

WALKING
in the
WAY *of*
WISDOM



A WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL ON PROVERBS



WEST JACKSON
BAPTIST CHURCH

Walking in the Way of Wisdom This Summer

This summer, we are studying the Old Testament book of Proverbs. And while Proverbs can give us principles for godliness and success in everyday life—there's so much more. That's because the book of Proverbs is ultimately a call to walk with a person. That person is God Himself, speaking in and through "Wisdom" (Prov. 8).

We can go even further, though. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul declares it boldly—Jesus Christ is our Wisdom (compare Prov. 8, John 1:1-3, and 1 Cor. 1:23-31). As Christians, we read Proverbs and hear the call to walk in God's ways. We are challenged to live our lives guided by His truth and we hear the promise that true life is found with Him alone. We then turn to the New Testament and hear Jesus make the incredible statement that He alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life! No one can come to know the Father except through Him (Prov. 8:35-36, John 14:6).

Because Christ is the fulfillment of Wisdom, we have an incredible opportunity. We can come to the Proverbs and be challenged to know Christ more and live in a way that honors our Savior. By the Spirit's power, we can have our minds renewed each day. We can experience a new divine perspective as we continue to surrender every area of our lives to God's will (Romans 12:1-2). Wisdom is not far off—He has come, He has died for us, and He lives now forever and in the hearts of all who believe in the Gospel!

The challenge as we study of Proverbs is this, though: Are we dedicated to knowing and growing in Wisdom as we walk in this world? In other words—do we want to know Christ more and see His kingdom advance in this world? The Proverbs echo all throughout Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God in the Gospels. James speaks in the same way when he calls us to wake up and turn our faith into action. Proverbs is an incredibly relevant book!

How To Use This Devotional

We have created eight weekly devotional cards for reflecting on one theme from the book of Proverbs each week. These cards are meant to help guide your focus over the summer as you meditate on Scripture and enjoy time with family and friends.

For each day, you will find one Proverb related to the week's theme. Try to spend intentional time in reflection and prayer through Scripture each day. As a bonus, we've also given simple ideas for family activities each week. We hope this simple devotional will bless you this summer as you seek to grow and go with the Lord wherever He leads!

**For a yearly devotional on Proverbs, consider picking up Tim Keller's book "God's Wisdom for Navigating Life." His themes helped shape the weekly themes found in this devotional.*

Week 1: Know Wisdom, Grow in Wisdom

"[Wisdom says:] I love those who love me, and those who search for me find me. With me are riches and honor, lasting wealth and righteousness...I give wealth as an inheritance to those who love me, filling their treasuries." (8:17-21)

Wisdom for the Week

As we open the book of Proverbs, we are immediately pulled into a heart to heart conversation between father and son: "Listen up, son. Fear God! Seek wisdom!" Why? Because, Solomon says, you need Wisdom! Above all things in this world—Wisdom will make you truly rich. In chapter 8, Wisdom is seen shouting in the streets to anyone who would hear: "Come and learn from me! Sit and eat at my table. Receive my inheritance!" Solomon, and Wisdom itself, speak boldly about the promise of an unimaginably wealthy future if we would only listen.

It's striking that Jesus spoke in a similar way during his earthly ministry. He compares the Kingdom of God to finding an unimaginable treasure (Matt. 13:44). He boldly declares: "I am the Bread of Life" (Jn 6:45-48). And like Wisdom, John says that Jesus cried out in the streets: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (Jn 7:37-38). This was no ordinary man!

As we open up the book of Proverbs, then, there is a Gospel truth that we must understand. If you are a believer in Christ, you do not have to search "out there" for Wisdom. You already know Wisdom! The Holy Spirit has come to reside in the heart of every believer—Christ is now our Wisdom (1 Cor. 1:23-31). Try to wrap your heart and mind around this incredible truth. Through the free gift of salvation in Christ, the Scripture declares that you are now rich beyond measure (Eph. 2:4-10, Rom. 10:12-13, 2 Cor. 8:9).

