverbs, notes that the sage counsel contained in the book is focused on earthy, everyday situations: *"Proverbs...is a book which seldom takes you to church. . . its function in Scripture is to put godliness into working clothes; to name business and society as spheres in which we are to acquit ourselves with credit to our Lord, and in which we are to look for His training"* (page 35)

Our prayer is that **Walking Towards Wisdom** will do more than fill your head with knowledge. We hope you gain some sanctified street smarts for your journey through life!

## Table Of Contents

Welcome to Walking Towards Wisdom .....	1
Introduction to the Book of Proverbs.....	3
Chapter 1 • The Way Of Wisdom	
Wisdom 101.....	9
The Benefits Of Wisdom.....	11
Walking In The Right Direction .....	13
Finding Wisdom.....	15
Wisdom Personified.....	17
Chapter 2 • The Way Of The Foolish	
The Simple Life.....	21
What Kind Of Fool Am I? .....	23
Fooled Again.....	25
Nabal Gazing .....	27
No More Fooling Around.....	29
Chapter 3 • Health And Wholeness	
Heart Healthy.....	33
Good Medicine.....	35
Bad To The Bones.....	37
Indulging And Bulging.....	39
Joie De Vivre .....	41
Chapter 4 • Words	
Let My Words Be Few .....	45
Don't Butter Them Up.....	47
A Killer Tongue .....	49
Winning Words .....	51
Timing Is Everything .....	53
Chapter 5 • Marriage	
A Loving Partnership .....	57
Keep Romance Alive .....	59
Marrying Well.....	61
Playing With Fire.....	63
Harmony At Home? .....	65

Chapter 6 • Family Life	
The Goal Of Parenting .....	69
Home: The School Of Wisdom .....	71
Disciplined For Wisdom .....	73
No Fun...For A While.....	75
A Loving Legacy .....	77
Chapter 7 • Friends, Neighbours And Enemies	
You've Got A Friend .....	81
Friendly Fire.....	83
Friendship Killers .....	85
Good Neighbours.....	87
Dealing With Enemies .....	89
Chapter 8 • Plans	
Planning For Success.....	93
Consider A Consultant.....	95
Careful Planning .....	97
Failure To Launch.....	99
Plan Your Work-Work Your Plan .....	101
Chapter 9 • Work And Wealth	
An Honest Day's Work.....	105
Working Hard Or Hardly Working? .....	107
Who Me? Lazy?.....	109
Generous Living.....	111
Becoming Money Wise .....	113
Parting Thoughts.....	115

• Chapter 1 •

# The Way Of Wisdom







## Wisdom 101

### Proverbs 1:1-6

- (1) *The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:*  
(2) *for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;*  
(3) *for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;*  
(4) *for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young*  
(5) *let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance*  
(6) *for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.*

The Hebrew word for “wisdom” carries the basic meaning of “living skillfully”. In other words, wisdom is more than head-knowledge; it involves practical knowledge for everyday living.

1. From the above verses, how does wisdom benefit us?
2. Wisdom is linked to “*doing what is right and just and fair*” (Proverbs 1:3). How does this make God’s wisdom different from ‘worldly wisdom’?
3. According to Proverbs 1:4-5, who needs to gain wisdom?
4. In which of these areas do you most need to gain wisdom?

<input type="checkbox"/> your speech	<input type="checkbox"/> your work
<input type="checkbox"/> your family relationships	<input type="checkbox"/> your finances
<input type="checkbox"/> your friendships	<input type="checkbox"/> your future plans

Here’s some good news. God promises to give wisdom to those who ask (James 1:3). So ask God to help you walk towards wisdom through this study.

**The Extra Mile:** My Own Wisdom Search

Journal your answer to the following prompts:

Looking back over your life, where have you tended to look for wisdom?

How has this been helpful?

Where has this been lacking?

## The Benefits Of Wisdom

### Proverbs 3:13-18

*(13) Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding,*

*(14) for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.*

*(15) She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her.*

*(16) Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.*

*(17) Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace.*

*(18) She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed.*

1. Proverbs 3:13 and 3:18 say the person who gains wisdom is “blessed.” Go through these verses and list the blessings that wisdom brings?
2. Which of these blessings is most important to you?
3. Proverbs 3:14-15 claim that wisdom is more valuable than gold, silver or rubies. In what ways is this true?
4. Proverbs indicates that wisdom must be intentionally pursued. We must find (13), gain (13), embrace (18) and lay hold of (18) wisdom. What are you currently doing to pursue wisdom?
5. Are you more intentional in your pursuit of wisdom or wealth? What does this tell you?

## **The Extra Mile: A Question for Reflection**

Proverbs 3:17 says walking in the way of wisdom brings peace. A lack of peace can be an indicator that we've wandered off the way of wisdom.

What internal or external lack of peace might God be bringing into your life as a sign that something is not right?

Prayerfully reflect on this question and record your thoughts below

## Walking In The Right Direction

### **Proverbs 1:7**

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

### **Proverbs 9:10**

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.*

### **Proverbs 15:33**

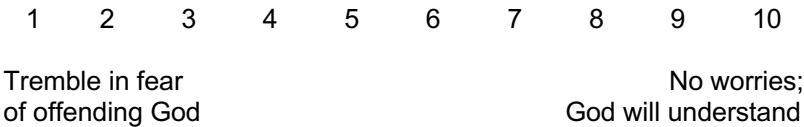
*The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.*

1. What does Proverbs say is the foundation or starting point for gaining wisdom?
2. What comes into your mind when you read the phrase *“the fear of the Lord”*?
3. In Proverbs 9:10, the phrase *“knowledge of the Holy One”* is parallel to the phrase *“The fear of the Lord.”* How is *“knowing God,”* related to *“fearing God”*?
4. In Proverbs 15:33, the word *“humility”* is parallel with the phrase *“the fear of the Lord.”* How does this help you better understand what it means to fear the Lord?
5. Fearing the Lord involves intimacy (knowing Him) and humility (reverencing Him). Why is this attitude foundational to gaining wisdom? What happens to a person who doesn't have a healthy fear of God (see Proverbs 1:7)?

**The Extra Mile: Healthy Fear**

Some people grow up fearing God in a way that leads them to be afraid of God. They obey God out of a fear of punishment. Others were taught from childhood that God is completely loving and kind. They are convinced God will understand their failings and shortcomings.

On the continuum below, where would you place yourself?



How would someone close to you assess you? (Ask a friend or a family member)

Remember that God does love you intimately, but He also wants you to reverence Him. Ask God to continue to reveal Himself to you as the God who is full of grace, yet full of truth.

If you are a parent, you have tremendous influence on the way your children picture God. After all, you paint the picture! Is the representation of God you are giving your children (or others around you) accurate? Why or why not?

## Finding Wisdom

### **Proverbs 6:6**

*Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise!*

### **Proverbs 12:15**

*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*

### **Proverbs 19:20**

*Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.*

### **Proverbs 19:25**

*Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence;  
rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge.*

1. Proverbs 6:6 says we can learn wisdom by observing God's creation. What wise ways are we to learn from ants? (see also Proverbs 30:25)
2. What other parts of God's creation teach you about wisdom?
3. According to Proverbs 12:15 and 19:20, in what other ways can we gain wisdom?
4. How good are you when it comes to asking for advice and listening to advice? What does that say about your chances of gaining wisdom?
5. Proverbs 19:25 indicates that we can learn wisdom from watching others experience painful consequences of foolish actions. What's one lesson you have learned from observing others?

## **The Extra Mile: Getting Wise Advice**

One way to gain wisdom is to seek the counsel of a wise person. Think of a situation where you could use some wise advice.

Who is a wise person from whom you might seek advice?

When could you spend some time with this person?

What questions might you ask?

- 

- 

- 

Make sure you evaluate the counsel you receive in light of God's Word.



## Wisdom Personified

### 1 Corinthians 1:27-31

*(27) But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.*

*(28) He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things — and the things that are not — to nullify the things that are,*

*(29) so that no one may boast before him.*

*(30) It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.*

*(31) Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."*

Today's verses take us from Proverbs to 1 Corinthians. Here we discover that wisdom is not just a set of principles; ultimately wisdom is a Person.

1. Paul speaks of Christians as those considered "*foolish*" by the worldly wise (1 Corinthians 1:27). Why doesn't the world recognize the wisdom of God's ways?
2. What is God's attitude towards those who think they are wise without Him?
3. In 1 Corinthians 1:30, Jesus is called the "*wisdom from God.*" In what sense is Jesus our wisdom?
4. What is one way Jesus demonstrated God's wisdom during His life on earth?
5. We are to boast in Christ, not in ourselves or our own wisdom (Proverbs 1:29,31). How can you tell if you are obeying this command?

## **The Extra Mile: Question for Jesus**

If you could sit down and have a talk with Jesus about a personal situation where you need wisdom, what would you say?

Journal out your thoughts, express your heart to Jesus. Ask Him, who is wisdom, for the insights you need for the situations you are currently in.



