



VILLAGE BIBLE CHURCH
SUGAR GROVE CAMPUS

God Wants You to be a Wise Guy

Proverbs: Search for Wisdom, Part 1

Tim Badal | July 13, 2014 | Proverbs 1:1-7



We're starting a new series that we have entitled "Proverbs: Search for Wisdom." Over the next couple of months we want to focus on seeking wisdom that comes from the Old Testament Book of Proverbs. Years ago, we used to seek out wisdom and insight from people who were older than us, whether it was our parents or a grandparent or maybe someone else we knew. Wisdom was seen in the eyes and through the words of someone who had more life experience. A younger person would seek out an older person and ask, "How do I do this? How do I pick the right college? How do I pick the right spouse? How do I do better at managing my money?" With the advent of technology, instead of turning to those wiser and more mature individuals who have lived life, people turn to their iPads, or iPhones, or the Internet in order to gain knowledge.

Just to give you an idea of how much we rely on the Internet for answers to the questions that are most pressing to us, the popular search engine Google boasts more than 100 billion searches every month. One hundred billion every month! In the first couple of years, Google boasted a fifty percent answer rate which means Google claimed that when you put something into the search box, they were able to correctly answer your question fifty percent of the time.

Fifteen years later they boast a more than ninety percent success rate; and for Google, that's not good enough. One of their representatives on an interview with CNBC said, "We are looking forward to the day when we will be able to answer every question that anyone could ever ask." And then he unveiled the "**knowledge graph**," a tool that Google has been working on for some time that uses your previous searches to better understand the question you're asking so they can give you the best answer. Unfortunately, when we seek answers from the Internet, sometimes we get the right answer; sometimes we don't. The Internet's not the best place to go for the answers that we're looking for.

Not too long ago, I had a terrible headache right behind my eye and I wanted to find out what was causing it. So I went to Google and typed, "What is a headache behind the eye a symptom of?" So it took me to WebMD which said that my headache was one of two things: a headache caused by inflamed sinuses or a watermelon-sized tumor that I needed to get removed right away. We need to understand that when we turn to places like the Internet we're not always going to get the right answers. Sometimes, it might raise more questions than answers.

God isn't angry with you when you seek out wisdom or insight. In fact God cares more about your knowledge and wisdom than you do yourself. For that reason, one of the sixty-six books of the Bible, God's Love Letter to us, is a book called Proverbs. For the rest of the summer, we are going to turn to the original search engine: the Word of God. We're going to see what God's Word says because the Apostle Paul tells us that the Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation (**2 Timothy 3:15**). If the Bible is able to answer the most important eternal question, shouldn't the Bible be the place where we turn for easier, more temporal questions? Shouldn't we turn to the Biblical text for the answers we seek?

So today, I want you to understand the concept of what the Proverbs are and the role they play in our lives. In order to do that we need to determine what Proverbs says about itself. As we search for the wisdom of God, let's look at **Proverbs 1:1-7** and see what the opening of this book says:

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:
²To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,
³to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
⁴to give prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the youth—
⁵Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,
⁶to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.
⁷The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Father God, as we come before You and we open Your Word, I pray that it will penetrate our heads and hearts. Lord, I pray that we would see the importance of turning to You, the Fountain of all wisdom and all knowledge. We are a people who lack wisdom. We are a people who lack knowledge. It is easy, it is tempting for us to go find the answers in this world. Lord, while the world only gets it right sometimes, we know You always get it right. We know where You lead is always pure and blameless and good. Let us set our hearts on things above, not on earthly things, especially that we would set our hearts on the wisdom of heaven and not simply the wisdom here on Earth. So Lord, lead us in this time. Speak through Your speaker that I may be able to speak these truths as You would see fit. Lord, we give You the glory for it. It's in Your Son Jesus' Name that we pray. Amen and amen.

I want to start this sermon highlighting the title of this message: God Wants You to be a Wise Guy. Now I know that "wise guy" has mafia connotations, but I want you to recognize that God desires for us to be wise and knowledgeable people. We often skirt the issue of being wise and knowledgeable because we're lazy. We use excuses that sound sanctimonious. We'll say, "You know what? I don't pursue too much of the Bible. I don't pursue too much knowledge because my faith is a simple faith; it is a child-like faith." I want to remind you that **Proverbs 19:8** says that Christ followers are called to get wisdom, to grab ahold of wisdom. The writer Solomon says that when we get wisdom, we love our souls and discover something good.