But if you know Wisdom, are you continuing to grow in Wisdom? Is God's word precious to you and His will your delight? If we do not pay attention, our hearts will grow dull over time (Heb. 3:12). But the Gospel calls us to stand in awe at receiving this treasure of Wisdom—Christ in us, the hope of glory (Col. 1:27)! This treasure brings great joy! Whoever receives it will delight to give freely and richly back to God in worship and call others to do the same by accepting the invitation to know Christ. May we know and grow in these riches of God's grace.

Prayer Guide

As you pray this week, ask God to help you see just how rich you are through receiving the gift of salvation (Eph. 2:4-10). Ask the Lord to keep you humble and teachable, always ready to grow in grace. Praise God for His great gift of salvation and pray for opportunities to share the treasure of lasting life and wealth with others.

Family Fun Activity

Set up a "treasure hunt" for the family using a treat from the store or a fun object from home. Have one family member hide the treasure for the others to find (optional: create a map for the "seekers" to follow). Once the treasure is found, talk about how we are to seek after Jesus because He is our Wisdom. Share your testimony about the treasure you've found in coming to know Him by God's grace!

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 1:5 "...A wise man will listen and increase his learning, and a discerning man will obtain guidance."

Day 2: Proverbs 2:3-5 "If you call out to insight and lift your voice to understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it like hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God."

Day 3: Proverbs 3:13-16 "Happy is a man who finds wisdom and who acquires understanding, for she is more profitable than silver, and her revenue is better than gold. She is more precious than jewels; nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left, riches and honor."

Day 4: Proverbs 4:7-9 "Wisdom is supreme—so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you. She will place a garland of grace on your head; she will give you a crown of beauty."

Day 5: Proverbs 7:1 "My son, obey my words, and treasure my commands. Keep my commands and live; protect my teachings as you would the pupil of your eye."

Day 6: Proverbs 8:10-11 "[Wisdom says:] Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. For wisdom is better than precious stones, and nothing desirable can compare with it."

Day 7: Proverbs 8:33-36 "[Wisdom says:] Listen to instruction and be wise; don't ignore it. Anyone who listens to me is happy, watching at my doors every day, waiting by the posts of my doorway. For the one who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord, but the one who sins against me harms himself; all who hate me love death."

Week 2: Guard Your Heart, Test The Path

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the Lord and turn away from evil.” (3:5-8)

Wisdom for the Week

You probably know from experience that sometimes the hardest thing to do in life is to ask for help. We may get lost while sightseeing, but avoid asking a local for directions. We may really want to reach a personal goal, but not enough to ask someone to help us stick to it. We wrestle with major life decisions from time to time but resist sharing the burden with others by asking for advice and prayer.

Scripture declares that the way we are with others is really only a surface reflection of a deeper struggle in relation to God: for our hearts are desperately sick with sin (Jer. 17:9). Left on our own in the world, we refuse to call out to God for help—never realizing just how serious our situation is (Matt. 6:22-23). But God declares the verdict on our self-sufficiency: “The one who trusts in himself is a fool, but one who walks in wisdom will be safe” (Prov. 28:26).

Proverbs teaches the hard truth of life that Jesus would later confirm, for there are ultimately only two ways to live. We can live by faith, clinging to God and crying out desperately for His help (Luke 18:9-14). Or we can persist in our unbelief and pride that will lead us down the road of destruction (Matt 7:13-14). We must swallow our pride, acknowledge our sin, and ask the Lord to forgive us and lead our hearts in every way. This is the path of Life!

But if it sounds simple, many of us know this reality all too well: “So I discover this principle: when I want to do good, evil is with me” (Rom. 7:21). Who will save us from this sin-sick heart? Thank God for His promise in Christ to continually deliver you from sin’s power and renew your mind each day! (Rom. 7:21-25). So let us set our minds on the Spirit, who will fill us in every way—every day—with life and peace (Rom. 8:6), for it is that peace alone which can guard and guide us so that we walk in this world with confidence that the Lord is directing our paths.