### **Ephesians 1:17-19**

*(17) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

*(18) I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*

*(19) and his incomparably great power for us who believe.*

• Chapter 2 •

# The Way Of The Foolish





## The Simple Life

### **Proverbs 1:32**

*The waywardness of the simple will kill them,  
and the complacency of fools will destroy them.*

### **Proverbs 7:7**

*I saw among the simple, I noted among the young men,  
a youth who lacked judgment*

### **Proverbs 14:15**

*The simple man believes anything,  
but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.*

### **Proverbs 21:11**

*When a mocker is punished; the simple gain wisdom,  
when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge.*

There are different kinds of fools in Proverbs. There's the simple, the scoffer, and three other types of fools! As we look at these variations on a fool, we'll be able to see some variegated threads that might have wound their way into our own lives! Today, we've begun with what Proverbs calls the "simple."

1. From the above verses, what characterizes the "simple"?
2. How would you personally describe a "simple" person? When might you have been one?
3. How does a simple person become wise according to Proverbs 21:11?
4. Is there currently an area in your life where you've been a bit "simplistic"? Where could you gain insight in order to become wise in this area?
5. What steps could you take to seek out this wisdom?

## **The Extra Mile: A Visit To The School Of Hard Knocks**

One of the ways the simple can wise up is by learning from the mistakes of others. Proverbs 21:11 says the simple can gain wisdom by seeing others disciplined. List several current events or news stories that could be used to help young people see the consequences of living foolishly.

1.

2.

3.

If you have kids or grandkids, initiate a discussion about one of these events and highlight the high cost of folly.

## What Kind Of Fool Am I?

### **Proverbs 10:23**

*A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct,  
but a man of understanding delights in wisdom.*

### **Proverbs 14:16**

*A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil,  
but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.*

### **Proverbs 17:10**

*A rebuke impresses a man of understanding  
more than a hundred lashes a fool.*

### **Proverbs 18:2**

*A fool finds no pleasure in understanding,  
but delights in airing his own opinions.*

### **Proverbs 18:6**

*A fool's lips bring him strife, and his mouth invites a beating.*

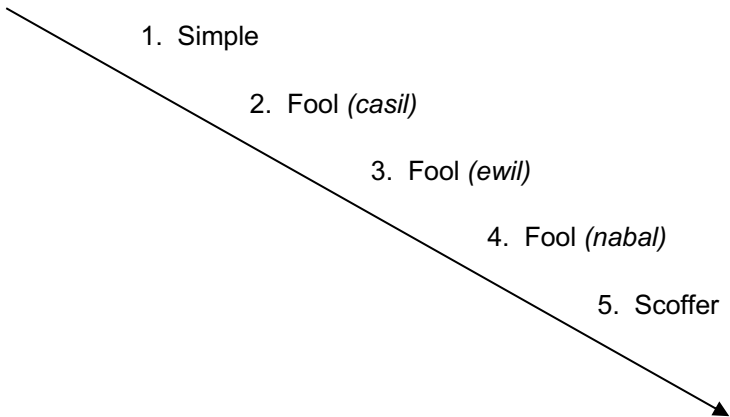
Fools in Proverbs are gradated. In the Hebrew text, there are actually three different words translated fool. The first word (*casil*) is the most common kind of fool, and is used forty-nine times in Proverbs. Observe how this word is used in the proverbs above.

1. How does this kind of fool speak and act?
2. Why isn't this kind of person easily persuaded to turn his or her life around? (Proverbs 14:16; Proverbs 17:10)
3. Where does the lifestyle of the fool lead? (see Proverbs 1:32, 19:29, and 26:3)
4. If a friend came to you with concerns about the friendships her child was making, how would you counsel her?
5. What steps would you encourage her to take to help her child form wise friendships?

***"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep  
to gain what he cannot lose." Jim Elliott***

## The Extra Mile: The Descent Of A Fool

This chart, developed by John Kitchen (**Proverbs, A Mentor Commentary**) shows the downward path of folly. The simple eventually becomes a scoffer.



How can you keep yourself from walking this downward path?



## Fooled Again

### Proverbs 1:7

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

### Proverbs 12:15

*The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice.*

### Proverbs 24:7

*Wisdom is too high for a fool, in the assembly at the gate he has nothing to say.*

The second word for a fool (ewil), found nineteen times in Proverbs, is used in these proverbs.

1. What characterizes this kind of fool? (see above verses)
2. How are these qualities “darker” in foolishness than those we’ve seen in the previous kinds of fool? Why?
3. Which of the following qualities of this fool are you most likely to exhibit?
  - ☐ not fearing the Lord
  - ☐ despising wisdom
  - ☐ over confident about your own views/opinion
4. When have you gotten into trouble for this quality?
5. It’s great to know that God is willing to help us if we are willing to turn to Him. Read Psalm 107:17-21 and list the ways God helped fools who sought Him:
6. What can you take to heart from these verses?

**The Extra Mile: Foolish Me**

Here’s an inventory that can help you assess your own “foolish” behaviour.  
Circle the answer you think best fits you...

Do I hate correction?  
(Proverbs 12:1)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Can I hold my tongue?  
(Proverbs 17:28)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Do I listen more than I talk?  
(Proverbs 19:10)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Do others consider me teachable or correctable?  
(Proverbs 9:8)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Do I eagerly seek wisdom instead of considering myself fine the way I am?  
(Proverbs 2:7)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Do I get caught in the same problems over and over?  
(Proverbs 26:11)

<b>never</b>	<b>sometimes</b>	<b>usually</b>	<b>always</b>
--------------	------------------	----------------	---------------

Talk to God about the areas where you are most prone to be foolish. Ask Him to help you grow in wisdom.

## Nabal Gazing

### **Proverbs 1:22**

*How long will mockers love mockery and fools hate knowledge?*

### **Proverbs 17:21**

*To have a fool for a son brings grief,  
there is no joy for the father of a fool (nabal).*

### **Proverbs 21:24**

*The proud and the arrogant man "Mocker" is his name,  
he behaves with overweening pride.*

### **Proverbs 22:10**

*Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.*

The final two fools we meet in Proverbs are the most far-gone. These two are actually proud of their folly. The Hebrew word for one of these hardened fools is the word "nabal". You might remember the story of a foolish man named Nabal who mistreated David (see 1 Samuel 25). Abigail, his wife, knew he was like his name! The Hebrew word for the other hardened fool is usually translated into English as "mockers" or "scoffers".

1. Describe the impact a "nabal" fool has on his or her family (see Proverbs 17:21). Without naming any names, when have you observed someone like this?
2. This same kind of fool impacts society. Proverbs 30:22 says that *"under three things the earth can't bear up... a fool (nabal) who is full of food"*. Evidently, a "nabal" fool upsets and disrupts the social order. It isn't the way that life works. When have you felt frustrated that a foolish person seemed to prosper?
3. Based on Proverbs 1:22 and 21:24, what are the telltale signs of a mocker?
4. How does the Lord respond to those who scoff or mock? (see Proverbs 3:34)
5. How can you make sure you don't become a cynical scoffer or a malicious mocker?

## **The Extra Mile:** Ten Minute Theatre

Read I Samuel 25

Liven up your family devotions or small group gathering by acting out the events described in 1 Samuel 25.

Read the chapter together then assign the parts and have fun acting out the story.

- Nabal (who's name means fool)
- Abigail (Nabal's wife)
- David (Israel's future king)
- David's men (if you need other parts)

Discussion/Reflection Questions:

1. In what ways was Nabal foolish?
2. In what ways was David tempted to be foolish?
3. How did Abigail get wisdom?
4. What can you learn from this story?

## No More Fooling Around

### **Proverbs 13:20**

*He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*

### **Proverbs 19:25**

*Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence;  
rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge.*

### **Proverbs 21:11**

*When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom;  
when a wise man is instructed, he gets knowledge.*

### **Proverbs 22:15**

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

1. From the above verses, what are some of the ways we can begin to change foolish behaviour...
  - in ourselves?
  - in our children?
2. Proverbs teaches that people become fools when they fail to “*choose to fear the Lord*” (see Proverbs 1:22-29). How does fearing the Lord keep us from sinking into folly?
3. How might you act differently when tempted to act foolishly if you were mindful that the Lord is with you and watching you?
4. What safeguards are offered in Psalm 1 to keep us from becoming scoffers or mockers?
5. What steps can you take this week to live with a healthy fear of God and soak up the life-giving truth of Scripture?

## The Extra Mile: Thoughts From John Piper

Over the past two weeks, we've seen that the starting point for gaining wisdom and forsaking folly is developing a healthy fear of God. When we fear God, we'll stop fooling around.

John Piper contends that the spiritual vitality seen in the lives of the first century Christians was due to the fact they had a healthy and holy fear of God. Here's an excerpt from his sermon on Acts 2:42-47:

"So let's sum up some the elements of this early church life. They focused a lot on the teaching of the apostles (which we have in the New Testament). They experienced wonders and signs...they lived in a state of wonder and awe as they saw day in and day out the stark reality of God in healings and deliverances and changed lives of people being added to the church.

They shared their possessions as freely with the needy as though they didn't even own them. They spent time in big groups in the temple. They ate together in their homes almost every day. And when they met each other, they met God. They prayed and they praised.

In closing let me ask, what makes all this hang together? What's the driving force that made those believers free from their possessions, and eager to meet needs, and full of gladness and generosity and praise and prayer when they ate together day after day?

I think the key is found in verse 43 in the phrase, "*fear came upon every soul*"—a joyful, trembling sense of awe that you don't trifle with the God of the apostles. That is not our experience. Today for most people, including most professing Christians, God is an idea to talk about, or an inference from an argument, or a family tradition to be preserved. But for very few people is God a stark, fearsome, stunning, awesome, shocking present REALITY. He is tame. He is distant. He is silent. Where are the churches of whom Luke could say today, "Fear—awe, wonder, trembling—is upon every soul"?

