

Proverbs 1-12 Devotionals & Sermon Illustrations

Proverbs Illustrations, Devotionals

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PROVERBS 1

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From Paul Apple's Introduction... Helpful general comments on the significance and usefulness of Proverbs for our daily life.

Goldberg: The teachings of Chapters 1-9 are considered: to understand the goal of wisdom in her outreach; why the fruits of wisdom are so important; how the disciple can be wise in the ways of the Lord, as well as in the practicalities of life; the burden the father carries in his spiritual leadership of the family; the call for chastity, with good instruction in how to avoid the temptation of immorality; the abundant folly we run into and how we can avoid it; and why and how we should respond to the call of wisdom to avoid "folly's cursed crumbs."

Lane: Job and Ecclesiastes are speculative wisdom, for they investigate why things are as they are and how we can make sense of them. Proverbs is practical wisdom, showing us what we can do to get on in this puzzling world without losing our way and ending in disaster. Whether or not we ever come to solve the

problems aired in the other two books, we can still come to terms with this world. We don't have to opt out and spend the whole of our lives thinking. We can get on with living in the real world, conquer our limitations and get along with other people. No book gives us more help in this than Proverbs.

House and Durham: By God's grace, the book of Proverbs enables each of us to have God's insight on how to live lives that will glorify Him; how to build up others; and how to be at peace with ourselves. Following its precepts will bring success in business and in the home. Through heeding its advice, we can avoid those regrettable pitfalls that can make life so difficult. If we listen to God's wisdom, we will experience joy and laughter rather than feeling the sorrow and despair that are so much a part of those who heed the "spirit of the age." Proverbs speaks to every area of life we will ever encounter. No stone is left unturned; no path not taken. The only issue in question is whether we will consider its ways and follow its advice.

Stedman: Life is simply too big for us to handle by ourselves. No matter how good the advice seems to be, if it isn't consistent with what God has told us, it is not to be trusted. And that is the conclusion that is reached through these opening chapters. Chapters 8 and 9 personify the two ways of life. Wisdom is seen as a beautiful woman, calling those who follow her to come away into the place of victory and achievement and success in life, while folly, or foolishness, which thinks everything it does is right in its own eyes, is personified as an evil woman -- attractive, alluring, tempting us to step aside into death. It is a marvelously-beautiful poetic passage.

Mouser: Two mistakes Christians make in interpreting proverbs: 1) Some Christians read the proverbs as if they were inflexible laws of God's creation, admitting no exceptions and 2) Christians will sometimes confuse proverbs with promises... However, proverbs in Solomon's collection are not promises made by God, but are guides which are to direct people in living successful and productive lives. ([All of the above are from Paul Apple's introduction to proverbs](#))

Proverbs 1:1 J R Miller

Solomon learned a great deal by experience. He put all the resources of this world to the test to see just what they would do for man. His proverbs are not, therefore, mere bits of theory, like many wise words we see; they were all wrought out in the crucible of actual experience.

Some of his words mark dangers: "Don't turn this way!" Some of them point to the safe path: "This is the way!" Whatever he found in life he set down here for the benefit of those who would come after.

It is wonderful, too, at how many points these proverbs touch life, and how intensely practical they are. To ponder them and to follow their instruction is to live well and grandly.

It is wonderful also that while Solomon himself wandered so far from God, there is not in all his writings a single word that excuses his sins. Everywhere he points away from the wrong path and to the right.

Proverbs 1:1-9 Focus on Fairness

Our Daily Bread

During the past 135 years of Major League Baseball, only 20 pitchers have thrown a perfect game. On June 2, 2010, Armando Galarraga of the Detroit Tigers would have been number 21 but an umpire's mistake denied him what every pitcher dreams of. The video replay showed the truth. Even though the umpire later acknowledged his error and apologized to Galarraga, the call made on the field could not be changed.

Through it all, Galarraga remained calm, expressed sympathy for the umpire, and never criticized him. Armando's refusal to retaliate amazed fans, players, and sportswriters alike.

If we insist on fair treatment for ourselves, we can become angry and frustrated. But when we embrace the Bible's wisdom, we will seek the welfare of others. Proverbs calls us "to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity" (1:2-3). Oswald Chambers said of our personal dealings with others, "Never look for justice, but never cease to give it; and never allow anything you meet with to sour your relationship to men through Jesus Christ."

When we experience unfairness, it is our privilege and responsibility as followers of Christ to respond with honesty and integrity, doing what is right, just, and fair.

How others handle justice

May not be up to me;

But when I react to others,

I must show integrity. —Branon

Life is not fair, but God is always faithful.

Proverbs 1:1-9 Advice For The Groom

The custom of a bachelor party before a wedding is often characterized by drunkenness and carousing. The party-hearty attitude seems driven by the belief that the groom will soon be married and have to settle down to a life of domestic boredom.

Not long ago, one of my nephews got married. The best man planned a get-together for Joel, but with a refreshing difference. Those invited were asked to bring some thoughts to share that would help him in this new chapter of life.

When I arrived at the informal breakfast, I found a cheerful spirit of camaraderie. Fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends were animated in lively discussion. The father of the bride and the father of the groom were asked to share their advice on what they had learned in their own Christian marriage. Their thoughts were personal, realistic, and biblical.

The book of Proverbs mirrors this kind of mentoring in facing life's challenges and rewards. "My son, hear the instruction of your father ... for [it] will be a graceful ornament on your head" (Pr 1:8, 9).

How God-honoring it would be if more couples began their marriage with an attitude that heeded the wisdom of those who walked the path before them. --Dennis Fisher

Lord, give us ears to hear advice
From loved ones wise and humble,
So when life's challenges appear
We will not have to stumble. —Sper

He is truly wise who gains his wisdom
from the experience of others.

Proverbs 1:5 Wise Counsel

I'll never forget Jake. His legs seemed too thin and spindly to hold him against the current of the river. His patched and discolored waders looked older than he was. His fishing vest was tattered and held together with safety pins; his ancient hat was battered and sweat-stained; his antiquated fly rod was scarred and taped.

I watched as he worked his way upstream to a patch of quiet water and began to cast. Then I took notice! He was fishing the same water I had fished earlier in the day and catching trout where I had caught none. Here was a man who could teach me a thing or two. All I had to do was ask.

We gain insight when we listen to those who have gone before and who know more than we do—insight we miss when our pride stands in the way. We're able to learn from others when we humble ourselves and acknowledge how little we know. Willingness to learn is a mark of those who are truly wise.

Consider our Lord as a young boy, "sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). Proverbs 1:5 says that "a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel." Let's ask questions of those who've spent their lives seeking God's wisdom. —David H. Roper

There's so much wisdom to be learned,
So many ways for me to grow,
Lord, I would listen like a child,
And learn what You would have me know. —K. De Haan

**If you think you know everything,
you have a lot to learn**

Proverbs 1:5 J R Miller

The wise man never ceases to be a learner. He never gets to a point where he feels satisfied with his attainments.

Many a man, who starts out with great promise in early life, by and by loses his energy and fails of his early hope, because in the

elation of his first successes he stopped learning, and then growth was at an end, and when growth stops decay begins.

An old artist had for his motto: "Nulla dies sine linea" (No day without a line). Every day he would add one line, at least, to his knowledge and attainment.

There could be no better motto for any life, young or old. Every day we should learn something we did not know before, add some new fact to our store of knowledge. Every day we should get some new lesson into our life, learn at some point to live better.

This applies to secular life - there should be daily progress in the business or profession we pursue. It also needs to apply to spiritual life - no day should be without its added line of likeness to Christ.

Proverbs 1:1-9 — Do The Right Thing — Our Daily Bread

Management expert Peter Drucker once wrote that too often people focus on efficiency (doing things right), instead of on effectiveness (doing the right thing). "There are few things less pleasing to the Lord, and less productive," Drucker says, "than an engineering department that rapidly turns out beautiful blueprints for the wrong product. Working on the right things is what makes ... work effective." Those are wise words for anyone seeking business success, and for those trying to live a good life.

How can we be sure we are doing the right thing—that which is morally correct and pleasing to God—instead of doing the wrong thing in an efficient way? Solomon wrote his proverbs so that his son would "receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity." Or, as one translation puts it, to acquire "a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair" (Proverbs 1:3 NIV).

Through His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, God will teach us what is right and enable us to do it. Our most important task is doing what is grounded in "justice, judgment, and equity."

Today, by God's wisdom and power, let's do the right thing. —David McCasland

Lead me, Lord, in tender mercy,

Leave me not to walk alone;

Let Your wisdom guide me ever,

For I dare not trust my own. —Reed

Be wise—do right.

Proverbs 1:1-9 — Mother's Influence — Our Daily Bread

It is my conviction that many a mother will occupy a higher position in God's kingdom than many prominent Christian leaders whom we might expect to find in places of greater honor.

Think of some of the great men of the Bible like Moses, Samuel, and Timothy. Where would they have been had it not been for their praying, Spirit-led mothers? Think of Augustine, John Newton, and the zealous Wesleys; their names may never have lighted the pages of history had it not been for the blessed influence of godly mothers!

The simple prayers from our infant lips were but echoes from our mother's heart. Can we ever forget the soft caresses of those hands of blessing on our heads as we knelt by our beds? Can we fail to remember her night vigils, her seasons of intercession, her well-marked Bible, and her words of admonition? Her actions spoke eloquently of Him who taught us of the greater love of God.

What a tragedy to neglect the counsel of a godly mother! What eternal consequences to reject her God! If you have wandered from her teaching, turn to Christ before it is too late and make sure of meeting her in heaven. "Do not forsake the law of your mother" (Prov. 1:8).

When Mother prayed, she found sweet rest,

When Mother prayed, her soul was blest;

Her heart and mind on Christ were stayed,

And God was there when Mother prayed! —Anon.

A thousand men may build a city, but it takes a mother to make a home.

[Proverbs 1:1-33 — Beyond Information — Our Daily Bread](#)

An investment company's full-page ad in the Wall Street Journal began with these words: "Information is everywhere. Insight is all too rare. For insight goes beyond information to discern underlying truths."

Today, we are long on information and short on insight. Television offers scores of channels. Encyclopedias and world atlases are on compact disks (CDs). Online databases give us the temperature in Hong Kong and the baseball score in Birmingham. We're wired and tired from trying to grasp the meaning of all we know.

Years ago, a friend encouraged me to read a chapter from Proverbs each day. One chapter each day takes me through this marvelous book of God's wisdom every month. "You can get knowledge in college," my friend said, "but wisdom comes from God."

Here's what Almighty God promises when we seek His wisdom: "If you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, ... then you will ... find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:3-6).

One chapter of Proverbs every day. Try it this month and see how God's Word will give you the wisdom to transform information into insight.

THINKING IT THROUGH

Why would someone not want to be wise? (Prov. 1:7).

What happens to those who live foolishly? (vv.31-32).

What are some benefits of wisdom? (v.33; 2:6-11).

You can get knowledge in college, but wisdom comes from God.

Proverbs 1:1-7 Fear Escape

In our increasingly dangerous world, think of what we have to fear: Ominous terrorist threats, frightening crime rates, increasing natural disasters, sobering energy crises, ... God.

Yes, God. Ironical, isn't it, that in a world full of fearful things, the single source of our refuge and safety is also the One we are instructed to fear?

Consider Solomon's words: "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge" (Prov. 14:26). Then look at the next verse: "The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life."

We try to avoid life's fearful things because they interrupt our peace. Yet we are told to move toward fear—the fear of God. For those who "fear the Lord, ... He is their help and their shield" (Ps. 115:11).

Our faith in God can deliver us from the fears of the world (Ps. 23:4)—but only because our faith relies on a fear that is different from worldly fear. Proverbs 29:25 says, "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe."

To fear God is to sense His awesomeness. When we acknowledge that greatness and trust in Him, we no longer want to sin against Him. He becomes our refuge from the fears of this world. In Him we find peace. —Dave Branon

Fear Him, ye saints, and you will then
Have nothing else to fear;
Make you His service your delight;
Your wants shall be His care. —Tate & Brady

Those who fear God need not fear the world

Proverbs 1:5 — Listen And Learn — Our Daily Bread

A person who read one of my articles in Our Daily Bread disagreed with something I said. So she wrote and asked for an explanation.

After receiving my letter, she responded, "Thank you for your answer. It was information that I didn't know. I just took for granted what I had learned in childhood. But it is a poor day when one doesn't learn something new—so at 84 I am still learning."

A willingness to learn is a mark of growth and wisdom. Proverbs 1:5 states, "A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel." The Hebrew word for learning in this verse means "a taking in."

If we desire to grow in our knowledge of God and learn to please Him, we need not fear discarding old ideas and taking in new ones that more adequately explain the Scriptures. People who are seeking wisdom will welcome new ideas. They will test them by the truths of the Bible, either to confirm what they already believe or to enlarge their knowledge and understanding.

We must be open to God's truth as He teaches us through His Word and the people around us. Are we listening, testing, and learning?

Think About It

When was the last time you admitted you were wrong?

Why is it so hard to do? What have you learned

recently from another believer?

To make room for wisdom, get rid of pride

Proverbs 1:5

The Circle of the Wise

I used to serve on the elder board of a church in California. One elder, Bob Smith, who was older than most of us, frequently called us back to the Word of God for guidance.

On one occasion we were discussing a leadership shortage in the church and had spent an hour or more working through various solutions. Bob was silent throughout the discussion. Finally, he said quietly, "Gentlemen, we've forgotten Jesus' solution to our leadership issue. Before we do anything, we must first 'ask the Lord of the harvest ... to send out workers'" (Luke 10:2 niv). We were humbled, and spent the rest of our time praying that God would raise up workers and send them into the field.

C. S. Lewis said, "The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are." Proverbs 1:5 says, "A man of understanding will attain wise counsel." Bob's comment is just one example of the value of wise men and women who "have known Him who is from the beginning" (1 John 2:13-14) and whose minds are saturated with the Word of God.

Let's take to heart the counsel of those who have lived in the Lord's presence and are mature in His wisdom. They are God's gift to us and our churches.

The older saints who trust God's Word

Have trod the paths that we now walk;

They've fought the battles we now fight—

Their wisdom teaches truth and right. —Branon

That one is truly wise who gains wisdom from the experience of others.

Proverbs 1:7

In God's Presence

As a farm boy in North Dakota, I often had a sense of awe when I looked at the sky on a clear day or when I listened to the rolling thunder of an approaching storm. God seemed so great, and I felt so small. I often had the same feeling when I entered the church sanctuary or heard my father pray. Today, though, I admit that at times I tend to be quite casual when I think of God, pray, study the Bible, or engage in worship.

When we assemble to worship, sing, pray, and listen to the message, we often do these things half-heartedly and with little sense of the fear of God. Ecclesiastes 5 speaks to those issues and warns us not to make promises to God carelessly and superficially!

We are inclined to hear only part of what God is saying to us through His Word. But genuine hearing includes careful listening accompanied by obedience. Unkept vows are also a serious matter (Pr 1:2,4, 5, 6). Just as many dreams have no basis in reality, the careless speech of the fool in God's presence is empty (Pr 1:3,7).

Always keep in mind how great and holy God is, and how small and sinful we are. Thank Him for His mercy and grace. This solemn contemplation of the Lord's character will help us obey the admonition to "fear God" (Pr 1:7). —Herbert Vander Lugt

A house of worship is a place

For praise and reverent prayer;
Let holy thoughts your spirit fill
Each time you enter there. --Bosch

The fear of God is the beginning of true worship

Proverbs 1:7, 8, 9,20-33

In Honor Of Barking Dogs

In the jungles of eastern Sri Lanka, 15 soldiers of a government commando unit were saved by two dogs adopted as mascots. According to a news report, the soldiers were completing a 10-mile hike when their dogs sensed danger. Running ahead toward a water hole where the unit planned to rest, the dogs suddenly began barking and circling the area. The troops searched carefully and found 12 buried grenades attached to a taut wire trigger.

It's intriguing to think about those two jungle mascots whose senses were tuned to the smell of danger. The soldiers escaped serious injury and even death because they listened to those barking dogs.

It's disturbing to realize, however, that sometimes we are apt to give less credibility and attention to more faithful protectors. How many times have we resented a father's warnings or a mother's advice? How often have we grown tired of pastoral pleadings or a fellow believer's caution?

Yet, how wise and loving is our God! He sends His messengers to whisper, to plead, and sometimes to howl about hidden dangers, which can do grave harm to our physical and spiritual lives.

Let's be wise and listen to the warnings. --Mart De Haan

Think About It

Do I resent being told what to do? Why? Who are some wise people I can learn from? When have I listened to someone's warning and avoided a problem?

If you want to be wise, listen to wise people.

Proverbs 1:7

J R Miller

You may set down six ciphers - 000,000 - and they count for nothing; but if you put a five or any figure before them they all count - 5,000,000. Human knowledge alone only adds up a row of ciphers. A young man goes through his medical or law school and is graduated with honors, a learned man, but not yet a Christian. His acquirements make only a long row of ciphers. These will be elements of power if he only gets in before them something that counts. Then he gives himself to Christ, consecrates all his attainments to Him, and every one of his acquirements assumes a high value. He has written a figure before the row of ciphers, and 000,000,000 has become 6,000,000,000.

The more a man knows, the more of a man he is, if he loves, reverences, and obeys God. But this is the first thing in all true wisdom. Not to have it, is to make failure out of life; and the greater the other acquirements the greater the failure.

The Wisdom We Need

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge. Proverbs 1:7 nlt

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 1:1–9

Ellen opened her mailbox and discovered a bulky envelope with her dear friend's return address. Just a few days prior, she'd shared a relational struggle with that friend. Curious, she unwrapped the package and found a colorful beaded necklace on a simple jute string. Attached was a card with a company's slogan, "Say It in Morse Code," and words translating the necklace's hidden and wise message, "Seek God's Ways." Ellen smiled as she fastened it around her neck.

The book of Proverbs is a compilation of wise sayings—many penned by Solomon, who was acclaimed as the wisest man of his era (1 Kings 10:23). Its thirty-one chapters call the reader to listen to wisdom and avoid folly, starting with the core message of Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Wisdom—knowing what to do when—comes from honoring God by seeking His ways. In the introductory verses, we read, "Listen when your father corrects you. Don't neglect your mother's instruction. What you learn from them will crown you with grace and be a chain of honor around your neck" (vv. 8–9 nlt).

Ellen's friend had directed her to the Source of the wisdom she needed: Seek God's ways. Her gift focused Ellen's attention on where to discover the help she needed.

When we honor God and seek His ways, we'll receive the wisdom we need for all the matters we face in life. Each and every one.
By: Elisa Morgan

Love of Learning

Let the wise listen and add to their learning. Proverbs 1:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 1:1–7

When asked how he became a journalist, a man shared the story of his mother's dedication to his pursuit of education. While traveling on the subway each day, she collected newspapers left behind on seats and gave them to him. While he especially enjoyed reading about sports, the papers also introduced him to knowledge about the world, which ultimately opened his mind to a vast range of interests.

Children are wired with natural curiosity and a love for learning, so introducing them to the Scriptures at an early age is of great value. They become intrigued by God's extraordinary promises and exciting stories of biblical heroes. As their knowledge deepens, they can begin to comprehend the consequences of sin, their need of repentance, and the joy found in trusting God. The first chapter of Proverbs, for instance, is a great introduction to the benefits of wisdom (Proverbs 1:1–7). Nuggets of wisdom found here shine a light of understanding on real-life situations.

Developing a love of learning—especially about spiritual truths—helps us to grow stronger in our faith. And those who have walked in faith for decades can continue to pursue knowledge of God throughout their life. Proverbs 1:5 advises, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning." God will never stop teaching us if we're willing to open our heart and mind to His guidance and instruction.
By: Cindy Hess Kasper

What fresh truth of Scripture have you added to your knowledge recently? How can you continually pursue a deeper understanding of God's truth?

Father, please continue to open my mind and heart to grow in knowledge and wisdom as I read from the Scriptures. Grow deeper in your [understanding of faith](#).

A Teachable Spirit

Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance. Proverbs 1:5

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 1:1–7

It has become sadly "normal" to attack not only the opinions of others but also the person holding the opinion. This can be true in academic circles as well. For this reason, I was stunned when scholar and theologian Richard B. Hays wrote a paper that forcefully took to task a work that he himself had written years earlier! In *Reading with the Grain of Scripture*, Hays demonstrated great humility of heart as he corrected his own past thinking, now fine-tuned by his lifelong commitment to learning.

As the book of Proverbs was being introduced, King Solomon listed the various intents of this collection of wise sayings. But in the midst of those purposes, he inserted this challenge, "Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance" (Proverbs 1:5). Like the apostle Paul, who claimed that, even after following Christ for decades, he continued to pursue knowing Jesus (Philippians 3:10), Solomon urged the wise to listen, to learn, and to continue to grow.

No one is ever hurt by maintaining a teachable spirit. As we seek to continue to grow and learn about the things of faith (and the things of life), may we allow the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth (John 16:13), that we might better comprehend the wonders of our good and great God. By: Bill Crowder

In what areas of life or spiritual growth have you become stale or stunted? How can you become more teachable, allowing God to grow you beyond where you are at this moment?

Loving God, give me a humble, teachable spirit that I might continually be growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus.

For further study, see [Why Read the Bible?](#)

Proverbs 1:7 — The Cost Of Rebellion — Our Daily Bread

The 1960s are known for the rebellion of thousands of young people. But ever since the fall of Adam in the Garden of Eden, people

of all ages everywhere have rebelled against authority—parental, governmental, and divine.

The fool, who is referred to in Psalm 53:1, denied God's rule over his life. People in our day do so in their hearts and in their actions.

It is obvious that rebellion pays bad dividends. It inevitably results in a sense of emptiness that often leads to alcoholism, drug addiction, bizarre religious practices, flagrant immorality, broken homes, incurable diseases, and despair. Sadly, many experience the high cost of putting what they call "my way" above "God's way."

The psalmist portrayed God as seeing the defiance of the wicked, observing their antagonism toward His people, and striking them with bewildered panic (Psalm 53:5). One way or another, people who "despise wisdom and instruction" (Proverbs 1:7) always pay a high price.

To live as if there is no God is foolish, for it leads to pain, despair, and eternal death. But to live in the "fear of God" is wise, for it leads to satisfaction, rejoicing, and everlasting life. You must decide, so choose wisely!

The fool denies that God exists,

Eternal truth defies;

But when the foolish one believes,

God's teaching makes him wise. —Fitzhugh

He is truly wise who submits to God's wisdom.

Proverbs 1:19

In an article for Newsweek, David Gates wrote: "It's the nature of addiction to sneak up on you in apparently harmless increments: during the initial stages, life would be about right if you could just add on that two-car garage. Toward the middle, it seems a little hard if you can't have a Lexus and Boxster in it. Near the end you've got a Learjet and life is still intolerable.—Newsweek, July 29, 2002, p. 37

Proverbs 1:20-33 Common Sense

Voltaire said, "Common sense is not so common." He was right! In a society that has grown increasingly litigious, we are inundated with warnings on products, mostly because some people lack common sense. Just read the following instructions.

On a hair dryer: Do not use while sleeping.

On an iron: Do not iron clothes on body.

On a chainsaw: Do not attempt to stop chain with your hand.

Common sense can be learned from experience or the teaching we receive from those we trust. But God's Word is the best source of all to develop discernment and good judgment.

Three words echo throughout the book of Proverbs: wisdom, knowledge, understanding. God has packed this book with common sense.

Proverbs 11:12 advises restraint: "A man of understanding holds his peace."

Proverbs 17:27 warns: "He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit."

Proverbs 20:13 is practical: "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty."

To get more common sense, consult God's Word—the source of wisdom—daily. --C H Kasper

To Gain A Heart Of Wisdom:
Ask God for it (James 1:5).
Read regularly from the Proverbs.
Seek out godly counsel (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 19:20).

Knowledge without common sense is folly.

Proverbs 1:8-19 Cardboard Kids

When Mike Wood began to advertise his sign company, he didn't know how useful his work would become. Some of his signs were life-size cardboard pictures of kids, which he put close to the street.

Besides advertising his business, the signs had another effect. Motorists thought the cutouts were real children and began to drop their speed. Now Mike sells the cardboard kids to parents who want to slow down speeding drivers in their area. Mike said, "We truly hope that some of our standups help to control speeding in neighborhoods around the country."

Parents work at protecting their children from physical danger. But there are other dangers as well. Solomon, the writer of Proverbs 1, was concerned about the people who would pose spiritual danger to his son. He warned him about those who would entice him to do evil (vv.10-14) and told him, "Do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path; for their feet run to evil" (vv.15-16).

We need to protect our children by teaching them God's Word and training them to avoid evil influences. Busy streets are hazardous for our children, but the enticement of taking an evil path is far more dangerous. --Anne Cetas

Children are a heritage,
A gift from God above;
He asks you to protect and care
And nourish them with love. —Hess

**Tomorrow's world will be shaped
by what we teach our children today.**

Proverbs 1:20-33

A Storm Is Coming!

We were in a small boat on the far side of the lake and the fish were biting when we heard a rumble of thunder in the distance. Looking up, we saw a mass of dark clouds in the west.

I ignored the suggestion of my fishing partner that it might be wise to start back to the cottage—I wanted to keep fishing. Then it happened! The storm was suddenly upon us. We tried to start the motor but it wouldn't go! My friend tried to row, but the rain came in sheets and the waves tossed our little aluminum boat. We survived, but I learned a lesson. Don't delay when a storm is brewing.

Another type of storm is coming—a day of judgment. It may seem far off, and you don't feel you have to hurry to prepare. You may be in good health and in the prime of life. But listen, the storm may come upon you unexpectedly.

Proverbs 1 says that disaster will strike the person who foolishly ignores all warnings (v.27). And the author of Hebrews warned, "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment" (9:27).

To heed God's warnings is true wisdom. Have you sought shelter in Christ? If you haven't, it's time to stop "fishing" and seek safety before it's too late. Turn from your sin to Christ. Do so today.—Mart De Haan

Oh, turn to Christ while still you may;

Too late, it soon will be—

A glorious life you then will have

Throughout eternity. —Anon.

Those who reject Christ as Savior will face Him as Judge

Proverbs 1:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25,26, 27, 28 29, 30, 31, 32, 33 Common Sense

Voltaire said, "Common sense is not so common." He was right! In a society that has grown increasingly litigious, we are inundated with warnings on products, mostly because some people lack common sense. Just read the following instructions.

On a hair dryer: Do not use while sleeping.

On an iron: Do not iron clothes on body.

On a chainsaw: Do not attempt to stop chain with your hand.

Common sense can be learned from experience or the teaching we receive from those we trust. But God's Word is the best source of all to develop discernment and good judgment.

Three words echo throughout the book of Proverbs: wisdom, knowledge, understanding. God has packed this book with common sense.

Proverbs 11:12 advises restraint: "A man of understanding holds his peace."

Proverbs 17:27 warns: "He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit."

Proverbs 20:13 is practical: "Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty."

To get more common sense, consult God's Word—the source of wisdom—daily.--C H Kasper

To Gain A Heart Of Wisdom:
Ask God for it (James 1:5).
Read regularly from the Proverbs.
Seek out godly counsel (Prov. 11:14; 15:22; 19:20).

Knowledge without common sense is folly.

Proverbs 1:33

Spurgeon - Morning and evening

Divine love is rendered conspicuous when it shines in the midst of judgments. Fair is that lone star which smiles through the rifts of the thunder clouds; bright is the oasis which blooms in the wilderness of sand; so fair and so bright is love in the midst of wrath. When the Israelites provoked the Most High by their continued idolatry, he punished them by withholding both dew and rain, so that their land was visited by a sore famine; but while he did this, he took care that his own chosen ones should be secure. If all other brooks are dry, yet shall there be one reserved for Elijah; and when that fails, God shall still preserve for him a place of sustenance; nay, not only so, the Lord had not simply one "Elijah," but he had a remnant according to the election of grace, who were hidden by fifties in a cave, and though the whole land was subject to famine, yet these fifties in the cave were fed, and fed from Ahab's table too by His faithful, God-fearing steward, Obadiah. Let us from this draw the inference, that come what may, God's people are safe. Let convulsions shake the solid earth, let the skies themselves be rent in twain, yet amid the wreck of worlds the believer shall be as secure as in the calmest hour of rest. If God cannot save his people under heaven, he will save them in heaven. If the world becomes too hot to hold them, then heaven shall be the place of their reception and their safety. Be ye then confident, when ye hear of wars, and rumours of wars. Let no agitation distress you, but be quiet from fear of evil. Whatsoever cometh upon the earth, you, beneath the broad wings of Jehovah, shall be secure. Stay yourself upon his promise; rest in his faithfulness, and bid defiance to the blackest future, for there is nothing in it direful for you. Your sole concern should be to show forth to the world the blessedness of hearkening to the voice of wisdom.

Proverbs 1:33a

Quiet from fear of evil.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

"Whoso." This promise is to us all. To the man in the street, as much as for those of us who have been nurtured in Christian homes.

The evil is taken out of things for those whose hearts are full of God. Nothing which God allows to come to us is really evil, except sin. Put away sin from your heart, and let it be filled with Love and Faith, and behold all things will become new. They will lose their evil semblance, because you will look at them with new eyes. Men talk against the March wind; but when they understand that it is cleansing fetid dens of fever-germs, they regard it as a blessing. Men dread change, anything unwonted or unaccustomed; but when they find that, like the transplanted fruit-tree, they will often attain a greater maturity than when left to one spot of soil, they welcome it. If you look at things apart from God, especially if you anticipate the future without Him, you have good cause for fear; but if you hearken to and obey Him, if you know and love Him, if you abide in God and God in you, you will see that the evil is not in the things or events, but in yourself. Give yourself as alms to God, and lo, all things will become clean to you.

Death shall lose its terrors, and become the Father's servant, ushering you into his presence. Pain and suffering shall but cast into relief the stars of Divine promise. Poverty will have no pangs, and storm no alarms. You shall become so habituated to find the rarest blessings associated with what men often dread most, that you will be quiet from all fear of evil, and able to look out, with serene and untroubled heart, on a sea of troubles. In fact, it is very doubtful if anything is really evil for those who love God.

PROVERBS 2

Proverbs 2

Searching For A Rare Jewel

When Betty Goldstein of Staten Island, New York, entered the hospital, her husband Ron wrapped her 3.5-carat diamond ring in a napkin for safekeeping. But in a forgetful moment, the 63-year-old Goldstein threw the napkin in the trash. When he realized his mistake, he dashed outside, only to see the garbage truck rumbling down the street. So he called the local sanitation department and got permission to follow the truck to a transfer station. Workers began sorting through hundreds of garbage bags and recovered the ring an hour later.

The writer of Proverbs urges us to search diligently for something far more precious—wisdom. In Pr 2, a father encourages his son to do whatever is necessary to get insight and wisdom. This strenuous search for wisdom is actually a search for God Himself (Pr 2:3-5). In fact, inner happiness comes when man attains this wisdom (Pr 3:13). He encourages his son to search diligently for this rare jewel because wisdom is not usually discovered by the casual observer. Wisdom is discovered and enjoyed only by those who are diligent, devoted, and determined to seek it.

Let us devote our whole being to searching for that rare jewel of wisdom. —Marvin Williams

More valuable than diamonds rare

Is priceless wisdom from above;

With purest gold it can't compare

Because it's filled with truth and love. —D. De Haan

With all your getting, get understanding. —Solomon

Proverbs 2:1-9

What Should I Do?

Our Daily Bread

My friend Krista is struggling with a decision: Should she keep her old car with its continual maintenance problems or buy a newer model? She wants to be a good steward of her finances, and she desires to make a wise decision. And most of all, she wants to honor God.

Financial decisions can be tough to make. Billy Graham even says, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life."

Here are a few ideas to consider about wisdom in money matters:

Do a checkup to be sure you're following God's priorities. Are you giving to Him and to others? (1 Cor. 16:2). Taking care of family needs? (1 Tim. 5:8). Not letting money control you? (Luke 16:13).

Research the topic. Consider all the options and the pros and cons of each one.

Ask God for wisdom. Pray, pray, and pray some more. He will direct you (Prov. 2:6).

Trust God and make the decision. Use the knowledge and wisdom you've gained, and commit your decision to Him.

Obedience to God nurtures a growing love-and-trust relationship with Him. What's most important is that we see each decision as an opportunity to draw closer to Him. - Anne Cetas

When you're facing a decision

And it seems a daunting task,

Trust the Lord for true discernment—

He'll give wisdom if you ask. —Hess

The closer we walk with God, the clearer we see His guidance.

Proverbs 2:1-9

Information Isn't Wisdom

Our Daily Bread

Are there any limits to the knowledge we can acquire? With today's amazing technology we are able to tap into incredible sources of information. Yet Bill Gates, visionary founder of Microsoft, claims that we are only on the threshold of far greater wonders. In his book *The Road Ahead*, Gates makes this prediction: "When tomorrow's powerful information machines are connected on the highway ... you'll be able to stay in touch with anyone, anywhere, who wants to stay in touch with you; to browse through any of thousands of libraries day or night."

Surely we are grateful for the technology that makes available such remarkable means of obtaining information. A mere accumulation of facts, though, doesn't add up to insight and understanding. All the learning of philosophers, the speculations of ethicists, and the achievements of scientists can't give us the truth about God and His will, His grace, or the good news concerning Jesus Christ and salvation from sin. For that knowledge, we need the Bible—and we always will.

So don't squander your time merely acquiring facts. It's far better to study the truth God has given us in His Word. Remember: "The Lord gives wisdom" (Prov. 2:6).

Holy Bible, Book divine,

Precious treasure, thou art mine;

Mine to tell me whence I came;

Mine to teach me what I am. —Burton

We can get information online, but wisdom comes from on high.

Proverbs 2:1-11

Today in the Word

Jan 2, 2011

In 2007, rare coin dealer John Feigenbaum flew coast-to-coast with a special dime in his pocket. He didn't eat and he didn't sleep; he was nervous. He bought an economy-class ticket and dressed to be inconspicuous. After his flight landed in New York, he had to kill time in a Starbucks, waiting for a bank to open. Finally it did, and Feigenbaum breathed a sigh of relief. The dime Feigenbaum was delivering to a buyer was worth \$1.9 million. It's called an 1894-S dime—only 24 were known to have been minted, and only nine are still known to exist. That's one expensive 10-cent coin!

The Bible, though, keeps matters in perspective: The financial value of such treasures pales in comparison to wisdom. It is "more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her" (Pr. 8:11).

Today's reading is basically a long conditional statement, that is, an if/then statement. If we search after wisdom, then God will give it to us. The search for wisdom is described as a whole-person, holding-nothing-back, all-out endeavor (Proverbs 2:1–4). It involves listening, obeying, diligence, and passion. One must understand the value of wisdom in order to "search for it as for hidden treasure" (Proverbs 2:4).

The key truth undergirding this quest is that God is the source and giver of wisdom (Proverbs 2:5–8). That's why wisdom is described here and elsewhere as "the fear of the LORD." Even while suffering, Job grasped this truth. Men dig gold and silver mines and find precious gems deep in the earth, but they cannot find wisdom. "God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells" (Job 28:23). When God gives wisdom to those who pursue and call out for it, there are many positive and pleasurable results, including moral understanding and discretion (Proverbs 2:9–11). Wisdom, though, is not simply a means to an end—it is a relationship with the Giver, with Wisdom Himself. And that is something that money just can't buy!

Apply the Word - Today's passage gives us many reasons to put our trust in God rather than money. Not only is the Lord the giver of wisdom and the source of all knowledge and understanding, He also gives victory to the upright, is a shield to the blameless, guards the path of the just, and protects the way of the faithful (Proverbs 2:–8). Trusting in Him is the very definition of wisdom, and putting our trust in anything else the very definition of foolishness!

Proverbs 2:1-11

Today in the Word

Oct. 3, 2010

Earlier this year, a nationwide treasure hunt began with the publication of the book, *The Clock Without a Face*. The story contains clues to find emerald-encrusted numbers from a clock—and in fact, twelve actual numbers have been buried across the United States. If you read the story, follow the clues, and find one of these numbers (with actual emeralds!), you get to keep it. As of this writing, nine of the twelve numbers have been found by people from Texas to Connecticut to Wisconsin.

If we're going to find buried treasure, it's important to have a map or clues to guide us. Today we'll begin a series of studies focused on how to grow in the knowledge of God. In our reading, wisdom, knowledge, and insight are compared to hidden treasure; just as we would commit time and energy to uncover buried riches, so too we should commit ourselves to the pursuit of the knowledge of God (Proverbs 2:4).

The instruction in this passage, first given by David to his son Solomon, exhorts the reader to do two things. The first involves knowing content: "Store up my commands within you" (Proverbs 2:1). Growing in knowledge means knowing the content of God's Word. This discipline is indispensable for our spiritual growth. But the knowledge of God does not end with the study of content. The second exhortation describes an attitude that hungers for spiritual knowledge and values wisdom. Notice the verbs in verses 3 and 4: "call out," "cry aloud," "look," and "search." This is a pursuit for more than just facts. This is a passionate quest to know God.

We are instructed to study God's Word and to desire God's wisdom. And God does not leave us alone in this endeavor; He engages with our efforts. He promises to bestow His wisdom, knowledge, and understanding (Proverbs 2:6). In response to our searching, He provides victory and protection. Through our experience of His care and sovereign guidance, we then have the blessings of the knowledge of God. We know His commands and we know His character, and "wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul" (Proverbs 2:10).

Apply the Word - The knowledge of God is a treasure that we can find! As you reflect on this passage, ask the Spirit to evaluate your heart. Do you commit time to studying the Word of God? Do you have a passion to grow in His insight and understanding? Perhaps you've walked with God for many years, and can testify to your experience of His protection in your life. Share that testimony with others, just as David did with Solomon, to encourage them to grow in the knowledge of God.

The Pursuit

Proverbs 2:1-9

Our Daily Bread

When my husband, Carl, pursued a relationship with me while we were dating, he was serious about it. He called. He wrote notes. He asked thoughtful questions. He bought me flowers, candy, books, dinner, and other gifts. He spent a lot of time and effort in his pursuit of me.

Way back in the 10th century bc, Solomon recommended that kind of serious commitment when pursuing something else—wisdom. A dictionary definition of wisdom, "understanding what is true, right, or lasting," sounds crucial if we want a life that glorifies our holy God.

Maybe that's why Solomon used so many active verbs in Proverbs 2 to describe our needed efforts to gain wisdom. He said, "incline your ear," "apply your heart," "cry out," "lift up your voice," "seek her," "search for her" (vv.2-4).