Prayer Guide

This week, take time to acknowledge your dependence upon the Lord in every area of life. Thank God that He has promised to guard and guide your path as you continually yield your heart to Him. Ask Him to purify your heart and to strengthen you in the life and peace that comes from the Holy Spirit (Phil. 4:4-6).

Family Fun Activity

Take turns looking up various items and animals to guess whether they are a "Friend" (look dangerous but are safe) or "Foe" (look safe but are dangerous). Talk afterwards about God's call for us to be discerning and not always trust our immediate feelings—but to give our hearts to Him and treasure His words so that we can walk safely with Him in this world.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 2:1-2, 2:5 "[Accept] my words and store up my commands within you; [turn] your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding... then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."

Day 2: Proverbs 3:3-4 "My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being. Never let loyalty and faithfulness leave you. Tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart."

Day 3: Proverbs 3:5-8 "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own understanding; think about Him in all your ways, and He will guide you on the right paths. Don't consider yourself to be wise; fear the Lord and turn away from evil."

Day 4: Proverbs 4:20-22 "...Turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one's whole body."

Day 5: Proverbs 4:23-24 "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips."

Day 6: Proverbs 4:25-27 "Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways. Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil."

Day 7: Proverbs 7:2-3 "Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart."

Week 3: Wisdom and Relationships

"The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday. But the way of the wicked is like the darkest gloom; they don't know what makes them stumble." (4:18-19)

Wisdom for the Week

As men and women created in God's image, we are both relational by nature and called into intentional relationships. For in the beginning "God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:28). Life before the Fall was beautiful: a garden paradise where Adam and Eve walked with God. They had an opportunity to multiply God's blessing through their children. Imagine a world of perfect harmony, filled with sons and daughters of God who enjoyed His goodness and worked together for His glory each day! This is the picture of God's original design for creation and for humanity (Isa 43:6-7).

But we know the rest of the story. By rejecting God's blessing, Adam and Eve were cast out of His presence (Gen. 3:16-24). As a result, their own relationship—and human relationships in general—took a dramatic turn. Rather than filling the earth with godly offspring singing the Father's song, the harmony of Eden was broken. In the chapters of Genesis that follow, we find the shame, struggle, and violence that continue to echo in human history. The Proverbs warn us strongly against falling in line with the wicked—with this sad story of sin and rebellion against God (Prov. 2:11-22).

But against this bleak picture, we have a greater hope! God's restoration was fixed from the start in the promise of a son of Adam and Eve who would conquer the serpent (Gen. 3:15, Lk. 3:38). God's plan to bring about His Kingdom purposes would be a battle—but the promise of Eden would be fulfilled. The Son of God would crush Satan and rescue us from sin's power (1 Cor. 15:21-26, Rom. 16:19-20). We can barely imagine it—but the story of Scripture is that at the end there will be a new beginning. The universe will be renewed and filled with the redeemed from every nation, ethnicity, and language united under Jesus Christ—His Church and Bride (Rev. 21).

What does that have to do with wisdom and relationships? In short, everything! Our victory has come through God's long-promised Messiah, but we are still in a battle until He returns (1 Jn 5:4-5, Eph. 6:10-20). The difficulties of life and difficult people can influence you in negative ways. Life can be filled with more moments of bitterness, tiredness, and joylessness than we would like to admit. But God has restored you to true spiritual fellowship with Him and all other believers (Eph. 2:12-16). He has given you words of life to share (Prov. 10:11). He has prepared good works for you to walk in from before the world began (Eph. 2:10). May we glorify God in them!