The absence of this fear has a direct effect on the way we accumulate possessions for ourselves, the way we ignore the needy, the way we trivialize fellowship, and the way we play more than we pray. This is another reason why my heart longs for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in an extraordinary way."

From John Piper's sermon, "***The Fear of God and Freedom from Goods***"  
To hear the sermon or read a transcript, visit [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org).

• Chapter 3 •

# Health And Wholeness







## Heart Healthy

### Proverbs 4:20-27

- (20) My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words.  
(21) Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart;  
(22) for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body.  
(23) Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.  
(24) Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.  
(25) Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.  
(26) Make level paths for your feet and take only ways that are firm.  
(27) Do not swerve to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.*

1. What are the physical benefits of living a wise, godly life?  
(Proverbs 4: 22)
2. The way to health is to guard your heart (Proverbs 4:23), mouth (Proverbs 4:24), eyes (Proverbs 4:25) and feet (Proverbs 4:26-27) from doing evil. Which of these do you have the hardest time guarding? Why?
3. How does failing to be on guard morally damage us physically? When have you experienced this?
4. How has guarding yourself morally benefited you physically?
5. What changes will you ask God to help you make this week in order to promote a healthy life?

## The Extra Mile: A Personal Check Up

Proverbs says there is a correlation between our spiritual lives and physical well-being. Take a few minutes to do a **Personal Check Up** by answering the following questions:

What specific physical symptoms tend to be indicators that something is not healthy internally for you?

Are you experiencing any of these physical symptoms right now?

What steps can you take today to “*guard your heart*” (Proverbs 4:22) and so guard your body?

## Good Medicine

### **Proverbs 12:25**

*An anxious heart weighs a man down,  
but a kind word cheers him up.*

### **Proverbs 17:22**

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

### **Proverbs 18:14**

*A man's spirit sustains him in sickness,  
but a crushed spirit who can bear?*

1. According to Proverbs 18:14, what does it take to bear up under sickness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does having a cheerful heart work like a good medicine in times of sickness?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Which of the following words best describes the state of your heart or spirit today? (circle one)  
  

cheerful      steady      sagging      crushed
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. How is the current state of your heart impacting you, your work and your relationships?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Look at 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and write out how Paul kept his spirit from being crushed by the pressures and physical problems he faced. How can Paul's example help you?

## **The Extra Mile: Phone A Friend**

Think of a friend or acquaintance who has a cheerful spirit in spite of physical challenges.

Call or visit them and ask them these questions:

1. How do you keep your spirits from being crushed when you aren't feeling well?
2. How does your faith in God sustain you?

Make sure you give your friend some “*kind words*” that can cheer him or her on (Proverbs 12:25).

## Bad To The Bones

### Proverbs 14:30

*A heart at peace gives life to the body, but envy rots the bones.*

1. What does this proverb tell you about the link between our emotional state and our physical state?
2. The Hebrew word translated “peace” carries the idea of being “healthy or sound”. When have you noticed a connection between being healthy and being peaceful?
3. This proverb warns us that envy can not only “eat us up” emotionally and spiritually, but also physically. If psychological turmoil results in physical illness, we need to be on guard for envy.

When have you noticed the destructive forces of envy or jealousy?

How can you guard against it?

4. When is jealousy an appropriate response (Nahum 1:2) and when is it not?
5. Envy can destroy relationships. What additional insights about envy do you learn from James 3:16-17?

Envy can raise its ugly head at any time. We need to ask God to help us put it “to death.” (Romans 8:13) We can take it to the cross and confess it as sin, asking God’s Spirit for His help.

## The Extra Mile: Insights From A Hebrew Scholar

In his commentary on Proverbs, Tremper Longman, indicates that Proverbs 14:30 gives us

*“a rather striking psychological insight that shows an early awareness of what today is called ‘psychosomatic disease.’”*

Longman continues,

*“The first colon [line of the verse] states that an emotionally healthy person enjoys physical well-being; the second colon observes that psychological turmoil results in physical illness. The “heart,” after all, is roughly equivalent to one’s core personality, including emotions (see 3:1). A coolheaded person, an emotionally intelligent person enjoys “life in the body.” On the other hand, jealousy is an emotion that can destroy one’s inner peace and have a physical effect. . . . The association of jealousy with rot in the bones well indicates the nature of jealousy which “eats away at a person”. . . In any case, jealousy can destroy one’s mental, emotional and physical health.”*  
(Longman, **Proverbs**, pg. 307)

What strikes you from Longman’s comments?

## Indulging And Bulging

### **Proverbs 20:1**

*Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler;  
whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*

### **Proverbs 23:20-21**

*(20) Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat,  
(21) for drunkards and gluttons become poor,  
and drowsiness clothes them in rags.*

### **Proverbs 25:16**

*If you find honey, eat just enough — too much of it, and you will vomit.*

### **Proverbs 25:27**

*It is not good to eat too much honey,  
nor is it honourable to seek one's own honour.*

1. From the above proverbs, how can alcohol adversely affect our lives?
2. While the Bible doesn't prohibit believers from drinking wine, it gives clear warnings. Look up Proverbs 23:29-36 and list any other dangers associated with alcohol.
3. How are you making sure you aren't "*led astray*" by wine or beer? (Proverbs 20:1)
4. Proverbs 25:16 says it's possible to take in "*too much*" of a good thing. How prone are you to overeating?
5. What would it look like for you to "*eat just enough*"? (Proverbs 25:16)

## **The Extra Mile: Weighty Words**

Owen Strachan has some wise counsel for Christians who are seeking to honor God with their bodies. Here are excerpts from his blog post (<http://owenstrachan.com/post> on July 20, 2009)

One's weight and health relate closely to one's spiritual health. Lack of control over weight and health (within reason) reveals spiritual weakness and sin.

It makes no sense to treat your body poorly. There is no good reason to overeat and eat foolishly. No good argument can be made on this point. Eating badly and failing to exercise only brings harm.

It makes tremendous sense to treat your body well. Christians have a particular argument here. We steward all things the Lord gives us. If we do not steward our bodies well, we dishonour God. And we also cut short our opportunities to serve the Lord on this earth.

Without being grim, avoid excusing unwise behavior with jokes, cover-ups, and half-hearted arguments. This is hugely common, and helps to send many of us to an early grave. Be honest about your weight, just as you would in any area of your life. Weight/health is not cordoned off from holiness. It does not get a pass. It is as involved with your holiness as your media consumption is. Do not laugh off your gluttony or laziness. Like all sin, these things aren't funny—and neither are unnecessary health problems.

Guys: eat lots of vegetables and fruit. Many guys are dumb. They eat a burger four times a week for lunch and swear off vegetables and fruit. This is colossally stupid, and it's a key factor in many heart attacks and serious health problems. Yes, we all know people who ate horribly and lived to be 100, but we also know many who lived foolishly and died young. No one is impressed with your excessive burger consumption, least of all the grandchildren who won't get to see you!

Ladies: eat less snacks. What I've just written is way more than most people will say on this point. We're all much too polite for our own good. Ladies, if snacks are a problem, don't buy them. If desserts are a problem, don't make them. Contra pop culture, you don't need to look like a model—but neither do you need to struggle for years and years with weight.

Don't treat weight in hypersensitive terms. Weight is a tough issue for lots of people. Work hard not to make it an issue that you're so sensitive about that people cannot bring spiritual challenge and counsel to you. That's a very unhealthy place to be. No area of our lives should be outside of the bounds of spiritual and theological examination and rebuke.



## Joie De Vivre

### **Proverbs 12:20**

*There is deceit in the hearts of those who plot evil,  
but joy for those who promote peace.*

### **Proverbs 14:13**

*Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief.*

### **Proverbs 15:23**

*A man finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!*

### **Proverbs 21:15**

*When justice is done, it brings joy to the righteous but terror to evildoers.*

1. What do we understand about joy from these verses?
2. Who do you know that embodies a life of joyful living?
3. What promotes joyful living? (Proverbs 12:20)  
How are you seeking to do this?
4. Is laughter always a sign of joy? Why or why not?  
(see Proverbs 14:13)
5. Our circumstances may not bring us joy, but there's a place where joy can always be found. Where can we go to always find joy?  
(see Psalm 16:11)

Take a few unhurried minutes in God's presence. Ask Him to fill you with His joy today (Galatians 5:22-23).

## **The Extra Mile: Joyful Music**

Music can help us to “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4).

Here’s a song that encourages a joyful heart. Why not sing it to the Lord?

### ***Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee***

*Joyful, joyful  
Lord we adore Thee  
God of Glory, Lord of Love  
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee  
Clearly as the sun above  
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness  
Drive the dark of doubt away  
Giver of immortal gladness  
Fill us with the light  
Fill us with the light  
Oh fill us with the light of day*

*Mortals, join the happy chorus,  
Which the morning stars began;  
Father love is reigning o’er us,  
Brother love binds man to man.  
Ever singing, march we onward,  
Victors in the midst of strife,  
Joyful music leads us Sunward  
In the triumph song of life.*

As you go through the day, put on praise music to keep filling your heart with joy!