Yet, we push wisdom away and we say, "It's not that important." Remember **Proverbs 1:7** says that fools despise wisdom and instruction. God is not okay with you saying, "Well, the very little I know, that's all I need to know. I'm not a pastor; I'm not a small group leader; I'm not teaching the kids' Sunday school. What little I know about Jesus is good enough." God says, "No, I want you to know all of Me, all the wisdom and all the knowledge that I have revealed about Myself. I want you to grab ahold of it."

But what kind of wisdom does God want us to grab ahold of? John Piper puts it this way, "Wisdom is the practical knowledge of how to attain true and lasting happiness." Do you desire true and lasting happiness? If you don't want that, something's wrong with you and you need to get some help. All of us desire true and lasting happiness.

Where do we get it? It begins with the fear of the Lord and consistently, humbly hearing and doing God's will, both in the Scriptures and in the unique circumstances of the moment. Such wisdom is essential because the person who finds it finds life and joy. The one who doesn't find only death and misery. So God wants us to know that unless we find this wisdom, our lives aren't going to be as good as they could be. Happiness comes when we find wisdom, and when we hold tightly to the wisdom God gives.

Well, how are we to get it? The Apostle Paul tells us that those who are approved by God are those who rightly divide the Word of truth (**2 Timothy 2:15**). Rightly dividing the Word of truth means taking God's Word and rightly applying it to every situation. Many times, Christians take Scripture out of context and wrongly apply it to their lives. We need to understand that there's a context to Scripture. We are quick to point out that cults take Scripture out of context, yet we as Christians commit the same atrocity. A common example is this: "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope*" (**Jeremiah 29:11**). We take that passage and say, "Yes, that's for me. That's wonderful." But we forget that there were 70 years of captivity for God's people preceding this verse! We like the plans that God has for us, not the seventy years of captivity that the Israelites would endure in Babylon. We need to be very careful. Does that mean that we can't apply

that? No, what it means is make sure you understand each passage of Scripture in its context. Only then can we rightly apply what the Bible says.

Many times, we take a shot-gun approach to the application of Scripture. We just start shooting verses out of our guns, hoping one of them will hit the target. God says, "What I'm looking for is a single shot to the bull's eye." In order to do that, we have to rightly apply the Word of Truth. We must remember this as we approach the Book of Proverbs.

1. To glean wisdom from Proverbs, we must put them in their proper place

God is going to reveal these nuggets of wisdom to us. However, if we're going to glean wisdom from the book of Proverbs and use them properly, we need to put them in their proper place. We need to understand how Proverbs should be applied to our lives.

This involves examining a proper definition

To be able to do that, let's get a definition, not of wisdom, but of "proverbs." There is a proper definition that we need to pursue. The word "proverbs" itself is a compound Latin word that literally is "pro-verb." It means "in place of words" or "in place of speaking." So what is a proverb? It is a short statement that encapsulates wisdom. Some of you wish that I preached less and "proverb-ed" more. Let me remind you that of the sixty-six books of the Bible there is only one book that wholly focuses on proverbs. Understand that there is a place for short, pithy statements that encapsulate wisdom, but also understand that there's a place for long, drawn-out spoken words. The Bible contains both sermons and proverbs. Well, what is this proverb? A proverb is a short saying that would otherwise take a long sermon to get across.

To give you the best definition, proverbs are highly compressed, carefully chosen words of wisdom that have been skillfully crafted to stick in our minds so that our behavior changes. The writer of each Proverb has put together short, compressed, carefully chosen, skillfully crafted words so that you would consider how your conduct, how your life, how your approach to your circumstances needs to change. To put it another way, a proverb is a short sentence founded upon a long experience. A short sentence founded upon a long experience.

We see proverbs all the time. An example from our culture is, "The early bird gets the worm." Well, what does that mean? It's a short statement that communicates, "Get going! If you're the last one in line, you're going to get leftovers. Be the first one in line and you'll make sure you get the best things in life." It's a short statement that you could expound on for a long time.