Seeking wisdom takes effort, and Scripture tells us where it can be found: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding." He isn't storing up wisdom for Himself; "He stores up sound wisdom for the upright" (vv.6-7).

Seek God with all your heart. He is the source of all wisdom for your life.

What will it profit when life here is o'er,

Though great worldly wisdom I gain,

If seeking knowledge I utterly fail

The wisdom of God to obtain? —Nelson

You can acquire much knowledge, but true wisdom comes only from God.

Proverbs 2:1-6

Seek And You Will Find

Justin Martyr was a second-century man who eagerly sought for truth. He read the Greek classical writers, examining and analyzing every philosophy from all sides. He sought insight, especially the answer to his longings for sexual purity. But every effort was in vain. He wrote, "All at last did faithless prove, and late or soon betrayed love."

One day, aimlessly wandering on the seashore, he met an elderly man who spoke to his heart as no one had ever spoken before. He pointed him to God through Jesus Christ, and in that simple witness Justin found the knowledge he had sought all his life—"the knowledge of God" (Proverbs 2:4-5).

Perhaps you, like Justin Martyr, are searching for insight, looking everywhere for the answer to your longing for truth. You've read widely and thought earnestly about life, but you can find no answers that satisfy the deep needs of your soul. If so, read the Gospels, the first four books of the New Testament. As you read, cry out to God for understanding. He will hear you, and you too will find the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ (John 17:3).

God doesn't force truth on those who don't want it, but He hears the earnest cries of those who request it. As Jesus said, "Ask, and you will receive" (John 16:24). —David H. Roper

Look not to reason's arguments
If God you seek to find;
Look only to His holy Word,
For sin has made us blind. —D. De Haan

To find truth, look to Christ.

[Proverbs 2:1-9 — Treasure Hunt — Our Daily Bread](#)

On January 1, 2008, Keith Severin and his 7-year-old son, Adrien, agreed that they would spend at least 15 minutes every day that year searching together for treasure. Carlos Alcalá's article in the Sacramento Bee described how they went out each day in every kind of weather to see what they could find. A year later their collection of coins, golf balls, recyclable bottles and cans, and various other items had yielded more than \$1,000. In the process, they enjoyed many hours of companionship and fun.

If we decided to spend 15 minutes a day searching for treasure in the Bible, what would we find? Solomon wrote: "If you seek [wisdom] as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God... Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path" (Pr 2:4-5,9).

Growth won't happen all at once. But gradually, day by day, we will be changed through reading God's Word and obeying Him. And think of the privilege and pleasure of spending time with our heavenly Father.

It begins with a willing commitment, continues with exciting discoveries, and leads to the treasure of wisdom and life.

Search the Scriptures' precious store—

As a miner digs for ore;

Search, and you will surely find

Treasures to enrich the mind. —Anon.

Rich treasures of God's truth are waiting to be discovered.

Proverbs 2:1-9

Treasure Hunter

Mel Fisher was a treasure hunter who searched for gold and found it. In 1985, after 16 years of looking, he finally discovered the Spanish wreck Nuestra Señora de Atocha in 55 feet of water near Key West, Florida. His divers salvaged millions of dollars' worth of treasure from that sunken ship—but it didn't come easy. They toiled long and hard with metal detectors, diving to investigate every metallic "hit." Fisher's dreams and work eventually paid off when he came upon his big find.

The Bible describes another kind of treasure as being more precious than gold, silver, or rubies (Prov. 3:14, 15). It is wisdom, which is more than knowledge. It's the ability to apply that knowledge to everyday life. Solomon, who asked God for a wise and understanding heart, told us in Proverbs 2 to seek for wisdom with the same persistence and intensity as we would search for

hidden treasures (Pr 2:4). We must cry out for discernment and understanding (Pr 2:3), incline our ear to wisdom (Pr 2:2), and receive God's words and treasure them in our heart (Pr 2:1).

Do we value wisdom? Do we seek it as diligently as if it were gold? If so, we will be rewarded with life's greatest treasure--the knowledge of God. —Mart De Haan

What will it profit when life here is o'er,
Though great worldly wisdom I gain,
If seeking knowledge I utterly fail
The wisdom of God to obtain? --Nelson

You can gain much knowledge on your own, but true wisdom comes only from God.

Proverbs 2:1-9a

Digging For Treasure

Profitable Bible study involves more than just opening to a chapter and reading what's there. Here are seven guidelines to help you make the most of your study of the Bible.

- 1 Set aside a regular time. Unless you schedule it, you'll neglect it.
- 2 Before you start reading, ask God for help and understanding.
- 3 Carefully think about what you are reading. Not all of the Bible's treasures lie like pebbles on the surface. To mine the gold, you have to dig.
- 4 Seek to understand what the author was saying to the first people who read the book or letter before you decide how to apply it today.
- 5 Write down at least one truth or principle you can put into practice.
- 6 Try different translations of the Bible. If you find yourself skimming over familiar words, a new translation may focus your mind on the passage in a new way.
- 7 Don't get discouraged. Some parts of the Bible are more interesting than others, and some you may not understand at all. But there's enough that you can understand, and it will revolutionize your life if you apply it.

Now read today's verses again with these principles in mind. Then try it again tomorrow. You will begin to discover the treasures in the Bible. —Haddon W. Robinson

When reading God's Word, take special care

To find the rich treasures hidden there;

Give thought to each line, each precept clear,

Then practice it well with godly fear. -Anon.

The Bible's treasures are found by those who dig for them

Proverbs 2:1, 5

Starting Young

Addie was a bit worried. Before we all sat down for Sunday dinner, someone had started eating. That's when our 3-year-old granddaughter said, "We haven't prayed yet." She was concerned that we might forget to give thanks.

Her concern was a good sign. It showed that at her young age, Addie was beginning to form one of those good habits that parents teach their children as part of their instructions for life. This little routine, for instance, helps her see the value of prayer and thanksgiving, which can be a powerful resource for her in the years ahead.

Raising children in an age of hostility toward the Christian faith is not easy. Parents wonder how best to help their little ones learn to trust the Savior and live to please Him. Proverbs indicates that a key to directing children is through purposeful instruction by parents (Prov. 1:8) on such things as listening to wisdom (2:2), seeking discernment (2:3), understanding the fear of the Lord (2:5), recalling parents' teaching (3:1), and gaining insight (4:1). These become habitual when parents give instruction and when children "retain" those words of teaching (4:1-4).

Got kids or grandkids? It's never too early to begin instructing them in wise living.

God gives us children for a time

To teach them how to love the Lord,

To train them in His righteous ways,

To follow and obey His Word. —Sper

The character of your children tomorrow depends on what you put into their hearts today.

Proverbs 2:1-9

A Teachable Spirit

Just before our church service began, I overheard a young man behind me talking with his mother. They were reading an announcement in the bulletin about a challenge to read one chapter of Proverbs each day for the months of July and August. He asked his mom, "What will we do with chapter 31 in August since there are only 30 days?" She said she thought there were 31 days in August. He responded, "No, there are only 30."

When it was time in the service to greet each other, I turned back toward him and said hello. Then I added, "August does have 31 days." He insisted, "No, it doesn't. There can't be 2 months in a row with 31 days." The singing started, so I just smiled.

This brief encounter made me think about our need to develop a teachable spirit, seeking wisdom beyond our own. In Proverbs 3, the attitude the father recommends to the son is one of humility: "Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord" (v.7). In chapter 2, he says, "Incline your ear to wisdom ... ; search for her as for hidden treasures" (vv.2,4).

Knowing whether August has 30 or 31 days doesn't matter much, but having a teachable spirit does. It will help us gain wisdom from God and others. Reading a chapter from Proverbs each day next month may give us a start.

Lord, teach us from Your holy Word

The truth that we must know,

And help us share the joyous news

Of blessings You bestow. —D. De Haan

True wisdom begins and ends with God.

Proverbs 2:1-9

Pole-Sitting Hermit

Our Daily Bread

Some people throughout history have erred by overemphasizing certain elements of the truth while ignoring others. This has resulted in behavior that is absurd.

For instance, some individuals have stressed to an extreme the apostle Paul's instruction to separate themselves from the world and crucify the flesh (Rom. 12:2; Gal. 5:24). Simeon Stylites, a 5th-century monk, after being buried up to his neck in the ground for several months, decided to pursue godliness by living on top of a pole. He spent 30 years there.

Another self-styled "holy man" developed a reputation for sanctity because he never changed clothes or bathed after he became a hermit.

Although such instances were not widespread, they serve to illustrate the sad consequences of an unbalanced view of scriptural truth. The wisdom mentioned in Proverbs 2 is the kind that takes into consideration the whole counsel of God. A life that is built on such a foundation is characterized by balance and freedom from extremes.

Only by carefully studying the entire Word of God and daily applying our hearts to understanding it and living it can we avoid the one-sided behavior of the pole-sitting hermit. - Mart De Haan

We cannot find a safer guide to follow

Than precepts from the pages of God's Word;

But if we twist and misapply the Scripture,

We make its sacred teachings seem absurd. —Hess

Apply yourself to the Scriptures and the Scriptures to yourself.

Proverbs 2:1-9b

Discover The Treasures

Profitable Bible study involves more than just opening to a chapter and reading what's there. Here are six guidelines to help you make the most of your study of the Bible.

1. Set aside a regular time. Unless you schedule it, you'll neglect it.
2. Before you start reading, ask God for help and understanding.
3. Carefully think about what you are reading. The treasures of the Bible seldom lie like pebbles on the surface. To mine the gold, you have to dig.
4. Before you decide what a passage means to you, try to understand what the author was saying to the original readers.
5. Write down at least one truth or principle you can put into practice.
6. Don't get discouraged. Some parts of the Bible are difficult to understand, but there's much that you can understand. And if you apply what you've learned, it will revolutionize your life.

Now read today's passage from Proverbs 2 again, keeping these principles in mind. Then use this method whenever you study God's Word. If you do, you will begin to discover the treasures of the Bible.—Haddon W. Robinson

Thy Word is like a deep, deep mine,

And jewels rich and rare

Are hidden in its mighty depths

For every searcher there. —Hodder

Gems of truth are found in the Bible—but you must dig for them.

Proverbs 2:1-12

One Tough Job

The comment from Joe, my son's tennis coach, surprised me. We had just talked about which group of tennis players Steve should practice with, and Joe must have sensed my concern for doing the right thing for my son. Realizing that this was just one small decision I had to make as I tried to guide him, Joe said, "Being a parent must be really hard work."

Indeed it can be. Dedicated parents spend much of their time supporting, encouraging, instructing, protecting, and challenging their children. And sometimes all that steering and urging seems futile when the child starts to veer off course. That's when being a parent is "really hard work." If you find yourself there, perhaps some biblical parent-child principles can help.

One portion of Scripture that provides great instruction is Proverbs 2. Although addressing the son, this passage can also serve as a guide to what parents should teach their children. According to this passage, children must be taught to treasure God's commands (Pr 2:1), to call out for understanding (Pr 2:3), to grasp what it means to fear the Lord (Pr 2:5), and to practice God's wisdom in their lives (Pr 2:6).

When these things become part of a child's life, the parents' job will get a little easier. —Dave Branon

Your privilege is beyond all price—
Worth more than silver, gold, or fame—
To guide with love and sacrifice
And write on children's hearts God's name. —Anon.

A godly parent is a child's best guide to God

Proverbs 2:4–5

If thou seek her as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures, etc.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

There is a beautiful illustration of the truth of these words in the life of Justin the Martyr, who died for the Gospel in the second century. As a young man he earnestly sought for truth, specially that which would arm him with self-control. He took up one system of philosophy after another, trying them as a man might explore mine after mine for silver. Finally, he found that every effort was futile.

"All at last did faithless prove, And, late or soon, betrayed my love."

At length, wandering in despair on the seashore, he met an aged man, a Christian, who spake as none had ever done to his heart, and pointed him to God in Christ. Beneath those words, that afternoon, he understood the fear of the Lord, and found the knowledge of God.

Thomas longed for evidences of the Resurrection, and Christ came to him. The Chamberlain, as he sat in his chariot reading the book of Esaias the Prophet at Isaiah 53, was desirous to know the truth, and Philip was sent to him. To Saul of Tarsus, groping in the midnight, there came fuller revelations than ever Gamaliel gave, through Stephen and Ananias, led by the Spirit of God.

But you must be prepared to sacrifice all. He who seeks diamonds, or pearls, or gold, will leave his native land, and what other men hold dear, and centre his whole attention on his quest. Not otherwise must it be with those who would understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. They must be willing to count all things but loss, to sell all they have, in order to buy the field with its treasure-trove.

Illustration - A man was out walking in the desert when a voice said to him, "Pick up some pebbles and put them in your pocket, and tomorrow you will be both sorry and glad." The man obeyed. He stooped down and picked up a handful of pebbles and put them in his pocket. The next morning he reached into his pocket and found diamonds and rubies and emeralds. And he was both glad and sorry. Glad that he had taken some—sorry that he hadn't taken more. And so it is with God's word.

Proverbs 2:6

ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR WISDOM?

Often we hear people question the wisdom of those in authority over us. It's easy to point an accusing finger at government officials, bosses, pastors, teachers, or board members and say they are unfit to lead. In reality, though, we're focusing our attention in the wrong place. Instead of being critical of others, we need to make sure wisdom is present in our own lives.

But how do we get such wisdom? First, we need a "fear of the Lord" and a "knowledge of the Holy One" (Pr 9:10). The best way to acquire this knowledge is by reading God's Word. We must also ask the Lord for His help if we are to gain wisdom. James wrote, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (Jas 1:5). Just as Solomon asked God for wisdom to help him lead (1 Ki. 3:9), so we must constantly rely on the Lord if we are to walk a godly path. Proverbs 10 tells us that when we are wise we will bring joy to our parents (Pr 10:1), we will work in a timely manner (Pr 10:5), and we will know how to accept authority (Pr 10:8).

The next time you're tempted to criticize someone, think twice. Ask God to help you examine your own heart. Then ask yourself, "Am I searching for the wisdom God's Word promises?" - J D Branon

Give to me Your insight, Lord,
As I read Your Word today,
So I'll truly understand
Your message and Your way. -- Monroe

We won't have time to find fault with others if we're busy seeking wisdom.

Wisdom and Understanding

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:6

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 2:1–11

In 1373, when Julian of Norwich was thirty years old, she became ill and nearly died. When her minister prayed with her, she

experienced a number of visions in which she considered Jesus' crucifixion. After miraculously recovering her health, she spent the next twenty years living in solitude in a side room of the church, praying over and thinking through the experience. She concluded that "love was his meaning"; that is, that Christ's sacrifice is the supreme manifestation of God's love.

Julian's revelations are famous, but what people often overlook is the time and effort she spent prayerfully working out what God revealed to her. In those two decades, she sought to discern what this experience of His presence meant as she asked Him for His wisdom and help.

As He did with Julian, God graciously reveals Himself to His people, such as through the words of the Bible; through His still, small voice; through a refrain of a hymn; or even just an awareness of His presence. When this happens, we can seek His wisdom and help. This wisdom is what King Solomon instructed his son to pursue, saying he should turn his ear to wisdom and apply his heart to understanding (Proverbs 2:2). Then he would "find the knowledge of God" (v. 5).

God promises to give us discernment and understanding. As we grow in a deeper knowledge of His character and ways, we can honor and understand Him more. By: Amy Boucher Pye

How does God reveal Himself to you most often? When He does, how do you come to understand what He's revealed?

Gracious God, help me to grow in Your wisdom.

Proverbs 2:6-20 Tempting Outside

Our Daily Bread

An Australian study concluded that plainer cigarette packages would make smoking less appealing to teens. In response, the Australian government introduced legislation that would require tobacco companies to replace color, logos, and promotional text on cigarette packages with health warnings and images of diseased lungs. In effect, the Marlboro Man would give way to the Grim Reaper in an effort to reduce the number of deaths caused by smoking. But cigarette packaging isn't the only thing that may be tempting on the outside with a toxic product inside.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs urges us to carefully consider the long-term results of all our choices. The recurring phrase "in the end" (Prov. 5:4; 25:8; 29:21) is a warning to look down the road and ask if what we're attracted to will ultimately lead to joy or sorrow, honor or disgrace, life or death. "For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright" (2:6-7).

The key to avoiding the tragic results of foolish choices is embracing God's wisdom as our guide through life. "Then [we] will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path" (v.9).

There's so much wisdom to be learned,

So many ways for me to grow,

Lord, I would listen like a child,

And learn what You would have me know. —K. De Haan

Wisdom is understanding what's really important.

Proverbs 2:6

Today in the Word

April 2, 2013

In Words of Delight, Leland Ryken says proverbs have "memorable conciseness." Their brevity is "striking and attention getting." They capture "high points of human insight." They are "more tightly packed" than everyday speech; the "aim of such verbal concentration is to make an insight permanent."

These literary qualities are on display in today's reading, in which we learn three lessons about wisdom. The first is that wisdom is worth diligent searching (Pr 2:1–4). This doesn't mean that wisdom is hidden or difficult to find, but that it is worth extended and arduous effort to obtain. The language is active and intense—we are to look for wisdom, search for it, call out for it, cry aloud for it, turn our ear toward it, accept it, store it up, and apply our hearts to understanding it.

The second lesson is that God gives wisdom to those who search for it (Pr 2:5–8). He is the source of all wisdom and knowledge, so it makes sense that fearing Him is absolutely necessary to gaining wisdom. But what is "fear"? It's not the emotion felt from thinking

about scary things, but rather worship—proper respect, awe, and reverence for the Lord who rules over all. Those who fear the Lord are people who believe and obey, who act with integrity and uprightness.

The third lesson is that wisdom offers numerous benefits (Pr 2:9–22). Wisdom is associated with a certain kind of pleasure or sweetness that comes from acting responsibly and righteously. A wise person has an ability to understand situations and discern what to do. In this sense, wisdom protects and saves us from foolish and sinful choices, specifically including moral perverseness (vv. 12–15) and sexual immorality (Pr 2:16–19).

Apply the Word - A number of excellent commentaries are available for supplementing your study of the book of Proverbs. The Proverbs volume in Moody's Everyman's Bible Commentary series (also available as a Kindle edition) is accessible for most readers, and those looking for a good scholarly treatment might prefer Tremper Longman III's Proverbs (Baker, 2006).

Proverbs 2:10-11

REAL MOTIVATION!

"When wisdom enters your heart... discretion will preserve you."

Toward the close of World War II, Allied forces were mopping up against remaining Nazi resistance. One particular unit was assigned a crucial mission in Berlin. Each soldier had to memorize a map detailing all of Berlin's important military sites -- and they had to do it in a single night! In just a few hours, each soldier in the unit had committed the map to memory. The mission was a success.

Several years later, the Army conducted an experiment to see if that original feat could be duplicated. They offered a similar unit an extra week's furlough -- an attractive incentive -- if they could carry out a comparable mission without a hitch.

But the second unit could not match the success of the first. What made the difference? The lives of men were not at stake. Surviving in battle was a greater motivation than a week's vacation.

Christians are engaged in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18-notes). Our road map, our plan of strategy against Satan's military strongholds, is the Bible. The more we read it, the more effective we will be for God.

We must approach God's Word as if our lives depended on it -- because they do. That's real motivation!-- Haddon W. Robinson

Thy Word is like an armory,
Where soldiers may repair,
And find, for life's long battle-day,
All needful weapons there.-- Hodder

**If your life depended on knowing the Bible,
how long would you last?**

Proverbs 2:13-14

Bedlam

Our Daily Bread

England's Imperial War Museum is housed in a building in London that was a former location of the Bethlem Royal Hospital, a care center for the mentally ill. The hospital was commonly known as "Bedlam," which gradually became a term used to describe scenes of chaos and madness.

It's ironic that the War Museum would occupy Bedlam's former location. As you walk through the museum, in addition to stories of heroism and sacrifice in wartime, you also find bone-chilling accounts of the madness of man's inhumanity to man. From the exhibits about modern genocide and ethnic cleansing to the one on the Holocaust, it is evil on display.

Solomon observed mankind's propensity for evil, describing it as those who "rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked" (Prov. 2:14). While this may describe much of the world around us, followers of Jesus have a refreshingly different way to handle life. Paul challenged us: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). Christ-centered actions such as living morally (v.17), making peace (v.18), and treating our enemies with care (v.20) will affect the world for good.

If each of us were to live as a reflection of God's love, perhaps there would be a lot less bedlam. - Bill Crowder

The godless and sinful everywhere

Are objects of God's love and care,
But they will always know hopeless despair
Unless His love with them we share. —D. De Haan
A despairing world needs caring Christians.

Proverbs 2:20

THE SECRET OF THE INNER WAY

F. B. Meyer. Our Daily Walk

THIS CHAPTER abounds in references to the Way and Path. Walk occurs three times, paths seven, and ways five. Here we read of the way or path by which good and righteous men have preceded us. The old Christian mystics were fond of talking of the inward way and its various stages. They said that God was alone the centre and satisfaction of the human soul, that we must advance along the pathway traversed by holy souls before us until we have realised the motto of Monica: "Life in God and union there."

True knowledge of God and union with Him are only to be attained by those who will not shrink before the perils and steepness of the strait gate and narrow way. It is not necessary to leave the body to reach the inner secret of God. The path may be trodden on this side of the grave. Stony and steep it may be, but when it climbs the crest, and the whole glory of the heavens is in view, the soul is satisfied. In the attainment of true wisdom God is willing, yea, eager to give, but we must be sincere and earnest in our desire to obtain (Pr 2:1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9). Notice the many words that are employed to stir up our search. Receive! Hide! Incline the ear and apply the heart! The treasures of God, like those of the mine, do not lie on the surface, but no labour is more profitable. Our Heavenly Father not only gives good things to them that ask Him, but He becomes our Shield and Buckler, our Protector and Guide (Pr 2:7, 8).

These are the stages of the inner Way, which the saints have trodden before us: Detachment from the ambitions, passions and sins of nature; Attachment, i.e., the attitude of fellowship with Christ; Illumination, which reveals to the soul its unworthiness; Union with God. This is the experience of few, but they who have described it remind us that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, what God's Spirit reveals to those who love and wait for Him. But you must be prepared to sacrifice all. He who seeks diamonds, or gold, will face hardships and relinquish much that other men hold dear, that he may prosecute his quest. Not otherwise must it be with those who would understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

PRAYER - Make us more conscious, O Lord, we beseech Thee, of the indwelling of Thy Holy Spirit: may He witness within us that in spite of our sin we are still Thy children: may He enable us to mortify the deeds of the body, and to reckon ourselves dead to the solicitations of the flesh. AMEN.

PROVERBS 3

Proverbs 3:1-18

They're After Our Children

Advertisers are after our young people. They are increasingly targeting their messages to children. Because of the strong influence they have on the purchasing habits of their parents, and because they have an increasing buying power of their own, millions of dollars are being spent to get their attention. People in the advertising business are convinced that a young, satisfied consumer could become a lifelong customer—eager to buy their products far into the future.

In a similar way, we need to be influencing our young people to "buy into" the good things God has in store for them throughout all of life. According to Proverbs 3, some fantastic possibilities lie ahead for the young person who chooses God's way: long life and peace (Pr 3:2), favor in the sight of God and man (Pr 3:4), direction from God (Pr 3:6), health and strength (Pr 3:8), abundance (Pr 3:10), happiness (Pr 3:13). The person who trusts, honors, and fears the Lord finds wisdom—an incomparable prize (Pr 3:15).

The world spends millions convincing our children that they can't be happy without a certain kind of shoe. How much more we have to offer them by showing them that happiness comes by walking with God! —Dave Branon

We can help our precious children

Follow in God's way,

Living out our faith with gladness,

Praying every day. —Sper

What we leave in our children is more important than what we leave to them

Proverbs 3:1-8 — Learning from Lincoln - — Our Daily Bread

The day before his 52nd birthday, Abraham Lincoln left Springfield, Illinois, to become President of the United States. With the threat of civil war looming, he said goodbye to the friends and neighbors who had come to see him off. "I now leave," he told them, "not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of the Divine Being who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail. Trusting in Him who can go with me, and remain with you, and be everywhere for good, let us confidently hope that all will yet be well. To His care commending you, as I hope in your prayers you will commend me, I bid you an affectionate farewell."

Lincoln's reliance on God for guidance and strength reflects the instruction of Solomon: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

On this 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth, we celebrate his kindness, integrity, and courage. And we can also learn from him how to face a daunting future with confident hope in the Lord.

Into His hands I lay the fears that haunt me,

The dread of future ills that may befall;

Into His hands I lay the doubts that taunt me,

And rest securely, trusting Him for all. —Christiansen

Living without trust in God is like driving in the fog.

Wisdom Seekers

Proverbs 3:1-18

Every spring colleges and universities hold commencement ceremonies to celebrate the success of students who have completed their studies and earned their degrees. After the students cross the stage, these graduates will enter a world that will challenge them. Just having academic knowledge won't be good enough. The key to success in life will be in wisely applying everything they have learned.

Throughout Scripture, wisdom is celebrated as a treasure that is worth seeking. It is better than riches (Prov. 3:13-18). Its source is God, who alone is perfectly wise (Rom. 16:27). And it is found in the actions and attitude of Jesus, in whom "all the treasures of wisdom" are found (Col. 2:3). Wisdom comes from reading and applying the Scripture. We have an example of this in the way Jesus applied His knowledge when He was tempted (Luke 4:1-13). In other words, the truly wise person tries to see life from God's point of view and chooses to live according to His wisdom.

What's the payoff for this kind of life? Proverbs tells us that wisdom is like sweetness of honey on the tongue (Prov. 24:13-14). "Blessed are those who find wisdom" (3:13 niv). So seek wisdom, for it is more profitable than silver or gold!

Lord, strengthen my resolve to live by the wisdom that comes only from You. Give me the discernment to live all of life from Your point of view that I might know the blessings of a life lived wisely.

Blessing comes from seeking wisdom and living by it.

Proverbs 3:1-12

The Joy Of Disappointment

By Bill Crowder

While in Bible college, I auditioned for one of the school's traveling musical teams. I was excited about the thought of being able to be involved in that ministry, but was crushed when I failed to make the team. In my disappointment, I could only trust that God's purposes were greater than mine.

Months later, I had the opportunity to join a different musical team, but as the Bible teacher. The results were more than I could have

imagined. Not only was my future wife a part of that team, allowing us to serve Christ together, but it also gave me many opportunities to preach over the next 3 years—priceless preparation for a life of ministry in the Word.

Many times we struggle with the reality that our Father knows what is best. We assume our way is right. But, as we rest in Him, His purposes always prove to be for our good and His praise. To be honest, that's easy to see when the outcome is better than we had hoped, but difficult when we can't see the good right now or maybe won't till heaven.

As wise King Solomon said, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,

Pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but Thou art mighty;

Hold me with Thy powerful hand. —Williams

God's purpose for today's events may not be seen until tomorrow.

[Proverbs 3:1-6 — Directions-from-above — Our Daily Bread](#)

During a visit to Chicago, I stayed on the 25th floor of a downtown hotel. As I gazed out the window, I was fascinated by the maze of cars flowing four lanes abreast in opposite directions.

One motorist faced an emergency. He had engine trouble and was stalled in the middle of all that traffic. From my vantage point I could see for blocks. I watched several drivers switch into the same lane as the stalled auto, unaware of what was ahead. Thinking they were gaining time, these motorists were actually crossing over into a lane that would only spell greater delay.

As we travel along life's road, we do much the same as those misguided drivers. With our limited foresight we select the route that seems best—only to find that the temporary advance has led us into a course filled with delay and heartache. But how reassuring that we can look to One who is above everything, who knows the end from the beginning! This is why the writer of Proverbs could say, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6). When the Lord indicates a "stop" or a "change of lanes" or a "wait," we should gladly obey.

Yes, look for direction from above.

He leadeth me! O blessed thought!

O words with heavenly comfort fraught!

Whate'er I do, where'er I be,

Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me. —Gilmore

The best way to know God's will is to say "I will" to God.

[Proverbs 3:1-12 — Why- Why- Oh, Why — Our Daily Bread](#)

Why must I suffer disappointment, sorrow, and tribulation? What have I done that God should send me trials? Is He displeased with me? These questions are constantly asked by God's dear children.

Much of this fear and questioning is due to our misunderstanding of God's dealings with His own. He has His good reasons. And one of those reasons is for our spiritual discipline. We should be far more afraid of being left alone than of God's chastening, for He wastes no time on worthless objects that give no promise of fruitfulness.

On the shores of Lake Michigan are great barren sand dunes that have never felt the point of a plow. But in the rich lowlands beyond them, the farmer is constantly cultivating the soil. The farmer knows what he is doing, so he keeps on breaking up the soil. The deeper the plow works and the more the sharp harrow, the more precious the crop will be when harvest time comes.

God's plow goes deep, but it is only that in the end we may forget the plowing and rejoice in the blessing of bearing much fruit for Him. "No chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb. 12:11).

When blades of distress cut deep in the soul,

Breaking up ground that was untouched before,
The Lord is preparing soil to bear fruit
Fit for the harvest to feed many more. —Hess
All sunshine and no rain make a desert.

Proverbs 3:1-8

Rerouting ... Rerouting

By Randy Kilgore

Don't worry. I know right where I'm going," I said to my passengers. Then an almost-human voice rattled me out: "Rerouting ... rerouting." Now everyone knew I was lost!

These days, millions of drivers recognize those words, or others like them, as a sign they've gone off track or missed a turn. The GPS device not only recognizes when a driver is off course, but immediately begins plotting a new path to get back on track.

Sometimes followers of Jesus need help to get back on track spiritually. We may intentionally veer off course because we think we know best, or drift away slowly, failing to notice we're moving further and further from the walk God wants with us.

God has not left us on our own, however. He has given all believers the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 3:16), who convicts us of our sin (John 16:8,13). When we're going off course, He sounds the alarm and triggers our conscience (Gal. 5:16-25). We may ignore the warning, but we do so to our own detriment (Isa. 63:10; Gal. 6:8).

What comfort to know that God is at work in our lives through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit! (Rom. 8:26-27). With God's help and guidance, we can continue on a path that is pleasing to Him.

Holy Spirit, we would hear

Your inner promptings, soft and clear;

And help us know Your still, small voice

So we may make God's will our choice. —D. DeHaan

We're never without a helper, because we have the Spirit within.

Proverbs 3:1-12

We Thank The Lord

By David C. McCasland

Anna Anderson's husband died early in their marriage, leaving her with three young daughters and a difficult future. Although trained in Virginia as a teacher, she lacked full credentials to work in the Philadelphia schools, so she took in laundry, did ironing, and later scrubbed floors at a large department store. As African-Americans, they often experienced racial prejudice and discrimination. When doors of opportunity closed, Anna believed that if they would trust the Lord with all their heart and acknowledge Him in all their ways, He would direct their paths (Prov. 3:5-6). She taught her daughters to depend on God, follow Him, and always be thankful.

When her firstborn, Marian, rose to become an internationally acclaimed classical singer, Anna continued to pray for her, and always gave God credit for her success. Reporters, who asked Anna how she felt after attending Marian's concerts at Carnegie Hall and her 1955 debut with the Metropolitan Opera, heard her say, "We thank the Lord." Her reply was not a cliché, but sincere gratefulness to God.

Rather than lament what she lacked, Anna Anderson expressed gratitude for what she had and used it for God's glory. Today, we can follow her example with faith, confidence, and a heartfelt, "We thank the Lord."

When we consider all God's gifts

And all that we possess,

A grumbling mood of discontent

Gives way to thankfulness. —Sper

Gratitude is a mark of godliness.

Proverbs 3:1-12 — Don't Forget Your Children — Our Daily Bread

It's one of the saddest stories I've ever heard. A father was to drop off his infant child at daycare on the way to work, but his mind was preoccupied and he forgot. Left alone in the car, the baby girl died from the excessive heat. The father will bear that painful memory the rest of his life.

While this dad inadvertently forgot his child, many other fathers are forgetting their children deliberately—abandoning them to pursue their own selfish desires. They forget their children when they engage in an extramarital affair. They forget their children while they indulge in pleasures, or become preoccupied with work, money, sports, or any number of distractions. As they do, their children are left without the guidance only a dad can give.

The importance of a father in a child's life is monumental. He is to nurture his children by giving them instruction, protection, sustenance, companionship, assistance, love, discipline, and example.

A good father provides a wide-ranging supply of godly advice and wisdom as he guides his children (Prov. 3:1-12). But a father can't do that if he ignores his children because he is busy with self-serving activities.

Dad, don't forget your children. They need you.

Our children need a home where love

Provides security,

Where what is taught is not confused

By what they hear and see. —Sper

The greatest gift a father can give to his children is himself.

Proverbs 3:1-12 — The High Cost Of Sin — Our Daily Bread

It was only a little comma, but it cost the Lockheed corporation millions of dollars! An error was made in a contract with an international customer—a misplaced comma in a crucial number. The company insisted that the manufacturer honor the contract as written. Unfortunately for Lockheed, the error was made in an equation that adjusted the sales price, and it cost them \$70 million.

That's the way it is with sin too. It has a high cost, even though at the time it may seem so small. Seemingly harmless transgressions can end up doing great damage. Carrying a few extra pounds can cost a runner valuable time in an important race. Likewise, a "root of bitterness" or hatred in our lives can produce enormous spiritual harm to ourselves, others, and to our relationship with God (Heb. 12:15).

Proverbs 3 tells us that we can expect God's chastening if we disobey Him (vv.11-12). That's why we would be wise to "fear the Lord and depart from evil" (v.7). If we take God and His Word seriously, we will hate any sin in our lives—big or little.

How about you? Are you letting some sin entangle you and slow you down in your Christian race? (Heb. 12:2). Confess it now, or it will have a much higher cost later.

The price of sin is very high,

Though now it may seem low;

And if we let it go unchecked,

Its crippling power will grow. —Fitzhugh

Uproot the weed of sin while it's still small.

Proverbs 3:1-12

Alternate Route

By Dave Branon

My daughter was coming home from college for the weekend to play the piano at her friend's wedding. Before she left, I sent her an e-mail directing her to take an alternate route instead of the one she usually travels for the 6-hour drive home. Why? Because on that road a few weeks earlier my wife and I had been delayed for 2 hours by construction crews.

As parents, we must provide alternate routes in life as well. We've observed the wrong highways others have traveled or perhaps the foolish ways we have taken, and we know they lead to delay or danger.

Think of all the possible paths our children might choose—the road of sexual immorality, the avenue of alcohol and drug abuse, the way of ungodly friends. But in Christ, there is an alternate path—a route that will lead our children away from the struggles we know they'll face on any other road.

The right route starts with the Via Dolorosa—the way of the cross. It starts with salvation. It continues with a path that is straight (Prov. 3:5-6) and is directed by God's Word (Ps. 119:105). It includes Jesus as a traveling companion (Jn. 8:12). That's the ultimate alternate route. Let's model it clearly so our children will see the right way.

The journey that we're on each day

Has many roads to choose;

But if we trust the Lord to guide,

Our way we cannot lose. —Sper

To guide your children on the right way, you must go that way yourself.

Proverbs 3:1-12

A Huge Difference

Hear, my son... I have taught you in the way of wisdom. --Proverbs 4:10-11

One is my son's doctor. Another is a popular local TV personality. Several are parents of children who go to school with my son and daughter. Another is well known in the Christian music industry. Some are missionaries. Others work with me at RBC Ministries.

Who are these people? They are students who attended the high school where I taught and where my children have gone to school.

My son Steve and I were looking at names and photos in some old yearbooks not long ago. As I pointed out where those students are today, I was struck by the power of potential.

Who knew what would become of those young people my fellow teachers and I asked to do book reports, diagram sentences, or run sprints and make free throws on the basketball court? But now, with their pathway through life partially complete, I can see that many of them have trusted the Lord and are seeking to honor Him, realizing much of their God-given potential.

In light of Proverbs 3, it's awesome to contemplate what can become of today's youth. If they are taught to walk according to God's wisdom, use the skills He has given them, and follow His leading, they can make a huge difference in whatever future the Lord has in store. —JDB —Dave Branon

O Lord of all the upward road,

Keep strong our youth, we pray;

May age and youth together seek

To follow in Thy way. —Nidermeyer

We shape tomorrow's world by what we teach our children today.

Proverbs 3

Today in the Word

April 3, 2013

Every culture and period of history has a collection of proverbs. In American history, Benjamin Franklin is often regarded as the quintessential proverb writer. His gems include "No gains without pains"; "Beware of little expenses: a small leak will sink a great ship"; "He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals"; and "What you would seem to be, be really."

The proverbs in today's reading extol the value and benefits of wisdom. Along the way we also get a portrait of wise people and how they act in relation to God and others. There is a repeating pattern of imperative verbs, which if done, yield a reward. We are to fear the Lord (v. 7), trust Him completely (v. 5), keep His commands (v. 3), and welcome His discipline (vv. 11–12). In relation to others, we are to seek out opportunities to do good (v. 27), avoid evil and violence (v. 31), and act with humility (v. 34). The rewards include health, safety, wealth, and long life. Since these are proverbs and not promises, we're not to take this as some form of prosperity theology, but rather as general maxims. That is, generally speaking, acting in the ways described brings about positive results. The writer simply states the rewards or blessings in ways that people can relate to and understand.

The chapter's exhortations to pursue and practice wisdom are accompanied by praise extolling its value (vv. 13–20). "Blessed is the man who finds wisdom" (v. 13) starts a kind of extended beatitude. Since wisdom is a core dimension of God's character and work (vv. 19–20), this makes it a core dimension of our relationship with Him (v. 18). Thus, the most significant blessing associated with wisdom is approval and blessing from the Lord (vv. 33–35).

Apply the Word - To guide our children in godly wisdom is a high calling and responsibility! Solomon received wisdom as a special gift, but we, too, can call upon God's wisdom (James 1:5). This wisdom is "first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (James 3:17).

Proverbs 3:1-6

Lost In The Fog

The fog was as thick as pea soup. Visibility was limited to a few feet, and the lake was as smooth as glass. The only sound to break the silence was the laughing of a loon across the lake.

I rowed for an hour around the shore, trying to catch fish in different areas, but the fish weren't biting! So I decided to go back to my cabin for a cup of coffee. I was at the mouth of a small inlet, which I knew was directly across the lake from the cottage. So I set out across the lake on a straight course (I thought) toward the dock.