• Chapter 4 •

# Words





## Let My Words Be Few

### **Proverbs 10:19**

*When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.*

### **Proverbs 17:27**

*A man of knowledge uses words with restraint,  
and a man of understanding is even-tempered.*

### **Proverbs 17:28**

*Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent,  
and discerning if he holds his tongue.*

1. What do Proverbs 10:19 and 17:28 say are the benefits of not talking too much?
2. In what settings or situations are you most tempted to talk too much?
3. In what ways are you most prone to sin when words are many?  
(Proverbs 10:19)
4. Proverbs 17:27 implies that to restrain our words we must be even-tempered (literally an “excellent spirit”). Why is emotional health essential to verbal control?
5. How can God help you to “set a guard” over your lips  
(see Psalm 141:3)?

Ask Him to help you today.

# The Extra Mile: Tongue Tied

Take an inventory of yourself. In a recent, lengthy conversation, how much of the talking did you do?

25%    33%    50%    75%    90%

James 1:19 counsels us to be *“quick to listen and slow to speak.”* Today’s exercise will give you the chance to put that into practice. (This will be harder for some of us who tend to talk a lot!)

Here are your instructions for a one-day exercise. Consciously try to “hold your tongue” as you follow these suggestions:

1. Ask questions of others and then listen attentively to their answers.
2. When you are speaking, seek to be concise, clear and kind.

Journal:

What challenges did you encounter as you sought to hold your tongue?



## **Don't Butter Them Up**

### **Proverbs 12:25**

*An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*

### **Proverbs 28:23**

*He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.*

### **Proverbs 29:5**

*Whoever flatters his neighbour is spreading a net for his feet.*

1. The Hebrew word for flattery has the basic idea of "smooth". In what way are flattering words "smooth"?
2. Proverbs 29:5 says that flattering someone is like spreading a net for his or her feet. How can flattery trip a person up? (see also Romans 16:18)
3. Kind words cheer a person up (Proverbs 12:25). Flattering words can initially have that same effect. How can you tell if a compliment is flattery or not?
4. When have you personally seen the truth of Proverbs 28:23 lived out?
5. When are you most tempted to flatter someone instead of being honest? Ask God to help you be kind but still truthful in those situations.

## The Extra Mile: You Flatter Me!

**Flattery** (noun):

To praise too much, untruly or insincerely in order to win favor.

*New World Dictionary*

Reflect back on the conversations you've had with people over the past several days (your family members, friends, coworkers, others)

Did you speak or hear any compliments that were excessive, untrue, insincere or exaggerated?

What may have prompted this use of flattery?

How can you give genuine compliments and sincere words of praise?



## A Killer Tongue

### **Proverbs 12:18**

*Reckless words pierce like a sword,  
but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

### **Proverbs 18:21**

*The tongue has the power of life and death,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.*

### **Proverbs 16:27-28**

*(27) A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.*

*(28) A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*

1. How can words be deadly, like a “sword” or a “scorching fire”? When have you experienced words like these?
2. According to Proverbs 16:28, what damage can words do to close friendships?
3. When was the last time you had a “killer tongue” that scorched someone or separated a friendship?
4. Words reveal character: those who scorch with words are scoundrels (Proverbs 16:27) and those who gossip are perverse (Proverbs 16:28). What do your words reveal about your character?
5. Jesus says that our words aren’t the real problem—our hearts are (Matthew 15:18-19). How is your heart currently affecting your words?
6. Ask the Lord to help your words have life (Proverbs 18:21) and bring healing (Proverbs 12:18) to those you meet today.

## **The Extra Mile: Making Repairs**

When we sin with our tongues, we need God's forgiveness. We also need to seek peace and pursue forgiveness with those we've hurt.

Is there anyone who should receive an apology from you?

If so, how about making things right today?

Controlling our words takes the self-control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Invite the Lord to ripen the fruit of self-control in your life. Make this song your prayer:

*Over every thought  
Over every word  
May my life reflect  
The beauty of the Lord  
Lord reign in me!*

## Winning Words

### **Proverbs 15:1**

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

### **Proverbs 16:13**

*Kings take pleasure in honest lips;  
they value a man who speaks the truth.*

### **Proverbs 22:11**

*He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious  
will have the king for his friend.*

### **Proverbs 25:15**

*Through patience a ruler can be persuaded,  
and a gentle tongue can break a bone.*

1. How does Proverbs 15:1 instruct us to speak to an angry person?  
What happens if we respond harshly?
2. When have you seen the truth of Proverbs 15:1 lived out?
3. From the proverbs listed above, what do you learn about speaking in a persuasive way?
4. Wise words are both honest (Proverbs 16:13) and gracious (Proverbs 22:11). Which of these two qualities do you struggle with most—being honest or gracious?
5. Rate the graciousness of your speech in the following situations (one is low and 5 is high)

when you are in a conflict	1	2	3	4	5
when you are around your boss	1	2	3	4	5
when you are trying to persuade	1	2	3	4	5
in most situations	1	2	3	4	5

## **The Extra Mile: Humorous But Harsh**

Proverbs 15:1 reminds us that while a gentle answer can defuse conflict, harsh words fuel strife.

A good (or bad) illustration of this truth is found in the verbal sparring done between Sir Winston Churchill and Lady Nancy Astor, the first woman to sit in the British House of Commons.

It's reported that Lady Astor once said to Sir Winston,

*"If you were my husband I would poison your tea."*

To which Churchill replied,

*"If I were your husband, I would drink it."*

When have you seen humour used in a harsh or hurtful way?

When have you seen humour defuse a tense situation? What wisdom is found in not taking ourselves (and life) too seriously?

How can you make sure your use of humour is helpful and not hurtful?

## Timing Is Everything

### **Proverbs 15:23**

*A man finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!*

### **Proverbs 25:11**

*A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*

### **Proverbs 27:14**

*If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning,  
it will be taken as a curse.*

1. According to Proverbs 15:23, our words should be “*apt*” (the right words) and “*timely*” (the right time). What do you learn from the above verses about speaking the right words at the right time?
2. “*Apples of gold in settings of silver*” (Proverbs 25:11) refer to something very precious. Why does speaking the right words at the right time increase their value?
3. According to Proverbs 27:14, how might others respond if we say the right thing at the wrong time?
4. When have you said the right thing at the wrong time? What was the result?
5. How can you be more sensitive to “timing” in your words with other people?

**The Extra Mile:** Giving Timely Words

Identify several key relationships in your life. For each relationship indicate how or when you could pass on some timely words to this person. A timely moment could include a birthday, an anniversary, or an ordinary day!

Person	Timely Moments

• Chapter 5 •

# Marriage







## A Loving Partnership

### **Proverbs 2:11**

*Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.*

### **Proverbs 2:12**

*Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men,  
from men whose words are perverse,*

### **Proverbs 2:16-17**

*(16) It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her  
seductive words,*

*(17) who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made  
before God.*

1. The Hebrew term translated “partner” (Proverbs 2:17) has the idea of a close companion, friend or guide. What does this say about the marriage relationship?
2. Why is a healthy marriage like a good partnership? If you are married, how is your partnership going?
3. Proverbs 2:17 indicates that marriage is also a covenant—a sacred and solemn agreement made in God’s sight. What does this tell you about the biblical understanding of marriage?
4. Read Malachi 2:13-16 and record how God views the breaking of a marriage covenant?
5. If you are unmarried, what will you want to consider before entering into a marriage covenant?
6. If you are married, ask God to enable you to strengthen your marriage partnership and stay faithful to your marriage covenant.

## **The Extra Mile: A Vow To Remember**

Plan a time when you will review then vows you made with your spouse. Talk about how you will live out your vows in the coming years.

If you are unmarried, reflect on the permanent nature of a marriage covenant. Would you be willing to make this kind of lasting covenant with someone? Why or why not?

## Keep Romance Alive

### Proverbs 5:15-20

*(15) Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.*

*(16) Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares?*

*(17) Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.*

*(18) May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.*

*(19) A loving doe, a graceful deer — may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.*

*(20) Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?*

1. The Hebrew word translated “captivated” often carries the idea of being intoxicated. What does that tell you about God's view of marriage?
2. In these verses there is a celebration of physical intimacy within marriage. Why is this an important message for believers today?
3. Sexual passion is to be exclusively reserved for one's marriage partner (Proverbs 5:20). The fires of passion are to be kept within the fireplace of a covenantal relationship.

If you are married, how will you keep the romantic fires burning with your marriage partner?

If you are unmarried, how will you keep from getting burned by premature intimacy?

## **The Extra Mile: Romance Resources**

Here are several resources for keeping romance alive. These materials can be ordered at Family Life Today ([www.shopfamilylife.com/romance-and-sex.html](http://www.shopfamilylife.com/romance-and-sex.html)).

### **Simply Romantic Nights**

A box full of ideas designed to encourage and inspire you for creative, intimate romance with your spouse. Inside you'll find our best ideas to take your mate's breath away. Romance has never been so easy and so fun.

### **Coffee Dates for Couples**

This book provides refreshing conversation starters and flavorful date ideas. Your coffee experience will be renewed and recharged, as you enjoy the rich aroma of a robust, spicy conversation with your spouse in the haven of java!

### **Dates on a Dime**

Dozens of simple, frugal date ideas and money-saving tips that help you stay under budget with over-the-top romance!