This involves examining what makes them different from other Scriptures

So now that we understand what proverbs are, we need to ask the question, "What makes them different from all the other Scriptures?" It's crucial that as we approach Proverbs we understand what kind of teaching they provide. Many of us find ourselves in a bad spot simply because we forget the difference between proverbs and promises. So let me explain what I mean by that. A careful study of the Old Testament will show you that there are genres, or types of literature, in the Old Testament. I am going to highlight five of them here. Let them be a reminder of what the narrative of the Old Testament is about.

First of all, we need to understand that the Old Testament contains **laws or commands**. Throughout the Old Testament, and within the Pentateuch especially, there are laws that God has given. The best place to understand these would be within the Ten Commandments where God says to the people of Israel, "Don't do this. Do that. If this happens then do x, y or z." God has given His people commands--not suggestions..

Secondly, there is the genre of **history**, or biography. We recently experienced this kind of genre by looking at the life of Samson. The historical genre contains the life of a person, or events and issues with which a group of people were dealing. We see that much of the Old Testament is history. First and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings and the Chronicles are all historical books. Other examples include the books of Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra. These are histories of events that were going on in the lives of people who were near and dear to the heart of God.

A third genre is one of **promises**; promises that God has given His people. Promises that say, "If you do this God says, 'I promise to do that.'" Throughout the Bible God says, "You're going to be here for a while, but I'm going to come and deliver you." So one such promise in the Old Testament is a passage I have just talked about: **Jeremiah 29:11**. This passage is a promise to the Israelites that for 70 years they're going to endure captivity under the hand of the mighty Babylonian empire. However, after those 70 years are completed, God says, "*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*" And what He's saying is, "In 70 years, Jeremiah, even though you're crying, wailing and mourning over their captivity, in 70 years it's all going to be over. I promise I'm going to bring My people back to Myself." And God fulfills that promise when He tells Nehemiah to go back and rebuild the Temple.

Fourthly, there is the genre of **prophecy**. Prophets typically use two types of prophecy. Remember that prophetic words can involve two things: proclaiming, which is "Thus sayeth the Lord..." and foretelling. We see proclamation happen all the time in the prophetic books. Prophets will say, "Hey! The Lord has said this. The Lord has told us to do this thing." For example, the prophet **Haggai** says, "Hey! Go and build a temple for God. Stop building your own homes and start building a temple for the Lord." But we also recognize from books of the Bible, like Ezekiel, Isaiah and Joel, that foretelling is different than proclaiming. Foretelling tells about the future. Isaiah foretells the coming of Jesus. The Book of Daniel foretells the events that are yet to come. So we've got prophecy within the Old Testament.

Let me remind you of a fifth genre: the **proverbs**. Proverbs are catchy ways to describe our experiences generally, but they are not precepts or promises. Proverbs must be understood as **descriptive** not **prescriptive**. These proverbs are generalizations about the way life experiences turn out. So let's explain that. When we read a proverb, we cannot assume that just because we do what a particular Proverb says, things are going to turn out that way.

For example, "*Train up a child in the way he should go...*" (**Proverbs 22:6**). Some of you have taken this proverb as a promise. Looking back at your life, you might say, "Wait a minute. We raised our kids in the fear and admonition of the Lord. We sent them to church and they had the best education. We have trained them and disciplined them. Now we're looking at our 25-year-old kids and they want nothing to do with the Lord. God, you messed up!" No, God said that it is a good thing to train your children in the way they should go. Generally speaking, when you do those good things, it results in good things, but not always. Remember, this is a book of proverbs, not promises.

Another example is **Proverbs 15:1**: "*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*" Let's ask Jesus how that turned out. When Jesus was betrayed, He gave gentle answers, right? Jesus didn't stop and say, "Wait a minute. I read Proverbs 15:1, and it said if I'm gentle you're not going to punch Me, or rip My beard out, or put a crown of thorns on My head. Wait a minute God, You said in the Book of Proverbs, which we can say are promises..." No. Jesus understood that when we are gentle with others there is a good chance that they will be gentle in return, but not always. That will not always be the case. So when we read these things be very careful not to assume that "If I do x, y and z then my life will go well." With Proverbs, "One plus one" doesn't always equal "two." They are general, wise observations, not promises.

This involves examining how they were designed to teach us

We need to understand how the Proverbs were designed to teach us. They are designed to be read slowly. They're to be thought over and prayerfully considered. We shouldn't race through them or handle them carelessly. We shouldn't just grab a Proverb without using care or without discerning the implications. Be careful, Christian, that you don't use Proverbs as a magic potion for what ails you. They were designed to be studied, memorized, meditated on and practiced. They need to be practiced.