The minutes went by—and after an hour I was surprised when I arrived back at the mouth of the little stream from which I started. I had been going in a circle in the fog. I was so sure I knew where I was going, but after an hour I had gotten nowhere! If I had only taken my compass—instead of relying on my own sense of direction.

Proverbs 3:5 comes to mind: "Lean not on your own understanding." Without the Lord as your guide through the fog of life, and His Word as your compass, you will wander aimlessly.

So be sure to make Proverbs 3:6 your lifelong motto: "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths."—Mart De Haan

My Lord is ever with me

Along life's busy way;

I'll trust in Him completely

For guidance day by day. —Anon.

To avoid going wrong, follow God's leading.

Proverbs 3:1-10

Our Daily Bread

Many Christians equate God's leading with an overriding feeling or an inner impression. These strong inclinations, however, are not necessarily proof of God's direction. John Hibben, former president of Princeton University, once invited a guest to dinner. Mr. Buchman, an eccentric believer in divine guidance, arrived late and brought along three uninvited guests. When Buchman shook hands with Mrs. Hibben, he said,

"The Lord told me to bring these three other men to dinner, too."

Mrs. Hibben, not expecting added company, replied,

"Oh, I don't think the Lord had anything to do with it."

"Why not?" retorted Buchman.

"Because," responded Mrs. Hibben, "God is a gentleman."

Mrs. Hibben knew something about God and His ways that Buchman had overlooked.

This exchange raises an important question about the primary source for divine guidance. Strong impressions will come to us, but we must always test them to be sure they are in line with God's revealed will. They must never run contrary to what is true and right. Studying Scripture passages in their context gives us discernment, and meditating on them helps us to evaluate our feelings honestly.

In his book *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer cautions,

"Feelings with an ego-boosting, or escapist, or self-indulging, or self-aggrandizing base must be detected and discredited, not mistaken for guidance."

That's good counsel—especially since we have a lamp for our feet, and a light for our path. —D. J. De Haan

Feelings are no substitute for facts and faith.

Proverbs 3:3

Semper Fidelis, the official motto of the United States Marine Corps, was adopted in 1883. The phrase is adopted from the Latin, and it means, "Always Faithful." The Marines use an abbreviated verbal version, "Semper Fi," to voice loyalty and commitment to their comrades-in-arms. *Semper Fi* holds the promise to be faithful to the end. They will serve, and even die, with honor: to the corps, to one another, and to themselves.

Proverbs 3:3 — Let's Talk About It! — Our Daily Bread

The police in San Diego received complaints from a woman who said she was getting annoying phone calls. In the middle of the night a person would phone her, bark like a dog, and then hang up. Police eventually discovered that the source of the calls was a neighbor. He said that whenever he was awakened by the barking of her dog, he wanted to make sure she was awake too.

The neighbor's approach certainly didn't express the wisdom of God. The Scriptures tell us that it is often necessary to face a problem head-on (Matthew 18:15-20). At the right time and for the sake of all parties involved, an honest discussion is part of the solution.

Yet such a loving, open approach is not usually followed among Christians. Rather than trusting God and walking into a tense situation with a clear conscience and a desire for peace, we tend to play games. Hints are dropped. Affection is withheld. Conversation is abbreviated. The air gets chilly, and ice forms around a situation that can only be melted by a wise combination of mercy and truth (Proverbs 3:3).

Our complaints against others cannot be smoothed over by burying our anger. If a problem is not small enough to overlook graciously, then let's talk about it.

If you can't forgive a brother

For the wrong he's done to you,

Go to him and talk it over—

That's the Christian thing to do. —D. De Haan

The best way to destroy your enemy is to make him your friend.

Proverbs 3:5

O God, Why?

Several years ago, the growing season had been unusually good in eastern Michigan. Farmers were elated at the thought of their potential profits. Then, just before harvest, the rains came--and stayed.

Potatoes rotted in the ground; beans molded in their pods. The entire harvest season remained wet. Anticipation of a record yield quickly faded. One discouraged farmer was quoted as saying, "You ask yourself, 'Why? What have we done wrong?'"

People have always asked why when faced with reversal and hardship. Their question is significant because it reflects the fact that nothing happens by chance. God is in control. Neither Satan nor man can go any further than is allowed by the Almighty.

The story of Job, however, makes it clear that we should not become too preoccupied with the question why. God's reasons are often kept to Himself. He may hold them high above our understanding and far beyond our natural field of vision in order to develop our faith. Our response to trouble should be like that of Job at the beginning and at the end of his problems (Job 2:10; 42:1-6).

Obediently trust God in your circumstances--even when you can't understand what He's doing. —Mart De Haan

When through life's darkened maze I go

And troubles overwhelm my soul,

O grant me, Lord, Your grace to know

That You are surely in control. --DJD

When God conceals His purposes, He consoles with His promises.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Directions From Above

During a visit to Chicago, I stayed on the 25th floor of a downtown hotel. As I gazed out the window, I was fascinated by the maze of cars flowing four lanes abreast in opposite directions.

One motorist faced an emergency. He had engine trouble and was stalled in the middle of all that traffic. From my vantage point I could see for blocks. I watched several drivers switch into the same lane as the stalled auto, unaware of what was ahead. Thinking they were gaining time, these motorists were actually crossing over into a lane that would only spell greater delay.

As we travel along life's road, we do much the same as those misguided drivers. With our limited foresight we select the route that seems best—only to find that the temporary advance has led us into a course filled with delay and heartache. But how reassuring that we can look to One who is above everything, who knows the end from the beginning! This is why the writer of Proverbs could say, "In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:6). When the Lord indicates a "stop" or a "change of lanes" or a "wait," we should gladly obey.

Yes, look for direction from above. —Richard De Haan

He leadeth me! O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me. —Gilmore

The best way to know God's will is to say "I will" to God

Amid all the Christmas activities, one man is often forgotten.

Proverbs 3:5 — The Forgotten Man — Our Daily Bread

No, I don't mean the person whose birthday we're celebrating. Although we often fail to give Jesus first place as He deserves, we don't usually forget Him. I'm talking about Joseph—the man God trusted so much that He placed His Son in his home to love and nurture. What a responsibility!

Joseph truly is the forgotten man in the Christmas story. Yet his task was an important component of God's incredible plan. As we read the story of the birth of Jesus, we find that Joseph was just, righteous, merciful, protective, and courageous. But most of all—he was obedient. When the angel told him to take Mary as his wife, he obeyed (Matt. 1:24). And when the angel told him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, he did (2:13-14).

Just as Mary was carefully chosen to bear the Son of God, Joseph was deliberately chosen to provide for his young wife and the Christ-child. And trusting God, Joseph followed through on everything God asked him to do.

What is God asking of you today? Are you willing to commit yourself to do whatever He wants you to do?

We can learn much about obedience from Joseph, the forgotten man of Christmas.

It matters not the path on earth

My feet are made to trod;

It only matters how I live:

Obedient to God. —Clark

The proof of our love for God is our obedience to the commands of God.

Proverbs 3:6

Guided Tour

By Dave Branon

Former college basketball coach Don Callan decided to venture off on his own in Nepal—but he found he wasn't really alone.

Don and a missions leader were in Nepal to look for ways to assist the people of that land. While his colleague took care of some business in Katmandu, Don flew to Pokhara to investigate that beautiful city in the heart of Nepal. He was praying for God's guidance as he went.

Don had been given the name of a man in Pokhara who could serve as a guide, but no one knew he would be visiting there. Not knowing the city, he randomly chose a hotel and took a taxi from the airport to its location. When he arrived, he walked into the hotel lobby feeling unsure of himself. He didn't know anyone and couldn't speak the language. A group of men were standing at the front desk, so Don ventured over to them and said, "I'm looking for Jeevan." What a surprise when one of the men said, "I'm Jeevan." Obviously, God had directed Don's path.

We do not always see God's guidance so clearly, but this story reassures us that He does direct our lives. He led Isaac to Rebekah (Gen. 24), and He leads us as well. As we walk by faith on our earthly journey, we can trust God because He is our guide.

I may not see the path ahead,

Or find my way with ease,

But Jesus leads me by the hand—

He knows the way, He sees. —Adams

God does not ask you to go where He does not lead.

[Proverbs 3:6 — A Mere Happening — Our Daily Bread](#)

Huang, a nonbeliever, was a visiting scientist at the University of Minnesota in 1994. While there, he met some Christians and enjoyed their fellowship. So when they learned he would be returning to Beijing, they gave him the name of a Christian to contact who was also moving there.

On the flight back to Beijing, the plane encountered engine trouble and stopped in Seattle overnight. The airline placed Huang in the same room with the very person he was to contact! Once they arrived in Beijing, the two began meeting weekly for a Bible study, and a year later Huang gave his life to Christ. This was not just a mere happening; it was by God's arrangement.

In Ruth 2, we read that Ruth came "to the part of the field belonging to Boaz" (v.3). Boaz asked his servants who she was (v.5), which prompted his special consideration toward her. When Ruth asked him the reason for such kindness, Boaz replied, "It has been fully reported to me, all that you have done for your mother-in-law ... The Lord repay your work, and a full reward be given you" (vv.11-12).

Did the events in the lives of Ruth and Huang just happen?

I know who holds the future,

And I know who holds my hand;

With God things don't just happen—

Everything by Him is planned. —Smith

A "mere happening" may be God's design.

Proverbs 3:6

He shall direct thy paths.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Thy paths! Then, every man's path is distinct for him, and for no other. The paths may lie side by side, but they are different. They have converged; they may diverge. When Peter had been told of the rugged nature of the predestined path which was marked out for him in the Providence of God, he turned towards John, his companion and friend, and said to Jesus, "What shall this man do?" The Lord instantly replied, in effect: "That is a matter in which I can brook no interference; it is entirely a matter for my choice and will; if I will, it may be that he shall tarry till I come."

We need to be divinely directed. — The man who stands above the maze can direct you through all its labyrinth by the readiest path. God who made thee for thy life, and thy life for thee, can direct thee, and He only.

First: Lean not to thine own understanding. — One is apt to pride oneself on one's far-sighted judgment. We consult our maps and guides and the opinions of fellow-travellers, to find ourselves at fault. We have to learn that our own understanding is not keen enough or wise enough to direct; we must abjure and renounce all dependence on it.

Second: In all thy ways acknowledge Him. — Let thine eye be single; thy one aim to please Him; thy sole motive, his glory. It is marvellous how certainly and delightfully our way opens before us when we no longer look down on it, or around at others, but simply upwards into the face of Christ. "It is a universal law, unalterable as the nature of God, that no created being can be truly holy, useful, or happy, who is knowingly and deliberately out of the Divine fellowship, for a single moment."

Proverbs 3:1-8 God's Direction

In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. —nkjv Proverbs 3:6

A century ago, 41-year-old Oswald Chambers arrived in Egypt to serve as a YMCA chaplain to British Commonwealth troops during World War I. He was assigned to a camp at Zeitoun, six miles north of Cairo. On his first night there, October 27, 1915, Chambers wrote in his diary, "This [area] is absolutely desert in the very heart of the troops and a glorious opportunity for men. It is all immensely unlike anything I have been used to, and I am watching with interest the new things God will do and engineer."

Chambers believed and practiced the words of Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6 nkjv).

Wherever God puts us, our one great aim is to pour out a whole-hearted devotion to Him.

This is both a comfort and a challenge. There is security in knowing that the Lord will lead us each day, but we must not become so attached to our plans that we resist God's redirection or His timing.

"We have no right to judge where we should be put, or to have preconceived notions as to what God is fitting us for," said Chambers. "God engineers everything. Wherever He puts us, our one great aim is to pour out a whole-hearted devotion to Him in that particular work."

Lord, may I love and serve You with all my heart where You have placed me today.

Read more of Oswald Chambers' work at utmost.org

As we trust in God, He directs our steps.

INSIGHT:

The book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings, advice, instructions, and warnings. It is structured as a life manual from a father to his son—an encouragement to live wisely and in a way that obeys and honors God. Solomon, who spoke about 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), is the main author (see Prov. 1:1-6; 10:1; 25:1). Other authors include unnamed Jewish wise men (22:17–24:34), Agur (ch. 30), and Lemuel (ch. 31). In today's reading Solomon admonishes us not to neglect God's Word but to obey it (3:1). A wise person is faithful (v. 3), trusts and depends on God (vv. 5-6), is not proud and avoids evil (v. 7), puts God first in everything (v. 9), and learns from God's discipline (v. 11). Sim Kay Tee

Proverbs 3:5-18

When God Corrects Us

By Joanie Yoder

Solomon warned us not to lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5). That implies we are prone to make mistakes in judgment. And how we hate having our mistakes corrected!

Some people detest correction so much that their main goal in life seems to be attempting to avoid or hide all their mistakes. But let's be practical. Correction, if well received, can save us a lot of grief.

A personal experience told by Eugene Peterson illustrates the value of correction. With his lawn mower tipped on its side, Eugene struggled to remove the blade so he could sharpen it. When his biggest wrench wouldn't budge the nut, he slipped a 4-foot length of pipe over the wrench handle for more leverage. When that failed, he started banging on the pipe with a huge rock. Finally his neighbor pointed out that the threads on the bolt went the other way. When Eugene reversed his exertions, the nut turned easily. He said, "I was saved from frustration and failure."

Are you forcing your life in the wrong direction? Welcome the correction of your heavenly Father, who delights in you. Trust His wisdom instead of your own, and He will redirect your life. That's a promise! (Prov. 3:6).

THINKING IT THROUGH

What are some practical ways Proverbs 3 gives us to learn God's wisdom? What rewards are promised if we heed this advice?

The only way to be right is to agree with God when He says we're wrong.

Proverbs 3:7

Our Daily Bread

A cartoon in a New York newspaper depicted a young woman garbed in cap and gown, holding a diploma. With her head held high, she looks down her nose at Mr. World. "Well, what do we have here?" Mr. World asks in his cold, cruel, cynical way. "Certainly you know who I am. Cecelia Shakespeare Doaks, a graduate of Prestige College. I have my A.B." "How sad," replies Mr. World. "Come with me and I'll teach you the rest of the alphabet."

We wouldn't disparage the graduate for learning, nor downplay the desire to pursue an education. But four years of classroom instruction, even under the most competent teachers, doesn't make a student wise. The "school of hard knocks" often contributes more to wisdom than the "university of hard facts."

Get an education? Yes! But more importantly, seek the wisdom that is from above. The Scriptures tell us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Knowledge is the acquisition of facts; wisdom is the right use of those facts. Even with the best education and the broadest practical experience, a man or a woman knows nothing apart from God. The Bible says, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, ... and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). This kind of wisdom never leads to arrogance. —R. W. De Haan .

The heart of education is education of the heart.

Proverbs 3:7-8

The High Cost Of Sin

It was only a little comma, but it cost the Lockheed corporation millions of dollars! An error was made in a contract with an international customer—a misplaced comma in a crucial number. The company insisted that the manufacturer honor the contract as written. Unfortunately for Lockheed, the error was made in an equation that adjusted the sales price, and it cost them \$70 million.

That's the way it is with sin too. It has a high cost, even though at the time it may seem so small. Seemingly harmless transgressions can end up doing great damage. Carrying a few extra pounds can cost a runner valuable time in an important race. Likewise, a "root of bitterness" or hatred in our lives can produce enormous spiritual harm to ourselves, others, and to our relationship with God (Heb. 12:15).

Proverbs 3 tells us that we can expect God's chastening if we disobey Him (Proverbs 3:11-12). That's why we would be wise to "fear the Lord and depart from evil" (Proverbs 3:7). If we take God and His Word seriously, we will hate any sin in our lives—big or little.

How about you? Are you letting some sin entangle you and slow you down in your Christian race? (Heb. 12:2). Confess it now, or it will have a much higher cost later. —David C. Egner

The price of sin is very high,

Though now it may seem low;

And if we let it go unchecked,

Its crippling power will grow. --Fitzhugh

Uproot the weed of sin while it's still small

Proverbs 3:11

Roughed Up To Grow Up — Our Daily Bread

Scientists tell us that the seeds of certain types of desert bushes must be damaged by a storm before they will germinate. Covered by hard shells that keep out water, these seeds can lie dormant on the sand for several seasons until conditions are right for growth. When heavy rains finally bring flash floods, the little seeds are banged against sand, gravel, and rocks as they rush down the slopes. Eventually they settle in a depression where the soil is damp several feet deep. Able to absorb water through the nicks and scratches they acquired on their downhill plunge, they finally begin to grow.

Sometimes Christians are like those seeds. We need bad weather to stimulate our spiritual development. We do not take life seriously until something drastic happens. Although the heavenly Father never allows His children to suffer needlessly, sometimes He lets us experience nicks and scratches that let the water of His Word seep in and soften our hearts.

An unexpected stay in the hospital, stacks of unpaid bills, or family disruption can quickly awaken a sleeping saint. Such difficulties hurt for a while, but if we yield to the Lord we will find that life's bruises can mark the beginning of spiritual advances. Occasionally God will let us be roughed up to grow up. We may prefer to remain seeds, but He wants us to become fruitful trees. —M. R. De Haan II

There are no gains without pains.

Proverbs 3:11

J R Miller

The Bible always talks to us as children. It comes with a Father's authority, and also a Father's gentleness. It is hard, however, not to despise chastening. Of course, it is not possible that we should really find pleasure in being chastened. That is not natural. Indeed the Bible says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Not even the grace of God in our hearts can take the sting out of chastening. We are not expected then to like it. But we are told not to "despise" it. That is, we are to accept it without murmuring.

It will help us to receive chastening meekly, in faith and love, if we remember that it is "of the Lord." He sends it. We know that He loves us with infinite affection. He would not take pleasure therefore in causing us pain, nor would He do it at all, were it not in some way for our good. It is because He loves us and would do us good that He sends or permits the suffering.

Proverbs 3:11

J R Miller

It is not possible that we should really enjoy being chastened. Indeed the Bible says, "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Not even the grace of God in our heart can take the sting out of chastening.

We are not expected, then, to like it. But we are told not to despise it. That is, we are to accept it without murmuring, without complaining, and reverently, as God's messenger to us, bringing a blessing.

It should help us to accept chastening to remember that it is our Father's chastening. He would not take pleasure in causing us pain, nor would He do it at all, were it not in some way for our good.

We should not despise any instruction our Father gives us, however costly and painful it may be. He lets us suffer because He loves us, and would make our lives beautiful and holy.

We should be willing to endure any pain or trial in order to have the likeness of Christ fashioned in our life

Proverbs 3:11; Hebrews 12:1-13

Today in the Word

April 8, 2010

Dave Dravecky is a retired major league baseball pitcher and a Christian, best known for his courageous battle with cancer and his subsequent comeback to professional baseball. But later, the cancer in his pitching arm returned, resulting in amputation. Dravecky

knows the joy that comes after physical training, and he is intimately aware of God's training of his inner person.

The word repeated most in today's passage is discipline. When we hear the word discipline, we most often think of punishment. To the original readers of Hebrews, though, this word evoked a different significance. The Greek word that translated here as "discipline" includes, but is not limited to, forms of reproof. "Instruction," "training," or "education" are other words that help us better understand the concept of discipline. Since the imagery of athletic games is woven throughout Hebrews 12:1–13, discipline is likened to the strict and painful training athletes must endure in order to reach Olympic qualifications. Understanding this key term is crucial to interpreting today's passage and grasping God's fatherly love.

If a marathon is the driving metaphor of our text (v. 1), then Jesus is the supreme gold medalist and our perfect example (vv. 2–3). Jesus endured shame and opposition from those opposed to God's will; He did this for the future joy of God's glory (cf. Heb. 5:7–9). The author reminds his readers of their status as God's children (v. 5). Just as God's Son faced suffering, God's children will also face insult, persecution, and affliction as a result of faithfulness to Christ. The "word of encouragement" is this: God the Father disciplines or trains those He loves and calls legitimate children, just as He did His beloved Son, and this is always for our benefit. What is the purpose of this discipline? Verses 10 and 11 say, "that we may share in his holiness" and for the fruit of "righteousness and peace." The training and discipline of the Father are painful and extensive, but the harvest is worth it.

Apply the Word - For many, our relationship with our earthly father inhibits relating to God as our loving heavenly Father. Perhaps your earthly father was abusive, angry, distant, authoritarian, or absent. We all "fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), and fathers, too, have distorted the image of God the Father. Instead of viewing God and relating to Him as if He were similar to your earthly father, pray that you would know God as He actually is and allow Him to redeem your experiences of your imperfect earthly father.

Proverbs 3:11-12

What Good is Evil?

In Jesus' parable about the prodigal son, the son asked for his inheritance in advance and left home (Lk. 15:11-32). How would you feel if you were that father? Would you have let your son have his own way?

This father knew that saying no would do nothing to cure his son's rebellious streak. It must have been with reluctance and sorrow that he gave his son the inheritance, praying that the inevitable hard knocks ahead would lead his son to repentance.

Like that father, God also permits what He doesn't like. We see this in His care for the ancient Hebrews. God had warned His people of sin's consequences, but He left the choice with them. They chose to rebel, which led to grave repercussions. The book of Lamentations reflects Jeremiah's grief over those consequences.

Yet God ultimately brings good out of the evil He allows. This realization led Jeremiah to assure Jerusalem that although God was displeased with them, He was even angrier with their Babylonian captors (Lam. 3:31-36). He would exact justice and extend mercy to His people.

Are you suffering from choices you've made that grieve your heavenly Father? God can use those consequences for your eternal welfare. Humbly return to Him today! —Herbert Vander Lugt

For Further Study

According to Proverbs 3:11-12, what should be our reaction to God's discipline? After David asked God to forgive him, what did he pray in Psalm 51:12-13?

The way back to God begins with a broken heart

Proverbs 3:12

WHAT'S YOUR MOTIVATION?

Willard Aldrich tells a story about his sneaky Labrador retriever. The dog would stay off the furniture when Aldrich and his wife were around, but as soon as they left the room, he would climb into one of their chairs until he heard them return. It was the telltale dog hairs and the warm chair that gave him away.

What's a pet owner to do? Animals can't be reasoned with -- they have no moral sense. So Aldrich decided to wire the chair with a mild electrical current. Sure enough, during the night he was awakened by a yelp as the dog ran into another room.

Now, that Labrador didn't love its owners more because they disciplined him. But the disobedience stopped.

Our relationship with God isn't exactly like that sneaky dog's response to the Aldriches. We do make conscious moral decisions. But God disciplines His children when they disobey Him (Prov. 3:12). He wants us to obey Him out of our love for Him. But when we rebel, He lovingly provides correction in terms we can understand.

The choice is ours. We can obey God because we know disobedience will bring discipline -- or we can obey Him because we love Him and desire to please Him.

What motivates your obedience? -- Herbert Vander Lugt

"We love you, Lord Jesus," we often may say,

But are we as ready His will to obey?

Let's heed what God's Spirit would have us to do,

For that's how we show Him a love that is true. -- Dennis J. De Haan

The highest motive for obeying God is the desire to please Him.

Proverbs 3:12

J R Miller

We are apt to put it just the other way.

"My father does not love me, or he would not be so severe with me," a boy says. Then he points to another boy whose father lets his son do as he pleases, and never restrains or corrects him. "That father loves his boy, and is always kind to him," he says.

So it may seem just at the time. But to be left without discipline, to have no chastening, no correction, no restraining or withholding, is not proof of love. A father who does this with his son is letting him go to destruction unhindered. The one who corrects and chastens is intent on saving his son. Chastening is, therefore, a proof of love. God chastens us because He wants to save us and make something of us.

It should be a comfort to us to know, when we have trials or afflictions, that instead of being a proof that God does not love us, it is just the reverse - a new assurance of our heavenly Father's tender affection and deep interest in us.

Proverbs 3:13-18

Word Search

Emily loved the New York Times crossword puzzles. Her boyfriend Bill wanted a unique way to propose to her. So he enlisted the help of crossword composer Will Short.

On the appointed day, Bill took Emily to breakfast. He read the sports section while she started filling in her puzzle. Soon she began to notice some amazing "coincidences."

"Bill," she said, "My name is in here." Then, "Your name is in here too!" Soon phrases like "a modest proposal" and "Will you marry me?" emerged. Emily looked at Bill in astonishment. And she said yes.

The Bible may seem like a puzzle to us. We struggle through it, hoping to find wisdom for life's questions. Solomon understood that struggle. But he knew the search for wisdom was well worth it. He wrote, "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her" (Pr 3:13-15).

In the Bible, God talks to us--and about us. Persistent, prayerful study produces great personal rewards. So take time to search the Word. You'll discover the treasures of God's wisdom. —Haddon W. Robinson

Search the Scripture's precious store

As a miner digs for ore;

Search, and you will surely find

Treasures to enrich your mind. --Anon.

When we look into the mirror of God's Word, we see ourselves more clearly.

Proverbs 3:13-26

What We Really Need

In a biting comment, one philosopher said of another that he was "the greatest of thinkers and the most petty of men." We admire individuals of high intelligence, but we certainly wouldn't want that statement to be said about us.

Better by far to be an ordinary person who by God's grace reflects Christ's character. Better not to be a mental giant who is spiritually petty.

Intelligence and knowledge are God's gifts, and we can admire them. But we must remember that a good heart and godly character are more to be desired than brainpower, and that love is the most praiseworthy of gifts (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Even though we may respect friends who are blessed with keen minds, we know that wisdom from the Lord is what we really need. In Proverbs 2-3, we are told to search for wisdom as for hidden treasures, and to realize that it is more valuable than silver, gold, or rubies (Pr 2:4; 3:14, 15). Wisdom is called "a tree of life," which is a symbolic way of describing the blessings of being in a right relationship with God (Pr 3:18). A wise person can walk through life with confidence, assured of the Lord's approval (Pr 3:26).

Wisdom—that's what we really need. —Vernon C Grounds

The blessings of the Lord are known

By those who will obey;

His wisdom, truth, and love are shown

To all who choose His way. —D. De Haan

You can gain knowledge on your own, but wisdom comes from God.

Proverbs 3:14

J R Miller

There is something that gives better returns than silver or gold in the world's markets. It is better to be wise than to be rich. A proper use of wisdom yields larger and better gains than the best use of money. Wisdom increases continually in the life of him who possesses it.

Take the wisdom of trusting God, and how experience enlarges it! The timid faith of to-day becomes the heroic confidence of tomorrow.

Or take the wisdom of loving others. Only begin it and practice it, and your heart will expand and your hand will acquire new skill in ministering. Many a young person with only a commonplace life, by simple beginning in a small way to help others and do good, has at length attained a measure of helpfulness that is simply amazing.

A sailor boy brought home to his mother a little flower from some foreign land, and all the fuchsias in England are the harvest from that little kindness.

Proverbs 3:16

J R Miller

Long life is not in itself a blessing.

There is a legend of one who had a promise that the thing he asked for, whatever it might be, he would get. He prayed that he might not die, and his request was granted. He lived on and on. But he had forgotten to ask that he might not grow old, and so his gift became an intolerable burden. No doubt right living tends to longevity. Sin shortens life.

One year of wise and Christ-like living, earnest and faithful, is better than ten years of selfishness and sin. "Riches and honor" are part of wisdom's portion. It may not be this world's riches and honor. True riches are those we can carry out of this world with us.

Wisdom teaches us how to use even money so that it shall enrich us in eternity. What we keep and spend on ourselves we lose. What we give away in Christ's name is all we really make our own forever. What we sacrifice for Christ we shall find again and have forever.

From Wisdom to Joy

[Wisdom] will guide you down delightful paths. Proverbs 3:17 nlt

Today's Scripture & Insight: Proverbs 3:13–18

The phone rang and I picked it up without delay. Calling was the oldest member of our church family—a vibrant, hard-working woman who was nearly one hundred years old. Putting the final touches on her latest book, she asked me some writing questions to help her cross the finish line. As always, however, I soon was asking her questions—about life, work, love, family. Her many lessons from a long life sparkled with wisdom. She told me, “Pace yourself.” And soon we were laughing about times she’d forgotten to do that—her wonderful stories all seasoned with true joy.

Wisdom leads to joy, the Bible teaches. “Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding” (Proverbs 3:13 nlt). We find that this path—from wisdom to joy—is a biblical virtue, indeed. “For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy” (Proverbs 2:10 nlt). “God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to those who please him” (Ecclesiastes 2:26 nlt). Wisdom “will guide you down delightful paths,” adds Proverbs 3:17 (nlt).

Reflecting on the matters of life, author C. S. Lewis declared that “joy is the serious business of heaven.” The path there, however, is paved with wisdom. My church friend, who lived to be 107, would agree. She walked a wise, joyful pace to the King. By: Patricia Raybon

What paths have you taken in trying to find joy? How can wisdom lead you to joy?

When I might take a rocky road, loving God, please point me back to Your path of wisdom and joy.

Learn more about [joy here](#).

Proverbs 3:18 The Tree

The corkscrew willow tree stood vigil over our backyard for more than 20 years. It shaded all four of our children as they played in the yard, and it provided shelter for the neighborhood squirrels. But when springtime came and the tree didn’t awaken from its winter slumber, it was time to bring it down.

Every day for a week I worked on that tree — first to fell it and then to chop two decades of growth into manageable pieces. It gave me a lot of time to think about trees.

I thought about the first tree — the one on which hung the forbidden fruit that Adam and Eve just couldn’t resist (Genesis 3:6). God used that tree to test their loyalty and trust. Then there’s the tree in Psalm 1 that reminds us of the fruitfulness of godly living. And in Proverbs 3:18, wisdom is personified as a tree of life.

But it is a transplanted tree that is most important — the crude cross of Calvary that was hewn from a sturdy tree. There our Savior hung between heaven and earth to bear every sin of every generation on His shoulders. It stands above all trees as a symbol of love, sacrifice, and salvation.

At Calvary, God’s only Son suffered a horrible death on a cross. That’s the tree of life for us.—Dave Branon

On a hill far away stood an old rugged cross,

The emblem of suffering and shame;

And I love that old cross where the dearest and best

For a world of lost sinners was slain. —Bennard

The cross of Christ reveals man’s sin at its worst and God’s love at its best.

Proverbs 3:19-26

Get Rid Of The Grubs

A frustrated homeowner had a yard full of moles. He tried everything he knew to defeat his underground enemy, but he was losing the battle. Finally a friend informed him that he was trying to solve his problem the wrong way. The moles weren’t the true culprits. The real problem was the grubs that the moles were feeding on. Get rid of them and the moles would have no reason to stay.

The third chapter of Proverbs gives us a parallel situation. Instead of moles, the problem is fear—the kind of fear that robs us of strength during the day and sleep at night (Pr 3:24, 25).

What is also evident from this chapter is that we can eliminate our fears only by attacking the "grubs" that attract it. We must go after our self-sufficiency and irreverence (Pr 3:5, 6, 7, 8). We have to treat our evil and foolish ways with a strong application of divine wisdom and understanding (Pr 3:13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18). Then and only then will fear lose its grip.

What's important is to know the real problem so that we can work on it. When it comes to fear, we must make wise decisions based on God's Word and build a love-trust relationship with Christ. That's what it takes to get rid of the "grubs."—Mart De Haan

When you are deeply troubled

By fear and inward doubt,

Strive to do what pleases God,

And He will lead you out. —Lloyd

Keep your eyes on God and you'll soon lose sight of your fears.

Proverbs 3:23

Avoid that Slip

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

THAT is to say, if we follow the ways of wisdom and holiness, we shall be preserved in them. He who travels by daylight along the highway is under some protection. There is a way for every man, namely, his own proper calling in life; and if we devoutly walk therein in the fear of God, He will preserve us from evil. We may not travel luxuriously, but we shall walk safely. We may not be able to run like young men, but we shall be able to walk like good men.

Our greatest danger lies in ourselves: our feeble foot is so sadly apt to stumble. Let us ask for more moral strength that our tendency to slip may be overcome. Some stumble because they do not see the stone in the way: divine grace enables us to perceive sin and so to avoid it. Let us plead this promise and trust in Him who upholds His chosen.

Alas! our worst peril is our own carelessness, but against this the Lord Jesus has put us on our guard, saying, "Watch and pray."

Oh, for grace to walk this day without a single stumble! It is not enough that we do not actually fall; our cry should be that we may not make the smallest slip with our feet, but may at the last adore Him "who is able to keep us from stumbling."

Proverbs 3:24

Refreshing Sleep

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

IS the reader likely to be confined for a while to the bed by sickness? Let him go upstairs without distress with this promise upon his heart: "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid."

When we go to bed at night, let this word smooth our pillow. We cannot guard ourselves in sleep, but the Lord will keep us through the night. Those who lie down under the protection of the Lord are as secure as kings and queens in their palaces, and a great deal more so. If with our lying down, there is a laying down of all cares and ambitions, we shall get refreshment out of our beds such as the anxious and covetous never find in theirs. Ill dreams shall be banished, or even if they come, we shall wipe out the impression of them, knowing that they are only dreams.

If we sleep thus we shall do well. How sweetly Peter slept when even the angel's light did not wake him, and he needed a hard jog in the side to wake him up. And yet he was sentenced to die on the morrow. Thus have martyrs slept before their burning. "So he giveth his beloved sleep."

To have sweet sleep we must have sweet lives, sweet tempers, sweet meditations, and sweet love.

Proverbs 3:25

STAY AT YOUR POST

Eric was stunned by the certified letter he received. He had been fired! His record with the company was good, and the reasons given for his dismissal were without substance.

As he related his story to me, Eric explained, "I said to myself, 'Don't panic. Think this through. How would God have me respond?'"

After praying and consulting a Christian lawyer, Eric felt that God was leading him to apply the truth of today's text to his situation. So he stayed at his post and continued to see clients and place orders. To meet his financial needs, he

drew on his personal reserves. Company officials were unprepared to deal with someone who kept at his job after being dropped from the payroll. Eight months later, the president offered Eric a new contract with the best terms ever.

Not everyone can or should do what Eric did. But we can learn from his example. We don't need to be "afraid of sudden terror" (Prov. 3:25). We don't need to panic.

When a trial turns our life upside down, we can "stay at our post" by seeking God's wisdom through prayer, Scripture, and mature Christian counsel. We can resist despair, remain confident that God is at work, and continue doing what is right and good. God will do the rest. -- Dennis J. De Haan

When through life's darkened maze I go

And troubles overwhelm my soul,

Oh, grant me, Lord, Your grace to know

That You are surely in control. -- DJD

A crisis cannot break the one who relies on God's strength.

Proverbs 3:25 A Bad Dream

Read: John 6:15-21

Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes. —Proverbs 3:25

All of us have had bad dreams. Perhaps we were falling from a high building, fleeing from a hideous creature, or standing before an audience and forgetting our speech.

My wife had a nightmare recently. She dreamed she was in a small room when two men appeared out of the mist. Fear overwhelmed her. Just as the men were about to grab her, she said, "Let me tell you about Jesus." Immediately she was awakened by the sound of her own voice. The name Jesus had freed her from fear.

We read in John 6 that Jesus' disciples were afraid when in the dimness of nightfall they saw a strange figure walking on the stormy sea of Galilee. But the mysterious figure was not part of a bad dream—He was real. Matthew reports that they "cried out for fear" (14:26). Then the disciples heard a familiar voice: "It is I; do not be afraid" (John 6:20). It was Jesus. Their fears were calmed, as well as the sea.

The Savior speaks the same assurance to us today amid the many fears along our Christian journey. Solomon said, "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe" (Prov. 18:10).

Fears will come, but we are assured that Jesus is always a light in the darkness.

How oft in the conflict, when pressed by the foe,

I have fled to my Refuge and breathed out my woe;

How often, when trials like sea-billows roll,

Have I hidden in Thee, O Thou Rock of my soul. —Cushing

You need not fear the darkness if you are walking with the Light of the World.

Proverbs 3:25–26

Presence of Mind

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

WHEN God is abroad in judgments, He would not have His people alarmed. He has not come forth to harm, but to defend the righteous.

He would have them manifest courage. We who enjoy the presence of God ought to display presence of mind. Since the Lord

Himself may suddenly come, we ought not to be surprised at anything sudden. Serenity under the rush and roar of unexpected evils is a precious gift of divine love.

The Lord would have His chosen display discrimination, so that they may see that the desolation of the wicked is not a real calamity to the universe. Sin alone is evil; the punishment which follows thereupon is as a preserving salt to keep society from putrefying. We should be far more shocked at the sin which deserves hell, than at the hell which comes out of sin.

So, too, should the Lord's people exhibit great quietness of spirit. Satan and his serpent seed are full of all subtlety; but those who walk with God shall not be taken in their deceitful snares. Go on, believer in Jesus, and let the Lord be thy confidence.

Proverbs 3:27 — Have We Learned — Our Daily Bread

What happens when we keep to ourselves something that, if shared with others, would enrich their lives? We not only fail to increase their happiness, but we rob ourselves of the joy that generosity brings.

Luigi Tarisio, who loved violins passionately, never learned that lesson. He spent his limited income buying the finest instruments he could find. He owned 246 exquisite violins, which were crammed into every corner of his otherwise barren little house. And they were never played! His obsession prevented those instruments from bringing pleasure and inspiration to other music lovers.

Instead of following Luigi's example, we need to be motivated by the admonition of Proverbs 3:27 to keep ourselves free from the guilt of withholding good. Even more, we should be motivated by grateful obedience to Jesus Christ. And obedience, the Savior assures us, brings joy (John 15:10-11).

As Christians, we have a message that makes the melodies of heaven flood our souls. Our Lord gave us the mandate to share that message with everybody everywhere (Mark 16:15). Are we keeping the heavenly harmonies of saving grace sealed up inside ourselves, or are we obediently letting them ring out through our lips and lives?

O you who are trusting Jesus,

Redeemed at infinite cost,

Are you showing Christ to others

And seeking to win the lost? —Gilmore

Joy is a byproduct of obedience.

Proverbs 3:27 — My Two Cents — Our Daily Bread

Recently, our family had to change Internet cable services. Our former provider promised to send us a postage-paid box to mail their equipment back to them. We waited. No box came. I phoned. The promised box still did not arrive, but we did get a bill for the equipment!

Wanting to get this resolved, I decided to return it at my own expense. I sent several faxes asking if they received it—but no reply. Then I got a refund check of \$.02 for the returned equipment! An experience like that can be frustrating. A simple transaction was complicated by poor communication.

Sadly, some people in our churches may encounter an impersonal response to their needs. Whether seeking marital counseling, childcare, guidance for a troubled teen, or a loving community, they come away feeling uncared for.

The first-century church was not perfect, but it faithfully helped others. The church at Jerusalem "divided [their goods] among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 2:45).