Prayer Guide

Take time to write down and pray for several key friendships that God has given you over the years. Ask God to help you connect in new ways with others this summer. Ask the Lord to continue to transform your friendships towards His Kingdom purposes. Finally, reflect and pray through Colossians 4:5-6: "But walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you should answer each person."

Family Fun Activity

This week, take turns playing a game where one person is blindfolded but trying to get from point A to point B. Have two other family members give conflicting advice—one helpful and one not so helpful. Afterwards, share with your children about how other people can encourage us in the right path or lead us astray. Teach them about discerning the voice of Wisdom and Foolishness in our lives and help others walk with God.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 1:10-19 "My son, if sinners entice you, don't be persuaded."

Day 2: Proverbs 2:11-13 "Discretion will watch over you, and understanding will guard you, rescuing you from the way of evil: from the one who says perverse things, from those who abandon the right paths to walk in ways of darkness..."

Day 3: Proverbs 3:27-28 "When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one it belongs to. Don't say to your neighbor, "Go away! Come back later. I'll give it tomorrow"—when it is there with you."

Day 4: Proverbs 17:7 "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time."

Day 5: Proverbs 18:1 "One who isolates himself pursues [selfish] desires; he rebels against all sound judgment."

Day 6: Proverbs 18:20-21 "Life and death are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Day 7: Proverbs 18:24 "A man with many friends may be harmed, but there is a friend who stays closer than a brother."

Week 4: Pay Attention To The Times

"A house is built by wisdom, and it is established by understanding; by knowledge the rooms are filled with every precious and beautiful treasure." (24:3-4)

Wisdom for the Week

Gardeners and farmers know well the reality of seasons. Plants need the right conditions and timing to be established, grow, and produce fruit. Until recently in human history, everyday life for most people was shaped by the times and seasons of nature. To miss your prime opportunity for plowing or to sleep during harvest was not just shameful: it meant an empty pantry.

"The slacker does not plow during planting season; at harvest time he looks, and there is nothing" (Prov. 20:4). The result for such a person was often utter poverty (Prov. 6:6-11).

Even in Proverbs, though, we see that God's rhythm of times and seasons has to do with more than just food. Plowing, planting, waiting, and harvesting is a symbol for the process of unearthing the riches of God in creation. It's the diligent who obtain riches while the slothful are too distracted to cook their own dinner (Prov. 12:27). Wisdom means being aware and ready to apply action and skill at the right moment. It means being free to get beyond working for tonight's meal so that we can be blessed to produce a lasting inheritance with our lives.

Like other themes in Proverbs, it is striking to find that Jesus spoke about knowing the times and seasons in much the same way. It was one of His criticisms of the religious leaders of his day. For they paid great attention to the timing of the weather but ignored the obvious timing of God's coming Kingdom (Matt. 16:1-12). Through His countless miracles—the feeding of the 5,000 in this context—we know that Jesus is Lord over all creation. Why worry about food when you are walking with Him? We are strongly assured that the things of life will ultimately be taken care of if we only focus on following Christ (Matt. 6:25-33).

The Kingdom of God involves a great deal of work—of planting, watering, watching and praying. And yet it is God who ultimately gives the growth (1 Cor. 3:6-9). But still Jesus warns us: "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few." (Luke 10:2-3). The reality is that some live in spiritual laziness, missing the Gospel opportunities that are right in front of them (Eph. 5:15-17). Some are distracted by the cares of this world so that they do not produce fruit for God (Matt. 13:22). Instead, we should work diligently with joy as a beloved child of God and look for the coming of Christ as we work for Him! We are called to be aware and walk confidently in God's unfading light (1 Thess. 5:1-8).

Prayer Guide

Pray this week for God to reveal new insight into the season of life you are in now. Where can you take a bold step of faith in service to God's kingdom? Confess the areas where you have not been diligent with the things of God. Pray that God would provide the growth you need to become more fruitful in His Kingdom work.