Why did God write them? What was His design for the Book of Proverbs? God wrote them to teach His people how to live, how to act in every circumstance. He wants His people to be an understanding people, a just people, a fair people in everything that they do. In essence, God wants you to be wise in all circumstances, too. That's why we have the Book of Proverbs.

Now I believe that the Book of Proverbs is one of the most neglected evangelistic tools. You know we want evangelistic tools so badly. We say, "I would evangelize more if someone would teach me how to do it. Give me that little box with all the carefully crafted words and all the answers to the questions that someone could bring up." Forget that! You want to know what the best evangelistic tool is? Be the wisest person at work. Be the wisest person in the neighborhood. Be the wisest person in your family and people will come and ask you questions. How do I know that? Solomon is the writer of Proverbs. We know that Solomon's wisdom captured the heart and mind of a very, very influential person. You know who came to seek wisdom from

Solomon? The Queen of Sheba. She came, not because Solomon was wealthy or because he was an incredibly handsome man, she came because she recognized that Solomon had the answers to life's most difficult questions.

When we start living out the Book of Proverbs in our lives, when we become wise, people will come and say, "What is the source of your wisdom? How is it that when good times come you know how to respond? How do you have the answer to whatever ails you? You face life with joy and contentment welling up in your heart. Give me the answer to that!" To which you can say, "It ain't me. I'm a dummy. It's the God Whom I serve. Let me tell you about Him. Let me tell you about where I find the answers." Many of the reasons why people don't respond to the gospel are because sinners see no difference between your life and their own lives. They say, "What wisdom are you getting from the gospel? What truth are you getting? What knowledge are you getting? Seems like you're drowning in this life, just like I am. Why would I turn to you for the life preserver that will get us out? You're drowning just like I am."

So here's what God did in His grace. He put in the heart of a godly king, who has lived a long life, to write some words to his son. He pens these words saying, "You know what? I want to help you, son. I want to help you live a good life. I want you to live a pleasant life. I want you to live a wise life. Here's what I've learned. Here's what I've gleaned from life." And Solomon had lived a pretty incredible life. He had much to share with his children, especially with his son to whom he writes this book. It's not just Solomon who writes this word, but God Himself. Our Father in heaven writes to His children and says, "Let Me share some wisdom with you. Let Me share some insight." And just as the classic TV show reminds us, "Father knows best!" Our God knows best and He wants to share some thoughts with us.

2. To glean wisdom from Proverbs we must understand the purpose of it

The Proverbs teach us the art of living well

We need to understand the purpose of this book. What's the purpose? The art of living well. So what is He wanting to share? What words of wisdom? Notice in our text that God wants to share through the pen of Solomon the art of living well. In Proverbs 1:2, God reminds us that the reason why He writes Proverbs is so that we may know wisdom and instruction, understanding words of insight.

Let's stop at that word "wisdom." That is the Hebrew word, *chokmah*. *Chokmah* is not what we would think wisdom would be. This word *chokmah* in the Hebrew language didn't mean "head knowledge," or even "heart knowledge" as we would describe wisdom. It referred to the idea of skill. This word would be used when someone would show prowess in what they were doing. If a musician was especially talented, others would describe that musician as having *chokmah*. If a craftsman, or an artisan, or a student was doing exceedingly well at his craft, that person was someone who was wise, who was skilled in his area of work. *Chokmah* would be the word that was used. So now move back to this idea of bringing wisdom to life. What Solomon is saying is, "God wants to give us this *chokmah*, this wisdom that allows us to skillfully live life according to His ways."

So let me ask you this question: how skilled are you at living life? At facing the problems that are going to come tomorrow? How skilled are you at handling whatever comes your way? As a teenager, one of the things that I looked for in the lives of older people around me, the guys that I wanted to hang out with, was their confidence in God in the midst of trouble. One of the reasons why I idolized my father was he was so settled. The things that scared and bothered me, he never seemed to be worried about. He never seemed to fret about things. He always had an answer to whatever was coming. I remember saying, "I want that."