Good communication is the starting point for learning others' needs. This enables us to provide personal and practical help to people when they need it. Resources, both material and spiritual, can then be directed to each person as the object of God's personal love.

All who serve within the church

Should show by word and deed

A sensitivity to those

Who have a special need. —D. De Haan

God cares for you—care for others.

Proverbs 3:33

Home Blessings

Spurgeon's Faith's Checkbook

HE fears the Lord, and therefore he comes under the divine protection even as to the roof which covers himself and his family. His home is an abode of love, a school of holy training, and a place of heavenly light. In it, there is a family altar where the name of the Lord is daily had in reverence. Therefore the Lord blesses his habitation. It may be a humble cottage or a lordly mansion; but the Lord's blessing comes because of the character of the inhabitant, and not because of the size of the dwelling.

That house is most blest in which the master and mistress are God-fearing people; but a son or daughter or even a servant may bring a blessing on a whole household. The Lord often preserves, prospers, and provides for a family for the sake of one or two in it who are "just" persons in His esteem, because His grace has made them so. Beloved, let us have Jesus for our constant guest even as the sisters of Bethany had, and then we shall be blessed indeed.

Let us look to it that in all things we are just: in our trade, in our judgment of others, in our treatment of neighbors, and in our own personal character. A just God cannot bless unjust transactions.

Proverbs 3:33 — Family First — Our Daily Bread

The nearest thing to heaven on this earth is the home where husband and wife, parents and children live in love and peace together for the Lord and for each other. The nearest thing to hell on earth is an ungodly home, damaged by sin and iniquity, where parents quarrel and bicker, and children are abandoned to the devil and all the forces of wickedness.

In the wisdom of God, the family is the smallest complete unit of society on the earth. As goes the family, so goes the nation, and civilization, and the world.

No nation has ever risen higher morally, intellectually, or spiritually than the families of which that nation was constituted. All efforts, therefore, at improving moral and spiritual standards in the world, combating crime, infidelity, and violence, must begin with the home and with the family. Attacking these problems anywhere else, anywhere farther down the line, can only be temporary. It can only restrain but never result in a cure.

Until the homes of our nation, and that means first of all the parents of our nation, turn to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, our country will deteriorate morally and spiritually.

O blest that house where faith you find

And all within have set their mind

To trust their God and serve Him still

And do each day His holy will! —Anon.

The home is the building block of society.

Proverbs 3:35

Today in the Word

January 16, 2008

Leadership works through servanthood? Humility leads to greatness? Theologian William Barclay understood the paradoxes at the heart of Christian faith: "[T]he way to power lies through the realization of helplessness; the way to victory lies through the admission of defeat; the way to goodness lies through the confession and the acknowledgment of sin ... the way to independence lies through dependence, the way to freedom lies through surrender ... the way to bliss which the world can neither give nor take away lies through the recognition of our own need, and the conviction that the need can be met, when we commit to God in perfect trust."

Do you want strength and wisdom and success? These are "power words"! But to get them in God's kingdom, we must cherish and practice humility. The overall theme of today's reading is the pursuit of wisdom as part of a "web of virtues" combining goodness and holiness (see Jan. 14). These qualities include kindness, honesty, peaceableness, contentment, and integrity (vv. 27–32).

With reference to humility, the key is verse 34: "He mocks proud mockers but gives grace to the humble." "Mock" implies "laugh at." Why does God laugh at the proud? Because before Him, the Creator and Ruler of the universe, pride and self-exaltation come off as

absurd. That such a finite thing as a human being could imagine itself at the center of the universe is not only false but ludicrous or laughable. Humble people, on the other hand, have a proper sense of themselves in relation to God. They are able to receive, and God delights to give them, His grace and favor. What could be sweeter?

The benefits of this kind of God-seeking and God-honoring lifestyle are many (vv. 21–26). Faith is strengthened. We can walk in sureness and safety, receiving God's blessings. Obedience brings life and makes the life we live an "ornament" or piece of jewelry, that is, beautiful.

Apply the Word - "My son, do not forget my teaching," says Proverbs 3:1. This prompts the question of how we should teach children about humility, particularly as they are living in a culture that promotes Me-ism and selfishness. Children are individuals, and no single approach will guarantee results for every child. But thinking through suggestions for children in preschool, elementary, middle school, and high school will also help us ponder our own lessons about humility.

PROVERBS 4

Proverbs 4:1-7| Cutting A Trail

By David C. Egner

The Native Americans of Michigan were the state's first highway route engineers. With few exceptions, Michigan's major highways follow the trails they cut through the wilderness hundreds of years before the white man came. A trail was 12-18 inches wide, and for safety the people followed single file. Then pack horses followed these trails, widening them. Later came wagons, and the trails became dirt roads and then highways.

In a similar way, Solomon followed the trail of his father and in turn paved the way for his sons and grandsons. He did this by encouraging his sons to heed his instructions just as he had followed the sound teaching of his father (Prov. 4:4-5). So this father, giving his sons good practical and spiritual counsel, was passing on what he had learned from the boys' grandfather, David, who was called a "man after [God's] own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22). The younger generation of believers often learns best about God from the family.

Our physical and spiritual children watch the path we're taking. As God's men and women, let's make certain we cut a righteous, wise, and clear trail. Then if ongoing generations choose to follow, the trail can become a highway—an ongoing legacy to God's glory.

Lord, as I walk my path of life,

Help my feet step straight and true;

That those who follow after me,

Will be tracking straight with You. —Egner

When we follow God, we blaze a trail

for those who would follow.

Proverbs 4:5-13

The World Wide Web

I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. --Ecclesiastes 2:13

Brewster Kahle has a vision for the Internet. He dreams of universal access to all human knowledge. As Digital Librarian and Director and co-founder of Internet Archive, Kahle believes we have only begun to tap the vast potential of the Internet to change and improve our world. "My interest," he says, "is to build the great library... It is now technically possible to live up to the dream of the Library of Alexandria." He's referring to a huge vault of writings in ancient Egypt that was said to house all the world's knowledge.

But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. King Solomon was a man of vast knowledge (1Ki 4:29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34). In his better moments, he used his God-given capacity to collect information and insight from every corner of life. In unguarded moments, however, he showed that all the knowledge in the world does not keep a person from missing the purpose of life (Ec 1:16, 17, 18). In spite of his knowledge, Solomon married many women, and when he was old he built altars to their gods (1Ki 11:1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7,

8, 9, 10, 11). His foolishness eventually led to his downfall.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Don't get caught in a web of knowledge without true wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Pr 1:7; 9:10). --Mart De Haan

True wisdom is in living

Near Jesus every day;

True wisdom is in walking

Where He shall lead the way. --Anon.

Wisdom gives wings to knowledge

Proverbs 4

Today in the Word

April 4, 2013

Raising a child is a costly endeavor. To raise a child to age seventeen, a typical, middle-income American family spends an estimated \$234,900, or about \$14,000 per year. About 16 percent of this total is spent on food, 18 percent on childcare and education, and 30 percent on housing. This total represents, adjusted for inflation, a 23-percent increase since 1960.

More important than any financial challenge, though, is the task of instilling children with godly wisdom (Pr 4:7). Proverbs 4 focuses on several themes to help us do so. One is to teach attentiveness. You've probably already noticed the frequent exhortations to "listen" and "pay attention" (Pr 4:1, 20). Attentiveness involves more than hearing the words—it requires one to "lay hold" of wisdom, store it up and not to swerve from her commands (Pr 4:4–5, 23). It's a commitment that involves one's whole being (Pr 4: 6, 21).

Another focus for training wise children is to teach them that wisdom and righteousness are two sides of the same coin. One of the most important differences between godly wisdom and human wisdom is that God's wisdom never takes us down the path of the wicked (Pr 4:14–15). Wisdom is righteousness and folly is sinfulness, by definition, in the same way that light and dark are opposites by nature (Pr 4:18–19).

One more emphasis in godly childrearing is to teach wise decision-making. The spiritual life often confronts us with choices between two paths. One is the path of wisdom and righteousness and obedience; the other is the path of foolishness and evil and disobedience. One is the path of life; the other is the path of death (Pr 4:4, 13, 22–23). Wisdom reveals which are the crooked ways and which are the "straight paths" (Pr 4:11–12, 25–27).

Apply the Word - Building a spiritual heritage with our children is one of the most important callings we have as parents and even grandparents (Pr 4:3–9). Teaching, discussing, and modeling a life of faith for our children is an example of our own obedience to God's Word. When the time comes for them to leave the nest, godly wisdom is the garland of grace they need!

Proverbs 4:1-13 — A Dad Looks Back — Our Daily Bread

Where did two decades go? How could they have sneaked by so fast? How could my little girl with the ringlet hair and cherubic smile already be 20 years old?

Wasn't it just a short time ago that she learned to write her name? Now she's writing term papers and e-mail. Wasn't it just yesterday that she sat on her tricycle and asked Jesus to be her Savior? Now she's working with foster kids to tell them of Christ.

Gone are the preschool years, the elementary years, and now the teenage years. With the loss comes the recollection of so many great times—so many opportunities to reveal God's goodness, His guidelines, His love, and His salvation to Lisa.

As I think back on the opportunities I had during her formative years, I've concluded that the most vital aspect of parenting is relationship. Only when we maintain close fellowship with our children can we instruct them properly. When parents and their children share a relationship of mutual respect, new moments of teaching build themselves into a lifetime of love and strong values.

Mom and Dad, make it easier for your children to listen to your teaching by nourishing the relationship. It will help to make looking back a great experience.

God gives us children for a time

To train them in His way,

To love them and to teach them how

To follow and obey. —Sper

Children may not inherit their parents' talents, but they will absorb their values.

Proverbs 4:1-13 Foolish Knowledge - Our Daily Bread

Proverbs 4:7

First Things First

During World War II, I served as an orthopedic technician in a hospital in England. One day we were cleaning up after putting casts on fractured limbs when I noticed some co-workers goofing off instead of helping. I didn't hesitate to show my displeasure.

Such incidents are why I usually find myself saying a few words in defense of Martha whenever I preach on Luke 10:38, 39, 40, 41, 42. You'll recall that she was "distracted with much serving" (Lk 10:40), while her sister Mary did nothing but listen to Jesus.

It's easy for me to see Martha's point of view. In Proverbs, more than a dozen verses rebuke the slothful. And when some first-century Christians quit working and started to freeload off others, Paul laid down the rule: "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2Th 3:10).

Our approach to work must be balanced. Proverbs 4:7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing." Martha could have said, "Mary, dinner can wait. I'll join you in listening to Jesus before getting started in the kitchen."

Work is vital. But we should not be so obsessed with it that it crowds out worship and spiritual instruction.

Work hard, but keep first things first. —Herbert Vander Lugt

For Further Study

For more on this topic, read the online booklet

Mary & Martha: Balancing Life's Priorities

Don't be so busy doing good that you neglect to do what's right.

Proverbs 4:7a

A series of cartoons in a New York newspaper depicted a young woman, garbed in cap and gown, holding a diploma with much pride. With her head held high she is looking down her nose at "Mr. World," while that cold, cruel cynic is saying, "Well, who do we have here?" Next, with shoulders thrown back, the young lady replies, "Certainly you know who I am. I'm Cecelia Shakespeare Doaks, a graduate of Prestige College. I have my A.B." "My dear child," Mr. World says in reply, "come with me, and I'll teach you the rest of the alphabet!"

Now, we certainly would not discourage the quest for learning, nor the desire to pursue an education to meet the demands and opportunities of life — we would encourage it! But it's important to remember that there is more involved in a well-rounded education than the completion of some college courses. Four years of classroom instruction, even under the most competent teachers, doesn't make one all-wise. The "school of hard knocks" often makes a far greater impact than the "university of hard facts." Even with the best education and down-to-earth, practical experience, however, a man or woman really "knows" nothing apart from God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Knowledge is the acquisition of facts. Wisdom is the ability to use this knowledge rightly. A person may acquire much knowledge, but without wisdom his acquired storehouse of facts will do him little good; in fact, it may even be spiritually harmful to him. Get an education? Yes, but also seek for that wisdom which is from above. James tells us, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God ... and it shall be given him" (James 1:5-note).

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good life [behavior] his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

A man may store his mind with facts,

Till knowledge from it overflows,

But lacking wisdom from Above,

He's still a "fool" till Christ he knows.—Bosch

True wisdom consists principally of two parts: the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of ourselves! —John Calvin

Proverbs 4:10-19

The Dalton Gang

By Dennis Fisher

The Dalton brothers were infamous outlaws during the late 1800s in the US. They started out on the right side of the law as officers. But then they followed a gradual descent into crime and became known for bank and train robberies. Their day of reckoning came when they tried to hold up two banks at once. Hearing of the robberies, the townspeople armed themselves and began to fire on the Dalton Gang. When the smoke cleared, Emmett Dalton was the sole survivor.

After serving 15 years in the penitentiary, Emmett was pardoned and set free. While in prison, he had come to see the error of his ways. So when he was released, he wanted to deter young people from a life of crime. Drawing from his own experience, Emmett wrote and starred in a film about the Dalton Gang in which he showed the folly of being an outlaw. In many ways, Emmett's film was telling others: "Do not enter the path of the wicked" (Prov. 4:14).

In a similar way, when we have sinned but have genuinely repented and experienced God's forgiveness, we can tell our own story. We can encourage others not to make the same mistakes we have made. James wrote, "He who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death" (5:20).

If others learn from our mistakes,

And it saves them from the pain

That we ourselves experienced—

Then it wasn't all in vain. —Sper

When we learn from our mistakes, we are less likely to repeat them.

[Proverbs 4:10-27 — The Path Of Wisdom — Our Daily Bread](#)

I had always heard that if a farmer keeps his eyes on a distant object while he's plowing, he'll make a straight furrow. So I tested the principle when I mowed my lawn. Sure enough, my first cut was a straight swath of new-mown turf.

If you can plow a straight furrow or mow in a straight line by keeping your eyes fixed on a distant object, surely the principle should also be true of life—especially if the object on which you fix your gaze is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

That's what the writer of the Proverbs says in chapter 4. In fact, the whole book of Proverbs is about following a straight path. It tells how to avoid the sexual trap (ch. 5-7), how to retain your integrity (12:1-16; 29:23), how to control your tongue (12:17-22; 21:23), how to get along with difficult people (14:7; 15:1), and how to stay healthy and live long (3:7-8,13-18). According to Proverbs, the wise person can walk the straight path and not be diverted.

But the Bible doesn't just advise, "Be wise!" It introduces us to Jesus Christ. The truly important question is our relationship to Him. He didn't just teach the truth; He is the truth (Jn. 14:6). So the only way to follow a straight path through life is to keep your eyes on Him.

I need His eye to guide me in the pathway,

For I am weak and helpless as a child;

And if without it I would take my journey,

My feet would stumble on the mountains wild. —Anon.

Our wisdom is folly unless we're following Christ.

Proverbs 4:14-27

Healthy Ingredients

By Joe Stowell

My wife, Martie, is a careful shopper when it comes to buying healthy and nutritious food. No matter how attractive the packaging

looks, she checks the list of ingredients on the back of the box. Lots of difficult-to-pronounce words usually announce the presence of preservatives that work against good nutrition. She always puts those items back on the shelf and continues to look for labels with lists of natural food products that contribute to good health.

I've often thought that her shopping habits are a lot like what God is looking for in our lives: It's what's on the inside that counts, regardless of how attractive the outside might be. It's no wonder that the wisdom-teller of Proverbs warns us to guard what goes into our hearts, "for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Wearing the right fashions and keeping ourselves looking young are of little importance if our hearts harbor greed, hatred, grumpiness, self-pity, and other counter-productive contents.

So, ask yourself: When others get past the packaging of my life, do they experience a heart full of healthy, Christ-honoring ingredients? By putting in grace, kindness, patience, and compassion, we'll reflect the wonderful nature of Christ.

Lord, teach me to value my heart more than the

externals. Grant me the wisdom to cultivate internal

ingredients that will make my heart a wellspring of

life to those whom I come in contact with today.

The contents in your heart are more important than the outer packaging.

Proverbs 4:14-27

Ponder Your Path

Our Daily Bread

David McCasland

A 47-year-old Austrian man gave away his entire \$4.7 million fortune after concluding that his wealth and lavish spending were keeping him from real life and happiness. Karl Rabeder told the Daily Telegraph (London), "I had the feeling I was working as a slave for things I did not wish for or need. It was the biggest shock in my life when I realized how horrible, soulless, and without feeling the 'five-star' lifestyle is." His money now funds charities he set up to help people in Latin America.

Proverbs 4 urges us to consider carefully our own road in life. The passage contrasts the free, unhindered path of the just with the dark, confused way of the wicked (v.19). "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live" (v.4). "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (v.23). "Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established" (v.26). Each verse encourages us to evaluate where we are in life.

No one wants to go through life on a selfish, heartless road. But it can happen unless we consider where we are going in life and ask the Lord for His direction. May He give us grace today to embrace His Word and follow Him with all our hearts.

If we pursue mere earthly gain,

We choose a path that ends in pain;

But joy remains within the soul

When we pursue a heavenly goal. —D. De Haan

You are headed in the right direction when you walk with God.

Proverbs 4:14-27

Smart Dad

A hard-working single dad named William Jackson Smart was the inspiration for the creation of Father's Day. His wife died in 1898 while giving birth to their sixth child, and the Civil War veteran was left to raise the children alone in rural Washington.

In May 1909, Smart's daughter, by then a married woman named Sonora Dodd, heard a sermon enumerating the virtues of motherhood. It was Mother's Day, a new American holiday that had begun the previous year. Sonora decided to honor her dad's dedication to his children by seeking to have a Father's Day designated on the calendar. The day caught on, but it wasn't permanently established as an annual holiday in the US until 1972.

What a vital role fathers can play in the home as they train their children to follow God's ways! Proverbs 4 gives these nuggets of

wisdom that dads can pass on to their children: "Do not enter the path of the wicked" (Proverbs 4:14). "Keep your heart with all diligence" (Proverbs 4:23). "Put away from you a deceitful mouth" (Proverbs 4:24). And finally, "Remove your foot from evil" (Proverbs 4:27).

We honor our godly fathers by obeying their instruction. And we should pray for all dads to recognize their God-given role of training in the home. — Dave Branon

We're thankful for good fathers, Lord,

They're special gifts from You;

Help us to show we honor them

By what we say and do. —Sper

Good fathers not only tell us how to live—they show us

Proverbs 4:14-15

Watch Out For Pebbles

My kids enjoy rollerblading. My 13-year-old son likes jumps, rails, and anything else he can do tricks on. But my daughters like long excursions on smooth paths.

Straight-line blading has its hazards too, my daughter Julie explained to me. She said that when she blades, she stays alert for big obstacles ahead like a large rock or a limb on the path. But she said that most problems are caused by small pebbles she doesn't see while watching for the big objects.

Then she made this observation: "It's like that in life. You keep watching for the big problems, but then a little one surprises you and causes trouble."

She's right. Most of us are on the lookout for life's big difficulties—the big sins. But we allow what might be considered a less serious problem to trip us up. An angry word, a dirty thought, a hateful feeling toward someone—we see these as small indiscretions. But to a holy God, all our sins are serious. Look at Uzza. He may have thought that touching the ark of God was a small infraction. But it wasn't, and he died instantly (1Chr 13:5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10).

"Little sins" can cause us to fall down in our forward movement toward maturity. Sure, watch out for the big problems, but don't forget the pebbles. —Dave Branon

It's "little" sins that trip us up

And cause an unexpected fall;

That's why we need to stay alert

To every sin, both large and small. —Sper

Little sins can add up to big trouble.

Proverbs 4:5-13 — The World Wide Web — Our Daily Bread

Brewster Kahle has a vision for the Internet. He dreams of universal access to all human knowledge. As Digital Librarian and Director and co-founder of Internet Archive, Kahle believes we have only begun to tap the vast potential of the Internet to change and improve our world. "My interest," he says, "is to build the great library... It is now technically possible to live up to the dream of the Library of Alexandria." He's referring to a huge vault of writings in ancient Egypt that was said to house all the world's knowledge.

But knowledge is not the same as wisdom. King Solomon was a man of vast knowledge (1 Kings 4:29-34). In his better moments, he used his God-given capacity to collect information and insight from every corner of life. In unguarded moments, however, he showed that all the knowledge in the world does not keep a person from missing the purpose of life (Eccl. 1:16-18). In spite of his knowledge, Solomon married many women, and when he was old he built altars to their gods (1 Kings 11:1-11). His foolishness eventually led to his downfall.

Wisdom is the application of knowledge. Don't get caught in a web of knowledge without true wisdom that comes from the fear of the Lord (Pr. 1:7; 9:10). - Mart De Haan

True wisdom is in living

Near Jesus every day;

True wisdom is in walking

Where He shall lead the way. —Anon.

Wisdom gives wings to knowledge.

Proverbs 4:14-27a

Sand In Your Shoes

Imagine the obstacles a person would have to overcome to walk from New York City to San Francisco. A man who had accomplished this feat was asked about his biggest hurdle. He said that the toughest part of his trip wasn't walking up the mountains or crossing hot, dry, barren stretches of desert. "The thing that came the closest to defeating me," he admitted, "was the sand in my shoes."

This reminds me of how we can be spiritually defeated by what begins as a little irritant. We let an unkind word, a small setback, or a misunderstanding get us down. Or we allow people around us to influence us in little but wrong ways. Instead of being determined to avoid evil—big or small— (Pr 4:14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27), we compromise. We neglect to go to the Lord for forgiveness and help.

Sir Francis Drake, the 16th-century English explorer who had sailed around the world, was crossing the Thames River when a violent storm threatened to capsize his boat. He cried, "Shall I who have endured the storms of oceans be drowned in a ditch?"

We would be wise to ask ourselves, "Shall I, who have come so far by faith, be defeated by 'sand in my shoes'?" We must answer with a resolute no!—Richard De Haan

Lord, grant us strength to overcome

Life's greatest trials that we may meet;

And grant it also when we face

Those little trials that would defeat. —D. De Haan

We stumble over pebbles, not mountains

Proverbs 4:18

Treadmill

In bad weather I get my exercise on a treadmill. But it's so boring! When the odometer says I've walked a mile, I've actually gone nowhere.

Life without God is like being on a treadmill. Generations come and generations go (Eccl. 1:4). The sun rises and sets day after day, year after year (Eccl. 1:5). The wind follows a repetitive course as it blows and swirls over the earth (Eccl. 1:6). Rivers flow into the sea, but it is never full (Eccl. 1:7). Like these natural phenomena, life is always moving but never arriving, always encountering changes but never finding anything really new. Then comes death. People without God are without hope and know they will soon be forgotten. What a dismal prospect!

How different for those who know God! Yes, they too sometimes experience routine, monotony, and difficulty, but instead of being on a treadmill they are on a journey. That's how Ernest Pike, an 83-year old friend of mine, viewed his life. Shortly before he died, he greeted me with a smile and said, "All my Christian life I've been preparing for heaven. Now I'm about to go there."

You too can have that hope. Admit you are a sinner. Receive Jesus as your Savior. He'll transform your life from a monotonous treadmill into a meaningful journey. —Herbert Vander Lugt

If we commit ourselves to Christ

And follow in His way,

He'll give us life that satisfies

With purpose for each day. --Sper

Life without Christ is a hopeless end; life with Christ is an endless hope.

Proverbs 4:18a

The light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This may be referred to the work of God in the heart. He who commanded light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. A little glimmering ray at first, God's light in the soul grows ever from less to more, revealing Himself and manifesting ourselves, so that we are growingly attracted from the self-life to circle around Him.

But probably it is true also of the graciousness of the believer's life. At first it shows itself in little acts of blessing on children and the poor; but the range of influence is always apt to increase, till what was a glimmer of helpfulness becomes as the sun shining in strength. The Sunday-school teacher becomes the preacher; the visitor among the poor becomes the philanthropist; the witness to the Gospel in the factory is called to witness in the great theatre of the world. See to it that there is a steady obedience to God's least promptings and monitions. Follow on to know the Lord, and to be conformed to his all-wise purpose.

Once again, notice the comparison in its exquisite beauty. Light is so gentle, noiseless, and tender. There is no sound; its voice is not heard. So is the influence of the holy soul. Its life becomes the light of men. As with the angel over the plain of Bethlehem, it sheds a light around those whom it will presently address. Like the Gulf Stream, which changes our climate from northern rigour to the temperate zone, so a holy life gently and irresistibly influences and blesses the world. The world is no worse than it is, not because of the holy words spoken on the Lord's Day, but for the holy lives of obscure saints.

Proverbs 4:18

J R Miller

Christian old age should be beautiful. It should have the mellowness of autumn, after the heat and toil of summer. Youth has its beauty, and so has manhood, but there is a loveliness in good old age which is more winning than aught in any other period of life.

"There is a beauty Youth can never know,
With all the lusty radiance of his prime,
A beauty the sole heritage of time,
That gilds the fabric with a sunset glow,
That glorifies the work it soon lays low!
There is a charm in age, well-nigh sublime
That lends new lustre to the poet's rhyme,
As mountain peaks are grander crowned with snow.
How gay the laugh of Youth! But, oh, how brave
The stately weakness of a reverend Age!"

Proverbs 4:20-27

Spiritual Checkup

Given a choice, I'd probably not voluntarily visit my doctor for a physical exam. I'm inclined to assume that everything is okay and not bother my doctor about it. But since my wife is a nurse, I don't have a choice. I go in for regular exams.

And given a choice, many of us are a little afraid of spiritual checkups as well. After all, if we check our spirit too closely, we might have to change a habit or two. We might need something like an "attitude-ectomy."

I suggest that we get over our reluctance. With God's guidance, let's undergo a spiritual checkup, using Proverbs 4:20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27 as a checklist.

Ears (Proverbs 4:20): Are we hearing God's Word clearly and with understanding? Are we doing what those words tell us?

Eyes (Proverbs 4:21,25): Are we keeping our eyes on the teachings that will guide us toward righteousness?

Heart (Proverbs 4:23): Are we protecting our heart from evil?

Tongue (Proverbs 4:24): Is our mouth clean and pure?

Feet (Proverbs 4:26): Are we walking straight toward God's truth without wavering?

How did you do on your examination? Are there areas where you need to take action? Regular checkups will help to restore your spiritual vitality. —Dave Branon

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

Show me the way that Jesus has trod;

Then I will tell of Your saving grace,

Until the day when I see Your face. —Hess

A spiritual checkup is the key to spiritual health

Proverbs 4:20-27a

Healthcare For The Heart

If you're over 40 years old, your heart has already beat more than 1.5 billion times. I know that when my heart stops, it will be too late to change my ways. So I've been trying to control my weight, get exercise, and watch not only what I eat but also what's eating me.

This last point relates to another vital organ called "the heart"—our spiritual heart. It too has throbbed millions of times with thoughts, affections, and choices. In the heart we determine how we will speak, behave, and respond to life's circumstances (Proverbs 4:23). Will we trust the Lord and choose to be gracious, patient, and loving? Or will we yield to pride, greed, and bitterness?

Today's Scripture reading emphasizes the importance of caring for our heart. Are we keeping spiritually fit?

Weight: Do we need to lose the weight of unnecessary burdens and cares?

Pulse: Are we maintaining a steady rhythm of gratitude and praise?

Blood pressure: Is our trust greater than our anxiety?

Diet: Are we enjoying the life-giving nutrients of the Word of God?

Have you checked your heart lately?—Mart De Haan

O Lord, You see what's in the heart—

There's nothing hid from You;

So help us live the kind of life

That's filled with love for You. —D. De Haan

To keep spiritually fit, consult the Great Physician

Proverbs 4:23 — Spiritual Heart Care - — Our Daily Bread

You're up at the crack of dawn, doing your exercises. You're not going to let your heart get weak! You've trimmed the fat from your diet. You get regular cholesterol checks. And you're exercising four times a week to keep your cardiovascular system in peak condition.

But you've let your spiritual heart turn to mush. Preoccupied with the temporary, you've neglected the eternal. You seldom read the Bible anymore. Your prayers are lists of requests to God to make your life more comfortable and pain-free. By the time you reach the church door after the sermon, you can't recall what the pastor said because you were thinking about something else.

If this describes you, it's time to get into a spiritual heart-care program. It begins where David (a man after God's own heart) was in Psalm 139—by acknowledging that God knows all about your heart. It continues in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And it results in the prayer of Psalm 19:14, "Let ... the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."

Taking care of your body makes sense, but it makes even more sense to gain spiritual fitness by walking with the Lord. That's an exercise program with eternal value!

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,

And grant me this, I pray:

That I through Your sweet love may grow

More like You day by day. —Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, keep walking with the Lord.

Transformed Hearts

Proverbs 4:23

During the early 1970s in Ghana, a poster titled “The Heart of Man” appeared on walls and public notice boards. In one picture, all kinds of reptiles—symbols of the vile and despicable—filled the heart-shaped painting with the head of a very unhappy man on top of it. In another image, the heart-shape was clean and serene with the head of a contented man. The caption beneath the images read: “What is the condition of your heart?”

In Matthew 15:18-19, Jesus explained what pollutes a person. “The things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (niv). That is the condition of a heart separated from God—the situation ancient Israelites found themselves in when their sins forced them into exile (Ezek. 36:23).

God’s promise in Ezekiel 36:26 is beautiful: “I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart” (nlt; see also 11:19). God will take away our stubborn hearts that have been corrupted by all kinds of evil and give to us a clean heart that is responsive to Him. Praise God for such a wonderful gift.

Father in heaven, thank You that when we confess our sin to You, You give us a new heart and a new life. I pray that the life I live reflects the goodness of Your gift and that others may see the difference a new heart has made in me.

For a new start, ask God for a new heart.

INSIGHT:

Today’s text gives two reasons why God is going to rescue and redeem the people of Israel. He will do it for the sake of His holy name (v. 22) and so the nations will know He is the Lord (v. 23).

Proverbs 4:23

The Secret Garden

By Dennis Fisher

The Secret Garden, a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, tells the story of Mary, a young girl who goes to live with her wealthy uncle Archibald on his estate in England. Mary gets to know Dickon, a working-class boy who loves nature. The two children discover a fenced-in garden that Mary’s uncle has locked up because it reminds him of his deceased wife. The garden looks dead because of neglect, but Dickon assures Mary that, with proper tending, it will recover with new life. With the children’s help, “the secret garden” eventually bursts forth with colorful, fragrant blooms.

All of us have a secret garden of the heart. How we tend it will determine what speech and behavior it produces. Proverbs wisely admonishes us: “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The word keep means “to watch or guard with fidelity.” Guarding what we take into our hearts and monitoring our response will determine what takes root there. As we remove the thorns of resentment, weeds of lust, and roots of bitterness, we can replace them with the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Are you tending the garden of your heart?

Think not alone of outward form;

Its beauty will depart;

But cultivate the Spirit’s fruits

That grow within the heart. —D. De Haan

God wants you to water the seed He’s planted in your heart.

Proverbs 4:23

Heart Matters

By Poh Fang Chia

Our hearts pump at a rate of 70-75 beats per minute. Though weighing only 11 ounces on average, a healthy heart pumps 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day. Every day, the heart creates enough energy to drive a truck 20 miles. In a lifetime, that is equivalent to driving to the moon and back. A healthy heart can do amazing things. Conversely, if our heart malfunctions, our whole body shuts down.

The same could be said of our “spiritual heart.” In Scripture, the word heart represents the center of our emotions, thinking, and reasoning. It is the “command center” of our life.

So when we read, “Keep your heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23), it makes a lot of sense. But it’s difficult advice to keep. Life will always make demands upon our time and energy that cry out for immediate attention. By comparison, taking time to hear God’s Word and to do what it says may not shout quite so loudly. We may not notice the consequences of neglect right away, but over time it may give way to a spiritual heart attack.

I’m thankful God has given us His Word. We need His help not to neglect it, but to use it to align our hearts with His every day.

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,

And grant me this, I pray:

That I through Your sweet love may grow

More like You day by day. —Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, consult the Great Physician.

[Proverbs 4:23,26 — The Cost Of Neglect — Our Daily Bread](#)

I read about a Detroit man who couldn’t find his house. He had gone to the right address but all he found was an empty lot. Completely baffled, he asked the Detroit Free Press to help him figure out what was going on. A newspaper reporter learned that not only was the house gone, but the deed to the empty lot was in someone else’s name.

What had happened? For one thing, a few years had passed since the homeowner had left the city without providing a forwarding address. In addition, he had failed to make arrangements for someone to keep the property in repair. So the house was torn down because a city ordinance called for the removal of neighborhood eyesores.

The homeowner’s neglect illustrates the practical truth of Proverbs 24:30-34. Neglect leads to loss. This principle also applies to our daily walk with God. If we neglect our times of prayer and fellowship with the Lord, our relationship with Him will deteriorate and we will no longer experience His favor. We would never want that to happen, but we allow it when we become preoccupied with anything that comes between us and Christ.

We need to establish priorities that honor God. Then we’ll avoid the loss that comes from neglect.

Unless we’re occupied with Jesus

And seek to do His will each day,

We’re sure to know the loss and sorrow

That comes when we neglect His way. —Anon.

If you shirk today’s tasks, you increase tomorrow’s burdens.

See In Depth Study on Proverbs 4:23

Proverbs 4:23

Care Of The Heart

My father-in-law took a rocky, barren hilltop in Texas and transformed it into a beautiful homesite with a shaded green lawn. After removing thousands of rocks, he added topsoil, planted trees and grass, and kept it watered. Since his death, it has lacked his

consistent care. Today when I visit and work around that house, battling the invading thistles, thorns, and weeds, I ponder the state of my own heart.

Am I like that neglected yard, or perhaps the field and vineyard described in Proverbs 24—overgrown with thorns, covered with nettles, its stone wall broken down? (Pr 24:31). The owner is lazy and lacks understanding (Pr 24:30), perhaps putting off today's tasks for a more convenient time.

Along with the practical instruction about diligence in work, I find an application for the care of my soul. The thistles of self-interest grow naturally within me, while the fruit that pleases God requires constant weeding and watering through prayer, confession, and obedience to the Lord. Without these, the soil of my heart will become choked with the thorns of trivial pursuits and greed.

"Keep your heart with all diligence," Solomon wrote, "for out of it spring the issues of life" (Pr 4:23). That requires constant care. — David C. McCasland

One little sin, what harm can it do?
Give it free reign and soon there are two.
Then sinful deeds and habits ensue—
Guard well your thoughts, lest they control you. —DJD

The garden of our heart needs constant weeding and care.

See In Depth Study on Proverbs 4:23

Proverbs 4:23a

THE FORTRESS OF THE HEART

F. B. Meyer. Our Daily Walk

IN MOST of the old castles there is an inner keep, which is protected, not only by mighty walls and bastions, but by the portcullis at the gate, and sentries at every approach, who challenged every one that passed in and out. So the heart is continually approached by good and evil, by the frivolities and vanities of the world and the insidious suggestions of the flesh. It is like an inn or hostelry, with constant arrivals and departures. Passengers throng in and out, some of them with evil intent, hoping to find conspirators, or to light fires that will spread until the whole being is swept with passion, consuming in an hour the fabric of years to ashes.

We need, therefore, to be constantly on the watch; we must keep our heart above all else that we guard, for out of it are the issues of life (R.V. marg.). Our Lord says that "out of the heart of man come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts," etc. The devil and the world without would be less to be feared, if there were not such strong tendencies to evil within--many of them inherited from long lines of ancestors, who, alas! pass down to us the worst features of their characters equally with the best.

Keep it Clean. Just as the eye of the body is perpetually washed with tear-water, so let us ask that the precious blood of Christ may cleanse away any speck of impurity. Remember how delicate a thing the heart is, and how susceptible to the dust of an evil thought, which would instantly prevent it becoming the organ of spiritual vision. Sursum Corda! Lift up your hearts! We lift them up unto the Lord!

The Sentinel of Peace. Then the Peace of God will become the warden or sentry of the heart, and it passeth understanding! We can understand the apparent peace of some men. They have made money, and their gold-bags are piled around them as a fortress; they have rich and influential friends, within whose protection they imagine they will be sheltered and defended; they enjoy good health, and are held in high esteem. We can understand such peace, though it often proves ephemeral! But there is a peace that passeth understanding! It is to this that our Lord refers when He says, "My Peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth." "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

PRAYER - Keep me, Heavenly Father, as the apple of Thine eye; defend me by Thine Almighty power; hide me from this strife of tongues and the fiery darts of the wicked one. May my heart be as the palace which the Stronger than the strong man keeps in perfect peace. AMEN.

Proverbs 4:23b

SELF-WATCH!

F. B. Meyer. Our Daily Walk

SAID PETER to our Lord, "Spare Thyself this death of which Thou speakest--this bitter suffering and anguish shall never be Thine!"

These words are continually spoken still, and many are the voices that bid us spare ourselves--the voices of our friends who love us; the voices of prudence and worldly wisdom; the voices of our own wayward hearts.

Do not spare your judgment of yourself. Never permit yourself to do things which you would be the first to condemn in others. Never suppose that there are reasons for you to do a wrong, which, under no circumstances would you tolerate in your neighbour.

Do not spare yourself in confessing your sins and mistakes. Confession is one of the tests of nobility. Not a few are willing to confess to God, who never attempt to confess to men. It is a serious question whether that sorrow for sin is genuine and deep enough which does not lead the offender to ask his fellow-man for pardon, even as he asks his God. Nothing could be clearer than Christ's words, that whenever we remember that our brother has aught against us, we are to leave our gift at the altar, and go first to seek reconciliation with him, before we offer our sacrifice to God.

The supreme test of goodness is not in the greater but in the smaller incidents of our character and practice; not what we are when standing in the searchlight of public scrutiny, but when we reach the firelight flicker of our homes; not what we are when some clarion-call rings through the air, summoning us to fight for life and liberty, but our attitude when we are called to sentry-duty in the grey morning, when the watch-fire is burning low. It is impossible to be our best at the supreme moment if character is corroded and eaten into by daily inconsistency, unfaithfulness, and besetting sin.

You cannot really help people without expending yourself. The only work that tells must cost you something. Gold, silver, and precious stones can never be built into the new Jerusalem unless you are willing to part with them from the stores of your own life.

PRAYER - Most loving Father, may love fill and rule my heart. For then there will spring up and be cherished between Thee and me a likeness of character, and union of will, so that I may choose and refuse what Thou dost. AMEN.

Proverbs 4:23c

SPIRITUAL HEART CARE

You're up at the crack of dawn, doing your exercises. You're not going to let your heart get weak! You've trimmed the fat from your diet. You get regular cholesterol checks. And you're exercising four times a week to keep your cardiovascular system in peak condition.

