

**Big Idea:** Wisdom starts with knowing God.

**Primary Scripture:** Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10

**Supporting Scripture:** Proverbs 16:9

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**CAPTURE (Why should students pay attention to and care about your message?)**

- Imagine you're reading a book where every few pages, the story stops and asks you to make a choice.
  - You're on page 34. You've made it deep into the jungle. You've navigated past the ancient ruins and survived a river full of piranhas, and now the path splits in two directions.
  - To the left, there's a narrow trail that disappears into a thick fog. You can't see more than a few feet ahead. To the right, there's a wide-open road lined with torches. It looks safe. It looks obvious.
  - The pages direct you toward your options... *"If you take the foggy trail, turn to page 72. If you take the torch-lit road, turn to page 58."*
  - Your gut says one thing, your brain says another, and you have absolutely no idea what's waiting on either page. Pick wrong and your character ends up dead, trapped, or stuck in some terrible situation you never saw coming.
  - And the most frustrating part? You can't flip ahead. You just have to **choose**.
- That's called a Choose Your Own Adventure book, and they were very popular in the 1980's and 90's.
  - Sometimes the choice that looks safe is actually the trap.
  - The wide, well-lit road? That's the one with the hidden pit. And the foggy trail you almost didn't take? That's the one that leads to the treasure. You never know which decision is the one that changes everything.
- Life works the same way. Every day, you're choosing *your own* adventure, and you can't flip ahead to see how it turns out.
  - Big or small, you're making those choices without knowing what's on the next page.

- You're trying to figure it out on your own and we don't always know what we're doing.
- What if there was a better way to navigate these choices?
- That's what this **Choose Your Own Adventure** series is all about.
  - We're going to spend four weeks in the book of Proverbs, learning how to make choices that actually lead somewhere good.
  - Our starting point is: wisdom doesn't begin with knowing more, it begins with knowing God.
  - The Bible calls it "fear of the Lord."
  - It's about recognizing who **God is** and who **we're not**.
- If we want to choose wisely, we start by choosing to trust the One who actually knows how the story ends.

### **SCRIPTURE (What does God's Word say?)**

- Proverbs is one of the oldest books in the Bible, written primarily by King Solomon, known as one of the wisest people who ever lived.
  - Along with Psalms and Ecclesiastes, it's part of what's called the wisdom literature of the Bible.
  - These are books that were written to help people figure out how to *actually* live.
  - Proverbs' primary audience was people *your* age, facing real decisions, trying to figure out how to live wisely in a world that doesn't always make that easy.

***<sup>7</sup> Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:7 – NLT)***

- Wisdom starts with God who created our capacity to think and reason.
- The ancient Hebrew word used for "fear" carries the idea of awe.
- Fearing the Lord means recognizing **who God is** and **who we're not**.
- When we actually do that, we're finally in a position to receive something.

***<sup>10</sup> Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. (Proverbs 9:10 – NLT)***

- Proverbs is saying what God is actually after is the kind of knowing where there's a *real* relationship.
- According to Proverbs, that's what produces good judgment.
- We want people to come to us when something matters. We want to be seen as someone who actually knows what they're doing.
- Proverbs is saying the path to becoming that person runs straight through God.
- If we want to choose wisely in the adventure ahead of us, this is where it begins.

### **INSIGHTS (What might this Scripture mean?)**

#### **1. Wisdom starts with knowing God.**

- Proverbs is saying wisdom starts with ***actually knowing God.***
- When you know God, you bring your decisions to someone who actually knows the whole story. You start to trust a voice that isn't just your own instincts or your friends' opinions or whatever feels right in the moment.
- Fearing the Lord is about being the kind of person who says, "God, I don't have all the answers, and I'm not going to pretend I do."
- From that posture, from actually knowing God rather than just knowing about Him, wisdom has somewhere to start.

#### **2. God's truth is our guide.**

- Whenever I'd hit a choice in a Choose Your Own Adventure book, I'd cheat by flipping to both pages, read what happened, and then pick the better option.
- The problem is that you can't do that in real life. You can't flip ahead and see how your choices play out before you make them.
- But God can.

***<sup>9</sup>We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps. (Proverbs 16:9 – NLT)***

- When I use GPS, I usually know where I want to end up, but I have no idea how to get there. It just tells me the next step.
- If I miss a turn it just recalculates and gives me a new route.
- God works like that. Not asking you to see the whole road ahead. Just asking you to trust Him with the next step.

- When we actually open the Bible and let it guide us, we're giving God the chance to direct our steps, even when we can't see where the path is going.

## **2. Ignoring God leads to detours.**

- When we ignore GPS, it usually costs us some time, but when we consistently ignore God's direction, the cost tends to be *a lot bigger*.
- Proverbs 1:7 said, "*Fools despise wisdom and discipline.*" That word "despise" means actively choosing to ignore that guidance even when it's right in front of you.
- If you've been making some choices lately that feel like detours, that doesn't make you a fool, it makes you human.
- God isn't standing at the end of your detour to shame you. There's a recalculation waiting. A better route available. But we have to be willing to take it.

### **ACTION (How could we live this out?)**

#### **1. Pray before big decisions.**

- This week, pick one decision you're facing, and before you decide, stop and bring it to God.
- Something like, "God, I want to walk with You through this. What do you see that I'm missing?"
- If that feels like a stretch, just pause before you decide and say, "God, is this wise?" Then listen.
- If you want to go deeper, write down what you prayed and what you felt like God was saying. Then look back at the end of the week and see what you notice.

#### **2. Spend time with God in Proverbs.**

- There are 31 chapters. One for every day of the month. So if today is the 12th, read Proverbs 12. Tomorrow, Proverbs 13. That's it.
- As you read, ask God, "What are you saying to me through this?" And then sit with whatever comes up.
- If you want to go further, share what you read with someone.
- Saying it out loud has a way of making it stick.

#### **3. Ask a wise person for wisdom.**

- Think of one person in your life who follows Jesus and has wisdom you respect.
- Now think of one specific area where you're trying to figure out the right choice.
- This week, go to that person and tell them what you're facing. Ask them, "What do you think would be the wise choice here?"
- If you're not sure where to start, begin by just identifying who that person is.
- And then take the next step and actually reach out.
- If you want to go further, don't just ask for advice. Ask them to pray with you about it.