I've told you this many times: When my brother died, the thing that solidified my faith—that made my faith my own and not my parents'—was that it didn't rattle my parents like a death should. I sat there and said, "I want that kind of steely resolve to stand strong in troubled times." This is what Solomon is telling us the Proverbs are for: to make us skilled in life. The Christian should be viewed by the unbelieving world as the best practitioners of living life. Does that make sense? Your neighbors should say, "Man, that guy next door who loves Jesus, and who goes to church every week, boy, he knows how to live life. He knows how to do it right." But sadly, because we don't pursue the wisdom of God, our neighbor says, "That neighbor of mine is just like me. Just struggling through life."

Can I tell you that my prayer request for my kids is that they would find the *chokmah* of God; that I would train them, teach them and guide them into that *chokmah* of God? Here's what the world says, "Our kids need to be the best athletes on the field. Our

kids need to be the best students in the classrooms. Our kids need to be the best citizens in the community, the most desirable to attend a dance with." We raise our kids with those types of ideals, not with wisdom. No. We want our kids to be able, when they're 25 years old, to take on everything in their life because they're walking with the wisdom of God. So that's what we need to be addressing; that's what the Book of Proverbs is saying. It is a godly, loving Father saying, "Children, hear what I have to say."

The Proverbs teach us how to become alert

Notice in verses two and three that these Proverbs also help us become alert. *"To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity."* The idea here is the ability to know the real deal from the counterfeit. Now what does that have to do with life? The Book of Proverbs is written to us so that we will know what is right and good and what is wrong and harmful for us.

So notice that we're going to learn the right words to use and the right words to say. We're going to learn what it means to look for the right spouse and not to find the wrong spouse. We're going to learn what to do with our money and what not to do with our money. The Book of Proverbs contains these short, pithy statements that remind us of what's right and what's not. So when we see the wrong thing, the alarms go off in our minds, "That's not the way to go; I'm going to go this way. I'm going to go away from that which is not good to the things that are good." That's why the Book of Proverbs is badly needed in our world today, where the lines between good and evil, or profitable and unprofitable, have been blurred. The Book of Proverbs is going to make that line a whole lot clearer for us.

The Proverbs teach us how to be morally astute

Proverbs also helps us become more morally astute. **Proverbs 1:4** says, *"To give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth."* The word, "**prudent**" is literally the word "shrewd" or "clever." I know shrewd and clever can be used in negative connotations, but Solomon is speaking in the most positive sense of the word. Literally what verse four is talking about is that the Proverbs give us street smarts so that when we're out on the street we know how to handle ourselves. If we have a problem the Proverbs help us know how to address it. A person who has prudence is clever and shrewd in the ways of the world. Literally, "You're as gentle as doves but as wise as serpents" (**Matthew 10:16**). You know what needs to be done, when it needs to be done. This prudence is doing the right thing at the right time for the right reasons.

The Proverbs teach us how to age well

Fourthly, we see that Proverbs help us age well. Notice the different age groups that are given. *"To give prudence to the simple"*—literally the children—and then it says, *"knowledge and discretion to the youth"* at the end of verse four—that's teenagers or young people. But notice in verses five and six it starts talking about older people. *"Let the wise (the older, the mature) hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles."* So there are three groups of people, and I want you to get out of your mind that it's based on age.

There are the young people—those who are like children. They're naïve; they're gullible; they need to be told exactly what to do. The Proverbs address that. Just as we tell our kids, "You're going to do this, this, this and this. You don't have a choice in the matter; you're going to do it," Proverbs are going to write to the simple and say, "You've got to do these things."

But then there are the words of discretion to the youth. Some of you parents might have older children. Our oldest son is 11 years old and he's been given some responsibility. So we say, "Okay, you're going to be left on your own and you're going to have to make some decisions." So it's not just telling him, "Well, this is what you're going to do," in every circumstance. We start talking in generalities. "Make wise decisions, son." "Don't put yourself in bad situations." "Well, what bad situations might they be?" "It could be a myriad of things. I don't know what they are but be careful. And this is what you need to be looking for and so use discretion." The Book of Proverbs is going to address that.

But what about those who are more mature in the faith? The Book of Proverbs is going to teach us where we ought to continually find guidance and insight. The world is totally given over to the concept that youth is good and glamorized and pursued by all ages. Proverbs reminds us that "old and wise" always wins the day. We've lost that as a culture.

At an event I was catering, I saw something that should not happen. A woman, well into her seventies, was wearing glamor, teenage blue jeans. You know when you see something and you just want to shake your head and say, "Act your age!" I could say that the teenagers shouldn't have been wearing the jeans that she was wearing. This mature woman shouldn't have been wearing them. It is unbecoming for an older woman to wear low-rise pants. It just was out of place.