But you've let your spiritual heart turn to mush. Preoccupied with the temporary, you've neglected the eternal. You seldom read the Bible anymore. Your prayers are lists of requests to God to make your life more comfortable and pain-free. By the time you reach the church door after the sermon, you can't recall what the pastor said because you were thinking about something else.

If this describes you, it's time to get into a spiritual heart-care program. It begins where David (a man after God's own heart) was in Psalm 139 -- by acknowledging that God knows all about your heart. It continues in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." And it results in the prayer of Psalm 19:14, "Let... the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord."

Taking care of your body makes sense, but it makes even more sense to gain spiritual fitness by walking with the Lord. That's an exercise program with eternal value!-- David C. Egner

Dear Jesus, take my heart and hand,

And grant me this, I pray:

That I through Your sweet love may grow

More like You day by day.-- Garrison

To keep spiritually fit, keep walking with the Lord.

Proverbs 4:23d

HEALTH CARE FOR THE HEART

Being over 40 years old, my heart has already beat more than 1.5 billion times. When my heart stops, it will be too late to change my ways. So I've lost some weight, gotten more exercise, and begun watching not only what I eat but also what's eating me.

This last point relates to another vital organ called "the heart" -- our spiritual heart. It too has throbbed millions of times with thoughts, affections, and choices. In the heart we determine how we will speak, behave, and respond to circumstances (Prov. 4:23). Will we trust the Lord and choose to be gracious, patient, and loving? Or will we yield to pride, greed, and bitterness?

Today's Scripture reading emphasizes the importance of caring for our heart. Are we keeping spiritually fit?

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Pulse: Are we maintaining a steady rhythm of gratitude and praise?

Blood pressure: Is our trust greater than our anxiety?

Diet: Are we enjoying the life-giving nutrients of the Word of God?

Have you checked your heart lately? Martin R. De Haan II

O Lord, You see what's in the heart--

There's nothing hid from You;

So help us live the kind of life

That's filled with love for You.--DJD

To keep spiritually fit, consult with the great physician.

Proverbs 4:23

J R Miller

Every one carries in himself the elements of his own happiness or wretchedness. It is the heart that gives color to our skies and tone to the music we hear. A badly kept heart makes pain for the life. A well-lived life stores away memories which make celestial music to cheer the declining years.

Norman McLeod said: "Nothing makes a man so contented as an experience gathered from a well-watched past." We can insure full happiness only by living no day whose memory will make us ashamed or give us pain, when we sit in the eventide and recall it.

The time to secure a "well-watched past" is while the early days of life are fleeting. We never can change any yesterday. An unholy life yields a harvest of wretchedness in old age. But a life of obedience to God, of faithfulness to duty, of personal purity and uprightness, and of unselfish, Christ-like service, will make old age like a garden of fruit and flowers.

Proverbs 4:20-27b

Hostile Heart

Beware the hostile heart. That's the warning of Dr. Redford Williams from Duke University's Behavioral Medicine Research Center. He has been saying for years that having a hostile personality can kill us--most often by heart disease but also by injuries and accidents. Anger speeds the heart rate, raises blood pressure, and disrupts the coronary arteries.

Some indicators of a hostile heart are impatience with delays, mistrust of co-workers, annoyance with the habits of family members or friends, and a persistent need to have the last word in arguments or to get even when wronged.

In Proverbs 4, a wise father urged his son to listen closely to his words. He said, "They are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (vv.22-23).

Our wise heavenly Father issues the same call to us about His life-giving words recorded for us in the Bible. The transformation of a hostile heart begins as we listen to God, meditate on His Word, and allow Him to alter our behavior and speech. It's a prescription I need to follow today. How about you? —David C. McCasland

I want my heart to be in tune with God,

In every stage of life may it ring true;

I want my thoughts and words to honor Him,

To lift Him up in everything I do. --Hess

Let God's Word fill your mind, rule your heart, and guide your tongue.

Proverbs 4:23e

[Dean O'Bryan Guard Duty - Click Full Sermon](#)

Imagine a mountain village sitting at a high elevation. The little village is situated such that its water resources are very limited. Aside from collected rain water, it has only one source -- a sparkling clear, spring-fed lake just up from the village. Every person and animal in the village gets drinking water from that lake. Water for cooking, washing, crops -- and every other need, comes from that single source. There's no where else to get the life-sustaining substance.

Because it's the lone source, that spring-fed pool is essential and valuable. Every attempt is therefore made to protect it from any kind of pollution -- because of the significant impact the pollution would be so significant to everyone.

The Bible describes your heart in a similar way. It informs us that the heart is a critical center of life which touches and impacts all we are and all we do...

Somebody wrote this: "heart worship, heart love and heart obedience are far more difficult to recognize than the outward forms and duties of religion, because they are unseen, unrecognized and unrewarded of men. Not only is heart work difficult, it is constant."

Proverbs 4:23, 26

The Cost Of Neglect

I read about a Detroit man who couldn't find his house. He had gone to the right address but all he found was an empty lot. Completely baffled, he asked the Detroit Free Press to help him figure out what was going on. A newspaper reporter learned that not only was the house gone, but the deed to the empty lot was in someone else's name.

What had happened? For one thing, a few years had passed since the homeowner had left the city without providing a forwarding address. In addition, he had failed to make arrangements for someone to keep the property in repair. So the house was torn down because a city ordinance called for the removal of neighborhood eyesores.

The homeowner's neglect illustrates the practical truth of Proverbs 24:30-34. Neglect leads to loss. This principle also applies to our daily walk with God. If we neglect our times of prayer and fellowship with the Lord, our relationship with Him will deteriorate and we will no longer experience His favor. We would never want that to happen, but we allow it when we become preoccupied with anything that comes between us and Christ.

We need to establish priorities that honor God. Then we'll avoid the loss that comes from neglect. —Mart De Haan

Unless we're occupied with Jesus

And seek to do His will each day,

We're sure to know the loss and sorrow

That comes when we neglect His way. —Anon.

If you shirk today's tasks, you increase tomorrow's burdens

PROVERBS 5

Proverbs 5:6, 21

The level path of life. He maketh level all his paths.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It is a remarkable expression, "the level path of life"; and there is great comfort in knowing that God is ever before us, leveling our pathway, taking insurmountable obstacles out of the way, so that our feet do not stumble.

It may be that you are facing a great mountain range of difficulty. Before you, obstacles, apparently insuperable, rear themselves like a giant wall to heaven. When you cross the Jordan there is always a Jericho which appears to bar all further advance, and your heart fails. But you are bidden to believe that there is a level path right through those mighty barriers; a pass, as it is called, in mountainous districts. The walking there is easy and pleasant if only you will let yourself be led to it. God has made it, but you must take it. How we dread the thought of those steep cliffs! It seems as though we could never climb them; but if we would only look at the Lord instead of at the hills, if we would look above the hills to Jehovah, we should be able to rest in sure faith that He will show us the level path of life.

Your path is not level, but full of boulders which have rolled down upon and choked it. But may this not be partly due to your

mistakes or sins-to your willfulness and self-dependence? There are sorrows and trials in all lives; but these need not obstruct our progress. The text surely refers to those difficulties which threaten us with their arrest, putting barriers in our way. When Peter reached the iron gate he found it open; when the women reached the sepulchre door they found the stone gone. What an awful indictment against the child of sensual pleasure, "She findeth not the level path of life!"

SIN'S POWER - Dr. J. Wilbur Chapman told of a distinguished minister, Dr. Howard, from Australia who preached very strongly on the subject of sin. After the service, one of the church officers came to counsel with him in the study. "Dr. Howard," he said, "we don't want you to talk as openly as you do about man's guilt and corruption, because if our boys and girls hear you discussing that subject they will more easily become sinners. Call it a mistake if you will, but do not speak so plainly about sin." The minister took down a small bottle and showing it to the visitor said, "You see that label? It says strychnine -- and underneath in bold, red letters the word 'Poison!' Do you know, man, what you are asking me to do? You are suggesting that I change the label. Suppose I do, and paste over it the words, 'Essence of Peppermint'; don't you see what might happen? Someone would use it, not knowing the danger involved, and would certainly die. So it is, too, with the matter of sin. The milder you make your label, the more dangerous you make your poison!" (Source Unknown)

Sin's Deceitfulness - Gary Richmond, a former zoo keeper, had this to say: Raccoons go through a glandular change at about 24 months. After that they often attack their owners. Since a 30-pound raccoon can be equal to a 100-pound dog in a scrap, I felt compelled to mention the change coming to a pet raccoon owned by a young friend of mine, Julie. She listened politely as I explained the coming danger. I'll never forget her answer. "It will be different for me... " And she smiled as she added, "Bandit wouldn't hurt me. He just wouldn't." Three months later Julie underwent plastic surgery for facial lacerations sustained when her adult raccoon attacked her for no apparent reason. Bandit was released into the wild. Sin, too, often comes dressed in an adorable guise, and as we play with it, how easy it is to say, "It will be different for me." The results are predictable. - Gary Richmond, View From The Zoo.

Reaping what you have built! - Not long after a wealthy contractor had finished building the Tombs prison in New York, he was found guilty of forgery and sentenced to several years in the prison he had built! As he was escorted into a cell of his own making, the contractor said, "I never dreamed when I built this prison that I would be an inmate one day." - Today in the Word, July 12, 1993.

Freezing "Warm" - The man huddled on the cabin floor was slowly freezing to death. It was high in the Rockies in southwestern Alberta, and outside a blizzard raged. John Elliott had logged miles that day through the deep snows of the mountain passes. As he checked for avalanches and as dusk and exhaustion overcame him he had decided to "hole-up." He made it wearily to his cabin but somewhat dazed with fatigue, he did not light a fire or remove his wet clothing. As the blizzard blasted through the cracks in the old cabin walls, the sleeping forest ranger sank into oblivion, paralyzed by the pleasure of the storm's icy caress. Suddenly, however, his dog sprang into action, and with unrelenting whines, finally managed to rouse his near-comatose friend. The dog was John's constant companion, a St. Bernard, one of a long line of dogs famous for their heroics in times of crisis. "If that dog hadn't been with me, I'd be dead today," John Elliott says. **"When you're freezing to death you actually feel warm all over, and don't wake up because it feels too good."** This moving story illustrates the spiritual condition of many people today. They are cold spiritually, and sadly are oblivious of their true condition. (Some sin continues to make their heart colder and colder to God and they think they are fine!). Thank God for all the ways in which He arouses such sleepers. He sends His messengers to nudge them awake. Sometimes the methods used to awaken them are drastic, but always for their good. Let us not imagine that because He shakes us, He therefore hates us. He awakens us from lethargy because He loves us, and wants to save us from an eternal death. When we were "ready to perish" (Isaiah 27:13), He was "ready to save" (Isaiah 38:20). Trust your life in His hand. - The Prairie Overcomer.

Gambling with Sin is a Loaded Gun - In 1982, "ABC Evening News" reported on an unusual work of modern art--a chair affixed to a shotgun. It was to be viewed by sitting in the chair and looking directly into the gun barrel. The gun was loaded and set on a timer to fire at an undetermined moment within the next hundred years. The amazing thing was that people waited in lines to sit and stare into the shell's path! They all knew the gun could go off at point-blank range at any moment, but they were gambling that the fatal blast wouldn't happen during their minute in the chair. Yes, it was foolhardy, yet many people who wouldn't dream of sitting in that chair live a lifetime gambling that they can get away with sin. Foolishly they ignore the risk until the inevitable self-destruction. - Wake Up Calls, Ron Hutchcraft, Moody, 1990, p.60.

The Danger of "Small Sins" Illustrated - Imagine all the obstacles a person might have to overcome if he were to walk from New York City to San Francisco. One man who accomplished this rare achievement mentioned a rather surprising difficulty when asked to tell of his biggest hurdle. He said that the toughest part of the trip wasn't traversing the steep slopes of the mountains or crossing hot, dry, barren stretches of desert. Instead, he said, "The thing that came the closest to defeating me was the sand in my shoes." - Our Daily Bread.

Slavery to Sin - Radio personality Paul Harvey tells the story of how an Eskimo kills a wolf. The account is grisly, yet it offers fresh insight into the consuming, self-destructive nature of sin. "First, the Eskimo coats his knife blade with animal blood and allows it to

freeze. Then he adds another layer of blood, and another, until the blade is completely concealed by frozen blood. "Next, the hunter fixes his knife in the ground with the blade up. When a wolf follows his sensitive nose to the source of the scent and discovers the bait, he licks it, tasting the fresh frozen blood. He begins to lick faster, more and more vigorously, lapping the blade until the keen edge is bare. Feverishly now, harder and harder the wolf licks the blade in the arctic night. So great becomes his craving for blood that the wolf does not notice the razor-sharp sting of the naked blade on his own tongue, nor does he recognize the instant at which his insatiable thirst is being satisfied by his OWN warm blood. His carnivorous appetite just craves more--until the dawn finds him dead in the snow!" It is a fearful thing that people can be "consumed by their own lusts." Only God's grace keeps us from the wolf's fate. - Chris T. Zwingelberg.

Attraction to Sin - Several years ago our family visited Niagara Falls. It was spring, and ice was rushing down the river. As I viewed the large blocks of ice flowing toward the falls, I could see that there were carcasses of dead fish embedded in the ice. Gulls by the score were riding down the river feeding on the fish. As they came to the brink of the falls, their wings would go out, and they would escape from the falls. I watched one gull which seemed to delay and wondered when it would leave. It was engrossed in the carcass of a fish, and when it finally came to the brink of the falls, out went its powerful wings. The bird flapped and flapped and even lifted the ice out of the water, and I thought it would escape. But it had delayed too long so that its claws had frozen into the ice. The weight of the ice was too great, and the gull plunged into the abyss. The material possessions of this world can entrap us if we become too attached to them. They will take us to our destruction if we cannot give them up. And as Sweeting observed, "Oh, the danger of delay!" - George Sweeting

TWENTY REASONS NOT TO SIN! Just for "*fun*" take a moment to review the following list of **20 reasons not to commit sins** (hamartano)...

1. A little sin leads to more sin.
2. Sin invites the discipline of God.
3. The time spent in my sin is forever wasted.
4. My sin never pleases but always grieves the God Who loves me.
5. My sin places a greater burden on my spiritual leaders.
6. In time, sin always brings heaviness to my heart.
7. Others, including my family, suffer consequences due to my sin.
8. My sin makes the enemies of God rejoice.
9. Sin deceives me into believing I have gained when in reality I have lost.
10. Sin may keep me from qualifying for spiritual leadership.
11. The supposed benefits of sin will never outweigh the consequences of disobedience.
12. Repenting of sin is a painful process.
13. My sin may influence others to sin.
14. My sin may keep others from knowing Christ.
15. Sin makes light of the Cross, upon which Christ died for the very purpose of taking away my sin.
16. It is impossible to sin and follow the Spirit at the same time.
17. Others more earnest than I have been destroyed by just such sins.
18. God chooses not to hear the prayers of those who cherish their sin (Ps 66:18).
19. My unwillingness to reject this sin now grants it authority over me greater than I understand.
20. I promised God He would be the Lord of my life. (Source unknown)

Sin will take you farther than you ever thought you'd stray
Sin will leave you so lost, you think you'll never find your way
Sin will keep you longer than you ever thought you'd stay
Sin will cost you more than you ever thought you'd pay

Proverbs 5:22

How to Be Free

The human spirit longs for freedom. But for many people, its pursuit actually leads to greater bondage.

Bible teacher Henrietta Mears once told her students, "A bird is free in the air. Place a bird in the water and he has lost his liberty. A fish is free in the water, but leave him on the sand and he perishes... The Christian is free when he does the will of God and is obedient to God's command. This is as natural a realm for God's child as the water is for the fish, or the air for the bird."

Although King Solomon didn't use the word freedom in Proverbs 16, he understood that it comes only within the sphere of honoring God and His Word. By contrast, bondage comes to those who ignore God's truth. Liberty results from practicing humility, trust, careful conversation, and self-control (Proverbs 16:19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24). But bondage inevitably enslaves those who are governed by willful rebellion, pride, arrogance, strife, and malicious trouble-making (Proverbs 16:8,27, 28, 29, 30).

Do you want to be free? Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn 8:31, 32). Jesus is the ultimate source of true freedom. —Mart R. De Haan II

(Below is an older version of this same devotional)

Everybody longs for freedom. But for many people its pursuit leads to bondage. Beloved Bible teacher Henrietta Mears knew the secret of true freedom, and she wanted her students to know it too. With young people in mind, she said, "A bird is free in the air. Place a bird in the water and he has lost his liberty. A fish is free in the water, but leave him on the sand and he perishes. He is out of his realm. So, young people, the Christian is free when he does the will of God and is obedient to God's command. This is as natural a realm for God's child as the water is for the fish, or the air for the bird."

Wise King Solomon urged his son to understand that true freedom is possible only within the sphere of God-centered living, for which He created us. By contrast, bondage predictably and inescapably comes to anyone who ignores God's truth. Proverbs 16 describes the liberty and satisfaction that come from practicing humility, trust, careful conversation, and self-control. But it also warns about the inevitable bondage that comes into the lives of people governed by willful rebellion, pride, arrogance, strife, and malicious trouble-making.

The New Testament introduces us to Jesus—the ultimate source of our freedom. He, our Creator and Redeemer, said, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). —Mart R. De Haan II

What freedom lies with all who choose
To live for God each day!
But chains of bondage shackle those
Who go another way. —DJD

**True freedom is not in having your own way,
but in yielding to God's way.**

Thomas Watson - Adultery is destructive to the body. "Afterward you will groan in anguish when disease consumes your body." Proverbs 5:11. Immorality turns the body into a hospital, it brings foul diseases, and eats the beauty of the face. As the flame wastes the candle, so the fire of lust consumes the body. The adulterer hastens his own death. "So she seduced him with her pretty speech. With her flattery she enticed him. He followed her at once, like an ox going to the slaughter or like a trapped stag, awaiting the arrow that would pierce its heart. He was like a bird flying into a snare, little knowing it would cost him his life!" Proverbs 7:21-23... Do not come into the company of a whorish woman; avoid her house, as a seaman does a rock. "Run from her! Don't go near the door of her house!" Proverbs 5:8. He who would not have the plague, must not come near infected houses; every whore-house has the plague in it. Not to avoid the occasion of sin, and yet pray, "Lead us not into temptation," is, as if one should put his finger into the candle, and yet pray that it may not be burnt!... **"Rejoice with the wife of your youth."** Proverbs 5:18.

It is not having a wife

—but loving a wife—

which makes a man live chastely.

He who loves his wife, whom Solomon calls his fountain, will not go abroad to drink of muddy, poisoned waters. Pure marital love is a gift of God, and comes from heaven; but, like the vestal fire, it must be nourished, so that it does not go out. He who does not love his wife, is the likeliest person to embrace the bosom of a harlot. ([She is a Common Sewer](#))

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ILLUSTRATION OF THE SUBTLE, CORRUPTING EFFECT OF SIN: What happened to the great city of Ephesus? Often mentioned in the New Testament, it was one of the cultural and commercial centers of its day. Located at the mouth of the Cayster River, it was noted for its bustling harbors, its broad avenues, its gymnasiums, its baths, its huge amphitheater, and especially its magnificent Temple of Diana.

What happened to bring about its gradual decline until its harbor was no longer crowded with ships and the city was no longer a flourishing metropolis? Was it smitten by plagues, destroyed by enemies, or demolished by earthquakes? No, silt was the reason for its downfall—silent and non-violent silt. Over the years, fine sedimentary particles slowly filled up the harbor, separating the city from the economic life of the sea traders. Little evil practices, little acts of disobedience may seem harmless. (Song 2:15) But let the silt of sin gradually accumulate, and we will find ourselves far from God. Life will become a spiritual ruin. In the book of Hebrews we are warned of the danger of “the deceitfulness of sin” (Heb 3:13-note). James said that the attractive pleasures of sin are really a mask covering death (Jas 1:15-note). God forbid that we let the **"silt of sin"** accumulate in our lives!

Little sins add up to big trouble.

There is no sin so little as not to kindle an eternal fire!

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Sin Is Like An Insect! - It was reported recently that an enormous pine tree in the mountains of Colorado had fallen victim to a pine beetle and died. According to locals, up to that point the tree was thought to be indestructible. It had survived fourteen lightning strikes and many years of Colorado winters, including avalanches and fires. But it was eventually brought down from within by a tiny insect that did its work silently. That's the way it is with sin in a person's life, be they a Christian or a non-Christian. Watch over your heart with all diligence. (Pr 4:23-note)

We must deal with the seeds of sin in our hearts.
If neglected the seeds soon become weeds.
--Vance Havner
(Compare the progression in Ge 4:5-8)

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John Blanchard says that...

Sin has two great powers; it reigns and it ruins.

Sin is not a toy, it is a tyrant.

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Rousseau's "Self-Ruse" - The deceitfulness of sin is vividly seen in the life of the French philosopher Rousseau. He declared, “No man can come to the throne of God and say, ‘I’m a better man than Rousseau.’” When he knew death was close at hand, he boasted, “Ah, how happy a thing it is to die, when one has no reason for remorse or self-reproach.” Then he prayed, “Eternal Being, the soul that I am going to give Thee back is as pure at this moment as it was when it proceeded from Thee; render it a partaker of Thy felicity!” This is an amazing statement when we realize that Rousseau didn’t profess to be born again. In his writings he advocated adultery and suicide, and for more than 20 years he lived in licentiousness. Most of his children were born out of wedlock and sent to a foundling home. He was mean, treacherous, hypocritical, and blasphemous.

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Two theological students were walking along a street in the Whitechapel district of London, a section where old and used clothing is sold. What a fitting illustration all this makes!” said one of the students as he pointed to a suit of clothes hanging on a rack by a window.

A sign on it read:

**SLIGHTLY SOILED—
GREATLY REDUCED IN PRICE.**

“That’s it exactly,” he continued. “We get soiled by gazing at a vulgar picture, reading a course book, or allowing ourselves a little indulgence in dishonest or lustful thoughts; and so when the time comes for our character to be appraised, we are greatly reduced in

value. Our purity, our strength is gone. We are just part and parcel of the general, shopworn stock of the world."

Yes, continual slight deviations from the path of right may greatly reduce our usefulness to God and to our fellowman (see **notes** on "vessel of honor... useful to the Master" - 2Ti 2:21-note, 2Ti 2:22-note). In fact, these little secret sins can weaken our character so that when we face a moral crisis, we cannot stand the test. As a result, we go down in spiritual defeat because we have been careless about little sins. (Source unknown)

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Tiny Evils, Big Fall READ: Eccl 9:16-18, 10:1-10

Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. --Ecclesiastes 10:1

It started as a seedling on the slopes of the Colorado Rockies some 500 years ago. For centuries it had stood tall, enduring violent winds, lightning strikes, blizzards, even avalanches. Now, however, the once-towering tree is just a mound of decaying wood. What caused its demise? A horde of beetles had attacked it, gnawing away until that skyscraper of nature surrendered to those tiny pests and toppled over. That's also the tragic story of many Christians. For long years they stood tall for God. They resisted temptations, weathered crises, and were bold in the strength divinely provided. But **little sins** began to eat away at their lives--**little lies, little compromises** with greed or lust, sins that gradually eroded their **character**. And suddenly they fell. Song of Solomon 2:15 states, "**Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines.**" This colorful Old Testament verse should sound a loud alarm in our consciences. We must not tolerate the little evils that eat away at the roots of our lives. Otherwise, our once-strong witness for Christ will become a silenced casualty of sin. Let's confess those "tiny" evils to God now, before they lead to a big fall. — Vernon C. Grounds

Nothing between, like worldly pleasure,
Habits of life, though harmless they seem,
Must not my heart from Him ever sever--
He is my all! There's nothing between. --Tindley

A big fall begins with a little stumble.

(I would add a blessed life can begin with what may seem like a little obedience!)

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SIN IS LIKE A BOA CONSTRICTOR! - Are you being deceived by sin and tolerating it like a **pet**? If you are, then you need to remember the fate of the man with the **pet boa constrictor** (Do a Google search - use the following three words in your search keeping the quotation marks as written >> "pet boa" killed). After 15 years of living with his owner, one day the "pet boa" would not let its "owner" out of its grip resulting in the owner's tragic death. Wild animals remain wild and so does **Sin**. Do not be deceived (Stop being deceived)!

A slight sore, neglected, may prove of fatal consequence,
and so may a slight sin slighted and left unrepented of.
--Matthew Henry

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No Small Deviations in God's Economy! - In St. Louis there is a railroad switchyard. One particular switch begins with just the thinnest piece of steel to direct a train away from one main track to another. If you were to follow those two tracks, however, you would find that one ends in San Francisco, the other in New York. Sin is like that. Just a small deviation from God's standards can place us far afield from our intended destination. Don't be deceived by the world, flesh or devil who say "It's no big deal!" Wrong!

The way of sin is downhill.
A man cannot stop himself when he will.
--Matthew Henry

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Entanglement by the Cords of one's own Sin - Not long after a wealthy contractor had finished building the Tombs prison in New York, he was found guilty of forgery and sentenced to several years in the prison he had built! As he was escorted into a cell of his own making, the contractor said, "I never dreamed when I built this prison that I would be an inmate one day." (cp Nu 32:23)

No sin is small.

It is against an infinite God
and may have consequences immeasurable.
No grain of sand is small in the mechanism of a watch.
--Jeremy Taylor

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According to sociologist **Robert Bellah** - One of our current psychological gurus says that 98 percent of Americans are dysfunctional. No doubt he is right. He has just discovered original sin, though he is mistaken if he thinks 2 percent are without.

PROVERBS 6

Proverbs 6:1-11 — A Little Trouble — Our Daily Bread

One of the most recognizable structures on the rural American landscape is the grain elevator. Some stand 15 stories high and stretch for blocks. Unfortunately, these storage bins are often susceptible to grain dust explosions. Some elevators blow up because microscopic dust particles suspended in the air suddenly ignite. According to one engineer, to get rid of the dust danger, "You would have to tear down half your elevator."

This situation reminds me of a similar danger among some Christians and churches, especially those that have been around for a while. Longtime believers and longstanding institutions are inclined to get cluttered up with little particles of familiarity, tradition, and laziness, which can easily be ignited by the sparks of temptation.

The wise man who wrote Proverbs 6 said, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler" (vv.10-11). Big troubles come from little problems that we may not even take seriously. They slowly build up to the point where clearing the air requires a complete overhaul. But the cost is nothing compared to the loss that occurs if particles of sin collect and produce an explosive downfall.

Today pull up the little weeds,
Those sinful thoughts subdue,
Or they will take the reins themselves
And someday master you. —Anon.

A little sin adds to your troubles, subtracts from your energy, and multiplies your difficulties.

Proverbs 6:6-11

Slacker?

By Cindy Hess Kasper

While studying the book of Proverbs in my small-group Bible study, our leader suggested that we change the description of a lazy person from a sluggard to a slacker (6:6,9). Ah, now he was speaking my lingo. I immediately started thinking of all the people I consider to be slackers.

Like the men and women who fail to teach and discipline their children. Or that guy who refuses to help around the house. Or those teenagers who neglect their studies and play Internet games day and night.

If we're honest, we're all susceptible to this. What about being a "prayer slacker" (1 Thess. 5:17-18), or a "Bible-reading slacker" (Ps. 119:103; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), or a "non-exercising-of-our-spiritual-gift slacker" (Rom. 12:4-8), or a "non-witnessing slacker"? (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

If we are not doing what we know God wants us to do, we are certainly spiritual slackers. In fact, when we refuse to obey God, we are sinning.

Listen to these challenging and convicting words from the book of James: "It is sin to know what you ought to do and then not do it" (4:17 NLT). Let's not be spiritual slackers.

When we know what God wants us to do,

But then we refuse to obey,

We're ignoring the voice of the Lord,

And sinfully choosing our way. —Sper

We may make excuses for not obeying God, but He still calls it disobedience.

Proverbs 6:6-11

The Wise Ant

By Jennifer Benson Schuld

Every year I do something special to celebrate the arrival of spring —I buy ant traps. Those little invaders continually march into our kitchen in search of any crumb left on the floor. They aren't picky; a shard of potato chip, a grain of rice, or even a speck of cheese will do.

Although ants may be a nuisance, Solomon praised them for their steadfast work ethic (Prov. 6:6-11). He pointed out that ants are self-directed. They have "no captain, overseer, or ruler" (v.7), yet they are very productive. The ants also keep busy even when it's not immediately necessary, providing supplies in the summer and gathering food in the harvest (v.8). By the time winter arrives, they're not worried about what they will eat. Little by little, these hard workers have saved up enough to sustain themselves.

We can learn from the ant. When God gives us times of plenty, we can prepare for times when resources may be low. God is the provider of all that we have, including our ability to work. We are to work diligently, be wise stewards of what He has provided, and then rest in the promise of His care (Matt. 6:25-34).

Let's remember Solomon's advice: "Go to the ant ... Consider her ways and be wise" (Pr. 6:6).

The humble ant's keen industry

Can teach us all a lesson,

If in creation we will see

God's classroom is in session. —Gustafson

Trust God for today—and prepare for tomorrow.

Proverbs 6:12-19

The Fine Art Of Slander

God hates slanderers. They are scoundrels and villains with hidden hatred in their hearts and deceit in their mouths.

Some people have turned slander into a fine art. They would never use a meat cleaver to cut down another person. They are more subtle than that. They have learned to slander with a gesture, a wink, or an evil smile.

Jonathan Swift, an author who knew well the ugliness of slander, described a man who could "convey a libel in a frown, and wink a reputation down." Robert Louis Stevenson wrote, "The cruelest lies are often told in silence." When someone is attacked in a conversation, the listeners can join the mugging with a nod.

The book of Proverbs describes people in the ancient world who used body language to destroy others (6:12-15). They winked, motioned, or gave a shrug to work their slander, and they felt safe in their attacks. After all, it is difficult to refute a gesture or to prove evil in a wink. Their actions were subtle, yet as deadly as bullets piercing the heart.

What are your gestures saying about others? Ask the Lord of love and truth to help you guard your speech and actions. For His sake, for your own sake, and for the sake of others, do it now! —Haddon W. Robinson

Today let only thoughts that bless

Dwell in my heart and mind;

Silence my lips and tongue to all

That wounds or is unkind. —White

The tongue, being in a wet place, is apt to slip

Proverbs 6:12-19 — The Poison Of Suspicion — Our Daily Bread

For 30 years he worked as a Soviet spy, betraying British secrets to the KGB. For this, H.A.R. (Kim) Philby has been called "the Napoleon of deception, the greatest mole of them all." A New York Times editorial said of Philby and his fellow double-agents, "Beyond information, their greatest service to Moscow was to spread the poison of suspicion, setting ally against ally."

The poison of suspicion—could it also be a description of subtle, calculating gossip among Christians? I'm not referring to blatantly passing along tidbits of failure to other believers. I'm thinking about divisive barbs that cast doubt on a person's reputation or integrity by a raised eyebrow and a questioning tone of voice.

One of the most sobering lists in the Bible is God's itemization of the seven things He hates, beginning with "a proud look" and concluding with "one who sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). Between those two are five other acts of betrayal, each represented by parts of the body: tongue, hands, heart, feet, and lips.

Lord, help us to avoid spreading the poison of suspicion. Instead, make us Your faithful agents of encouragement and love.

The tongue can spread suspicion,

And reputations steal;

But when the Lord controls our tongue,

Its words will soothe and heal. —Sper

Rumor is one thing that gets thicker as you spread it.

Proverbs 6:12-19a

Our Daily Bread

God hates sin. In Proverbs 6, the author singled out seven specific transgressions that are an abomination to the Lord. Sin is so horrible that when the Lord Jesus, the perfect Son of God, bore our guilt on the cross, the Father turned His back on His beloved Son. And Christ, in the blackness of that dreadful hour, cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46). If sin is so terrible in the sight of God, then we must fear it, hate it, and avoid it.

Johann Peter Lange, the nineteenth century German theologian and author, told a story about a religious leader who was viciously hated by the emperor of his day. Some of the ruler's advisors said to the monarch, "Burn him, confiscate his property, put him in irons, or have him killed." But others disagreed. They said, "You will not gain anything by all this; for in exile he would find a home with his God; ... he kisses his chains, death opens heaven to him. There is only one way to render him unhappy; force him to sin. He fears nothing in the world but sin" (F. B. Proctor, Treasury of Quotations).

How many people do we know who fear "nothing in the world but sin"? Unfortunately, we often become so comfortable in sin's presence that we practice it rather than fear it. But remember how God views it. May we therefore, as lovers of Him, be haters of sin. —R. W. De Haan

It is not enough for gardeners to love flowers; they must also hate weeds

Proverbs 6:6-11

Ants And Elephant Seals

Elephant seals spend most of their lives sleeping. Science News magazine reports, "Male elephant seals measure 16 feet from trunk-like nose to flipper, and they weigh about 3 tons. Occasionally, a seal will use a front flipper—incredibly tiny for such a massive creature—to scratch itself or flip sun-shielding sand on its body." Otherwise these huge animals are basically motionless.

The article goes on to state that because they don't eat while on land during the breeding season, they sleep most of the time. Besides scratching, dirt-flipping, or rolling over, these ponderous animals seldom move.

By contrast, the little ant seems tireless as it goes about its industrious work of storing up food for the colony. The writer of Proverbs commends the diligence of the ant, citing her active ways as a model for people who would live wisely.

There's a spiritual lesson here. Christians who pattern their service after the ant get things done for the Lord. But others, like the elephant seal, scarcely move. They seem to be barely alive spiritually, as if they are conserving their energy for some huge effort

later on. But the time to get busy for Christ is now, even though our talents may seem insignificant.

Imitate the ant, not the elephant seal.—David C. Egner

Lord Christ, we humbly ask
Of Thee the power and will
With fear and meekness every task
Of duty to fulfill. —Montgomery

Many Christians do nothing, but no Christian has nothing to do.

Proverbs 6:16-19

Our Daily Bread

Risk

Albert Lee

When our children were young, one of our favorite board games was Risk. World conquest was the objective. Each player mobilized his troops to take possession of countries and continents. It always amused me that the person who initially was leading the game seldom won. The reason is obvious. When other players sensed his mounting pride, they would join together against him.

Whether consciously or subconsciously, it is easy to dislike powerful people who have proud looks. Their very countenance seems to encourage others to throw obstacles in their paths or to be silent objectors.

In today's Bible reading, we are told that God hates seven things. Tellingly, the first is pride. When someone overvalues himself by undervaluing others, he inevitably reveals it with his proud look. Puffed up in self-conceit, he may also devise evil and sow discord. No wonder God hates proud looks.

Proud and powerful people may think they can disregard others' displeasure, but they cannot disregard God's opposition. Peter reminds us not to trust in ourselves but in the One who will exalt us "in due time" (1 Peter 5:6). As we submit to Him, we avoid the risk that pride brings to our character and we become thankful, humble servants of God.

Naught have I gotten but what I received;

Grace hath bestowed it since I have believed;

Boasting excluded, pride I abase;

I'm only a sinner saved by grace! —Gray

No one can glorify self and Christ at the same time.

Proverbs 6:23 Warning Labels

Read: Proverbs 6:16-22

Reproofs of instruction are the way of life. —Proverbs 6:23

Warning labels are everywhere today—from new appliances to toys. Even medications include pages of small print about all that could possibly go wrong.

God's Word is filled with warning labels, alerting us to things that are harmful to our spiritual health. When we read, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him" (Prov. 6:16), it grabs our attention like a flashing warning signal. The list that follows (vv.17-19) warns against destructive tendencies like pride and dishonesty—sins that damage earthly relationships and grieve our heavenly Father. The text further states that "reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (v.23). In other words, God's warnings aren't meant to take the fun out of life, but rather to protect and preserve life.

I'll always remember as a child standing with my friend Bobby outside after church and watching him suddenly run toward the busy street. I heard his mother yell, "Stop!" It was a warning to protect him, not to hinder his freedom.

Too often we've ignored God's warnings to stop running in the wrong direction and suffered the consequences. Let's remember that there's freedom in heeding His warnings. They're for our good.

Lord, thank You for the warnings in Your Word

that are intended to protect and preserve my life.

Help me to heed Your reproofs and instruction

that I may live a life that is pleasing to You.

God's Word is full of loving warnings to protect and preserve us.

Proverbs 6:16-19

Promoting Unity

By Dennis Fisher

The language of Proverbs 6:16-19 is strong. In the citing of seven things the Lord hates, sowing "discord among brethren" makes the list. The reason for naming this sin is that it spoils the unity that Christ desires for His followers (John 17:21-22).

Those who sow discord may not initially set out to create divisions. They may be preoccupied instead with their personal needs or the interests of a group they belong to (James 4:1-10). Consider how Lot's herdsmen argued with those of Abraham (Gen. 13:1-18); Christ's disciples argued about personal preeminence (Luke 9:46); and divisive groups in the church at Corinth elevated party factions above the unity of the Spirit (1 Cor. 3:1-7).

So what is the best way to promote unity? It begins with the transformation of the heart. When we adopt the mind of Christ, we develop an attitude of humility and we focus on service toward others (Phil. 2:5-11). Only in Him can we access the power to "look out not only for [our] own interests, but also for the interests of others" (v.4). Soon the needs and hopes of others become more important to us than our own.

With growing bonds of love among us, we find discord replaced with joy and unity (see Ps. 133:1).

Like a mighty army moves the church of God;

Brothers, we are treading where the saints have trod.

We are not divided, all one body we—

One in hope and doctrine, one in charity. —Baring-Gould

We can accomplish more together than we can alone.

Proverbs 6:19 — One Tough Command — Our Daily Bread

High on the list of God's tough commands for us is telling the truth. I've told my 9-year-old son Steven many times that if he wants us to trust him in a few years with a car and all of the responsibilities of being a teenager, he has to tell the truth in everything now!

Truth, honesty, and trust are the basis of every good relationship. But being trusted by others is just one reason God's command "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor" is so important (Eph. 4:25). Another good reason is that the Lord hates lying. Proverbs 6:19 lists it as one of the seven things God hates: "A false witness who speaks lies." And John 8:44 tells us that Satan is a liar and the father of lies.

Lying can be so easy. It often seems like the best way to avoid a sticky problem or to protect ourselves from the results of other bad choices. But it always backfires. That's why when Joseph's brothers lied about selling him into slavery they spent the rest of their lives worrying about the consequences (Gen. 37:31-33; 50:15).

Don't lie. It's one tough command from the Lord, but it is the best way to please Him and win the respect of other people.