Family Fun Activity

If you have a garden or have a relative who gardens, visit them to discuss how important knowing the times and seasons is for growing success. You can also visit a local nursery and ask one of the gardeners there what you can plant now. Ask them how important it is to plant in the right conditions. If you like one of their recommendations, take a plant home and plant it for a lesson that will go on throughout the summer!

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 6:9-11 *"How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, and your poverty will come like a robber, your need, like a bandit."*

Day 2: Proverbs 10:4-5 *"Idle hands make one poor, but diligent hands bring riches. The son who gathers during summer is prudent; the son who sleeps during harvest is disgraceful."*

Day 3: Proverbs 12:11 *"The one who works his land will have plenty of food, but whoever chases fantasies lacks sense."*

Day 4: Proverbs 12:24 *"The diligent hand will rule, but laziness will lead to forced labor."*

Day 5: Proverbs 13:4 *"The slacker craves, yet has nothing, but the diligent is fully satisfied."*

Day 6: Proverbs 14:23 *"There is profit in all hard work, but endless talk leads only to poverty."*

Day 7: Proverbs 24:3-4 *"A house is built by wisdom, and it is established by understanding; by knowledge the rooms are filled with every precious and beautiful treasure."*

Week 5: Family Matters

"In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children have a refuge." (14:26)

Wisdom for the Week

Throughout the pages of Scripture, we see that family matters to God. Husbands and wives are called to delight in one another and enjoy the God-given joy of intimate relationship. There is a sobering but blessed responsibility for parents to provide for and teach their children. Built into the Ten Commandments is the great promise of long life and peace for children who honor their parents (Exod. 20:12). The truth is that God designed all aspects of the family to enhance our lives and bring Him glory.

In this world, however, there are many challenges. A husband will be tempted to forsake the "wife of his youth" (Prov. 5:18-23). Proverbs warns strongly against this—adultery, in God's eyes, is much more harmful than we even know. It is a deceptive delight, a sure path to spiritual death (Prov. 2:16-19, 5:1-14). But wives, too, will be tempted. They will batter and belittle their husbands (Prov. 21:9,19; 25:24). Children may grow up to be foolish, rejecting wisdom and endangering their future as a result (Prov. 10:1, 15:20, 17:25). This is not the ideal picture!

But as strong as those words of warning are, in Proverbs we are refreshed by the picture of a family that is blessed by the LORD. For a righteous man has great potential to bring God's power in his family and into this world (Prov 15:29, Jas. 5:16). The well-known woman of Proverbs 31 is strong, industrious, full of wisdom and providing for the needs of her household in every season. Solomon speaks of the great joy to be had when children walk in wisdom (Prov. 23:24). For us, and for God, the family matters!

This picture, though, is transformed by Jesus in a surprising way. He came to start a new family—the global and diverse spiritual family of faith. Our Savior warns us: "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26-27). Our individual families will certainly continue to be a potential source of great blessing as we walk together by God's grace (Eph. 5:25-6:4). But, to understand Jesus' radical call to discipleship, we must understand that our family is given to us for God's greater Kingdom purposes.

Prayer Guide

This week, ask the Lord to strengthen you so that you might lead and serve your family in joyful service to His Kingdom. Thank Him for the gift of family and the gift of our church family. Pray that He would keep you from temptation and increase your love for your family and your brothers and sisters in Christ here and around the world.

Family Fun Activity

Set aside one night this week for a family picnic outside or roasting marshmallows around the fire. Talk about the summer experiences you are thankful for so far and how you can continue to grow as a family. Share about the blessing of spiritual family and the joy of being a part of the worldwide Body of Christ.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 1:8-9 *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and don't reject your mother's teaching, for they will be a garland of grace on your head and a [gold] chain around your neck."*

Day 2: Proverbs 2:16-17 *"[Discretion] will rescue you from a forbidden woman, from a stranger with her flattering talk, who abandons the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God..."*