Here's what I want to remind you. Number one: some older people are trying to hold on to youthfulness to their shame. Some of us who are over forty are acting like teenagers spiritually—to our shame. The things you talk about, the things you're focused on, the desires and delights that are in your heart are the things that a teenager should be using discernment to stay away from but we still get tripped up by them. So what the Book of Proverbs wants to remind us is that old and wise is beautiful; it is something glorious. So stop pursuing youth and start pursuing the age where God has you now. The experiences that God has given you are a garland you should wear on your head. We should praise grey-haired individuals, those who not only are grey-haired biologically, but also who are grey-haired through circumstances.

When I was a young man, I read a book on eldership called, *They Smell like Sheep*. I got so angry because I was a 24-year-old elder—which is an oxymoron—and the writer wrote something that totally nullified my qualifications for being an elder. He said, "In our church we don't bring on an elder unless he's got grey hair." And I said, "Well, I don't have grey hair. I'm 24! I've got lots of beautiful black hair." And he said, "Grey hair comes as a result of doing a couple of things. Number one: walking with God for a long time." And I said, "Okay, that makes sense." And then he said, "Walking around the devil for a long time as well."

What I've come to learn now in my 13-14 years of being an elder in this church is that grey hair comes because we walk with God and God teaches us some hard truths, amen? I've also come to know the devil's schemes a little more than I did when I was 24. I know how the devil wants to trip me up. I know the tricks that he uses. Now at 38—which is still young in some minds and ancient in other minds—I've come to know how the devil works.

So this is a word to our young people: I know every fiber of your being thinks you've got all the right answers. Let me remind you of the truth. It was true for me and everybody else in this room. When you're twenty, you are young and dumb. I don't care how smart you are. I don't care how many answers you have, you are young and dumb. Before you think I'm being hard on you, the elderly people were young and dumb when they were twenty. So you need to be grabbing ahold of every Scripture you can and living according to these precepts. You need to grab some older people and say, "I need help. I need help." And old people, you better stop living like a 20-year-old and start living like the mature person you are. Embrace your age and the experiences that God has given you so that you can teach and train others. That's why the Bible says older men teach younger men, and older women teach younger women (**Titus 2**). What good is it to have older men and women when they act like younger men and women? Pursue the wisdom of God that is lived out in the book of Proverbs.

So this is what the Proverbs teach us: the art of living well, becoming alert, becoming astute and aging well. We want to age well as Christians. The Proverbs remind us of the great value of growing old because we're going to be able to share some truths that we've learned about our God and His working in our lives.

So what do we do? We need to personalize the truths of the Proverbs. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, but we could spend years on the book of Proverbs, gleaning the truths from it. We're not. We're going to spend anywhere from nine to ten weeks on it. I want to highlight some of the things that we're going to talk about just to set the trajectory. The Book of Proverbs is going to challenge us. We need to be ready for it and we need to personalize it. We need to put our finger down and say, "That's a proverb for me." Not for someone else. You will anger your pastor if you say, "Man, this is really good for the young people." Bologna! It's good for you. It's good for me.

3. To glean wisdom from Proverbs we must personalize its truths

So what are some of the things that the Proverbs are going to challenge us with?

Proverbs will challenge you to watch your words

Proverbs 10:19 says, "*When words are many, transgression is not lacking.*" For a guy who talks a lot, that word is for me.

Proverbs will challenge you to lose your laziness

Proverbs 19:24 will speak of a man named, “the sluggard.” What a great word. The sluggard is a lazy individual. Solomon says a sluggard is so lazy that he’ll dip his hand into the dish but will be too lazy to bring it back out. A lazy person is a type of person who dips the potato chip into that glorious French onion dip, but he’s too lazy to bring it out of the dip dish. Are you kidding me? And yet some of us are living lives that way. We need to be careful of that. I know the elderly people are saying, “Preach it, pastor! Yeah! The young kids on those stupid video games and technology. It’s like dipping a chip into dip and never eating it.” Let me remind you some of you have gone on permanent vacation with your retirements as well. We need to lose our laziness.

Proverbs will challenge you to grow in your giving

Proverbs 19:17 is going to tell us that when we are generous with others, God is generous with us.