## Marrying Well

### **Proverbs 12:4**

*A wife of noble character is her husband's crown,  
but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.*

### **Proverbs 18:22**

*He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord.*

### **Proverbs 19:14**

*Houses and wealth are inherited from parents,  
but a prudent wife is from the Lord.*

### **Proverbs 22:24-25**

*Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man...and get yourself ensnared.*

### **Proverbs 26:21**

*As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire,  
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.*

1. Marriage is a good thing (Proverbs 18:22), but marriage to the right kind of person is a great thing! What qualities do these proverbs emphasize as valuable in a marriage partner?
2. From the proverbs cited above, what character qualities could damage a marriage relationship?
3. If you are married, what noble qualities do you see in your mate? If you are unmarried, what qualities would you want to find in a marriage partner?
4. Proverbs 18:22 speaks of a man *"finding a wife"*. But Proverbs 19:14 says a prudent wife is *"from the Lord."* How do you put these two verses together? Whose responsibility is it to bring a couple together in marriage?
5. What should you do if you feel you've *"married the wrong person"*? (see Malachi 2:13-16)

## **The Extra Mile: Story Telling**

If you are married, discuss with your mate how God, circumstances or friends helped you find each other.

Seek to have a conversation this week with someone who has a solid marriage. Ask this person how he or she “found” a mate and how God was involved in the process of bringing them together. (This can be done in the context of your small groups).

## Playing With Fire

### Proverbs 6:23-29

*(23) For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life,*

*(24) keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.*

*(25) Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes,*

*(26) for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.*

*(27) Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?*

*(28) Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?*

*(29) So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.*

1. According to Proverbs 6:24-25, what charms could an immoral person use to tempt you? Which of these charms do you find most dangerous? (Note: while these verses describe an immoral woman, they would apply to an immoral man as well.)
2. What tragic consequences can result from giving way to an immoral relationship (Proverbs 6:26-29)?
3. Proverbs 6:27-28 ask questions that seem obvious. Why do some people think they can play with fire sexually and not get burned?
4. What safeguards are you taking to keep from getting burned in an immoral relationship at work, at school or even at church?
5. Is there any temptation you need to flee? (2 Timothy 2:22)

## The Extra Mile: Burnt Toast

Geoff Surratt, a pastor in South Carolina, offered some wise counsel on his blog to other pastors and ministry leaders about avoiding moral meltdowns. While his words are targeted to pastors, any Christian can benefit from his warnings. Reflect on what he has to say:

"If you think you aren't vulnerable, you are already toast. If you think you are too honest, too faithful, or too transparent to ever be involved in an affair you are skating on very thin ice. David never thought he'd sleep with Bathsheba until he saw her naked; then he couldn't think of anything else. You can steal money, you can get involved in pornography, you can cheat on your spouse, and you can lie to your family. Every day of our lives we have to remind ourselves we are vulnerable to complete moral failure.

If you think you can burn the candle at both ends, you are already toast. There are no super humans in ministry. When I read twitters of pastors who get up at 4:00 am every day, who work seven days a week, who counsel people at night and on their "day off", I know that they are headed for a fall. God took a day off when he was creating the world, Jesus took a beach trip to Tyre and Sidon (Mark 7:24) during his ministry. Unless you know something God doesn't know you are headed for a major fall without regular downtime.

If you think you don't need safeguards, you are already toast. Filters on internet access, never handling cash for the church, never meeting with someone of the opposite sex alone, letting others have access to your email.... The reality is that safeguards will not keep you from doing what you have already decided to do, but they can give you enough margin to change your mind before you act.

If you think it's about you, you are already toast. Failure begins with ego. When you begin to think that success is because you are smart, funny, talented, cool or a 100 other adjectives and not simply because God is God and has chosen to bless you; you are headed down a very dangerous path. . . .When you think the rules stop applying to you and you can cut corners and you are above it, you are on a crash course for disaster."

### 1 Corinthians 10:13

*No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*



## Harmony At Home?

### **Proverbs 15:18**

*A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*

### **Proverbs 17:1**

*Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife.*

### **Proverbs 17:14**

*Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam;  
so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.*

### **Proverbs 20:3**

*It is to a man's honour to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*

### **Proverbs 30:33**

*For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife.*

1. Proverbs 17:1 teaches that prosperity does not guarantee marital happiness. How have you seen the truth of this proverb lived out?
2. What wise advice can we take from Proverbs 17:14 and Proverbs 20:3 when it comes to quarrels?
3. Look back over the past week. How often did you get into a quarrel with your mate? With others? What does this say about you (see Proverbs 20:3)?
4. Does avoiding quarrels mean we will never confront or challenge one another in marriage? Why or why not? (review Proverbs 27:6)
5. When quarrels get started, we are wise to end them quickly and well. According to Proverbs 15:18, what character quality is needed to calm a quarrel? How are you doing in exemplifying this quality? (Remember, it's a "fruit of the Spirit" see Galatians 5:22-23).

## **The Extra Mile: How To Have A Clean Fight**

Geri and Pete Scazzero have developed some excellent tools to help married couples (and other friends) talk difficult issues through without getting into a damaging quarrel.

Here's a summary of their tool on "Clean Fighting"

### **Speaker:**

1. Ask permission to have a "clean fight" rather than a dirty or ugly fight.
  - a. Talk to God in prayer before going to talk to the other person
  - b. Be respectful in tone, timing and body language
2. State the problem: "I notice...."
  - a. Stick to one issue
  - b. Be honest, clear, direct and respectful.
3. State why it is important to you. "I value ...."
4. Fill in the following sentence: "When (this happens)....I feel ...."
5. State clearly, respectfully, and directly your request.

### **Listener:**

1. Give the speaker your full attention
2. Reflect back accurately what you heard the other person say
3. Consider the question and briefly share your perspective on it
4. State what you are willing to do about their request  
(some of it, all of it, none of it)

### **Together:**

1. Come to an agreement on what you will do going forward  
(perhaps put it in writing)
2. Pray for God's grace to forgive and work this matter through.

• Chapter 6 •

# Family Life





## The Goal Of Parenting

### **Proverbs 15:20**

*A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.*

### **Proverbs 17:25**

*A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him.*

### **Proverbs 23:24**

*The father of a righteous man has great joy;  
he who has a wise son delights in him.*

1. Circle the words in the verses above that describe the impact that wise or foolish children have on their parents.
2. When have you seen the truth of Proverbs 17:25 lived out?
3. When have you seen the truth of Proverbs 23:24 lived out?
4. In Proverbs 23:24, the word “*righteous*” is parallel to the word “*wise*”. How is wisdom connected to righteousness?
5. Based on these verses, helping children become wise should be a primary goal of parenting. Do you think this is a conscious goal for parents today? Why or why not?
6. List the names of several children for whom you can pray today. Ask the Lord to help them grow up in wisdom.

## **The Extra Mile: Focus On The Family**

Today we've looked at verses that remind us of the impact a child can have on his or her parents. Here are a few questions to help you consider the effect you've had on your mother and father.

How have you acted wisely and brought your parents joy?

When have you acted foolishly and caused them grief or shame?

How can you "*honour your father and mother*" (Ephesians 6:2) by seeking to live a wise and godly life?

## Home: The School Of Wisdom

### Proverbs 1:8

*Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

### Proverbs 4:3-5

*(3) When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender, and an only child of my mother,*

*(4) he taught me and said, "Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live.*

*(5) Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them.*

### Proverbs 22:6

*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

1. According to Proverbs 1:8, who should instruct a child in the way of wisdom?
2. When should parents begin training up their children in the ways of wisdom? (Proverbs 4:3; 22:6)

How do they do this? (Proverbs 4:4-5, 22:6)

3. What word best describes the tone of the parental words in these verses?  
  
casual                      hesitant                      urgent                      harsh
4. How do these verses parallel Ephesians 6:2-4? How can parents be urgent without being exasperating when it comes to instructing children?
5. If you are a parent, what can you take from today's verses that will help you instruct your children in the way of wisdom?

## **The Extra Mile: Follow Me**

A large part of training up a child in the way he should go (Proverbs 22:6) is setting a good example for him or her to follow. There's a lot of wisdom in the old saying: "More is caught than taught."

From watching how you live, what lessons would children who watch your life learn about...

- words
- work
- attitudes / emotions
- fearing the Lord

Would you be happy if the children you love most learned the way to live from your example? Why or why not?

What would God want you to do to set a better example?



## Disciplined For Wisdom

### **Proverbs 19:18**

*Discipline your son, for in that there is hope;  
do not be a willing party to his death.*

### **Proverbs 22:15**

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

### **Proverbs 29:15**

*The rod of correction imparts wisdom,  
but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*

1. The Hebrew word for discipline in Proverbs 19:18 has the idea of “correcting”. What does this verse say can happen if parents fail to correct their children?
2. According to Proverbs 22:15, why do all children naturally need corrective discipline? What does that tell you about the inherent nature of a child?
3. Both Proverbs 22:15 and 29:15 refer to the “rod” of correction. How can the “rod” help to drive out folly and impart discipline?
4. According to Proverbs 3:11-12, what is discipline an evidence of? Is this how you view discipline? Why or why not?
5. What does God’s example show you about the importance of parental discipline? (see Hebrews 12:7-11).
6. If you are parent, how do you need to provide loving discipline for your children? If you are not a parent, who can you pray for?