Lord, cleanse my heart of all deceit

And teach me to be true;

Help me to have integrity

In all I say and do. —Sper

Lying covers a multitude of sins—temporarily!

Proverbs 6:20

MOTHER'S LAW

As I read Proverbs 6:20, which refers to "the law of your mother," I recall some of my mother's unique "laws" that have helped me many times.

The first I call "the law of the warm kitchen." When we got home from school on a cold winter's day or when the holidays rolled around, the kitchen was always so warm from baking and cooking that the windows were steamed. It was also warm with a mother's love.

A second law I call "the law of a mother's perspective." When I would come to her all upset over some childish matter, she would often say, "Pay no attention." Or, "Ten years from now you'll have forgotten all about it." That helped me put things into perspective.

But above all was my mother's "law of faith." She had an unswerving trust in God that kept her strong and gentle amid fears, pressures, and sacrifices of the war years and of the 1950s.

Mom's been with the Lord now for many years. Yet I'm still grateful for her "laws," because they have helped me through many difficult days.

Christian mother, you too are writing "laws" for your children. Are they worth remembering? - D C Egener

I love you, Mother, for your quiet grace,

For that dear smile upon your kindly face,

For marks of toil upon each loving hand

That worked for me ere I could understand. - Simpson

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: No man is poor who has a godly mother. - Abraham Lincoln

Proverbs 6:20-35

The Scorpion's Sting

Aesop tells the ancient story of a boy hunting for locusts. The lad had caught quite a few when he saw a scorpion. Mistaking it for a locust, he reached out his hand to take it. The scorpion showed his stinger and said, "If you had but touched me, my friend, you would have lost me, and all your locusts too!"

There are some things you cannot embrace without losing what you have in the process.

King Solomon used a word picture of fire instead of a scorpion as he warned his son against the dangers of sexual sin (Prov. 6:27, 28, 29). As a wise father, he wanted his son to know that in this wonderful, dangerous world there are not only flowers and songbirds but also scorpions and fires.

Solomon's warnings in the Proverbs were not just about sexual immorality. Together with the rest of the Bible, such insights help us to understand the wisdom of an eternal God who loves us far more than our own mothers and fathers do. His Word also points us to the One who can help us even if we have "grabbed a scorpion" or "built a fire in our lap."

Life offers us choices. Christ graciously offers us forgiveness for what is past, and wisdom for what yet lies ahead. —Mart De Haan

Search out in me all hidden sin,

And may Thy purity within

So cleanse my life that it may be

A temple wholly fit for Thee. —Smith

The lessons of life are best learned when Christ is your teacher.

Proverbs 6:21

Bind them continually upon thine heart tie them about thy neck.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

If the son addressed here is bidden to thus care for the words of his parents, how much more should we ponder those of God as

given us in God's blessed Book.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee. — There is a little circle of friends whom I know of who read this book of Proverbs through every month for practical direction on the path of life. A West-countryman said of this collection of wise words, "If any man shall maister the Book of Proverbs, no man shall maister he." Take for instance the weighty counsels of the first five verses. How many lives would have been saved from bitter anguish and disappointment if only they had been ruled by them! Let every young man also ponder the closing verses. Let us all meditate more constantly on the Word of God.

When thou sleepest, it shall watch thee. — The man who meditates on the Word of God by day will not be troubled by evil dreams at night. Whatever unholy spirits may prowl around his bed, they will be restrained from molesting him whose head is pillowed on some holy word of God. And on awakening, the Angel of Revelation will whisper words of encouragement and love.

And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. — The heart is accustomed to commune with itself about many things, but when the mind is full of God through his Word, it seems as though the monologue becomes a dialogue. To all our wonderings, fears, questionings, answers come back from the infinite glory in words of Scripture. Some wear amulets about their necks to preserve them; but the Word of God is both a safeguard and choice treasure.

Proverbs 6:27

Our Daily Bread

The very nature of jealousy is to turn on those who harbor it; and it will ultimately destroy them. The Old Testament word for jealousy means "to burn or to inflame"—an apt description of what goes on inside the person who allows jealousy to smolder.

A legendary Burmese potter became jealous of the prosperity of a washerman. Determined to ruin him, the potter induced the king to issue an order requiring the man to wash one of his black elephants white. The washerman replied that according to the rules of his vocation he would need a vessel large enough to hold the elephant, where-upon the king commanded the jealous potter to provide one. Though carefully fashioned, it crumbled to pieces beneath the weight of the giant beast. He made many more vessels, but each was crushed in the same way. Eventually the potter was ruined by the very scheme he had devised to defame the man he envied. In a similar way, Saul's jealousy eventually caused his own destruction.

In Proverbs 6:27 we read, "Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" The coals of jealousy quickly become a raging fire that will burn us severely. Unless we douse it with confession and repentance, it will eventually consume us. —P. R. V.

As a moth gnaws a garment, so jealousy consumes a man.

Proverbs 6:27a

A DEADLY PET

Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?

It was a shocking tragedy. A 15-year-old boy was strangled by the family's pet. The slender youth had gone to an upstairs bedroom to play with an 11-foot Burmese python. Nobody is sure how it happened, but the supposedly tame snake turned into a killer that took the boy's life.

Why play with a powerful snake that can turn into a horrifying agent of death? Why even bring such a potentially dangerous creature into the house? This news story changes the old adage "Don't play with fire!" into a flashing warning signal.

This warning applies even more to the hazard of playing with sin -- some "small" thing that seems merely to give pleasure without hurting anyone. At first it seems harmless, but feed it, let it grow, take pride in it, and a trifling sin can become a terrible tragedy that "brings forth death" (Jas. 1:15). The writer of the Proverbs applied this truth to the area of sexual purity. "Do not lust after her beauty," said Solomon (6:25).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we must check even the smallest evil the moment it springs up in our heart by confessing it to the Lord and asking Him to help us overcome it. Toying with a pet sin is like playing with a deadly pet. Sooner or later it will turn on us.--
Vernon C. Grounds

We can't afford to play with fire

Nor tempt a serpent's bite;

We can't afford to think that sin

Brings any true delight.-- Anon.

The most deadly sins do not leap upon us, they creep upon us.

PROVERBS 7

Proverbs 7:4

Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call Understanding thy kinswoman.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This wisdom might seem to be too unearthly and ethereal to engage our passionate devotion, unless we remember that she was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who, throughout this book, seems forthshadowed in the majestic conception of wisdom. And who shall deny that the most attractive and lovable traits blended in his matchless character as Son of Man and exalted Redeemer.

With what sensitive purity He bent his face to the ground and wrote on the dust, when her accusers brought to Him a woman taken in the act of sin! With what thoughtfulness He sent word to Peter that he was risen, and provided the meal for his weary and wave-drenched sailor friends on the shores of the lake! With what quick intuition He read Mary's desire to anoint Him for the burying!

It was this combination of what is sweet in woman and strong in man, which so deeply satisfied men like Bernard, Rutherford, Fénelon, and thousands more, who have been shut out from the delights of human love, but have found in Jesus the complement of their need, the satisfaction of their hunger and thirst. In Him, for them, was restored the vision of the sweet mother of early childhood; of the angel sister who went to be with God; of the early love that was never destined to be realized.

Women find in Jesus strength on which to lean their weakness; and men find in Him the tender; thoughtful sympathy to which they can confidently, entrust themselves. We are born for the infinity and Divine; earthly loves, at their best, are only patterns of things in the heavens. They are priceless; but let us look into them and through them, to behold the unseen and eternal that lie beneath.

Proverbs 7

Today in the Word

April 7, 2013

To trap an animal, one must know its ways, including what it eats and where its hole or den is likely to be found. A bit of cheese or peanut butter in the right place, for example, and a careless mouse is easily caught. The key is to spotlight the bait and hide the consequences.

The same holds true in the case of sexual purity, including marital faithfulness. The foolish young man in today's reading saw only the bait—a willing, beautiful woman—and not the consequences—sin and death. Wisdom would have showed him the truth, protected him from temptation, and strengthened him for righteous obedience (Pr 7:1–5).

Most of today's reading is a narrative of how the adulteress lays her trap and how the young man falls into it (Pr 7:6–23). Dressed to entice, she meets him in the street and invites him home for "dinner."

There's no mistaking her real invitation—her husband is away and she asks the young man to join her for a night of lovemaking. This is apparently her habit, as her busy feet (Pr 7:11) and fragrant spices (Pr 7:17) may be read as euphemisms for sexual activity. In short, this woman is shameless, immodest, smooth-talking, and immoral. The young man is quite simply a fool. Lacking in judgment and seduced by her promises and his own desires, he follows her "like a deer stepping into a noose" (Pr 7:22). This does not make him a victim, because he bears full responsibility for his choice to be seduced.

Following the narrative, the writer again exhorts readers to embrace wisdom (pictured as a woman in the next chapter) and resist such temptations (Pr 7:24–27). Walking the adulteress's path leads to death, but walking in the way of Wisdom leads to life.

Apply the Word - One key to resisting temptation is godly relationships. If the young man had a stronger relationship with his wife (see Proverbs 5), he would have been better armed against temptation. If he had better friends, they would have advised him against walking down that street. A close relationship with Christ is our best defense for temptation (Heb. 4:15–16).

Proverbs 7

Today in the Word

Oct. 8, 2012

Many women feel bare or unattractive without make-up. The \$7 billion cosmetics industry has convinced them that they need it to be attractive. The editor of Cosmopolitan magazine commented: "Make-up is almost a religion in itself. You don't even think about why you do it. You just do it ... You make up your face, you're more dramatic, you're more interesting, people pay attention to you." In order to turn a hefty profit, the beauty industry perpetuates a false ideal focused on surface attractiveness and physical desire. This false ideal is not new, as we see in today's passage, and both women and men have fallen victim to it.

Having considered the foundations of a biblical view of language and words, we turn next to speaking and listening. Proverbs 7 is mainly an extended picture of an adulteress's seductive words and how they lead to foolishness and sin. Her dress, habits, and actions are a suitable frame for her words, which are loud, brazen, and defiant. She lies in wait for a young man, kisses him, and invites him home for a nice dinner (implied in the mention of fellowship offerings) and a night of lovemaking (v. 18). She knows exactly what she's doing but has no fear of God, promising the man they won't get caught. "With persuasive words she led him astray ... he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose" (Pr 7:21–22). She's done this so many times that "her house is a highway to the grave" (Pr 7:26–27).

To resist words of temptation and wickedness, we need to store up words of wisdom and righteousness. As Proverbs advises, "Keep my commands and you will live; guard my teachings as the apple of your eye" (Pr 7:2). Treasuring God's words and wisdom means pursuing and obeying them.

Apply the Word

The call of wisdom in Proverbs 8 contrasts with the adulteress's seduction in Proverbs 7. The adulteress invites a young man to sensual pleasures and wanton indulgences. Wisdom invites listeners to humility, holiness, and the fear of the Lord. The value of wisdom cannot be overstated! "Those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord" (Pr. 8:35).

PROVERBS 8

Proverbs 8:1-14

God Has No Big Shots

I was one of the speakers at a family camp in Canada. One afternoon as my wife and I were visiting a couple who directed the children's ministry, their teenage son came in and sat down. During a lull in the conversation he asked me, "Who are you, one of the big shots here?"

Momentarily I was speechless. Young people have a way of cutting through pretense and getting right to the point. "Well," I replied, "some people around here might think so, but you and I know the truth."

God has no big shots, yet the "Christian world" has created celebrities, and many people bow at the shrine of big-name speakers and musicians. Some in public ministry begin to believe the superlative descriptions of themselves and think they are superior. But when pride takes over, shame and disgrace are sure to follow (Prov. 11:2). In contrast, the pursuit of humility brings honor (29:23). Men and women who truly understand God's greatness detest any signs of pride within themselves (8:13).

It's appropriate to show honor and respect to God's servants, but we lack wisdom if we think of ourselves or others as "God's big shots."

Lord, help us to hate sinful pride as You do! —Dennis J. De Haan

Use us, Lord, and make us humble,

Rescue us from foolish pride;

And when we begin to stumble,

Turn our thoughts to Christ who died. --Sper

When we are filled with pride, we leave no room for wisdom

Proverbs 8:1-36

Today in the Word

Sept 1, 2009

In a musical stage production, the overture is the orchestral introduction to the upcoming performance, typically occurring before the musical itself begins. In the case of Broadway musicals, the overture often highlights musical themes from prominent songs in the upcoming production. This way, the audience is given a musical foretaste of what is to come.

This month's study is on the book of 1Kings, but we start today with an overture from Proverbs that highlights the themes of the book: wisdom and folly. According to Proverbs, wisdom is a way of life. The one who possesses wisdom fears the Lord and hates evil (Pr 8:13), which leads to great blessing: wealth, prosperity, power, and life (Pr 8:14, 18, 21, 34-35). Wisdom is beyond compare, more precious than silver, gold, and rubies (Pr 8:10-11, 19). Conversely, lack of wisdom finds expression in pride, arrogance, evil behavior, and perverse speech (Pr 8:13); eventually it leads to death (Pr 8:36).

Wisdom doesn't come magically, nor do we possess it as an inherent birthright. Rather, Scripture tells us we must seek it (Pr 8:17), we must respond to its call (Pr 8:1-6, 32-36). Moreover, wisdom belongs to God (Pr 8:22-31) and accordingly must be sought from Him. Today's overture from Proverbs presents two paths: the way of wisdom which leads to life, and the way of foolishness which leads to death.

Scripture specifically mentions that by wisdom, kings and princes will rule well (Pr 8:15-16). And so the exhortations and warnings in Proverbs 8 stand as a signpost for the book of 1 Kings. Wisdom and folly are both at play in the chapters to come. Wise kings will obtain incredible wealth, power, and life; foolish kings will receive prophetic rebukes, destruction of their kingdoms, and death. As we embark on this month's study of 1 Kings, train your mind and heart to be attuned to the appearance of wisdom and folly, that you too may learn and know the blessing of God's wisdom.

Apply the Word - Proverbs 8:35 states that "whoever finds me [wisdom] finds life and receives favor from the Lord." Do you believe the truth of these words? Do you value wisdom as life-giving favor from the Lord? As we begin our study of 1 Kings, pray that God would show you in His Word both the way of wisdom (that you might follow in it) and the way of foolishness (that you might avoid it), so that the words of Proverbs 8:35 would ring true in your own life this month.

Proverbs 8

Today in the Word

April 8, 2013

Wisdom can be seen in a fresh light since the coming of Christ. God's wisdom is pictured in today's reading as being at His side during the work of creation, and the New Testament affirms Christ's role in creation (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17). Christ is called "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), as well as the one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

In Proverbs 8, Wisdom is personified as a woman calling out an invitation to all who will hear (Pr 8:1-11). This supremely valuable treasure isn't locked in a bank vault. She isn't hidden or mysterious—wisdom is out there and available for all who will hear and respond. "Those who seek me find me" (Pr 8:17). Wisdom is described as humble, prudent, zealous for righteousness and truth and justice, and thus opposed to all evil words and actions (Pr 8:12-21). Wisdom fears the Lord, which one commentator explains as "that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law."

Wisdom is specifically associated with the order and goodness of God's creation (Pr 8:22-31). She is pictured as a craftsman at God's side. She has been "delighting in mankind" (Pr 8:31) for the entirety of human history, so her invitation in this chapter has an ancient pedigree. Since the New Testament reveals Christ's participation in the work of creation (see above), it is quite possible here to see a kinship or even identification between our Savior and the personified Wisdom of Proverbs 8.

Wisdom's invitation concludes: "Those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord" (Pr 8:35). What will our response be?

Apply the Word - Wisdom is relevant for every person and every aspect of life, but particularly so for the realm of governance and political power (Pr 8:14-17). Those who would wield power with discretion and justice need godly wisdom. For this reason, among others, we are exhorted to intercede and to give thanks for all those in authority (1Ti 2:1-2).

Proverbs 8:1-12

In The Screwtape Letters written by C. S. Lewis, a senior devil urges his young protégé to divert a Christian's thoughts away from God and focus instead on the faults of the people around him at church.

During a Sunday service, I found myself distracted and somewhat annoyed by a person near me who sang loudly off key and was out of sync during the unison readings. But when we bowed our heads for a time of silent prayer, it struck me that the Lord must surely be more pleased with that other person's heart than with the judgmental feelings He saw in mine.

A few days later I happened to read Proverbs 8 and was struck by verse 13: "Pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate." Throughout this chapter, wisdom calls to us to gain an understanding heart (v.5) and to find life and obtain favor from the Lord (v.35). The alternative is to go through life with a superior attitude while dying inside in the process (v.36).

Pride is a sword that wounds the person who uses it along with those against whom it is used. Arrogance robs us of all God longs to give us, but "by humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life" (Pr 22:4).

Oh, just a bit of Thy meekness, my Savior,

To be the least when of self I would boast;

Finding my glory and strength in Thy favor,

Know in my weakness Thy grace can do most. —Bosch

Pride brings shame. Humility brings wisdom.

[**Proverbs 8:1-11 The Forest and the Tree | Our Daily Bread**](#)

Proverbs 8:12-21

The Wisdom In God's Word

We treasure Scripture. It's God's inspired Word, and it teaches us the way to abundant life in this world and eternal life in the world to come. Indeed, it is the source of a wisdom that goes beyond that of the wisest philosophers (1 Corinthians 1:20). But this fact is rarely acknowledged in our culture.

So I was glad to read an article by The New York Times columnist David Brooks extolling biblical wisdom. He praised Martin Luther King Jr. for insight into human nature derived from Scripture. He felt that King "had a more accurate view of political realities than his more secular liberal allies because he could draw on biblical wisdom about human nature. Religion didn't just make civil rights leaders stronger—it made them smarter." And Brooks said further: "Biblical wisdom is deeper and more accurate than the wisdom offered by the secular social sciences."

Are we drawing on that source of wisdom in our own lives? We need Scripture's wisdom to deal with our personal problems and political issues. If we study and obey the Bible, we will be able to humbly testify with the psalmist, "I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Your testimonies are my meditation" (Psalm 119:99).—Vernon C Grounds

The Bible is God's Word to us,

Still fresh through all the ages;

And if we read it we will find

God's wisdom on its pages. —Sper

One truth from the Bible is worth more than all the wisdom of man.

Proverbs 8:1-14

God Has No Big Shots

By Dennis J. De Haan

I was one of the speakers at a family camp in Canada. One afternoon as my wife and I were visiting a couple who directed the children's ministry, their teenage son came in and sat down. During a lull in the conversation he asked me, "Who are you, one of the big shots here?"

Momentarily I was speechless. Young people have a way of cutting through pretense and getting right to the point. "Well," I replied, "some people around here might think so, but you and I know the truth."

God has no big shots, yet the "Christian world" has created celebrities, and many people bow at the shrine of big-name speakers and musicians. Some in public ministry begin to believe the superlative descriptions of themselves and think they are superior. But when pride takes over, shame and disgrace are sure to follow (Prov. 11:2). In contrast, the pursuit of humility brings honor (29:23). Men and women who truly understand God's greatness detest any signs of pride within themselves (8:13).

It's appropriate to show honor and respect to God's servants, but we lack wisdom if we think of ourselves or others as "God's big shots."

Lord, help us to hate sinful pride as You do!

Use us, Lord, and make us humble,

Rescue us from foolish pride;

And when we begin to stumble,

Turn our thoughts to Christ who died. —Sper

When we are filled with pride, we leave no room for wisdom.

Proverbs 8:17

Love and Seek True Wisdom

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

WISDOM loves her lovers and seeks her seekers. He is already wise who seeks to be wise, and he has almost found wisdom who diligently seeks her. What is true of wisdom in general is specially true of wisdom embodied in our Lord Jesus. Him we are to love and to seek; and in return, we shall enjoy His love and find Himself.

Our business is to seek Jesus early in life. Happy are the young whose morning is spent with Jesus! It is never too soon to seek the Lord Jesus. Early seekers make certain finders. We should seek Him early by diligence. Thriving tradesmen are early risers, and thriving saints seek Jesus eagerly. Those who find Jesus to their enrichment give their hearts to seeking Him. We must seek Him first, and thus earliest. Above all things, Jesus—Jesus first, and nothing else even as a bad second.

The blessing is that He will be found. He reveals Himself more and more clearly to our search. He gives Himself up more fully to our fellowship. Happy men who seek One who, when He is found, remains with them forever, a treasure growingly precious to their hearts and understandings.

Lord Jesus, I have found thee; be found of me to an unutterable degree of joyous satisfaction.

Proverbs 8:36

DEATH WISH

"All those who hate [wisdom] love death."- Proverbs 8:36

On a lonely 3-mile stretch of Florida beach, 100 pilot whales hurled themselves onto dry ground in an apparent mass suicide. It was another example of self-destructive behavior that continues to baffle marine biologists.

These huge creatures had beached themselves in a follow-the-leader fashion. People came from miles around to try to turn them back. At one point a human fence was formed between the whales and the shoreline.

But even when those sea mammals were pushed, pulled, and forced back into deeper water, many of them repeated their death surge and lunged onto dry ground again.

There's something about human beings that mimics those whales. Our sinful nature causes us to self-destruct. The Creator has provided a sea of wisdom for us to live in. Yet like unreasonable animals, we seem obsessed with a desire to break out of the element we were created for. Instead of remaining in the expanse of a loving conscious submission to God, we throw ourselves onto the arid ground of disobedience.

We may think we would never do that, but that's what we're doing every time we sin. Instead of loving death, let's believe what God says and love wisdom.-- Martin R. De Haan II

Grant us, O Lord, Thy wisdom true,

A sense of right in all we do,

And as we daily walk with Thee,

Help us Thy grace and truth to see.-- Dennis J. De Haan

Love wisdom -- love God; Hate wisdom -- love death.

Proverbs 8:22

The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This wisdom is not an abstract attribute or quality, but a Person. Whether the ancient writer of these glowing paragraphs realized fully what deep things he was saying when he so depicted her — as one who was brought up with the Father before the world was, as rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth with the children of men — we cannot positively determine; but we at least may lift the curtain, and see here Christ, who is both the Power and the Wisdom of God. Is not his chosen name the Word of God?

There, in that divine Man, in his gentle love, in his deep and weighty words, in his power to give life to them that find Him, we have the highest embodiment of the wisdom of God, which was before all worlds, and yet stoops to each lowly and obedient heart. It is not enough then for us to seek knowledge and get understanding apart from Jesus; but to seek Him diligently and early, as we are bidden in Proverbs 8:17, sure that when we win Him, we shall possess all the wealth of truth and knowledge that we require for this life and the next. He is the Truth and the Life. Truth apart from Him neither nourishes nor inspires.

Would you know the wisdom of God, then be still in heart, wait before God, quieting all your soul before Him; remember that Jesus is near, waiting, longing to impart Himself. Be not content till you have pressed through the words to the Word, though the Scriptures to Him of whom they testify. His delights are with the sons of men. Nothing will fill Him with greater joy than that we should hear Him, watching daily at his gates, and waiting at the posts of his doors.

PROVERBS 9

Proverbs 9:1-10

Welcome Criticism

Cancer researcher Dr. Robert Good was a hard-driving individual with an enormous faculty for new ideas. According to an article I read about him, he had the ability to make use of any information he came across.

I was most impressed, however, with a statement that credited him with a willingness to recognize any error in his theories and abandon them faster than anyone else in medical research. An associate said, "Dr. Good never gets married to his hypotheses, so he doesn't go through the pangs of divorce when one is proven wrong."

Proverbs 9 puts a high premium on such a willingness to see one's error and admit it. It describes a wise man as one who wants to learn from his mistakes. When challenged, he resists the urge to get his back up like a threatened tomcat. Instead, correction becomes a faithful friend and a necessary means to improvement (v.9). On the other hand, when a "scoffer" is rebuked, he responds with anger and hate (v.8). Because of his overinflated ego, he won't listen when told he has erred.

We need to follow the path of wisdom by giving heed to words of reproof. To be truly wise, we must remember that at times we too have played the fool. —Mart De Haan

When criticism comes your way,

Consider its intent;

It may be that some truth from God

To you is being sent. —D. De Haan

The person who refuses to hear criticism has no chance to learn from it.

Proverbs 9

Today in the Word

April 9, 2013

Imagine you've just received two invitations to dine at different restaurants. The first is from the best restaurant in town—outstanding

food, great atmosphere, fantastic service. The second is from a dingy dive almost shut down by the health inspector with a reputation for surly staff. Which invitation will you accept?

Yet between the contrasting invitations of wisdom and foolishness in Proverbs 9, we too often make the wrong choice. As if Wisdom's invitation in chapter 8 wasn't attractive enough, this chapter reiterates the stark contrast between wisdom and folly. Wisdom's invitation comes first (vv. 1–6). Personified as a woman, she invites humanity to a banquet at her house, the seven pillars of which most likely symbolize wholeness or perfection. The dinner has been prepared with the best food and wine, and all are welcome. The ignorant or immature will be transformed at her table.

Folly, or foolishness, is also personified as a woman but is characterized as undisciplined and without knowledge (vv. 13–18). Whereas Wisdom had actively presented her invitation from the highest point in the city, Folly lazily calls out to passersby. She invites humanity to a very different kind of meal, "stolen ... food eaten in secret" (v. 17). Just in case we're still not getting the point, we're then introduced to her other guests—dead people! Wisdom's invitation is to life, while Folly's is to the grave.

The meat of this contrast is found in the middle part of the chapter (vv. 7–12). A wise person fears the Lord, accepts instruction and rebuke, and loves learning. A foolish person, by contrast, does not worship the Lord, mocks and insults his teachers, and responds pridefully to correction and rebuke.

Apply the Word - Contrasts between life and death, wisdom and folly, and sin and righteousness are found throughout Scripture. Moses pronounced blessings for those who kept God's covenant and curses for those who broke it (Deuteronomy 28). Jesus used the technique of contrast many times, as in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Luke 6:47–49).

Proverbs 9:1-10a

Welcome Criticism

A number of years ago I read an interesting article about cancer researcher Dr. Robert Good. He was described as a hard-driving individual with an enormous faculty for new ideas and the ability to make use of any information that came to him. I was most impressed, however, with a statement that credited him with a willingness to recognize an error in his theories and abandon them faster than anyone else in medical research. An associate said, "Dr. Good never gets married to his hypotheses, so he doesn't go through the pangs of divorce when one is proven wrong."

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We always need to follow the path of wisdom by giving heed to words of reproof. To be truly wise, we must remember that at times we too have played the fool! —Mart De Haan

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Welcome its intent;

It may be that some truth from God

Through it is being sent. --DJD

The one who refuses to hear criticism has no chance to learn from it.

Proverbs 9:1-12

Helped by Fear

Fear means different things to different people. To professional golfer Pádraig Harrington, it is a motivator to help him perform his very best. In 2008, when he won both the British Open and the PGA Championship, Harrington said, "Yes, fear is a big part of me. I'd like to say that I have all the trust and patience and I'm relaxed. No, that's not my makeup. [Fear] pushes me on. Keeps me getting to the gym. I have to work with it and use it."

Maybe it's the fear of failure, or the fear of losing his edge, but Harrington finds fear to be a useful thing in his professional life.

The follower of Christ can also be helped by fear. We are challenged in the Scriptures to a reverential fear of God, which is the best type of fear that there is. It causes us to be concerned about disobeying Him or living in opposition to His ways. It's being in awe of our great God, bowing to His perfect will, and seeking His wisdom for living. To that end, the proverb declares, "The fear of the Lord

is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Pr 9:10).

By fearing God rightly, we can live wisely in an uncertain world.

God dwells in light and holiness,
In splendor and in might;
And godly fear of His great power
Can help us do what's right. —D. De Haan

Fear God, and you'll have nothing else to fear.

Proverbs 9:4, 16

Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

Twice over this invitation is given — first by wisdom, and secondly by the foolish woman. To every young life, in its first setting forth, many voices and inducements speak. Wise, grave voices mingle with siren songs. The strait gate into the narrow way stands side by side with the wide gate that leads into the broad way. The counsels of the fathers lips, the tears and prayers of the mother, amid the enticements of sinners, and the blandishments of the world. Here the true Shepherd, there the hireling; here the true Bride, there the apostate Church; here that which condemns the flesh, there that which takes its side.

Life is full of choices. There is no day without them. We are perpetually being reminded of the way in which the Creator introduced lines of division into his earliest work. For it is thus that He proceeds with the work of the new creation within. Repeatedly we hear his voice as He divides the light from the darkness, calling the one Day and the other Night. Would that we ever acted as children of the Light and of the Day, choosing the one and refusing the other! We are always being exercised in this, and our beat life depends on the keenness and quickness with which we refuse the evil and choose the good

Wisdom appeals to conscience. She says nothing at the outset of the sweetness of her service, or the pleasantness of her paths; but bases her appeal on whatsoever things are just, pure, lovely, and of good report. Yet she has rich rewards to those that choose her. Length of days, honour, a heart at leisure from itself, sure satisfaction, the assurance of the favour of God, a sure and certain hope of blessedness for evermore.

Proverbs 9:10 — Good Fear — Our Daily Bread

The prophet Jeremiah warned the Israelites that those who live wickedly and refuse to repent will one day experience God's wrath. This truth is restated throughout the Bible. God uses fear as a means of bringing people to salvation and encouraging obedience. Fear has certainly been a major factor in my life.

Two current misconceptions have weakened the moral influence of this fear. The first fallacy is that Bible standards for conduct have no authority today. I know of a public school teacher who expressed no shame for behavior that the Bible calls immoral, and he saw no need to repent.

The second fallacy is that if there is a God, He is so tolerant toward sin that He automatically forgives everyone (except maybe mass murderers and child molesters). A woman expressed this view in her letter to the editor of a local newspaper when she wrote of the unrepentant teacher, "God has forgiven him, and so should we."

In sharp contrast to these misconceptions is the truth that comes from God. His standards are absolute, and He punishes those who do not repent of violating them. Therefore, let's take seriously the fear of sin's consequences and make it an incentive for repentance and godly living.

Thinking It Over

Define in positive terms what it means to fear God.

According to Proverbs 9:10,

what is one benefit of fearing the Lord?

The right kind of fear prompts us to do right.

Proverbs 9:10

The Path Of Wisdom

By Bill Crowder

Albert Einstein was heard to say, "Only two things are infinite, the universe and human stupidity, and I'm not sure about the former." Sadly, it does seem that far too often there is no limit to the foolishness we get ourselves into—or the damage we create by our foolishness and the choices it fosters.

It was in such a season of regret that David poured out his struggle and complaint to God in Psalm 38. As he recounted his own failings, as well as the painful consequences he was enduring because of those failings, the shepherd-king made an insightful comment: "My wounds are foul and festering because of my foolishness" (v.5). Although the psalmist does not give us the details of those choices or of his worsening wounds, one thing is clear—David recognized his own foolishness as their root cause.

The answer for such destructive foolishness is to embrace the wisdom of God. Proverbs 9:10 reminds us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Only by allowing God to transform us can we overcome the foolish decisions that cause so much trouble. With His loving guidance, we can follow the pathway of godly wisdom.

Loving Father, forgive me for the seemingly

limitless capacity I have to be foolish. Teach me

in Your wisdom, so that my life might be pleasing

to You and a blessing to others around me.

God's wisdom is given to those who humbly ask Him for it.

PROVERBS 10

Proverbs 10:1-6

Understanding Parents

Wise children will want to please their parents. First, though, they must understand them. As any teenager knows, parents are tough to figure out. These seven tips may help:

1. Don't shy away from speaking their language. Try some strange-sounding words like "Let me help you with the dishes," or "Yes."
2. Try to understand their music. Play "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" on the stereo until you get accustomed to the sound.
3. Be patient with their weaknesses. If you catch your mom sneaking a candy bar, don't jump all over her. Quietly set a good example.
4. Encourage your parents to talk about their problems. Keep in mind that things like earning a living or paying off the mortgage seem important to them.
5. Be tolerant of their appearance. When your father gets a haircut, don't try to hide him from your friends. Remember, it's important to him to look like his peers.
6. If they do something you think is wrong, let them know that it's their behavior you dislike, not them.
7. Above all, pray for them. They may seem confident on the outside but feel weak on the inside. They need God to get them through these difficult years. —Haddon W. Robinson

On Second Thought

These seven tips can work just as well for parents.

Read them again with that in mind.

Then give them a try.

A right attitude toward your family begins with a right attitude toward God.

Proverbs 10:1-9

ARE YOU SEARCHING FOR WISDOM?

The Lord gives wisdom. - Proverbs 2:6

Often we hear people question the wisdom of those in authority over us. It's easy to point an accusing finger at government officials, bosses, pastors, teachers, or board members and say they are unfit to lead. In reality, though, we're focusing our attention in the wrong place. Instead of being critical of others, we need to make sure wisdom is present in our own lives.

But how do we get such wisdom? First, we need a "fear of the Lord" and a "knowledge of the Holy One" (Prov. 9:10). The best way to acquire this knowledge is by reading God's Word. We must also ask the Lord for His help if we are to gain wisdom. James wrote, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God" (1:5). Just as Solomon asked God for wisdom to help him lead (1 Ki. 3:9), so we must constantly rely on the Lord if we are to walk a godly path. Proverbs 10 tells us that when we are wise we will bring joy to our parents (v.1), we will work in a timely manner (v.5), and we will know how to accept authority (v.8).

The next time you're tempted to criticize someone, think twice. Ask God to help you examine your own heart. Then ask yourself, "Am I searching for the wisdom God's Word promises?" - J D Branon

Give to me Your insight, Lord,

As I read Your Word today,

So I'll truly understand

Your message and Your way. -- Monroe

Bible in one year: Song of Solomon 1-4

We won't have time to find fault with others if we're busy seeking wisdom.

Proverbs 10

Today in the Word

April, 2013

From here on out, the book of Proverbs becomes mostly a collection of individual proverbs. The sayings or aphorisms won't necessarily be related to each other; the reading experience will be somewhat like opening up Bartlett's Familiar Quotations. Our approach, therefore, will be not to exposit passages (since there are few narrative passages) but rather to hit highlights, explore themes, and trace threads of thought in ways appropriate to this literary genre.

One of the running themes of Proverbs—one that is prominent in today's chapter—is the power of words and control of the tongue. As today's verse says, "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin" (v. 8). Put simply, the wise listen more and talk less (v. 19). They are humble and teachable rather than full of hot air. Fools, unable to control their tongues, are run over by their own words. The wise know when to speak and what to say, whereas "the mouth of the wicked [speaks] only what is perverse" (vv. 31–32). This choice comes with consequences: "Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked" (v. 6).

In addition, the wise use the power of their words for good. "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life" (v. 11). "The tongue of the wise is choice silver" (v. 20). "The lips of the righteous nourish many," in the same sense that a shepherd cares for his sheep (v. 21). The words of a fool, on the other hand, are of little worth because they emerge from a sinful heart. They come to nothing, as if their tongues had been cut out. Those who listen to such words, far from being nourished, are left to starve and die.

Apply the Word - A previous devotional studied the issue of words and the tongue in Scripture. Entitled "God's Word, Your Words: A Practical Theology of Language," it can be found on our website, www.todayintheword.com. In fact, by clicking on "Archives" on the upper tool bar or on the navigational words near the bottom of the page, you can read past issues.

Proverbs 10:1-7

A Good Name

On Memorial Day in the United States, thousands of people visit cemeteries and monuments to remember and honor their loved ones. They ponder a name carved in stone and recall the person for whom it stands.

This kind of reflection on the lives of those who have gone before us can encourage us to evaluate the way we are living today.

When people hear our name, do they think of someone who is faithfully living for Christ?

King Solomon observed: "The memory of the righteous is blessed" (Proverbs 10:7). "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches" (22:1). "A good name is better than precious ointment" (Ecclesiastes 7:1).

A solid reputation and loving relationships are high achievements. Honesty, integrity, and generosity in life are more valuable than the most expensive funeral. Perfume fades, but the aroma of our lives lingers on.

By our attitudes and actions, we are creating the memories that will be associated with our names in life and in death. Today we have an opportunity to renew our commitment to Christ and to the making of a good name—a name that honors Him and encourages those we love for years to come.

Do you have a good name? —David C. McCasland

This is the wish I always make,

The prayer I always pray:

Lord, may my life help other lives

It touches by the way. —Anon.

The memory of a faithful life speaks more eloquently than words.

Proverbs 10:2-15 A Good Name

Charles Ponzi's name will be forever associated with the financial fraud scheme he elevated to a way of life. After some minor financial crimes and brief times in jail, in early 1920 he began offering investors a 50 percent return on their money in 45 days and a 100 percent return in 90 days. Although it seemed too good to be true, the money poured in. Ponzi used money from new investors to pay prior investors and fund his lavish lifestyle. By the time his fraud was discovered in August 1920, investors had lost 20 million dollars and five banks had failed. Ponzi spent 3 years in prison, was later deported to Italy, and died penniless in 1949 at the age of 66.

The Old Testament book of Proverbs frequently contrasts the reputations of wise and foolish people: "The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot... He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known" (Prov. 10:7,9). Solomon sums it up by saying, "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold" (22:1).

We seek a good name, not to honor ourselves but to glorify Christ our Lord whose name is above all names.

Lord, You know what is best, and You desire to lead us in paths that are right and good. Give us the courage to trust and to follow You in the way of right living for Your name's sake.

A good name honors our great God.

Proverbs 10:1-17

Making A Name

In the mid-1800s, Texas rancher Samuel Augustus Maverick refused to brand his cattle. When neighboring cowboys came upon a calf without a brand, they called it a "maverick." The word entered the English language and came to refer to a person who takes an independent stand and refuses to conform.

Other names have become words that describe a person's character and behavior: Judas and Benedict Arnold both mean "traitor." An Einstein is a genius, while a Solomon is a wise man.

Few of our names will become part of a language, but they signify who we are and how we have lived—today and for generations to come. Solomon said, "The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot... He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known" (Proverbs 10:7,9).

When we think of someone we know and admire, the words we associate with that person's name are usually the character traits we'd like to have as well. Honesty, generosity, and love often head the list. We see these in our Lord Jesus Christ, who allows us as Christians to bear His name.

Today, the Lord wants to work in us to make our name one that points to Him.—David C. McCasland

I'd rather die than bring disgrace

Upon my Lord, His name debase;

So I will live my life each day

To honor Christ and walk His way. —Hess

When others think of you, do they think of Jesus

Proverbs 10:4-5

Today in the Word

Jan 9, 2011

A recent Nielsen study revealed that the average American watches four hours and 49 minutes of television per day. That's 20 percent more than a decade ago. In an average American household, someone is watching TV eight hours and 21 minutes of every day. In 1991, that number was only one hour and 50 minutes. Experts attribute this increase to expanded television programming, competing leisure options, and varying economic conditions.