Proverbs will challenge you to find real friends

Proverbs 18:24 says that a person can have many companions but when you find a friend who is better than a brother you have found something glorious. We’re going to find out who our real friends are.

Proverbs will challenge you to cultivate contentment

In **Proverbs 30:8**, Agur says, “Lord, don’t give me poverty but don’t give me riches. Whatever You deem as good I will take from Your hand. I want to be content in those things. Content enough not to think I’ve done it on my own, and content enough not to be angered by God either.” We’ll learn about contentment.

Proverbs will challenge you to pursue biblical parenting

Proverbs 22:6: “*Train up a child in the way he should go.*” If you are going to parent your kids well, discipline has to be at the heart of it. I’ve seen some cute little babies in this place. But discipline must be paramount, not because kids are cute but because they’re rebels. They’re absolute rebels. Sinners at the heart. That’s why a parent needs to discipline. I’ll tell you, as a parent right now, discipline is the hardest thing to do. It’s hard to do.

Proverbs will challenge you to get fit with finances

The Bible says that we should be careful not to pursue riches. We need to know when to say enough is enough. Some of us haven’t learned that. Some of us continue to acquire things going against the good wisdom of God because we don’t know when to say enough is enough.

Proverbs will challenge you to pick the right partner

Proverbs 18:22 says, “*He who finds a wife finds a good thing.*” Let me rephrase that: a woman who finds a husband finds a glorious thing. However, let us be reminded that when we find a spouse we find a good thing, but in **Proverbs 21:19**: “*It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.*” So let me remind you that Proverbs can go the other way, gentlemen. That while it’s good for wives to find good husbands, it is better to be in the wilderness and in the desert alone than to have an unproductive and lazy husband.

4. Points to Ponder

For us to be wise we must acknowledge where wisdom comes from

So we’re going to learn these things. We’re going to address these things in order to become wise. But let me close with three very quick principles that I think you need to ponder as we begin this study. If we’re going to understand this Book of Proverbs, we need to first of all acknowledge where wisdom comes from. **Verse seven** tells us, “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.*”

I’ve got a middle son who will remain nameless. (His name is Josh.) Josh is a smart little boy, eight years old. He knows he’s smart. Not a lot misses him. Our oldest son, everything misses him, you know? He’s got a great personality, but our middle one, you can’t get anything by him. He remembers the Christmas gifts he got. He told me the other day, when I said that we try to give the same amount of gifts to all the kids at Christmas, “I don’t think you gave me the same amount as my brothers.” This is the kind of kid we have.

Here's the thing that the fear of God is all about: The best way to illustrate this is with my eight-year-old son. When we have discussions, my son thinks that he gets a say in the matter. So when I say, "Son, I need you to do this...", what I get from my middle son is, "But dad... But dad, I have something to say about that." And then he proceeds to give me his little wisdom at eight years old. And I say, "Son, your dad is older than you, he's bigger than you, he's stronger than you, he's smarter than you.... But I want to remind you of this: I am wiser than you. And you better listen. You're my son. That's what sons are supposed to do. They are supposed to listen and heed the instruction of their father."

Now we laugh and think that's cute with an eight-year-old kid. Don't we do the same thing to God? God instructs us and what do we say? "But God... But God I've got something to say about this." You know what the fear of the Lord is? It is knowing that God is wiser and stronger. He can do whatever He wants, when He wants, how He wants, and you don't get a say in the matter. You don't get the opportunity to say, "But God!" The fear of God says, "I am not God. There is a God, and I'm not Him. I better listen to what He's saying if I want things to go well with me." And you and I don't fear the Lord when we say, "But God!" and give Him our side of the story. God's not looking for our side of the story. God knows what we're going to say and we're wrong when we say it.

So fear the Lord. Give Him prominence, give Him first place, and understand the Word comes from Him. I love it when the New Testament validates what the Old Testament says. The Bible reinforces this in **Colossians 2:3**. Where does wisdom come from? Where is wisdom embodied? Paul tells us that it is in Christ "*in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" You want to have wisdom? Then become the closest follower of Jesus Christ that you can. Jesus is Who we turn to because He embodies all of God's knowledge and wisdom. You want to live a wise life? Live the life that Jesus did. Follow His commands. Do what He says. Jesus said Himself, "*Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock*" (**Matthew 7:24**). The man who doesn't is a fool and builds his house on the sand. Some of you right now are living life apart from Jesus and you're building your life on the sand, not the rock of Jesus Christ.