Day 3: Proverbs 3:1-2 *"My son, don't forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commands; for they will bring you many days, a full life, and well-being."*

Day 4: Proverbs 4:1-4 *"Listen, [my] sons, to a father's discipline, and pay attention so that you may gain understanding, for I am giving you good instruction. Don't abandon my teaching. When I was a son with my father, tender and precious to my mother, he taught me and said: "Your heart must hold on to my words. Keep my commands and live."*

Day 5: Proverbs 5:18 *"Let your fountain be blessed, and take pleasure in the wife of your youth."*

Day 6: Proverbs 20:7 *"The one who lives with integrity is righteous; his children who come after him will be happy."*

Day 7: Proverbs 31:26-31 *"She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the activities of her household and is never idle. Her sons rise up and call her blessed. Her husband also praises her: "Many women are capable, but you surpass them all!" Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised. Give her the reward of her labor, and let her works praise her at the city gates."*

Week 6: Navigating Culture

"The one who pursues righteousness and faithful love will find life, righteousness, and honor." (21:21)

Wisdom for the Week

Do you ever get tired of the 'noise'? In recent times, the division and strife of our culture seems more obvious than ever. The idea of just what kind of life is "honorable" seems to have been turned upside down by many in our culture. Of course this is not new in human history (Rom 1:28-32)! We know that God will one day judge the world with perfect righteousness (Acts 17:31). But the fact of our experience remains: the Wrong often prevails, and the Right often seems to fail (Jer. 12:1).

One of the core principles for wise and Godly living is discerning God's will as we guard our hearts in Christ. Yes, we can know God's will in our lives (Phil. 4:4-7)! The freedom we have in Christ means that we can walk in a way that honors God and brings the light of Christ into this world (Phil. 4:8-9). The question we ask this week is this: What happens when a community comes together to seek God wholeheartedly? From Scripture we know the answer: The world gets turned upside down and God's power and light infiltrate the darkness (Acts 17:6).

Make no mistake—the church of Jesus Christ is a city on a hill—a "pillar and foundation of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). But, we can fall into the trap of sin and self, resulting in a conscience that is seared by sin and lacking spiritual integrity (2 Cor. 4:2-4). Amidst all the noise of this world, we must stay focused and seek what is good—whatever is honorable and true and benefitting others (Phil. 4:8). For with spiritual integrity and faithfulness comes God's abundant blessing (Prov. 20:6-7).

That's not always an easy task, though, for the purpose of Satan is to confuse God's people and lead them into disarray. Our way to navigate culture is to continually rejoice (Phil. 4:4). We are to walk the road of faith together with others who are following Christ wholeheartedly (Jer. 6:16, 1 Pet. 2:16). We are to encourage one another, using our different gifts to serve and build up the Body of Christ (Heb. 10:25, Eph. 4:15-16). As we do so day after day, our love will grow—and the Lord's Name will receive honor and praise (1 Pet. 2:12).

Prayer Guide

This week, pray for God's help to be consistently faithful in all things and encouraging to others. Pray for those around you, that they will be strengthened with integrity and that God's blessing will therefore abound in the church and in our community!

Family Fun Activity

Show your children the value of virtue this week. Put marbles or some other interesting item in a 'bank' each time you see them showing the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). Toward the end of the week, look at the results and share a special dessert to show them how honor is the reward for those who walk with God in integrity.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 2:20-22 *"So follow the way of good people, and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those of integrity will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous uprooted from it."*

Day 2: Proverbs 3:35 *"The wise will inherit honor, but He holds up fools to dishonor."*

Day 3: Proverbs 4:14-16 *"Don't set foot on the path of the wicked; don't proceed in the way of evil ones. Avoid it; don't travel on it. Turn away from it, and pass it by. For they can't sleep unless they have done what is evil; they are robbed of sleep unless they make someone stumble."*

Day 4: Proverbs 10:9 *"The one who lives with integrity lives securely, but whoever perverts his ways will be found out."*