## **The Extra Mile:** Discipling Through Discipline

Children can be corrected through various means of discipline. These measures need to correspond to the degree of “folly” or disobedience found in their lives.

Do some wise planning related to the methods of discipline you will use in your home:

When can you allow natural, negative consequences to teach your child wisdom? (For example: not bringing the child’s lunch to school when it is forgotten.)

When could you use praise to positively reinforce good behaviour?

When do you need to rebuke or correct your child?

When would you consider using the ‘rod’?

Chuck Swindoll reminds parents that we are to “train a child in the way they should go.” This not only means to train them to walk in God’s ways, but to consider their personality, their bent, and their interests in our training. Not every child will need the same disciplinary measures. Nor will every child have the same interests. Ask God to give you incredible wisdom to shape the lives of children around you!

## No Fun...For A While

### **Proverbs 12:1**

*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,  
but he who hates correction is stupid.*

### **Proverbs 13:1**

*A wise son heeds his father's instruction,  
but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.*

### **Proverbs 15:5**

*A fool spurns his father's discipline,  
but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.*

1. What does our response to discipline reveal about our hearts? (Proverbs 12:1)
2. Why is it foolish for anyone to reject rebuke or hate correction?
3. A wise child will “heed” instruction (Proverbs 13:1) and correction (Proverbs 15:5). How can you tell if a child is truly heeding discipline?
4. Since discipline is always painful (Hebrews 12:11), how can anyone be expected to “love” it (Proverbs 12:1)?
5. What can parents do to help their children receive correction well?
6. In what ways do you need to respond wisely to correction that is from the Lord?

## **The Extra Mile:** Resources On Discipline For Parents

Here are some helpful resources for parents:

Adrian Rogers, **A Home on the Rock** (available by podcast and CD).

Carolyn Mahaney, **Wisdom for Women from Titus 2**  
(available in MET Library and online).

Lou Priolo, **The Heart of Anger** (workbook also available)

Tedd Tripp, **Shepherding A Child's Heart** (workbook also available)

Paul Tripp, **Age Of Opportunity** (for teens)

Tim Kimmel, **Raising Kids Who Turn Out Right**

Mark Gregston, **When Your Teen Is Struggling**

## A Loving Legacy

### **Proverbs 16:31**

*Gray hair is a crown of splendor; it is attained by a righteous life.*

### **Proverbs 17:6**

*Children's children are a crown to the aged,  
and parents are the pride of their children.*

### **Proverbs 17:17**

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

### **Proverbs 20:29**

*The glory of young men is their strength, gray hair the splendor of the old.*

1. What attitudes are we to have towards aging parents or grandparents?
2. What challenges and joys have you experienced as you have tried to honour those with "gray hair"?
3. If your children someday followed your example, how loved would you feel?
4. How does Proverbs 17:17 encourage us to relate to our brothers and sisters?
5. How did Jesus re-prioritize our family relationships? (Mark 3:31-34)
6. How have Jesus' words shaped the way you relate to your family and your church family?

Ask God to continue to make you a blessing to your family and an example to those who watch you – including your children!

## **The Extra Mile: A Family Check Up**

Sometimes there is a blockage in the family relationship that we need to remove in order to enjoy the fullness of family life. Reflect on the following questions about your family relationships.

Is there anyone you need to forgive?

Anything that needs to be forgotten?

Any important dates that need to be celebrated?

Any steps taken to “move on”? (Psalms 45:10-11; Genesis 2:24)

• Chapter 7 •

# Friends, Neighbours And Enemies







## **You've Got A Friend**

### **Proverbs 17:17**

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

### **Proverbs 18:24**

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

### **Proverbs 19:4**

*Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him.*

### **Proverbs 20:6**

*Many a man claims to have unfailing love, but a faithful man who can find?*

1. From the above verses, what are the characteristics of a true friend?
2. Proverbs 19:4 indicates that it can be hard to tell who your true friends are in the good times. Why is that the case?
3. How do hard times reveal our true friends? Name someone who has proven to be a good friend in times of adversity.
4. Who would consider you a true friend? How have you shown your loyalty to him/her?
5. In John 15:14-15 Jesus offers friendship to those who follow Him. What makes Jesus a faithful friend? What does Jesus expect from His friends? (see John 15:14)
6. Based on what Jesus says in John 15:14-15, how could you develop a closer friendship with Him today?

## **The Extra Mile: A Friendly Thank You**

Here's an assignment for today: Find a way to express your gratitude to someone who has proven to be a loyal friend to you.

Which friend will you thank?

How will you do it?

- ☐ Check the box when you've done it.

## Friendly Fire

### **Proverbs 22:11**

*He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.*

### **Proverbs 27:5-6**

*(5) Better is open rebuke than hidden love.*

*(6) Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

### **Proverbs 27:17**

*As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

1. A popular conception of friendship says that friends “live and let live.” How do Proverbs 27:5-6 and Proverbs 27:27 refute that notion?
2. Why is it that wounds from a true friend can be trusted?
3. When have you been “wounded” by a true friend? How did you respond? What did it do to your friendship?
4. When have you “wounded” a friend in love? How did your friend respond? What did it do to your friendship?
5. How can Proverbs 22:11 help you be more effective when you speak challenging words to a friend? What needs to be true of your heart? What needs to be true of your speech?
6. Name a friend who you would trust to honestly and graciously “wound” you? Why not tell this person that you want them to sharpen you whenever you need it.

## The Extra Mile: Constructive Criticism

David Powlison's article, **"Does the Shoe Fit?"** (Journal of Biblical Counseling, Spring 2002) gives some wise words on why fair-minded criticism is much better for us than sweet-talking flattery. Here's an excerpt worth thinking about:

"Fair-minded criticism is one of life's best pleasures, an acquired taste well worth the acquiring. Someone who will take you seriously, understand you accurately, treat you charitably, and who then will lay it on the line is a messenger from God for your welfare (whether or not you end up completely agreeing). There is nothing quite like being disagreed with intelligently, lovingly, and openly: *"Faithful are the wounds of a friend"* (Proverbs 27:6). If I only listen to my allies, or to yes-men, clones, devotees, and fellow factionaries, then I might as well inject narcotics into my veins. The people of God are a large work in progress. To engage and to interact with critics is to further the process—in both of our lives. We ought to offer to others the kind of criticism that is such a pleasure to receive.

Critics, like governing authorities, are servants of God to you for good (Romans 13:4). He who sees into hearts uses critics to help us see things in ourselves: outright failings of faith and practice, distorted emphases, blind spots, areas of neglect, attitudes and actions contradictory to stated commitments, and, yes, strengths and significant contributions. God uses critics to help us. Even if I think that a criticism is mistaken, I shouldn't leap too quickly to the defense. Is there something I am doing or saying (or not doing and not saying) that makes that particular misinterpretation plausible? Am I too easily misunderstood? Do I leave implicit or understate something that needs to be made explicit? Does my attitude or tone or way of treating people send a mixed message? Do I ride my hobbyhorses? Am I not answering some important question that this person is asking? Am I not addressing some important problem that this person cares about? In my experience, the answer to these questions is usually yes."

## Friendship Killers

### **Proverbs 16:28**

*A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*

### **Proverbs 17:9**

*He who covers over an offense promotes love,  
but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*

### **Proverbs 27:10**

*Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you —  
better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.*

1. From the above verses, what are some things that destroy a friendship?
2. Gossip can be defined as “rumor or talk of a personal, sensational, or intimate nature”. How can you determine when a conversation you are in has crossed the line into gossip?
3. Proverbs 16:28 says a gossip separates close friends. When have you seen that happen?
4. Does “*covering over an offense*,” (Proverbs 17:9) mean we never confront a friend? Why or why not? (Hint: remember yesterday’s study)
5. Proverbs 27:10 says a friend who is nearby is a stronger support than a relative who is far way. When have you found this to be true?
6. The first line in Proverbs 27:10 counsels us not to forsake a friend or a family friend. Is there anything you have done that caused a past friendship to die? What might you do to see the friendship grow again?

## **The Extra Mile:** Guarding Against Gossip

Select one of the two picturesque proverbs on gossip below. Reflect on the imagery used in the proverb and write out what you learn about the nature or danger of gossip. Indicate how keeping this proverb in mind can help you guard against gossip

### **Proverbs 26:20**

*Without wood a fire goes out;  
without gossip a quarrel dies down.*

### **Proverbs 26:22**

*The words of a gossip are like choice morsels;  
they go down to a man's inmost parts.*

## Good Neighbours

### **Proverbs 3:27-28**

*(27) Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act.*

*(28) Do not say to your neighbour, "Come back later; I'll give it tomorrow" — when you now have it with you.*

### **Proverbs 25:17**

*Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house — too much of you, and he will hate you.*