For us to be wise we must ask for wisdom when we lack it

James says, "*If anyone lacks wisdom...*" If anyone, if anyone, if anyone, if any of you lacks wisdom, "*he should ask God who gives generously without finding fault.*"

So I knocked down my middle son today; let me raise him up for you. Yesterday, I come home after a long day of work and my son meets me in the garage and says, "Dad, can we talk?" I love that. And this cute little eight-year-old kid grabs his dad's hand and walks me over to the couch, away from all the other activities of the house, and says, "Can we talk for a minute?" "Oh, you bet, son." Had my son asked for the moon I would have lassoed it and given it to him because I long for my kids to seek me out. I long for my kids to come and ask for help. He said, "Dad, can you help me do this...?" "You bet you son. You asked the right way. You did it right."

When you come to God, He doesn't go, "You dummy! I mean, how stupid could you have been?" When you go and say, "Lord, I don't know what school I should attend in the fall." "Lord, I don't know which person I should marry." "Lord, I don't know what I should do with this job scenario." "Lord, I don't know what to do in parenting this kid." God doesn't say, "Dummy!" He doesn't put the dunce cap on you and send you over to the corner. God embraces you and says, "Son, daughter, let's talk about this. I'm going to give you generously the wisdom you need."

For us to be wise we must act on it

Finally, Proverbs are only good if you act on them. If you take these things and say, "Those are good sayings," all you've done is treat the Proverbs like a fortune cookie at the end of a Chinese dinner. You open it and chuckle at the saying on the little piece of paper inside. No. Act on it! If the Book of Proverbs says something, do it!

So here's my challenge: The Book of Proverbs has 31 chapters in it, and I want to challenge you to read one chapter a day and meditate on it. It won't take you very long to read. I want you to remember one Proverb each day. I think Solomon had a bit of ADD because he bounces from one thing to another and that's okay. But I want you to grab one Proverb out of the chapter that you're reading. It's something that I've done at different times in my devotional life. I want you to take the chapter that correlates with today's date and read it. Then pull out one Proverb and say, "Lord, I need help with this thing. Lord, I'm going to

take this one Proverb and I'm going to seek wisdom in it." Maybe it's your speech, a decision, how you view things, or what you're watching.

I'm going to challenge you to do two things.

1. Ask God for wisdom.
2. Find someone you can trust, someone who's a little older than you in the sense of experience. Someone you can go to and ask for help.

I will tell you that when we do this, God is going to blow out the ceiling through what He teaches us from this wisdom-packed Book of Proverbs.

Let's pray.

Father God, we come before You and thank You for Your Word. As we embark on this journey in the Book of Proverbs, I pray that You would speak to our hearts. Lord, that we wouldn't feel good about what we've heard and say, "Yeah, that's a good saying." I pray that we would not just be hearers of the Book of Proverbs, but we'd be doers of it as well. So Lord, I pray that You would allow us to act on these things, and when we lack wisdom that we would ask for it. Lord, let us remember that apart from You, we can do nothing. The wisdom that we need, the wisdom that we covet, the wisdom that is required in this daily grind called "life" comes from You, if it is going to be of any good for us. Lord, I pray that we would open this Book and that we would glean wisdom from it, that we would act on what we read, and do so to Your glory and honor.

Lord, I pray that as we become wise that it would be the impetus that would draw unbelievers to us; that as we live wise lives that we would be, as Jesus said, that "*city on a hill that is not hidden*," that it would allow people to be drawn to us so that we may draw them to You, and to Your words, and to Your source of knowledge and wisdom that each person in this world needs. Lord, I pray that we would be reminded that these Proverbs won't become wisdom in our lives unless we know You. So if there is a person in this room today that's never trusted You as their Savior, before they seek the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs, let them seek the Person of wisdom—Jesus Christ.

So Lord, lead us from this place into a world that is at times very unwise and lacks knowledge and let us shine like stars because we have encountered You. Let us live for You the rest of this week. Bring us back next week to worship and sing of the praises of what You've done because of what You've taught us today. We do so, Lord, all to the glory and honor of Your Name. Now lead us from this place in peace, joy and the fellowship of others. In Christ's Name we pray. Amen.

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All Scriptures quoted directly from the English Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

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