Perhaps they should also consider laziness and an addiction to entertainment as contributing factors! By contrast, both the book of Proverbs and common sense recommend diligence and hard work as essential elements of successful stewardship. Good stewards understand that they are stewards, not owners. All the resources they manage belong to the Lord. Good stewards further understand that their ability to acquire and manage these resources also comes from the Lord. Whether in terms of external factors such as money and material goods, or in terms of internal factors such as abilities and effort, we have no reason for pride. Good stewards give all the glory to God.

This is not an excuse for not working diligently (cf. Eph. 4:28). Believers do not "put it on cruise control" and call it "trusting the Lord to provide." God's will is for us to be diligent and hard-working with the responsibilities He's given us, including those related to wage-earning and finances. This is clear in today's reading. These two proverbs are built around contrast. In verse 4, the contrast is about results—laziness leads to poverty, but diligence leads to wealth. In verse 5, the contrast is about character—hard work indicates wisdom, whereas slothfulness indicates foolishness.

Proverbs are general truths or principles. They are not promises, certainties, or explanations for all situations. For example, there are causes for poverty other than laziness. Even so, the principle that one reaps what one sows in terms of diligence versus laziness is confirmed many times in Proverbs (see 14:23; 24:30–34; and 28:19).

Apply the Word - Throughout Proverbs, hard work and diligence are associated with wisdom, understanding, and humility; while laziness or slothfulness are associated with foolishness, ignorance, and pride. The diligent get it done—the lazy are empty talkers. Or in modern terms, the hard workers walk the walk, while others are merely couch potatoes. This makes biblical stewardship a countercultural idea. Others might be obsessed with entertainment and pleasure, but Christians strive to please God.

Proverbs 10:7

How To Treat Halloween

The word Halloween comes from All Hallows Eve, which was the evening before a religious holiday in Medieval England that became known as All Saints' Day. It was a time set aside by the church to commemorate its saints.

Today's celebration of Halloween, however, is more closely related to pagan customs that originated in ancient Europe. The Druids believed that the spirits of the dead returned to their former haunts during the night of October 31, so they lit torches and set out food for these unwelcome visitors. They did this out of fear, thinking they would be harmed if they didn't.

The Bible warns against all dabbling in the occult and preoccupation with witches and ghosts. What then can Christians do? One enterprising pastor had a special gathering in which he asked some of the church people to come dressed in the costumes of Bible heroes and the great saints of church history. In a dramatic way they were calling to mind the sufficiency of God's grace in the lives of His people.

Yes, the example set by that great "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1 encourages our faith. Remembering them on Halloween can remind us of the triumph of trusting the Lord.—Herbert Vander Lugt

Faith of our fathers, living still

In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword—

O how our hearts beat high with joy

Whene'er we hear that glorious word! —Faber

The greatest gift anyone can give us is a godly example

Proverbs 10:8-21

Don't Say It!

Our Daily Bread

In Discipleship Journal, Cynthia Heald told of a time she and her husband Jack were talking about remodeling their house. He said he wished he had his brother-in-law's skill for carpentry. "For a brief second," Cynthia wrote, "I was ready to make a snappy reply by saying, 'Maybe my next husband will be more handy.'" She went on, "For once in my life I thought before I spoke and asked myself, 'Will this benefit Jack?' Of course the answer was no! So I was quiet for a moment and responded in a much more positive way."

The Bible tells us that we can accomplish much good with kind, thoughtful, and wise words (Prov. 10:31-32; 16:23; Eph. 4:29). We can all think of times we have been blessed by the gentle, encouraging words of a brother or sister in Christ.

Ecclesiastes tells us that there is also "a time to keep silence" (3:7). Sometimes we can accomplish more by not saying anything. We avoid inflicting pain, creating conflict, or damaging someone's reputation or future.

When we're tempted to say something critical, damaging, confidential, boastful, whiny, or patronizing, we need to stop and think of the effect. Let's follow Solomon's advice about "a time to keep silence" and don't say it!

There are some silent people

Whose praises should be sung;

They preach a mighty sermon

By guarding well their tongue. —Posegate

If you hold your tongue now, you won't have to eat your words later.

Proverbs 10:9

True Walking Posture

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

HIS walk may be slow, but it is sure. He that hasteth to be rich shall not be innocent nor sure; but steady perseverance in integrity, if it does not bring riches, will certainly bring peace. In doing that which is just and right, we are like one walking upon a rock, for we have confidence that every step we take is upon solid and safe ground. On the other hand, the utmost success through questionable transactions must always be hollow and treacherous, and the man who has gained it must always be afraid that a day of reckoning will come, and then his gains will condemn him.

Let us stick to truth and righteousness. By God's grace, let us imitate our Lord and Master, in whose mouth no deceit was ever found. Let us not be afraid of being poor, nor of being treated with contempt. Never, on any account whatever, let us do that which our conscience cannot justify. If we lose inward peace, we lose more than a fortune can buy. If we keep in the Lord's own way, and never sin against our conscience, our way is sure against all comers. Who is he that can harm us if we be followers of that which is good? We may be thought fools by fools if we are firm in our integrity; but in the place where judgment is infallible, we shall be approved.

He who walks with integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will become known (Proverbs 10:9).

Proverbs 10:9a

Our Daily Bread

Personal integrity is often missing in today's society. Our world-system sees nothing wrong with people who shade the truth or make promises they don't intend to keep. The Christian, however, should be one "who walks with integrity."

In an article in Moody Monthly, John Souter wrote, "It was 11:00 P.M. I was sitting at the console of a sophisticated typesetting machine while an advertising man, a Christian, looked over my shoulder. He had roused me from bed to do a rush job for his client. Somehow I sensed I would never be paid for this job. But I swept those feelings aside. After all, this was a brother—a born-again Christian who would certainly pay his bills. But my fears were on target. I was never paid. Unfortunately, that experience has not been unique to me. I've learned there is often a big difference between what Christians say and what they actually do."

Apparently, many Christians have bought society's lie that integrity isn't important. As believers in Christ, though, we must follow the highest standards of personal honesty. When confronted with the temptation to compromise or to shade the truth, we must turn our backs on it and do what's right, regardless of personal cost.

If we have old bills to pay or promises to keep, we need to get things in order. Christians should be known for their honesty. —D. C. Egner

A debt is never too old to pay.

Proverbs 10:9

Integrity League

Our Daily Bread

We call it the Integrity League, but it's really just a bunch of guys who get together at lunchtime to play basketball. We call fouls on ourselves, attempt to avoid angry outbursts, and simply try to keep everything fair and enjoyable. We are competitive and we don't like to lose—but we all agree that integrity and honesty should control the atmosphere.

Integrity. Scripture clearly indicates the importance of this trait. And we honor the God of our lives when we practice it.

Through His Word, God has given us clear reasons to "walk in ... integrity" (Ps. 26:11). A person who has integrity has the security of a quiet life unknown to the one who "perverts his ways" (Prov. 10:9). The follower of God who lives with integrity is preserved by his confidence in God, for that person waits for God's intervention in his life instead of running ahead of Him (Ps. 25:21). And the one who practices integrity will be given guidance and clear direction (Prov. 11:3).

Why should we care about life's "Integrity League"? Because obeying God this way shows that we trust Him with our lives and that we want to shine His great love on others.

Dear Father, help my word be true. Help my

actions be honest. Help my life to

reflect Your holiness and shine God's light

for all to see. Help me to live with integrity.

Integrity is Christlike character in work clothes.

Proverbs 10:11-21

A Lot to Remember

Thanks a lot," the man behind the postal counter said to the person in front of me. The clerk, Jon, had seen me in line and was hoping I would overhear him. When it was my turn, I said hello to Jon, who had been a student of mine when I taught high school in the 1980s.

"Did you notice what I said to her?" Jon asked. "I told her, 'Thanks a lot.'" Sensing that I was missing his point, he explained, "Remember what you told us about the term a lot? You said a lot was a piece of land, not a phrase to use instead of much."

Astounding! An English lesson from a quarter-century before had stuck with Jon through all those years. That speaks clearly to us of the importance of what we say to others. It also backs up one of my favorite lines by poet Emily Dickinson: "A word is dead when it is said, some say. I say it just begins to live that day."

The words we say may have long-term consequences. Our comments, our compliments, and even our harsh criticisms may stick with the hearer for decades.

No wonder Scripture says, "He who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19). The words we speak today live on. Let's make sure they come from "the tongue of the righteous" (v.20).

Father, help me live today

With thoughtfulness in what I say,

Confronting wrong with truth and fact,

Expressing gentleness and tact. —Hess

The tongue is a small organ that creates either discord or harmony.

Proverbs 10:17

He is in the way of life that heedeth correction.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It is a wise prayer, "Correct me, O Lord, but with judgment." Happy is the man whom God correcteth; for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth. Sometimes God corrects us with rebukes, making our beauty to consume away as a moth before the stroke of illness or physical weakness. At other times we are corrected by the faithful rebuke of a friend, or the question of a little child. And yet again, correction comes to us through the sore discipline of having to reap the results of our sine Some heed correction; others resist and refuse it. Many get weary of it, and for their sakes it is written, "We have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live?"

Do not be weary of God's correction, my chastened friend. He does not expose you to the searching trial for his pleasure; but for your profit, and that you may be a partaker of his holiness. Heed correction. Ask why it has come, and what it is designed to teach. Set yourself to learn the lesson quickly. Above all, let us heed more carefully God's Holy Word, which is profitable for correction, as well as for teaching, reproof, and instruction. How often might we have been spared the searching correction of trouble if we had allowed our lives to be pruned by God's Word!

Our behavior under correction will show whether we are in the Way of Life or not. If the Life of God be truly within us, we will meekly accept and profit by the correction, from whatever source it comes. Otherwise we will murmur and fret, till the wine becomes vinegar, and the milk sour.

Proverbs 10:18-19

Finger-Pointing

You can't point your finger at someone without pointing at yourself. Try it right now. Extend your index finger and thumb in a pointing position away from you, and then notice in which direction the other three fingers are pointing. They point directly back at you.

Remember that the next time you point out the faults of someone else. Instead of jumping to conclusions, we should give the person the benefit of the doubt and reserve our judgment until all the facts can be known.

Under the Mosaic law, no charges could be brought against anyone unless there were two or three witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). Jesus echoed that standard when He taught how to deal with a Christian who sins against you (Matthew 18:16).

So if someone has wronged you, first go to the person alone to seek reconciliation (v.15) instead of badmouthing him before others. If the person refuses to admit his wrong and turn from it, then involve others to resolve the situation (vv.16-17). And if someone passes along a slanderous comment to you, refuse to pass it further. Instead, encourage the talebearer to follow these biblical steps.

God's children are to be channels of love and truth, not maliciousness and lies. —M. R. De Haan

Your Word instructs us not to judge;

So, Lord, we humbly pray,

Restrain our lips when we would speak

Those things we should not say. —D. De Haan

Slander seeks to destroy, but rebuke seeks to restore

Proverbs 10:19

[Words—Do They Matter — Our Daily Bread](#)

I heard a teenager from a Christian family declare, "My mom doesn't think swear words are bad." He then indicated which words she found acceptable—words that have long been considered inappropriate.

Society's standard of language has declined in recent years, but we don't have to decline with it. As we strive to be "very careful ... how [we] live" (Eph. 5:15 niv), we should think about how to honor God with our words.

We please the Lord with our tongue when we show discernment. "He who restrains his lips is wise," Proverbs 10:19 reminds us. When we do speak, we are to filter the words that escape our lips: "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (21:23).

It is important to use kind, positive words—even to address tough subjects. "A harsh word stirs up anger," but "the tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly" (Prov. 15:1-2).

Finally, avoid words that reflect poorly on who we are as God's children. Paul's admonition to "let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth" (Eph. 4:29) sets a strong standard for the righteous use of words.

To honor God in each part of life, use words that are pleasing and acceptable to a holy God.

The tongue can be a blessing

And the tongue can be a curse;

Say, friend, how are you using yours:

For better or for worse? —Anon.

What we say reveals who we are.

Proverbs 10:19

Taming The Tongue

At amusement parks, the bumper-car ride is always popular. People enjoy driving recklessly for a few minutes, bumping deliberately but harmlessly into other people's cars.

Some people have a bumper-car mentality in their relationships with others. Using blunt words, they deliberately bump into others' feelings, which is anything but harmless.

Solomon wrote, "He who restrains his lips is wise" (Proverbs 10:19). But James said, "No man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3:8). He said that with the tongue we bless our God who created us, but we also curse those whom He has created (v.9). Lest we think that Christians do the blessing and non-Christians do the cursing, we need to remember that James was writing to Christians.

To tame our tongues, we need God's help. In Romans 6:13, Paul said that we need to make a choice—to present the parts of our body "as instruments of righteousness to God," not "as instruments of unrighteousness to sin."

Today and every day, choose to present your body—including your unruly tongue—as a living sacrifice to God (Romans 12:2) to be used by Him as an instrument of blessing. —Joanie Yoder

Lord, set a watch upon my lips,

My tongue control today;

Help me evaluate each thought

And guard each word I say. —Hess

To bridle your tongue, give God the reins of your heart

Proverbs 10:11-21

Words Of Life

Not long ago, a friend wrote a lengthy account of his summers working at a mountain resort during his college years. Since I had worked there too, his stories of people, places, and events brought a flood of wonderful memories. It wasn't until I reached the end of his account that I realized something striking about what he had written. I thumbed back through the pages and began counting

people. In all, he mentioned about fifty of his co-workers by name and said something positive about each one.

It caused me to ponder the impact of my words, and ask myself: "Does what I say about people bring encouragement and affirmation? Am I usually talking about what's wrong with others or what's right? Am I primarily positive or negative?"

Proverbs 10:11 describes the mouth of the righteous as "a well of life." Verse 20 calls the tongue of the righteous "choice silver." Verse 21 says "the lips of the righteous feed many." The two constants are (1) a person who is righteous--right with God deep inside--and (2) words that nourish and refresh others.

Like our Savior, who spoke life-giving words, we can encourage and lift the spirits of others today by what we say about them. — David C. McCasland

Gracious Spirit, dwell with me;

I myself would gracious be;

And with words that help and heal

Would Thy life in mine reveal. --Lynch

A well-chosen word can speak volumes

Proverbs 10:11-23

Whispering Gallery

Bill Crowder

London's domed St. Paul's Cathedral has an interesting architectural phenomenon called the "whispering gallery." One Web site explains it this way: "The name comes from the fact that a person who whispers facing the wall on one side can be clearly heard on the other, since the sound is carried perfectly around the vast curve of the Dome."

In other words, you and a friend could sit on opposite sides of architect Sir Christopher Wren's great cathedral and carry on a conversation without having to speak above a whisper.

While that may be a fascinating feature of St. Paul's Cathedral, it can also be a warning to us. What we say about others in secret can travel just as easily as whispers travel around that gallery. And not only can our gossip travel far and wide, but it often does great harm along the way.

Perhaps this is why the Bible frequently challenges us about the ways we use words. The wise King Solomon wrote, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (Prov. 10:19).

Instead of using whispers and gossip that can cause hurt and pain while serving no good purpose, we would do better to restrain ourselves and practice silence.

Lord, help us bridle what we say

And tend our conversations,

Avoiding careless gossiping

That murders reputations. —Sper

Gossip ends at a wise person's ears.

Proverbs 10:11-21

From Intake to Output

By Herbert Vander Lugt

Pastors, public speakers, and writers must do a lot of listening and reading to keep fresh and current. They must search out information, keep alert for illustrations, and find new and better ways of expressing truth.

I listen to radio talk shows while driving, and I have a book or magazine in hand when I'm watching a ballgame on TV. What happens with all this input of words and ideas? It is processed by my mind and becomes a part of me. Then when I write or speak, it comes out in my own words.

This process of absorbing words and ideas is not unique to speakers and authors, however. We all take in vast amounts of information every day, and this can be very dangerous. What we do with all this input is vitally important. Living in a world-system with godless values, we are bound to encounter a lot of garbage. Therefore, we must avoid all we can and reject what we can't avoid. If we aren't discerning, our mind will become defiled. But if we find pleasure in what is "true," "noble," "just," "pure," "lovely," and "of good report" (Phil. 4:8), these qualities will be reflected in what we say.

Let's commit ourselves to take in only what is wholesome so that our output will also be wholesome.

Take my heart, its wellspring deep,

Cleanse and purify and keep;

Keep my tongue, Lord, bridled well,

Words of truth, oh, may it tell. —HGB

We need to ask God to keep us from evil hearing as well as evil speaking.

Proverbs 10:18-22

Out of Work

Our Daily Bread

Economic recession inevitably leads to an increase in unemployment. And the higher the percentage of people out of work, the more problems our social agencies have to deal with. Alcohol and drug abuse increases. Domestic violence rises. Crime rates go up. Some people just can't seem to stay out of trouble when they have idle time on their hands.

The same principle applies to our speech. In Jesus' warning about "every idle word men may speak," the word idle literally means "out of work." When our tongue is out of work—not being used for constructive and useful purposes—we are more likely to get in trouble with it. We find it so easy to say the kinds of things that are disrespectful, slanderous, cruel, or immoral.

Warnings against the sinful use of words are numerous in the Bible. "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking" (Pr 10:19). "Whoever spreads slander is a fool" (v.18). "Their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue" (Ps. 5:9).

If we keep our speech edifying, productive, and wholesome, we won't have sinful words to account for—because our tongue won't be "out of work."

Lord, set a watch upon my lips—

My tongue control today;

Help me evaluate each thought,

And guard each word I say. —Hess

Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles. —Proverbs 21:23

Proverbs 10:18

SUBTLE SLANDER

God hates slanderers. They are scoundrels and villains with hidden hatred in their hearts and deceit in their mouths.

Some people have turned slander into a fine art. They would never use a meat cleaver to cut down another person. They are shrewder "hit men" than that. They have learned to slander with a gesture, a wink, or an evil smile.

Jonathan Swift, who knew well the ugliness of slander, described a man who could "convey a libel in a frown and wink a reputation down." And Robert Louis Stevenson noted, "The cruelest lies are often told in silence." When someone is attacked in a conversation, the listeners can join the mugging with a nod.

The writers of the Proverbs described people in the ancient world who used their body language to destroy others. They winked, motioned, or gave a shrug to work their slander, and they felt safe in their attacks. After all, it is difficult to refute a gesture or to prove evil in a wink. Their actions were subtle, but as deadly as bullets piercing the heart.

Do you need to ask the God of love and truth to help you guard your speech and gestures today? Then for His sake, for your own

sake, and for the sake of others, do it! -- Haddon W. Robinson

Today let only thoughts that bless

Dwell in my heart and mind;

Silence my lips and tongue to all

That wounds or is unkind.- White

Be careful with your tongue -it's in a wet place and can easily slip.

Proverbs 10:19

The Sounds of Silence

The lips of the righteous nourish many. Proverbs 10:21

A fishing buddy of mine observed, "Shallow streams make the most noise," a delightful turn on the old adage, "Still waters run deep." He meant, of course, that people who make the most noise tend to have little of substance to say.

The flip side of that problem is that we don't listen well either. I'm reminded of the line in the old Simon and Garfunkel song "Sounds of Silence" about folks hearing without listening. Oh, they hear the words, but they fail to silence their own thoughts and truly listen. It would be good if we all learned to be silent and still.

There is "a time to be silent and a time to speak" (Eccl. 3:7). Good silence is a listening silence, a humble silence. It leads to right hearing, right understanding, and right speaking. "The purposes of a person's heart are deep waters," the proverb says, "but one who has insight draws them out" (Prov. 20:5). It takes a lot of hard listening to get all the way to the bottom.

And while we listen to others, we should also be listening to God and hearing what He has to say. I think of Jesus, scribbling with His finger in the dust while the Pharisees railed on the woman caught in adultery (see John 8:1-11). What was He doing? May I suggest that He could have been simply listening for His Father's voice and asking, "What shall we say to this crowd and this dear woman?" His response is still being heard around the world.

Father, today may Your Spirit remind us to seek the quiet so that we may listen first to Your voice and then understand the hearts of others. Teach us when to speak and when to be quiet.

Well-timed silence can be more eloquent than words.

INSIGHT: One of the major themes in Proverbs is our speech (Prov. 10:19-21; 15:1-4,23,28; 16:24,27-28; 18:7-8; 21:23). In Proverbs 10 Solomon contrasts the wise and the foolish person, noting it is our speech that reveals which one we really are (vv. 11,18-21). Those who are righteous and wise are restrained and judicious in their words and sometimes choose silence as the best response. If we keep silent, we will never say the wrong thing (v. 19), and we will even be thought to be wise (17:28). Jesus said that our words come from our heart and reveal whether we are good or evil. He warned that one day we shall give an account for the words we have spoken (Matt. 12:35-36).

Proverbs 10:24

Desires of Righteous Granted

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

BECAUSE it is a righteous desire, it is safe for God to grant it. It would be neither good for the man himself nor for society at large that such a promise should be made to the unrighteous. Let us keep the Lord's commands, and He will rightfully have respect to our desires.

When righteous men are left to desire unrighteous desires, they will not be granted to them. But then, these are not their real desires: they are their wanderings or blunders; and it is well that they should be refused. Their gracious desires shall come before the Lord, and He will not say them nay.

Does the Lord deny us our requests for a time? Let the promise for today encourage us to ask again. Has He denied us altogether? We will thank Him still, for it always was our desire that He should deny us if He judged a denial to be best.

As to some things, we ask very boldly. Our chief desires are for holiness, usefulness, likeness to Christ, preparedness for heaven. These are the desires of grace rather than of nature—the desires of the righteous man rather than of the mere man. God will not

stint us in these things but will do for us exceeding abundantly. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." This day, my soul, ask largely!

Proverbs 10:27

He with Us, We with Him

Spurgeon - Faith's Checkbook

THERE is no doubt about it. The fear of the Lord leads to virtuous habits, and these prevent that waste of life which comes of sin and vice. The holy rest which springs out of faith in the Lord Jesus also greatly helps a man when he is ill. Every physician rejoices to have a patient whose mind is fully at ease. Worry kills, but confidence in God is like healing medicine.

We have therefore all the arrangements for long life; if it be really for our good, we shall see a good old age and come to our graves as shocks of corn in their season. Let us not be overcome with sudden expectation of death the moment we have a finger ache, but let us rather expect that we may have to work on through a considerable length of days.

And what if we should soon be called to the higher sphere? Certainly there would be nothing to deplore in such a summons, but everything to rejoice in. Living or dying, we are the Lord's. If we live, Jesus will be with us; if we die, we shall be with Jesus.

The truest lengthening of life is to live while we live, wasting no time, but using every hour for the highest ends. So be it this day.

PROVERBS 11

Proverbs 11:1

HONEST PEOPLE

I hate dishonesty. It creates victims. I have lost money because I trusted people who were not honest. And I have met people who have been cheated out of their life's savings by smooth-talking con artists.

God hates dishonesty too. Proverbs 11:1 says that "dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord." This verse refers to people who cheated others in the marketplace. The overcharging may have amounted to only a few pennies per sale, but God hated this practice.

Honest people, on the other hand, do what they can to make things right, even when it costs them something.

I know a husband and wife who failed in their business and were forced to declare bankruptcy. This released them from a legal obligation to pay their bills, but they didn't view it as releasing them from a moral obligation to their creditors. So they both worked, raised their family in a low-cost house, and lived frugally. It took years of hard work and sacrifice, but they paid off every debt.

Our honesty is always on trial. It is tested when we make out work reports, file income tax returns, and make a sale. May we be so aware of God in our lives that we will be a people of unquestioned honesty.: Herbert Vander Lugt

Help me, dear Lord, to be honest and true

In all that I say and all that I do;

Give me the courage to do what is right,

And bring to the world a glimpse of Your light.--Fasick

There is no legacy as right as integrity

Proverbs 11

Today in the Word

April 11, 2013

Augustine said in a sermon: "Thou art thinking to construct some mighty fabric in height; first think of the foundation of humility. And how great soever a mass of building one may wish and design to place above it, the greater the building is to be, the deeper does he dig its foundation.

... Dig this foundation of lowliness deep in thee, and so wilt thou attain to the crowning top of charity.”

The book of Proverbs consistently groups pride and wickedness with foolishness, and humility and righteousness with wisdom. This is clearly seen in today’s reading, especially in a series of four proverbs, each of which uses antithesis, a kind of parallelism that pairs contrasting statements (vv. 18–21; cf. vv. 4–8). The first part of the proverb affirms a truth, the second part affirms a contrasting truth, and upon reflection both are seen to be examples of a larger truth.

For example, verse 18 begins, “A wicked person earns deceptive wages,” meaning that the results of sin, despite sinners’ foolish expectations, are not good. It finishes, “but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward,” meaning that the results of virtue are good. The larger truth here is that we reap what we sow. The next proverb focuses on the same idea and highlights the contrasting results: “Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death” (v. 19).

The next two proverbs shift the emphasis to God’s perspective (vv. 20–21). The Lord “delights in” righteous people but “detests” the wicked. In the end, He will make sure that justice is done and that people reap what they sow. We are all on a road to somewhere—the question is what road, why did we choose it, and where does it lead.

Apply the Word - To learn humility, and with it wisdom and righteousness, we look first to the perfect model (Phil. 2:5–11). For Jesus to become a human being was a big step down! Then “he humbled himself” even further “by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Yet in the end, just as in the proverbs above, His righteous actions led to a just reward.

Proverbs 11:1-6

Does Honesty Really Pay?

I’ll always remember the day when as a child I found two coins on the school playground. I brought them home, thinking they wouldn’t be missed. But Mother made me take them to my teacher. “They belong to someone else,” Mother told me. Since then, God has often reminded me of this early lesson in honesty.

For example, as I was putting bags of groceries in my car, I discovered at the bottom of the cart a greeting card I hadn’t paid for. I immediately went back into the store, waited in line, apologized to the cashier, and paid for the card. A man behind me, looking dumbfounded, challenged me, “It’s only a greeting card! Who would have known? Weren’t you a bit silly to come back?”

For a split second I did feel silly. But then I thought of something to say. “Should you ever lose your wallet,” I replied smiling, “I think you’ll hope that somebody silly like me finds it!”

Proverbs 11 reminds us that the Lord delights in honesty (v.1) and blesses those who do what is right (v.6). So even though we may give up what seems like some easy money, we gain God’s approval. That’s worth far more than all the riches in the world. Honesty really does pay! —Joanie Yoder

Help me, dear Lord, to be honest and true

In all that I say and all that I do;

Give me the courage to do what is right

To bring to the world a glimpse of Your light. —Fasick

Honesty pays great dividends—God’s approval and a clear conscience.

Proverbs 11:2

The Horse And His Boy

Our Daily Bread

In the Narnia Chronicle *The Horse and His Boy*, Bree is a talking horse. He considers the boy, Shasta, a “foal” who is badly in need of training. Often the horse’s arrogant opinions reflect an air of superiority. He thinks of himself as a brave warhorse, possessing great skill and courage. Yet, when he hears the roar of a great lion, he flees and leaves the other members of his party unprotected.

Later, Bree meets Aslan the lion, who is king of Narnia. The horse admits that he has been an arrogant and frightened failure. Aslan praises Bree for admitting his shortcomings.

The Bible tells us: “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). Life has a way of exposing the flaws of our own personal vanity. But learning the hard lesson that “pride goes before destruction” can become a turning point in which we intentionally shift our focus away from exalting self. Then, as we adopt a humble spirit before God and man, we can

become channels of wisdom to others. “When pride comes, then comes shame; but with the humble is wisdom” (Prov. 11:2).

Promoting our own importance leads to stumbling. But focusing on glorifying God and meeting the needs of others gives us the perspective of the wise.

Blessed Savior, make me humble,

Take away my sinful pride;

In myself I’m sure to stumble,

Help me stay close by Your side. —D. De Haan

Pride brings shame. Humility brings wisdom.

Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 27:9

Multitude Of Counselors

In October 1962, the world held its breath as the US and the Soviet Union stood at the brink of nuclear war. Premier Nikita Khrushchev had delivered nuclear missiles to Cuba, and President John F. Kennedy demanded their immediate removal. Tensions were at an all-time high.

Kennedy phoned three former US presidents to get their advice. Herbert Hoover had faced the economic problems of the Great Depression; Harry Truman had ended World War II; and Dwight Eisenhower had served as the Supreme Allied Commander in Europe. Each had valuable insights to share. After Kennedy conferred with all of his White House advisors, a balanced course of action defused the crisis. War was averted.

The Bible encourages us to seek the advice of wise counselors. Proverbs 11:14 states, “Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” The word translated “counsel” is a Hebrew nautical term used for steering a ship. The wisdom of godly advisors can help steer us in the right direction.

Are you facing a crisis? A truly wise person is open to the counsel and insight of others. Why not prayerfully seek the advice of some godly believers today? —Dennis Fisher

When a crisis looms before you,

Don’t face it on your own;

Seek advice from godly counsel,

And take it to God’s throne. —Sper

If you seek wise counsel you multiply your chances for sound decisions.

Proverbs 11:3

Danger!

Haman had enormous power in Ahasuerus’ kingdom, but he wanted more. When Mordecai the Jew would not bow to his arrogance, Haman was not content just to get even. He wanted to destroy all the Jews in Persia. But his lust for revenge cost him his own life (Est. 7:10).

So too, we today can self-destruct on our own pride, selfishness, greed, lust, or thirst for revenge.

According to Daniel Schaeffer in his book *Dancing With A Shadow*, the Eskimos devised a way of killing wolves. They planted a knife in the ice with the handle buried. Then they put chunks of fresh meat on the blade and let it freeze. The wolves would smell the blood from afar and come to devour it. As they licked the frozen meat, they worked themselves into a frenzy. Soon they cut their tongues on the razor-sharp blade and began feeding their hunger with their own blood. They would lick until they slowly bled to death.

When we fail to recognize the danger of sin and allow ourselves to become obsessed with it, we are in danger of self-destruction—as was Haman. To avoid that end, let’s daily open our hearts and lives to God’s examination, and ask Him to forgive us for the sin He exposes.

O Lord, if I am full of self,

I can be blind to danger;

I would be free from pride and greed,

To anger be a stranger. —Hess

Self-indulgence leads to self-destruction.

Proverbs 11:14

The Wisdom Of Crowds

The online description of *The Wisdom of Crowds* reads, "In this fascinating book, New Yorker business columnist James Surowiecki explores a deceptively simple idea: Large groups of people are smarter than an elite few, no matter how brilliant—better at solving problems, fostering innovation, coming to wise decisions, even predicting the future."

The author uses a variety of things, ranging from pop culture to politics, to present one basic thought: More often than not, the crowd gets it right. It's an interesting theory, but one that would probably be debated during election years or when someone's favorite contestant is voted off a reality TV show.

While the Bible makes it clear that the wisdom of crowds may not be reliable and can be dangerous (Matt. 7:13-14), there is another way collective wisdom can be helpful. In Proverbs 11:14, we read, "Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." One of the benefits of the body of Christ is that we can assist one another—in part by working together to seek God's wisdom. When we join together to pursue God's purposes, we find safety in His provision of each other and receive His wisdom for the challenges of life.

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,

In light inaccessible hid from our eyes,

Most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,

Almighty, victorious, Thy great name we praise. —Smith

We best pursue the wisdom of God when we pursue it together.

Proverbs 11:16-26

Giving Away Happiness

A U.S. News & World Report cover story explored the subject of happiness. According to the article, scientists have found that "strong marriages, family ties, and friendships predict happiness, as do spirituality and self-esteem. Hope is crucial, as is the feeling that life has meaning." But what if some of these elements are missing in our lives? Researchers say that "helping people be a little happier can jump-start a process that will lead to stronger relationships, renewed hope, and general upward spiraling of happiness."

What we give, more than what we get, produces joy in our lives. The Bible says, "There is one who scatters, yet increases more ... The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself" (Proverbs 11:24-25).

Is there some small way you can help someone else be happier today? Perhaps it's sending a card, making a phone call, or giving yourself in friendship. Hoarding never produces happiness. It comes as we seek the good of others and give away what God has given us.

The source of such an attitude is found in our relationship with Christ and His Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). From Him grows the fruit of generosity, happiness, and love.

What will you give away today? —David C. McCasland

Not what we have, but what we give,

Not what we see, but how we live—

These are the things that build and bless,

That lead to human happiness. —Anon.

It is more blessed to give than to receive. —Jesus

Proverbs 11:17

R. Lee Sharpe once went with his father to a blacksmith shop to get a rake fixed. When the job was finished, his father asked what the charge would be. The smithy replied, "Oh, there is no charge. I'm happy to do it for you!" But Sharpe's father did not feel right about accepting charity, so he persisted in trying to give at least a token payment. Over and over the blacksmith refused to accept any money until his patience was about to run out. Finally he exclaimed to his friend, "Ed, can't you let a man do something now and then just to stretch his soul?" Commenting on that boyhood experience, Sharpe later wrote, "I'll never forget that great man's reply. That short but big sermon from the lips of a humble, lovable blacksmith has caused me to find, again and again, the great joy and quiet happiness that comes from a little stretching of the soul."

Proverbs 11 speaks about enlarging one's soul as it relates to mercy. W. F. Adeney, writing in *The Pulpit Commentary*, said, "The merciful man is blessed in the very exercise of mercy... By a singular law of nature the exercise of mercy begins in the pain of self-sacrifice, but it soon bears fruit in inward peace and gladness... [Showing mercy] is elevating and ennobling."

Although Proverbs 11:17 refers to the "merciful man," all who are loving and generous experience the benefits he enjoys. Doing good carries its own blessed reward. It's a wonderful way of stretching our souls. —R. W. De Haan

Those who are good to others are good to themselves.

Proverbs 11:17-25

Stretching Our Souls

A man and his young son went to a repair shop to get a rake fixed. When the job was finished, the man asked what the charge would be.

The shop owner replied, "Oh, there is no charge. I'm happy to do it for you!"

The man did not feel right about accepting charity, however, so he persisted in trying to give at least a token payment.

Again and again, the owner refused to accept any money. Finally, his patience was about to run out, so he exclaimed, "Can't you let a man do something now and then just to stretch his soul?"

That humble store owner's reply was a short but powerful sermon on the joy and happiness that can come from a little "stretching of the soul." His attitude is an example of the truth of Proverbs 11:17, which says, "The merciful man does good for his own soul, but he who is cruel troubles his own flesh." We can learn from W. F. Adeney, who wrote, "The exercise of mercy begins in the pain of self-sacrifice, but it soon bears fruit in inward peace and gladness."

I challenge you to be loving and generous toward others. You will find that doing good carries its own reward. It's a wonderful way of stretching your soul. —Richard De Haan

How full and fruitful is the life

That finds in Christ its goal!

His love and mercy have a way

Of making large the soul. —D. De Haan

To stretch your soul, reach out with Christ's love

Proverbs 11:18 Sow What?

Read: Mark 4:1-20

He who sows righteousness will have a sure reward. —Proverbs 11:18

On the clock tower of my alma mater is an Art Deco bas-relief sculpture titled *The Sower*. The inscription beneath it is from Galatians 6:7, "Whatsoever a man soweth." Michigan State University remains a leader in agricultural research, but despite many improvements in farming techniques and crop production, this fact remains: Seeds of corn will not produce a crop of beans.

Jesus used many farming metaphors to explain the kingdom of God. In the parable of the sower (Mark 4), He compared the Word of God to seeds sown in different types of soil. As the parable indicates, the sower sows indiscriminately, knowing that some seed will fall in places where it will not grow.

Like Jesus, we are to sow good seed in all places at all times. God is responsible for where it lands and how it grows. The important thing is that we sow. God does not want us to reap destruction, so He wants us to sow what is good and right (Prov. 11:18). The apostle Paul elaborated on the metaphor when he warned believers not to sow seeds of corruption. Instead, we are to sow seeds that will reap eternal life (Gal. 6:8).

The answer to the question, "Sow what?" is "Sow what you want to reap." To reap a good harvest in your life, start sowing seeds of goodness.

Sow a thought, reap an act;

Sow an act, reap a habit;

Sow a habit, reap a character;

Sow a character, reap a destiny. —Anon.

A buried seed brings fruit; a selfless life reaps an eternal harvest.

Proverbs 11:19

A String Of Bad Choices

The teenager expressed the view of many. Speaking of the wild parties he attended, the 16-year-old declared, "Without these parties, my life wouldn't have any purpose."

Attitudes like this result from a string of bad choices that multiply until life loses its meaning. Examples of this "bad-choice string" can be seen all around us.

Take the couple whose first bad choice is to be sexually active without being married. They soon follow that practice with other poor decisions that lead to spiritual, economic, and social problems. Or consider the business person who takes money from petty cash to line his pockets, only to follow that bad choice with many others just to cover it up.

In Genesis 13 we read about the bad decisions Lot made when he and Abram decided to part ways. Given the pick of the land, Lot chose the best ground for himself, and then settled near a city known for its wickedness. Genesis 20 records the tragic result of one bad choice that led to others.

Learn from Lot's mistake. If you have made a decision that violates God's principles, don't let one mistake turn into a string of bad choices. Stop right now and ask the Lord's forgiveness and help.

The grip of habit can be so strong,

You find it easy to choose the wrong;

But let God's Spirit control within,

And He will free you from binding sin. —Kasper

True repentance rejects the wrong and returns to the right.

Proverbs 11:19

Don't Get Stung!

About 25 feet up in the maple tree behind my house hung a gray, cone-shaped object about 10 inches long. I decided to get closer to find out what it was.

Armed with a long fishing pole and standing on top of a barrel, I steered the end of the pole into the opening at the bottom of the object. And then it happened! Like a streak of lightning, down they came, first one, then another! I sprawled on the ground. Soon both eyes were swollen shut and I had large bumps on my forehead. I had been attacked by white-faced hornets. That was the last time I bothered them!

So it is with sin. The way to keep from being stung is to stay far from it.

As Israel prepared to enter the Promised Land, the Lord said He would send "hornets" to drive out their enemies (Exodus 23:28). But God also warned Israel not to turn from Him (v.33). As the people soon found out, disobedience would bring down the Lord's stinging judgment on them instead of on their enemies (32:7-10).