Day 5: Proverbs 11:16 *"A gracious woman gains honor, but violent men gain [only] riches."*

Day 6: Proverbs 21:21 *"The one who pursues righteousness and faithful love will find life, righteousness, and honor."*

Day 7: Proverbs 29:23 *"A person's pride will humble him, but a humble spirit will gain honor."*

Week 7: Seeking Justice & Mercy

"The one who oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors Him." (14:31)

Wisdom for the Week

In recent days, issues of social justice have been at the forefront of our nation. But what does God have to say about it? In short—the answer is that He says a lot. Proverbs teaches us right away that our seeking justice is a concern for God and essential to living wisely (Prov. 1:3). God is intimately involved in matters of justice—He “[guards] the path of justice and [watches] over the way of His saints” (Prov. 2:8-9). Perhaps Solomon heard this first from his father? After all, David’s song in Psalm 68 declares: “Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in His holy habitation” (Ps. 68:5).

The unfortunate reality is that most discussions of social justice in our day do not consider the source: He who alone is just (Deut. 32:4). An essential aspect of God’s character is that He is a holy and righteous Father. God cares deeply about the plight of those who are powerless (Ps. 82:3). Jesus, as the Son of God, came for this very purpose: “...the Lord has anointed Me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and freedom to the prisoners (Isa. 61:1-3, Luke 4:16-21). Make no mistake—we honor God’s incredible wisdom when we live in such a way that declares to the world His heart for the poor and oppressed!

Two important truths will help guide us toward Biblical justice in our day: (1) We acknowledge that God alone is righteous and just (Rev. 15:4). And (2) We confess that apart from Christ, we are unrighteous (Rom 3:9-18). Knowing this, we will be able to seek justice and mercy with both humility and confidence. For we are sinners who have been made right with God, even though we deserved condemnation (Rom. 3:26). Knowing that Jesus took our condemnation upon Himself, we are now free to show the same mercy to others: “...to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with our God” (Mic. 6:8).

It is well known that from earliest times, Christians have cared for the sick and the poor. The early churches took on the care of widows and sought out the fatherless for adoption. Proverbs calls us to reject the corrupting influence of power and greed (Prov. 15:27). In our own day, we have an incredible opportunity to witness to the love and power of Christ through actions of mercy and by speaking up for the powerless. Jesus’ mission on earth was to seek the lost—the outcast, the poor and the prostitute (Luke 7:36-50). Will we be known for the same reason? Will we share the same Fatherly heart for the least and the lost among us in our day?

Prayer Guide

This week, pray for a deeper understanding of God's call to seek justice and mercy in your life. Ask the Lord to show you where you have power to make right something that is wrong; ask him to give you a heart that sees the needy and poor with His Fatherly compassion.

Family Fun Activity

Take a few minutes over dinner to discuss what it means to show God's heart to the world through justice and mercy. As a family, come up with one thing you can do this week to help someone in need. Plan out a way to serve that individual, family, or community organization and find a time on your calendar to make it happen.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 1:2-3 *"[The proverbs are] for gaining wisdom and being instructed; for understanding insightful sayings; for receiving wise instruction in righteousness, justice, and integrity..."*

Day 2: Proverbs 2:6-8 *"For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up success for the upright; He is a shield for those who live with integrity so that He may guard the paths of justice and protect the way of His loyal followers."*

Day 3: Proverbs 6:16-19 *"Six things the Lord hates; in fact, seven are detestable to Him: arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil, a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers."*

Day 4: Proverbs 8:20-21 *"[I, Wisdom,] walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, giving wealth as an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries."*

Day 5: Proverbs 14:31 *"The one who oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors Him."*

Day 6: Proverbs 15:27 *"The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live."*

Day 7: Proverbs 21:15 *"Justice executed is a joy to the righteous, but a terror to those who practice iniquity."*