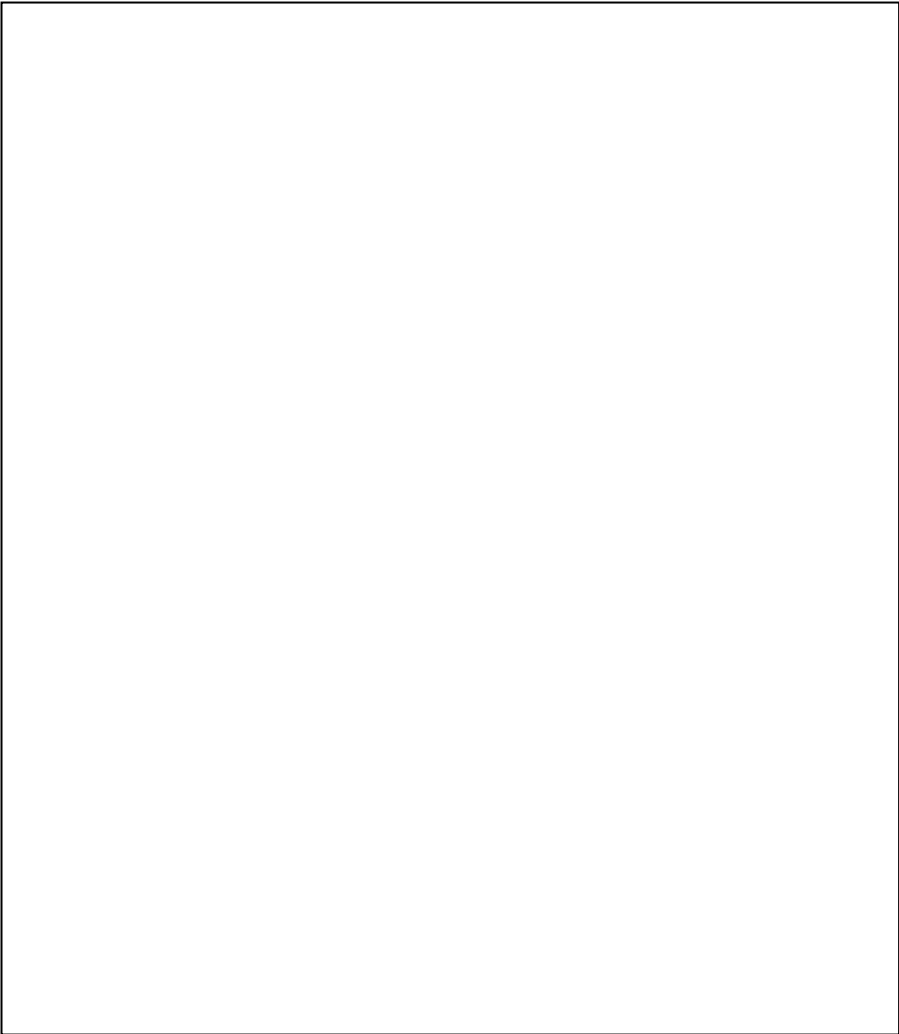
### **Proverbs 27:14**

*If a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.*

1. In Proverbs the word for “friend” and the word for “neighbour” are sometimes used interchangeably. A friend is someone who is close relationally; a neighbour is someone close geographically (at home, at work, or on campus). List some of your “neighbours”.
2. Jesus commanded us to love our neighbours as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). What neighbourly advice is given in Proverbs 3:27-28?
3. What qualities of a “bad neighbour” come out in Proverbs 25:17 and 27:14?
4. Can you think of a situation where neighbours failed to follow the instructions given in the above verses? What was the result?
5. We all need much wisdom when it comes to relating well to our neighbours. Ask the Lord to show you one principle from today’s study that you can, by His grace, live out this week.

**The Extra Mile:** Neighbourhood Watch

Draw a simple map of your neighbourhood that shows the homes/apartments of your neighbors. Write the names of the neighbors you know next to the place they live.



Use this map to pray for your neighbours. Ask God you let you be a good neighbour to them and to help connect them to Christ Jesus.



## Dealing With Enemies

### **Proverbs 16:7**

*When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD,  
he makes even his enemies live at peace with him.*

### **Proverbs 25:21-22**

*(21) If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat;  
if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.*

*(22) In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head,  
and the LORD will reward you.*

### **Proverbs 27:6**

*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

1. The Hebrew word for “enemy” is linked to the word for “hatred.” How does Proverbs 27:6 say this hatred can be concealed?
2. Living according to God’s ways tends to promote peace with others (Proverbs 16:7). Why is that the case?
3. How does Proverbs 25:21 tell us to respond to enemies? Can you think of a time when you’ve sought to do this?
4. What does Proverbs 25:22 say will be the effects of treating enemies with kindness?
5. The apostle Paul quotes Proverbs 25:21-22 in Romans 12:17-21. How do these verses help us trust God for justice when we feel harassed by our enemies?

## **The Extra Mile: Heap On The Coals**

Think of someone who has hurt you and could be considered an enemy. Pray for this person, asking the Lord to give you His love for him or her (remember, in Matthew 5:44, Jesus said, *“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”*).

What is one act of kindness you could show towards this person in the coming week?

• Chapter 8 •

# Plans





## Planning For Success

### **Proverbs 16:1-3**

*(1) The plans of the heart belong to man,*

*but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord*

*(2) All the ways of a man are clean in His own sight*

*but the Lord weighs the motives*

*(3) Commit your works to the Lord and your plans will be established.*

### **Proverbs 19:21**

*Many are the plans of a man's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails.*

1. When have you made a plan, only to have it fail? Contrast this with a time when your plans worked out beautifully. What factors contributed to the success of one and the failure of the other?
2. From the above verses, what contributes to a successful plan?
3. As you look at the plans that you identified in Question 1, how did God enable or intervene in your plans?
4. How is Jeremiah 29:11 an encouragement in our planning?
5. What plans are you currently making?

## **The Extra Mile: Questions For Reflection**

Proverbs 21:30 *“There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the Lord.”* Without God’s involvement, our plans are exercises in futility.

Take a moment to be still and quiet before the Lord.

Are there any of your plans that you need to fully surrender to God today?

Are there any strong desires that seem to be thwarted by events beyond your control?

Take a few moments to commit your plans to the Lord. (Proverbs 16:3).

## Consider A Consultant

### **Proverbs 15:22**

*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

### **Proverbs 6:2**

*All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight  
but the Lord weighs the motives.*

### **Proverbs 16:9**

*In his heart a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps.*

### **Proverbs 20:18**

*Make plans by seeking advice; if you wage war, obtain guidance.*

1. From the above verses, when and with whom should we discuss our plans?
2. Why might we hesitate to bring our plans out into the open with the Lord? (Proverbs 16:2)
3. How does the Lord respond to those who hide their plans from Him? (see Isaiah 29:15)
4. Are there any plans that you need to talk over with a wise counselor or a wise friend? Is there a business or ministry decision that needs the consultation of others?
5. Why might you be hesitating to talk to others about your plans?

Take a few moments to talk this situation over with God and then plan a time when you could consult a wise friend. Prepare to speak wisely and carefully consider his or her counsel.

## The Extra Mile: Turning Plans Into Action

Some people love lists and plans. Others live as life comes along. We've found it wise to begin each week by planning how we could invest in our various roles and relationships. These become our "goals" for the week. We'd like you to try this exercise.

What could you do this week that would make a significant difference in your role or relationship with...

- God
- Family
- Work
- Ministry

Is there anything you've begun that you need to finish?

Put an \* by the goal that would make a significant difference in your life to complete. Ask the Lord and a friend to help you take steps to accomplish this. Set a due date and work towards it.

For more on "roles and goals" see ***First Things First***, by Stephen Covey



## Careful Planning

### **Proverbs 20:18**

*Make plans by seeking advice;  
if you wage war, obtain guidance.*

### **Proverbs 21:5**

*The plans of the diligent lead to profit,  
as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

### **Proverbs 22:3**

*A prudent man sees danger and takes refuge,  
but the simple keep going and suffer for it.*

### **Proverbs 24:27**

*Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready;  
after that, build your house.*

1. Circle the answer that best suits you:
  - a. I tend to carefully plan things out
  - b. I tend to just “start” and see what happens

God had a plan when He carefully ordered creation. He designed the universe and crafted the human body in “*fearful and wonderful*” ways. As His image bearers, we’d be wise to do the same.

2. What contributes to a successful plan? (see verses above)
3. How should we plan for potentially threatening situations? (Proverbs 22:3)
4. In what areas of your life do you need to “think it through” and plan things out in a proper order?
5. Proverbs 21:5 also mentions the need for diligence. Where do you need to be diligent to bring a plan into action today?

## **The Extra Mile:** Turning Plans Into Action (Review)

Look back on the plans you made for roles and relationships on page (96)

How are you doing in making progress with these plans?

Which one(s) will you work on today?

Continue to pray about your plans, but also continue to work diligently on them.

## Failure To Launch

### **Proverbs 15:22**

*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

### **Proverbs 16:2**

*All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight  
but the Lord weighs the motives.*

### **Proverbs 21:5**

*The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

### **Proverbs 24:8**

*He who plots evil will be known as a schemer; the schemes of folly are sin.*

1. From the above verses, what contributes to failed plans?
2. When have you made a hasty plan? (Proverbs 21:5) What were the long-term results?
3. How are scheming and planning similar? How are they different?
4. As you look back over your life, have you ever been part of a scheme or a plot? How did you see it at that time? How do you see it now?
5. Plans and schemes differ in their motive. Sometimes we aren't aware of all our motives. It is wise to pray: *"Search me, O God, and know my heart; see if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."* (Psalm 139:23-24) Has the Lord revealed anything hidden or hurtful in any of your plans?

## The Extra Mile: Looking For Blind Spots

**Blind spot** (noun)

An area where vision is hindered or obscured.

A prejudice, or area of ignorance, that one has but is often unaware of.