Week 8: Trust & Repentance

"Do not despise the Lord's instruction, my son, and do not loathe His discipline; for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, just as a father, the son he delights in." (3:11-12)

Wisdom for the Week

For our last devotion, we come back to the beginning of Solomon's wisdom: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." To begin to walk down this road implies that it will continue taking you somewhere. As you've meditated on Scripture this summer, do you find yourself wanting to know Christ more? Are you eager to reach your final destination, take hold of your final inheritance, and be in His presence forever? We have an incredible gift in the good news of eternal life (Acts 2:21, 37-41)! Why would anyone say no and walk another direction?

The evidence of the weakness of our fallen nature which rejects the fear of the Lord is clear: "...fools despise wisdom and instruction." On their own, our hearts are darkened (Rom. 1:21, Eph. 4:28). God's ways and His will have been written on the hearts of men and women throughout all generations (Rom. 2:12-16). His Gospel word continues to be proclaimed throughout the earth but pride and hardness of heart persist for those who do not believe (Rom. 2:5). It is only right to call our rebellion for what it is—sheer foolishness!

But again, we come to our great hope in the character and promises of God. He is righteous: a holy and loving Father. Jesus Christ is Emmanuel: God with us, who took our sins upon Himself at Calvary! Proverbs teaches the great Gospel promise of the gift of the Spirit of God—poured out to those who respond to God with repentance and trust (Prov. 1:23). The promise of forgiveness, gift of new life, and future hope of glories that will never end stand in stark contrast to the bleak and ugly reality of human pride. There really are two ways to live—either alone in our own wisdom, or with Christ in eternal life and peace (Prov. 2:12-15, 8:32-36).

If you are a believer, the question is this—Are you living a life of daily repentance? Jesus promises that as we remain in Him, we will bear fruit in our lives (John 15:5-6). The seed that falls on good soil—a new heart of faith that receives the word—will grow fruit thirty, sixty, and one hundred times over (Mark 4:8, 20). Jesus is calling! For those who do not know him, he says: "Come and learn from me" (Matt. 11:29). To those of us who do know him, it is to continue learning from him as we follow this call: "Go therefore..." (Matt. 28:18-20).

Prayer Guide

As you consider everything we've seen in the book of Proverbs, take time to meditate on Hebrews 12 this week. Thank God for leading you in the path of Life and continuing to make you more like Christ each day. Pray for a renewed heart and readiness to live in daily repentance and trust with Him in the Gospel.

Family Fun Activity

Set aside one night this week for family worship. Get everyone involved and sing a few songs, read Scripture, and give a brief devotion, sharing some of your favorite verses out of the book of Proverbs. Reflect and discuss how God has spoken to each of you this summer, and pray for the coming school year.

Daily Proverbs

Day 1: Proverbs 1:20-23 *"Wisdom cries out... how long, foolish ones, will you love ignorance? How long will you mockers enjoy mocking and you fools hate knowledge? If you respond to my warning, then I will pour out my spirit on you and teach you my words."*

Day 2: Proverbs 1:28-31 *"Because they hated knowledge, didn't choose to fear the Lord, were not interested in my counsel, and rejected all my correction, they will eat the fruit of their way and be glutted with their own schemes."*

Day 3: Proverbs 1:33 *"But whoever listens to me will live securely and be free from the fear of danger."*

Day 4: Proverbs 3:9-10 *"Honor the Lord with your possessions and with the first produce of your entire harvest; then your barns will be completely filled, and your vats will overflow with new wine."*

Day 5: Proverbs 3:11-12 *"Do not despise the Lord's instruction, my son, and do not loathe His discipline; for the Lord disciplines the one He loves, just as a father, the son he delights in."*

Day 6: Proverbs 11:28 *"Anyone trusting in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf."*

Day 7: Proverbs 16:20 *"The one who understands a matter finds success, and the one who trusts in the Lord will be happy."*