*New World Dictionary*

Our plans often flow out of our usual patterns. These patterns may be shaped by our parents' patterns, or what we have found "works" over the years. However, sometimes we have "blind spots" and we aren't planning for areas that we should be!

God can bring what is hidden to us into clear view. He uses Scripture, the counsel of others and the promptings of the Holy Spirit to see these areas. Then He enables us to plan ahead in ways that are wise.

In what areas might you have "blind spots"?

What attention do you need to give to these areas?

## Plan Your Work—Work Your Plan

### Proverbs 24:30-34

*(30) I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgment;*

*(31) thorns had grown up everywhere; the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins.*

*(32) I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw;*

*(33) A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest*

*(34) and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.*

1. Dr. Howard Hendricks, a master teacher, assigned all of his students the task of making 25 observations from the above proverbs. We'll only ask you for five observations—and even give you one to get you started. (Share with your group and together you might find 25!)
  - The sluggard's field was full of thorns
  - 
  - 
  - 
  -
2. How can something that was well planned and even well established atrophy over time?
3. When and where have you noticed this in your own life?
4. As you look at these proverbs, in what area of your life does this most apply? Where does God's Spirit convict you?
5. Ask a friend to come alongside and help you deal with the "thorns and weeds" that may be affecting your very best plans!

## **The Extra Mile: Questions For Reflection**

Is there an area of your life that has been neglected and needs more careful attention?

Where is a lack of diligence affecting your life?

• Chapter 9 •

# Work And Wealth







## An Honest Day's Work

### **Proverbs 10:9**

*The man of integrity walks securely,  
but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.*

### **Proverbs 11:18**

*The wicked man earns deceptive wages,  
but he who sows righteously reaps a sure reward.*

### **Proverbs 16:11**

*Honest scales and balances are from the Lord;  
all the weights in the bag are of his making.*

### **Proverbs 20:23**

*The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please Him.*

1. What do these verses tell you about God's concern for honest business practices?
2. The Hebrew word for integrity means "whole" or "complete." Why does honesty keep us "whole" as people?
3. Righteous business practices receive a "*sure reward*." What kind of reward does God give to those who are honest in their work?
4. How are you most tempted to "tilt the scales" a bit at work or at home? How can these verses help keep you honest?
5. What steps can you take to ensure you are a person of integrity in your workplace?

## **The Extra Mile: An Integrity Manifesto**

Since a person of integrity walks securely (Proverbs 10:9), you would be wise to set your standards high.

Prayerfully consider what integrity on the job would involve for you (for some, your “workplace” could be your home or your campus). Draft an Integrity Manifesto to state the ways you will aim to please the Lord at work.

I resolve, in humble reliance on the grace of the Holy Spirit, that I will demonstrate integrity at work in the following ways:

1.

2.

3.

## Working Hard Or Hardly Working

### **Proverbs 10:4**

*Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth.*

### **Proverbs 10:22**

*The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds no trouble to it.*

### **Proverbs 12:14**

*From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things  
as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.*

### **Proverbs 14:23**

*All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

### **Proverbs 21:25**

*The sluggard's craving will be the death of him,  
because his hands refuse to work.*

1. Hard work has its rewards. What do these proverbs tell you are the benefits of working hard? When have you experienced this?
2. How does Proverbs 10:22 keep us from becoming proud if our work brings us some measure of wealth?
3. Proverbs 21:25 indicates that hard work won't kill us; however, refusing to work can. Why is that?
4. Look up 2 Thessalonians 3:6-10 and summarize it's message for those who "refuse to work."
5. How can we work hard without letting work consume all of life and crowd out other God-given priorities (reading Scripture, developing relationships, family life, etc.)?
6. What challenge or encouragement do you take away from today's verses?

**The Extra Mile:** Upping The Anty

Read Proverbs 6:6-11 which provides a living illustration of hard workers.

If you have young children (or even if you don't!), find some ants to watch for several minutes. Make a list of how these industrious (and infuriating) little critters can teach us wisdom. Why not go on the internet and read about ants?

Work Log:

Over the past week, how many hours did you work?  
(Either at the office or at home.)

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT

What does your work log reveal?

## Who Me? Lazy?

### **Proverbs 13:4**

*The sluggard craves and gets nothing,  
but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*

### **Proverbs 26:13**

*The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road,  
a fierce lion roaming the streets!"*

### **Proverbs 26:14**

*As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed.*

### **Proverbs 26:15**

*The sluggard buries his hand in the dish;  
he is too lazy to bring it back to his mouth.*

### **Proverbs 26:16**

*The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly.*

1. Proverbs 13:4 notes that both a diligent person and a sluggard have desires. But what happens to their desires?
2. From the verses above, list the characteristics of a sluggard.
3. A door turning on its hinges (Proverbs 26:14) is a picture of motion without progress. How can "busy" people be lazy?
4. According to Proverbs 26:16, what character flaw does laziness reveal? Why does this make it hard for sluggards to change?
5. Isolate one area you know God would want you to change when it comes to laziness.
6. Changing lazy patterns takes humility (not being "*wise in our own eyes*"). Who in your community of relationships will you ask to help you make these changes? Write his/her name \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Check the box when you've spoken to this person

## **The Extra Mile: Smoke Or Weeds?**

Choose one of the following learning experiences. If you have kids or grandkids, get them involved with you!

### **1. When the Smoke Gets in Your Eyes**

Read Proverbs 10:26.

If you are brave enough, let a little smoke get in your eyes or take a taste of vinegar. How do these unpleasant experiences help you understand the way others feel about us when we are lazy!

### **2. Field Trip**

Read Proverbs 24:30-34

Take a “field trip” to some area of your home that has become dilapidated or “covered with weeds” (perhaps your garage, a closet or toolbox). How did things get to a state of disrepair (notice Proverbs 24:33). What negative results can you expect if you let things go in life (see verse 34)?

## Generous Living

### **Proverbs 3:9-10**

*(9) Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.*

*(10) then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

### **Proverbs 11:24**

*One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.*

### **Proverbs 28:27**

*He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.*

1. Those who work hard often reap financial rewards. According to Proverbs 3:9, what are we to do with the “*first fruits*” of our labours?
2. Why is God honoured when we do this and dishonoured when we don't?
3. Where else should our generosity be directed? (Proverbs 28:27)
4. Based on the proverbs cited above, why is it wise to be generous?
5. Do a quick audit of your giving to the Lord over the last two months.
  - a) How did you do in giving “off the top” to the Lord in a way that honours Him?
  - b) How did you do in being generous with the needy?
  - c) What will you do in this area over the next two months?

## **The Extra Mile:** Practicing Generosity

George Sweeney, former president of the Moody Bible Institute, loved to say, “Never resist a generous impulse.”

Set aside a sum of money or a block of time and ask God to prompt you to use it generously. Have fun with this!

What did you do?

How did your generosity benefit someone else?

How did it impact you to be generous?



## Becoming Money Wise

### **Proverbs 13:11**

*Dishonest money dwindles away,  
but he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.*

### **Proverbs 13:22**

*A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children  
but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.*

### **Proverbs 15:16**

*Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.*

### **Proverbs 21:20**

*In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil,  
but a foolish man devours all he has.*

### **Proverbs 22:7**

*The rich rule over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender.*

1. Proverbs 13:11 indicates the way to “grow” wealth is to gather it “*little by little*” (literally, “by hand”). How are you doing when it comes to consistently saving “*little by little*”?
2. Based on Proverbs 21:20, what do we learn about spending?
3. Spending more than we are making leads to debt. What are the negative consequences of getting into debt? (see Proverbs 22:7)
4. How can Proverbs 15:16 help you resist overspending and getting into debt?
5. Read the prayer recorded in Proverbs 30:7-9. How do you react to this prayer? Could you pray it? Why or why not?
6. What is one practical step you will take to handle money wisely as a result of today's lesson? Ask God for grace to follow through.

## **The Extra Mile: Financial Advice**

Proverbs repeatedly highlights the value of getting wise advice. We have found it helpful to seek godly counsel in the area of our finances.

Do you need the counsel of a godly, financial planner?

Is there a money-wise friend you could take out for coffee and a conversation about handling money well?

Here are some areas you might discuss:

1. Giving
2. Budgeting
3. Saving
4. Spending
5. Debt-Elimination

Recommended resources:

***The Treasure Principle***, by Randy Alcorn.

***Money Wise***, A Sermon Series by Rick Reed (available at [www.metbiblechurch.ca](http://www.metbiblechurch.ca)).

## Parting Thoughts

Thank you so much for joining us on this walk towards wisdom. *Whew!* It's been a long hike hasn't it? It's taken us around bends on the path that we didn't expect; at other times our walk towards wisdom has refreshed us by of streams of *joie de vivre*. If you're like us – you've felt convicted, challenged and encouraged. Perhaps you've discovered some things that you wish someone **else** would see – but that wasn't the purpose of our walk, was it? This was our own personal walk towards wisdom.

As you look back over this journey, what are some particular ways that the Lord has spoken to you?

What insights did you gain that you need to continue to make a regular part of your life?

In what areas do you need to continue to seek God's wisdom for your future? How will you do that?

We trust this has been a blessed journey for you. We know that wisdom and folly will continue to call out to you (see Proverbs 9). May God give you determination and strength to continually choose the path that walks towards wisdom – for that path leads to life!

### Proverbs 8:34-35

*Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord.*