So don't try to see how close you can get to sin without getting into trouble—rather, see how far you can stay away. Listen to the warnings of God's Word, and don't forget the pain of past mistakes. Learn from them. If you do, you'll avoid being stung again! —M. R. De Haan

Today avoid sin's tempting lures

And evil thoughts subdue,

Or worldly things may take control

And someday master you! —Bosch

When you flee temptation, be sure you don't leave a forwarding address.

Proverbs 11:24

There it that scattereth, and yet increaseth.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

This scattering is a conception borrowed from the husbandman. From out of his barns he takes the precious seed, and scatters it broadcast. The child of the city might wonder at his prodigality, little weaning that each of the scattered seeds may live in a hundred more, and perpetuate itself for successive autumns.

We are bidden to measure our life by its losses rather than by its gains; by the blood poured out, rather than by its storage in the arteries of life; by its sacrifices, rather than its self-preservation; by its gifts, rather than its accumulations. He is the richest man in the esteem of the world who has gotten most; he is richest in the esteem of heaven who has given most.

And it is so ordered that as we give we get. If we miserly hoard the grain, it is eaten by weevils; if we cast it away it returns to us multiplied. Stagnant water is covered with scum; flowing water is fresh and living. He who gives his five barley loaves and two small fishes into the hands of Jesus sees the people fed and gets twelve baskets over. Tell out all you know, and you will have enough for another meal, and yet another. Set no limit to your gifts of money, time, energy; in the act of giving the whole that you have expended will return to you, and more also. Freely ye have received, freely give; freely give, and freely ye will receive. "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully... And He that supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for food, shall supply and multiply your seed for sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness, ye being enriched in everything unto all liberality."

Proverbs 11:24

Who Killed the Dead Sea?

The Dead Sea died of stinginess. Year after year it has received and not given. It has an inlet but no outlet. Likewise, the person who takes in what others offer spiritually but never gives anything out will become lifeless.

A student went to a professor and complained that he wasn't making progress in his studies. He then asked if he should find a tutor. "Get a tutor?" responded the wise professor. "What you need is a pupil!"

The author of the letter to the Hebrews scolded the readers because instead of being teachers they were like babies, still drinking spiritual milk (Heb. 5:12). Jesus, however, taught that we are to be generous in giving service to others (Lk. 6:30-38).

A man once said to me, "I never could get much out of the Bible until I began teaching a Sunday school class. Then I gave out the Word instead of just taking it in." There is no better way to learn than by teaching others. How much do you give out after taking in? Study the Word, not only for personal blessing and profit but for sharing.

Why is the Dead Sea dead? It —M. R. De Haan, M.D. (founder of RBC Ministries)

Is your life a channel of blessing?

Is the love of God flowing through you?

Are you telling the lost of the Savior?

Are you ready His service to do? —Smyth

When you give help to another, you get a blessing in return.

Proverbs 11:24-31

Gain By Giving

A visitor to a lighthouse said to the keeper, "Aren't you afraid to live here with the storms and high winds constantly lashing the walls?"

"Oh, we have to be more concerned about those out on the sea," the man replied. "We think only of having our lamps burning brightly and keeping the reflectors clear so that those in greater danger may be saved."

We too are to be more concerned about others than we are about ourselves (Phil. 2:3-4). Generosity and selflessness produce an abundant life of joy and rich reward. According to the Scriptures, if we give freely to others, we will receive abundant blessing.

Proverbs 11 teaches that a person who gives to others will gain even more (vv.24-25). Verse 25 paints a word picture to make the point. It states that "he who waters will also be watered himself."

The 19th-century preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Let me consider the poor, and the Lord will also recompense me. Let me water His garden, and He will make a well-irrigated garden of my soul."

As we focus our attention on giving refreshing help to the needy, we will be refreshed by the Lord.

Service is working and giving,

And not regretting the cost;

It's knowing and understanding

That no good deed will be lost. —Anon.

When it comes to helping others, some people stop at nothing.

Proverbs 11:24-31

What Can We Give?

When Milton J. Petrie died at the age of 92, his lifelong pattern of generous giving continued. The newspaper headline reporting his death said: Millionaire's Death Doesn't Stop His Generosity.

Petrie, the son of a Russian immigrant pawnshop owner, built his fortune with a chain of women's clothing stores. His will named 451 beneficiaries of his \$800 million estate. Many recipients were faithful employees, some were personal friends, and others were people he had read about and decided to help through a difficult time.

Few of us have the monetary resources of Milton Petrie, but we have the same opportunities to give. People all around us need time, encouragement, financial help, compassion, friendship, and prayer. How do we feel about giving what we have?

Proverbs 11:24-25 challenges our natural inclination to be tight-fisted: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."

We can hide our eyes from opportunities to give, or we can seek them out. Will we be generous today?

Sacrifice is the true measure of generosity.

Proverbs 11:25

Spurgeon's Faith's Checkbook

IF I desire to flourish in soul, I must not hoard up my stores but must distribute to the poor. To be close and niggardly is the world's way to prosperity, but it is not God's way, for He saith, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty." Faith's way of gaining is giving. I must try this again and again; and I may expect that as much of prosperity as will be good for me will come to me as a gracious reward for a liberal course of action.

Of course, I may not be sure of growing rich. I shall be fat, but not too fat. Too great riches might make me as unwieldy as corpulent persons usually are, and cause me the dyspepsia of worldliness, and perhaps bring on a fatty degeneration of the heart. No, if I am fat enough to be healthy, I may well be satisfied; and if the Lord grants me a competence, I may be thoroughly content.

But there is a mental and spiritual fatness which I would greatly covet, and these come as the result of generous thoughts toward my God, His church, and my fellow men. Let me not stint, lest I starve my heart. Let me be bountiful and liberal, for so shall I be like my Lord. He gave himself for me: shall I grudge Him anything?

Proverbs 11:25

Spurgeon - Morning and evening

We are here taught the great lesson, that to get, we must give; that to accumulate, we must scatter; that to make ourselves happy, we must make others happy; and that in order to become spiritually vigorous, we must seek the spiritual good of others. In watering others, we are ourselves watered. How? Our efforts to be useful, bring out our powers for usefulness. We have latent talents and dormant faculties, which are brought to light by exercise. Our strength for labour is hidden even from ourselves, until we venture forth to fight the Lord's battles, or to climb the mountains of difficulty. We do not know what tender sympathies we possess until we try to dry the widow's tears, and soothe the orphan's grief. We often find in attempting to teach others, that we gain instruction for ourselves. Oh, what gracious lessons some of us have learned at sick beds! We went to teach the Scriptures, we came away blushing that we knew so little of them. In our converse with poor saints, we are taught the way of God more perfectly for ourselves and get a deeper insight into divine truth. So that watering others makes us humble. We discover how much grace there is where we had not looked for it; and how much the poor saint may outstrip us in knowledge. Our own comfort is also increased by our working for others. We endeavour to cheer them, and the consolation gladdens our own heart. Like the two men in the snow; one chafed the other's limbs to keep him from dying, and in so doing kept his own blood in circulation, and saved his own life. The poor widow of Sarepta gave from her scanty store a supply for the prophet's wants, and from that day she never again knew what want was. Give then, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and running over.

Proverbs 11:25

Divine Recompense

Spurgeon's Faith's Checkbook

IF I carefully consider others, God will consider me; and in some way or other, He will recompense me. Let me consider the poor, and the Lord will consider me. Let me look after little children, and the Lord will treat me as His child. Let me feed His flock, and He will feed me. Let me water His garden, and He will make a watered garden of my soul. This is the Lord's own promise; be it mine to fulfill the condition, and then to expect its fulfillment.

I may care about myself till I grow morbid; I may watch over my own feelings till I feel nothing; and I may lament my own weakness till I grow almost too weak to lament. It will be far more profitable for me to become unselfish and, out of love to my Lord Jesus, begin to care for the souls of those around me. My tank is getting very low; no fresh rain comes to fill it; what shall I do? I will pull up the plug, and let its contents run out to water the withering plants around me. What do I see? My cistern seems to fill as it flows. A secret spring is at work. While all was stagnant, the fresh spring was sealed; but as my stock flows out to water others, the Lord thinketh upon me. Hallelujah!

Proverbs 11:24-31

Have A Wonderful Day

After admiring a painting in a woman's home, I was surprised by her generosity when she took it down and gave it to me.

I've seen many similar acts of kindness. For years, my mother-in-law hung on to her archaic-looking refrigerator so she could give more money to the Lord's work.

A Christian family I know had saved money to buy a new car. But when they heard of a desperate need on a mission field, they kept their old car and gave to missions instead.

I've also heard of a Christian businessman in Ohio who puts something in his pocket every morning to give away—a pen, a trinket, even a ten-dollar bill. As the day unfolds, he looks for someone who would be blessed by receiving a gift. "By constantly looking for an opportunity to give," he says, "I have a wonderful day."

The old saying "Takers eat well, but givers sleep well" is only partially true. According to Proverbs 11:25, givers also eat well: "The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself."

We must not give grudgingly or merely out of a sense of duty but from the heart. It's the generous, cheerful giver whom God loves (2 Corinthians 9:7). —Joanie Yoder

Give as you would to the Master

If you met His searching look;

Give as you would of your substance

If His hand the offering took. —Anon

Many people readily give God credit, but few cheerfully give Him cash.

Proverbs 11:30

The Price of a Soul

Our Daily Bread

According to a Wall Street Journal article, Hemant Mehta wanted to find out if he was “missing something” as an atheist. So the DePaul University graduate student went on eBay with this proposition: He would spend 1 hour of church attendance for each \$10 bid by the highest bidder. A former evangelical minister won with an offer of \$504.

How much would you pay for the opportunity to present Christ to an unbeliever? The apostle Paul gave a lot more than \$504 in his endeavor to bring the gospel to people who had never heard of Jesus Christ. He traveled many long, hard miles across the world. In a gripping account he told of his experiences: shipwreck, imprisonment, floggings, stoning, beatings, exhaustion, hunger, cold, and peril (2 Cor. 11:23-28).

In the past 2,000 years of missionary effort, valiant men and women have left their homelands to proclaim Christ in remote, primitive, and dangerous settings. Many have lost their lives; others have suffered persecution. In many parts of the world today, to talk publicly about Jesus is to risk hardship, jail, and even death.

When we consider Jesus’ sacrifice for us, any sacrifice we make to bring others to Him is worth the cost.

When we open our heart to the Lord, He opens our eyes to the lost.

PROVERBS 12

Proverbs 12:13

The wicked is snared by the transgression of his lips.

Meyer, F. B. Our Daily Homily

It has been well remarked that God has set many snares in the very constitution and order of the world for the detection and punishment of evil-doers. Amongst others, is the liar’s own tongue. Watch a criminal trial, and you will find abundant illustrations of this in the detection of a false witness, who makes statement after statement, which are not only inconsistent with truth, but with each other. Presently he comes to a point, where he falls into one of his own lies, which he had forgotten, and lies, floundering like a wild beast in a snare. It is impossible for a liar to imitate the severe and inflexible majesty of truth. In his endeavour to appear true, he will fall into a trap of his own setting.

But whilst the wicked goes into a snare, the righteous shall come out of trouble. It is not said that he will always escape it. Our Master clearly foretold that all lives which were molded on the example of his own would pass through similar experiences. For them also the bitter hatred of the world, the title Beelzebub, and at last the cross. “But the just shall come out of trouble.” It is not possible that we should be holden by it. We belong to Him who has come out of the great tribulation. Just now we may be following the serried ranks down into the heart of the sea, on either hand the heaped-up billows, and the stars bidden by the pale of thundercloud. But He who led us in will lead us out. On yonder bank we shall stand among the victors. That weary hand shall wave the victor’s palm; that tired head shall be crowned with light. Listen to the voices that come from that radiant shore: Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world: and, Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

Proverbs 12:1-7 Tall Trees, Deep Roots

My son Mark and I were digging out the stump of an old tree in his front yard. The tree had been only 5 inches in diameter, so we didn’t think the task would be difficult.

After digging around the stump and cutting through the surface roots, we fastened a nylon tow rope to the back of my truck and

pulled. Nothing happened. We dug some more, cut out some more roots, and tried again. Still no success. On the third try the heavy nylon rope broke. Strong, deep roots had anchored that tree firmly in the ground.

In the Bible, godly people are often likened to trees (Ps. 1:3; Prov. 12:3). Joni Eareckson Tada wrote about this in her book *Diamonds in the Dust*: “The branches of growing trees not only reach higher, but their roots grow deeper. It’s impossible for a strong tree to have high branches without having deep roots. It would become top-heavy and topple over in the wind.” Then Joni observed, “The same is true with Christians. It’s impossible for us to grow in the Lord without entwining our roots around His Word and deepening our life in His commands.”

Would you like to be a tall, immovable tree? That comes only through a life of Bible study, discipline, and tested faith—conditions that produce deep roots.

We read and learn the Word of God

To fix it firmly in our heart;

And when we act upon that Word,

Its truth from us will not depart. —DJD

The roots of stability come from being grounded in God’s Word.

Proverbs 12:10 Her Father’s Zoo

The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel. Proverbs 12:10

June Williams was only 4 when her father bought 7 acres of land to build a zoo without bars or cages. Growing up she remembers how creative her father was in trying to help wild animals feel free in confinement. Today Chester Zoo is one of England’s most popular wildlife attractions. Home to 11,000 animals on 110 acres of land, the zoo reflects her father’s concern for animal welfare, education, and conservation.

Solomon had a similar interest in all creatures great and small. In addition to studying the wildlife of the Middle East, he imported exotic animals like apes and monkeys from far-off lands (1 Kings 10:22). But one of his proverbs shows us that Solomon’s knowledge of nature went beyond intellectual curiosity. When he expressed the spiritual implications of how we treat our animals, he mirrored something of the heart of our Creator: “The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel” (Prov. 12:10).

The beauty of God’s creation should inspire us to take better care of what He has entrusted to us.

With God-given wisdom, Solomon saw that our relationship to our Creator affects not only how we treat people but also how much thoughtful consideration we give to the creatures in our care.

Father in heaven, when we think about the wonder and diversity of Your animal kingdom, please help us not only to worship You, but to care for what You’ve entrusted to us.

God is the real Owner of all of us.

INSIGHT: There is a subtle but important difference between intelligence and wisdom. Both of them are desirable; both of them important; both require diligence and discipline to acquire and exercise. However, wisdom is often considered the appropriate application of intelligence. Knowing something is one thing; being able to act well on what you know is another. As Solomon shows, intelligence can be demonstrated by speech, but wisdom is demonstrated in both speech and action.

Proverbs 12 Today in the Word

April 12, 2013

As you may know, the order of books in our English Old Testament is different from their order in the Hebrew canon. There, the book of Proverbs is followed by the book of Ruth. This fact has led some commentators to see the “wife of noble character” (v. 4, as well as the well-known passage beginning in Pr 31:10) as pointing to Ruth (see Ruth 3:11). That is, Ruth may be seen as a real-life example of an idealized description. “Noble character” is on display in the faith, choices, and actions of her daily life.

As we’ve seen, biblical proverbs touch on all areas of life. That’s why this book is often considered the most practical book in the Bible. Marriage and family are just two among many daily life topics (Pr 12:4, 7). Another is the power of words and control of the tongue, which we discussed two days ago and which receives significant emphasis again here (Pr 12:6, 13, 14, 17–19, 22, 23, 25).

Much of daily life can be framed in terms of relationships. The most important, of course, is our relationship with God (Pr 12:2, 22). As we move through the routines and interactions of an average day, it's worth remembering that the Lord is on the side of virtue and honesty. What about our relationships with others? Because not everyone is what they appear to be, Proverbs recommends caution in friendship (Pr 12:26). Because we always learn more by listening, we are advised to be humble and responsive to others' advice and correction (Pr 12:1, 15). Because so much of our time is spent working with others, diligence, hard work, and good stewardship are held up as exemplary qualities (Pr 12:11, 24, 27). Our characters are on display even in how we treat animals (Pr 12:10).

Apply the Word - A topical notebook can be useful in studying Proverbs. A page might be headed "Marriage" or "Work" or "Words" or "Two Paths." As you read and encounter verses on these different topics, you can jot them down under the appropriate heading. This can be a helpful way to get a bigger picture about what Proverbs is saying on a given topic.

Proverbs 12:13-22 Singing Liars

There are many ways of telling a lie. Some people who pride themselves on never speaking a falsehood would be amazed if they would begin to recount the number of lies they sing each Sunday in church.

Many years ago I read an article by an unknown author who wrote, "We sing 'Sweet Hour Of Prayer' and then content ourselves with only 10 to 15 minutes of intercession each day. We sing 'Onward Christian Soldiers' but wait to be dragged and drafted into God's service. We join in the song 'O For A Thousand Tongues To Sing' and then do not use the one tongue we have for His glory.

"We sing 'There Shall Be Showers Of Blessing' very enthusiastically in dry and sunny weather, but when the Lord sends a few literal showers we find it impossible to go to church because it's raining. We sing 'Blest Be The Tie That Binds' and then let the least little offense sever that precious tie. We sing 'Serve The Lord With Gladness' and then complain constantly about all that we have to do."

Remember, lies are lies whether we speak them or sing them. Next time you open the hymnbook, be sure you mean the words that come out of your mouth.

Don't be a singing liar! —Henry G. Bosch

Tell the truth and tell it right,

A lie will never do;

The Bible says that God is truth—

He wants the truth from you. —Branon

After all is said and done, more is said than done

Proverbs 12:15 Today in the Word

An executive at Oracle described his company's CEO, Larry Ellison, in these words: "The difference between God and Larry is that God doesn't believe he is Larry." This can be an area of temptation and subsequent failure in so many leaders: they think they're indispensable and infallible. Sadly, this isolates them and amputates their connection to the wisdom of others.

Proverbs 12:17-25 Speak That Word

In Charles Dickens' novel David Copperfield, young David returns from a happy visit with friends to find his widowed mother remarried to Edward Murdstone, a harsh and domineering man. Mr. Murdstone and his permanently visiting sister Jane set out to conquer David's spirit through cruel punishment and intimidation.

Early in the process, David describes his feelings: "I might have been improved for my whole life, I might have been made another creature ... by a kind word."

Copperfield desired so much to hear a word of encouragement, of understanding, and of reassurance that he was still welcome at home. He was sure that any act of kindness would help him respect and obey Mr. Murdstone. But to his dismay, no words of encouragement were ever given.

The tragedy of not speaking a kind word to a fearful and worried heart is as old as time. Wise King Solomon wrote: "There is one who speaks like the piercing of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health" (Proverbs 12:18).

In our personal and family relationships, are we trying to force others to do what we want, or are we seeking to lead by example and encouragement? A sharp tongue leaves a scar, while a helpful word heals the heart. —David C. McCasland

I long to have a caring heart—
To show God's love to those in need;
So help me, Lord, to share a part
Of all I have through word and deed. —Hess
Kind words can give a lift to a heavy heart.

Proverbs 12:17-22 Honestly

Today is National Honesty Day in the United States. It is a little-known designation for April 30, but an important one nonetheless.

Author M. Hirsh Goldberg established National Honesty Day in the early 1990s as a way to honor the honorable and encourage honesty. He said that April 30 was selected because "April begins with a day dedicated to lying [April Fool's Day] and should end on a higher moral note."

Honesty Day would be a good time to review the value of this trait according to God's Word. Honesty is not as easy as it seems—but we please God by striving for it.

An understanding of honesty begins with recognizing that God—our ultimate example—is truth (Deut. 32:4) and that He cannot lie (Num. 23:19; Heb. 6:18). Also, He hates falsehood (Prov. 6:16-19). Beyond that, all lies have as their originator Satan himself (John 8:44).

For our part, we can use these Scriptures as our guide: "A righteous man hates lying" (Prov. 13:5); love rejoices in truth (1 Cor. 13:6); lying is part of the old nature (Col. 3:9); growth means setting aside deceit (1 Peter 2:1); and speaking truth declares righteousness (Prov. 12:17).

Let's make every day Honesty Day.

Help me, dear Lord, to be honest and true

In all that I say and all that I do;

Give me the courage to do what is right,

To bring to the world a glimpse of Your light. —Fasick

People who trust God's Word should be people whose word can be trusted.

Proverbs 12:17-28 A Good Word

A man was invited to the home of some friends for dinner. The food was superb—except for the apple pie. Even so, he found something good to say about the pie.

Several weeks later, the man visited the friends again for dinner. This time they had a cherry pie that was absolutely delicious. But the visitor didn't say one word about it. This bothered the hostess, so she finally blurted out, "The last time you were here, I served a pie that I was ashamed of, yet you were complimentary. Tonight I've served what I think is the best pie I've ever made, and you haven't said a word. Why?"

The man smiled and replied, "The cherry pie tonight was fantastic, and the apple pie you served last time was not as good as this one. So you see, the apple pie needed more praise!"

Our relationships with people are like that—some need more encouragement than others. No matter how imperfect a person may seem or how poorly he performs, we should always try to find something to commend. All around us are discouraged people, perhaps even in our homes, who need "a good word" from us to cheer them up (Proverbs 12:25). Let's look for ways to give them that needed encouragement! — Richard De Haan

It was only a kindly word,

And a word that was lightly spoken,

Yet not in vain, for it stilled the pain

Of a heart that was nearly broken. —Anon.

If you see people without a smile today, give them one of yours!

Proverbs 12:15 The Critic

When I was a teenager, a family joined our congregation. The wife was quiet, but the husband was loud, critical, and overbearing. I was standing nearby one Sunday morning when he stormed up to the pastor and verbally attacked him for something he had said in the sermon. The man's voice was loud, his tone disrespectful.

The pastor didn't do what I expected. He spoke softly, thanked the critic for his insights, and promised to think through the issue again.

Later, I asked my pastor why he didn't argue right back. He gave me some valuable advice I still try to follow. He said, "Every piece of criticism can be helpful. God may be in it, and if He is, I need to hear what He's saying. The critic just might be right."

When someone criticizes you, here are some biblical principles to follow: First, don't respond in anger (Proverbs 15:1). It will only accelerate the tension between you. Second, realize that you have been presented with a golden opportunity to model Christlike behavior—love, unselfishness, humility, and concern for others (Philippians 2:1-4). Third, the critic may be right; you may need to change. A wise person welcomes advice (Proverbs 9:8-9).

Treat a critic as a friend, and you both win.

If criticism comes your way,

Consider its intent;

It may be that some truth from God

To you is being sent. —D. DeHaan

Criticism is a good teacher if we are willing to learn from it.

Proverbs 12:11 God Provides, But How?

Outside my office window, the squirrels are in a race against winter to bury their acorns in a safe, accessible place. Their commotion amuses me. An entire herd of deer can go through our back yard and not make a sound, but one squirrel sounds like an invasion.

The two creatures are different in another way as well. Deer do not prepare for winter. When the snow comes they eat whatever they can find along the way (including ornamental shrubs in our yard). But squirrels would starve if they followed that example. They would be unable to find suitable food.

The deer and the squirrel represent ways that God cares for us. He enables us to work and save for the future, and He meets our need when resources are scarce. As the wisdom literature teaches, God gives us seasons of plenty so that we can prepare for seasons of need (Prov. 12:11). And as Psalm 23 says, the Lord leads us through perilous places to pleasant pastures.

Another way that God provides is by instructing those with plenty to share with those in need (Deut. 24:19). So when it comes to provision, the message of the Bible is this: Work while we can, save what we can, share what we can, and trust God to meet our needs.

Thank You, Lord, for the promise that You will

meet our needs. Help us not to fear or doubt.

We're grateful that You're watching over us

and that our cries for help reach Your ear.

Our needs will never exhaust God's supply.

Proverbs 12:22 How Honest Are You — Our Daily Bread

Woman's Day magazine surveyed more than 2,000 people to check out their honesty level. When asked, "How honest are you?" 48 percent said very honest, 50 percent said somewhat honest, and the other 2 percent said not very honest.

Sixty-eight percent of respondents confessed that they had taken office supplies from their job for personal use. And 40 percent admitted that they would cheat on their taxes if they knew they wouldn't get caught.

Ananias and Sapphira must have thought they could get away with lying (Acts 5:1-11). But they quickly found out differently when Peter confronted them and told them that they had lied to the Holy Spirit. Immediately they were struck dead (vv.5,10).

The Lord's desire was to keep His new church pure so He could use the believers in the lives of others. As Bible teacher G. Campbell Morgan says, "The church pure is the church powerful... The only power [able to make] a church pure is that of the indwelling Spirit of God." The purity of the church led to their testimony spreading, and "believers were increasingly added to the Lord" (v.14).

Let's be the kind of people who "deal truthfully" (Prov. 12:22) so we can be used by the Lord.

Lord, by Your Spirit grant that we

In word and deed may honest be;

All falsehood we would cast aside,

From You, O Lord, we cannot hide. —D. De Haan

There are no degrees of honesty.

Proverbs 12:17-22

Nothing But The Truth

Years ago I read some unusual and humorous explanations for auto accidents. The following are just a few that people submitted to an insurance company:

"I had been driving my car for 40 years when I fell asleep at the wheel and had the accident."

"I pulled away from the side of the road, glanced at my mother-in-law, and headed over the embankment."

"The pedestrian had no idea which direction to go, so I ran over him."

"The telephone pole was approaching fast. I attempted to swerve out of its path when it struck my front end."

"The guy was all over the road. I had to swerve a number of times before I hit him."

"The indirect cause of this accident was a little guy in a small car with a big mouth."

These "excuses" may bring a smile, and some were probably meant to. But they also remind us of how prone we are to shade the facts, especially when it works to our advantage. The book of Proverbs tells us that "lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (12:22).

So let's be careful at all times to speak the truth—and nothing but the truth!—Richard De Haan

Deceit at first may have its sweets,

But these are brief, decaying,

So speak the truth as God directs,

For all your words He's weighing! —Bosch

A lie is a coward's attempt to get out of trouble.

Proverbs 12:17-22a

To Tell The Truth

Henry David Thoreau said, "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth." Imagine the difference it would make in our world if that theme were heard as often as those catchy and memorable advertising jingles by Coca-Cola or McDonald's.

Truth is essential to all our interactions--in the halls of government, the classroom, the workplace, the home. Truth-telling builds trust. As I tell my children, "If you tell a lie about one thing, it will be tough to believe you about anything."

There are hundreds of reasons to support the idea that telling the truth is best for us and for society, but the most vital reason is that it honors God. Truth is at the heart of who He is (Ps. 31:5), and it is how He wants us to interact with others.

Throughout the Proverbs, a book that clearly gives us God's thinking about moral and ethical principles, the standard of truth is held high. We find statements such as these: "He who walks with integrity walks securely" (10:9). "The truthful lip shall be established forever" (12:19). "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord" (12:22).

Truth cannot be refuted. It never grows old. It never has to be retracted. It never fails. It is the language of God. There's nothing better for us to do than to tell the truth. —Dave Branon

When lying lips attempt to skew the facts

And say that wrong is really just and right,

You never need to fear to tell the truth,

For truth can stand alone in any light. --Hess

There is nothing so powerful as truth. --Webster

Proverbs 12:17-25a

Who's Got Your Tongue?

It's been estimated that a talkative person may speak 30,000 words a day! But the important question is, how do our words, whether many or few, affect others?

A Greek philosopher asked his servant to cook the best dish possible. The servant, who was very wise, prepared a dish of tongue, saying, "It's the best of all dishes, for it reminds us that we may use the tongue to bless and express happiness, dispel sorrow, remove despair, and spread cheer."

Later the servant was asked to cook the worst dish possible. Again, he prepared a dish of tongue, saying, "It's the worst dish, for it reminds us that we may use the tongue to curse and break hearts, destroy reputations, create strife, and set families and nations at war."

We don't have to eat tongue to grasp that servant's point. But we may have to "eat our own words" quite often before we learn to avoid saying things we'd like to retract. Solomon wrote: "The tongue of the wise promotes health" (Proverbs 12:18). It affirms and encourages others. The key word in that verse isn't tongue but wise. The tongue is not in control, but the person behind it is.

If you want your tongue to build people up and not tear them down, ask God to make you wise. —Joanie Yoder

A wise old bird sat on an oak—

The more he saw the less he spoke,

The less he spoke the more he heard;

Lord, make me like that wise old bird. —Anon.

Wisdom is knowing when to speak your mind and when to mind your speech

Proverbs 12:18

Cutting Remarks

The writer of Proverbs describes an unwise person as "one who speaks like the piercings of a sword" (12:18). Our tongues can be like a multi-bladed Swiss Army knife when it comes to the variety of ways that we cut and destroy each other.

Unhealthy attitudes of anger, irritation, frustration, and impatience—even disappointment, stress, guilt, and insecurity—all contribute to our damaging speech. And as we cut with our words, we wound and divide friendships and relationships. It's no wonder that the infamous list of seven things that are an abomination to the Lord includes anyone who "sows discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19).

How do we stay off that list? For starters, we need to watch what we say. Gossip and slander are out, and words that hurt instead of heal are not welcome. Boasting, lying, and all the rest of the ways we use words to hurt and divide need to be gone as well. In their place, words that extend love and the healing power of forgiveness, mercy, and truth should rule our words and relationships. After all, where would we be if Jesus hadn't spoken words of forgiving love and grace to us?

So, put the "knife" away and use your words to help and heal.

Lord, put a seal upon my lips,

Help me to guard with care

The things I say and swift repeat;

O tongue of mine, beware! —Bosch

Our words have the power to build up or tear down.

Proverbs 12:13-25

Watch Your Mouth

You have probably heard the childish taunt, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” This piece of folk wisdom is at best a half-truth, with the second half being totally untrue. While sticks and stones can bring instant injury and pain, words can produce even worse and longer-lasting hurt.

According to a news report, an 8-year-old was arrested for assaulting a playmate with a stick. But the damage got worse when the parents waged a war of words that carried the humiliation and embarrassment of the children into the national press.

Sticks and stones inflict wounds that usually heal in time. But words can go much deeper and cause pain that lasts a lifetime. Such words as “I don’t love you,” “You are a failure,” and “You’re no good” can do permanent damage. Some people have been so deeply wounded that they are unable to accept words such as “I love you,” “You’re special,” and “I appreciate you.”

The book of Proverbs urges us to watch our words (12:17-22; 15:4; 26:2). We ought to pray with the psalmist, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

Though sticks and stones inflict great pain,

The hurt will fade away;

But just one sharp and biting word

Brings harm that comes to stay. —JDB

Words can't break bones, but they can break hearts.

Proverbs 12:25

The Power of a Kind Word

Frederick William Faber

The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious. Ecc 10:12

IT would seem as if very few of us give this power of kind words the consideration which is due to it. So great a power, such a facility in the exercise of it, such a frequency of opportunities for the application of it, and yet the world still what it is, and we still what we are! It seems incredible. Take life all through, its adversity as well as its prosperity, its sickness as well as its health, its loss of its rights as well as its enjoyment of them, and we shall find that no natural sweetness of temper, much less any acquired philosophical equanimity, is equal to the support of a uniform habit of kindness. Nevertheless, with the help of grace, the habit of saying kind words is very quickly formed, and when once formed, it is not speedily lost. Sharpness, bitterness, sarcasm, acute observation, divination of motives,—all these things disappear when a man is earnestly conforming himself to the image of Christ Jesus. The very attempt to be like our dearest Lord is already a well-spring of sweetness within us, flowing with an easy grace over all who come within our reach.

Proverbs 12:17-22b

Our Daily Bread

A college student in Texas became a local hero when word got around that he had rescued a woman from three attackers. But he gained national attention when it became known that his story was untrue. According to United Press International, the embarrassed fellow admitted that he did not (as he had originally claimed) use martial arts skills to defend a woman in distress. He confessed that he had picked up his cuts and bruises while meddling in a private argument.

His short-lived glory illustrates what Solomon said about the life expectancy of a lying tongue. According to his inspired words, lying

to avoid embarrassment will eventually result in even greater embarrassment. Lying to escape a painful admission of the truth merely delays the consequences of that lie and hopelessly entangles the liar in a web of deceit. But in time the truth comes out. The reasons for this can be found in Proverbs 12. The most important fact is that God hates lies (Pr 12:22), and He views them as unjust weapons of violence (Pr 12:18). As a result, lies do not hold up very long (Pr 12:19). They are the tools of the trade of those who depend on a temporary cover of darkness (Pr 12:20). They should have no place in the life of someone who is committed to doing what is right.

We can learn from the Word of God and from the experience of the embarrassed student. A lie may seem like the easy way out, but it will prove to be like an exit sign placed over a closet door. It leads no-where. —M. R. De Haan II

A lie is a coward's way of getting out of trouble.

Proverbs 12:18

The Problem With Critics

Critics talk much and do little that is constructive. They are more interested in trying to make themselves look good by making others look bad.

If Nehemiah had listened to his critics, the wall around the city of Jerusalem would never have been rebuilt. Some of what those critics said to him was accurate. The wall was rubble, and fire had burned the stones and caused them to crack and crumble (4:2-3). But the critics talked much and did absolutely nothing to help.

Years ago, Theodore Roosevelt noted, "It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred with dust and sweat and blood; ... and who, ... if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

Where do you see yourself in this picture? Are you being pelted by unfair criticism as you are serving Christ? If so, keep on going and God will reward your efforts. Or do you recognize yourself as one who tends to be critical of others? If so, it's time to quit the demolition team and join the construction crew.

I would not criticize the one who works,

The one who listens to God's Word and heeds;

But I would criticize myself, dear Lord,

Confess to you my faithless words and deeds. —Hess

Any spectator can criticize the players; it takes skill and dedication to play the game.

Proverbs 12:19

Truth Established

Spurgeon's Faith's Checkbook

TRUTH wears well. Time tests it, but it right well endures the trial. If, then, I have spoken the truth, and have for the present to suffer for it, I must be content to wait. If also I believe the truth of God, and endeavor to declare it, I may meet with much opposition, but I need not fear, for ultimately the truth must prevail.

What a poor thing is the temporary triumph of falsehood! "A lying lip is but for a moment!" It is a mere gourd, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night; and the greater its development, the more manifest its decay. On the other hand, how worthy of an immortal being is the avowal and defense of that truth which can never change; the everlasting gospel, which is established in the immutable truth of an unchanging God! An old proverb saith, "He that speaks truth shames the devil." Assuredly he that speaks the truth of God will put to shame all the devils in hell and confound all the seed of the serpent which now hiss out their falsehoods.

O my heart take care that thou be in all things on the side of truth, both in small things and great; but specially on the side of Him by whom grace and truth have come among men!

Proverbs 12:20

ARE YOU DECEITFUL?

"Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil."

Two slick con men boarded a train that runs between New York and Boston and singled out a prosperous-looking man. Sitting down next to him, they invited him to join them in a game of cards. It wasn't long until the unsuspecting victim owed one of the other players several hundred dollars.

The winner agreed to take a check, but once he had it in his hands he acted conscience-stricken and tore it up. "I never thought you'd lose so much money," he said. "Let's call the whole thing off." Impressed with his apparent generosity, the loser insisted on writing a new check.

Later, when he received his bank statement, he discovered that both checks had been cashed. The crook had apparently slipped the first one into his pocket and torn up a blank one instead. His seeming generosity was a clever scheme of deception.

We would all agree that such deception is despicable. Yet we have to admit that we all have a tendency to be deceitful. We deceive by wearing a mask of flattery, winking at wrong, or saying we are just trying to be diplomatic, but we are really following the example of the devil, the father of lies (Jn. 8:44).

Lord, help us always to be truthful.-- Henry G. Bosch

Deceitfulness lies deep within

And makes our life incline toward sin;

God's grace alone can cleanse the heart

And cause this evil to depart.-- Anon.

Oh, what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive!- Sir Walter Scott

Proverbs 12:22

When To Speak Up

Good communication is essential for a happy marriage. Poet Ogden Nash seems to have hit on a formula to help us remember how to communicate effectively. Nash, in his witty style, wrote:

If you want your marriage to sizzle

With love in the loving cup,

Whenever you're wrong, admit it;

Whenever you're right, shut up!

There's some immensely helpful truth in that four-liner--truth that is supported by Scripture.

Let's look at the two major points. First, if we are wrong we need to admit it. Not only marriage, but all relationships benefit from this kind of honesty (Prov. 12:22). Protecting ourselves when we're wrong makes resolution impossible.

On the other hand, we can be equally hard to live with if we insist that we're always right--and afraid to let our spouse know that we are fallible. According to 1 Corinthians 13:4, "[Love] does not parade itself, is not puffed up." No one likes to be around someone who always seems to be patting himself on the back.

Two simple guidelines for a marriage that pleases God: Admit wrong and keep quiet about being right. It's a good way to keep the relationship strong. --J D Branon

Button up your lip securely

'Gainst the words that bring a tear,

But be swift with words of comfort,

Words of praise, and words of cheer. --Loucks

Let your speech be better than silence; otherwise be silent.

Proverbs 12:25a

Our Daily Bread

Ken's friends invited him to their home for dinner. The food was superb—except for the apple pie. It wasn't bad; it just didn't measure up to the rest of the meal. Even so, Ken went out of his way to find some good things to say about it. Later, he visited the home again and stayed for dinner. On this occasion, the hostess topped off the meal with a cherry pie that was absolutely delicious. But Ken didn't say one word about it. This bothered the hostess, so she finally blurted out, "I don't understand. The last time you were here, I served a pie that I was ashamed of, yet you were very complimentary. Tonight I've given you what I think is the best pie I've ever made, and you haven't said a word about it." Ken smiled and replied, "I agree that the cherry pie tonight was fantastic, and that the apple pie you served last time was not as good as this one. But you see, the first one needed the praise!"

Our relationship with people is like that—some need more encouragement than others. Everyone who deserves praise should be recognized, and we should never say that something is good when it's really bad. Yet no matter how imperfect a person may seem or how poor the performance, we can almost always find something commendable to praise.

Discouraged people surround us—perhaps even in our own homes. But using a little imagination, we can find creative ways to give them the encouragement they need. —R. W. De Haan

If you see people without a smile today, give them one of yours.

Proverbs 12:26

Today in the Word

Dave Cullen's book *Columbine* seeks to explain the truth about what had really happened during the tragic school shooting. Based on diaries and other evidence, he concluded that one of the killers, Dylan Klebold, was a depressed teenage boy, while the other killer, Eric Harris, was a manipulative psychopath who wanted to destroy all humans. Eric could manipulate Dylan into helping to plan the massacre, and Dylan could feel important by being part of a grand plan. Their friendship was a lethal combination.

Proverbs 12:26

Best Friends

When I signed up for a popular Internet social network, I was shocked to be greeted with the words, "You have no friends." Although I knew it was untrue, I still felt sad for a moment. The idea that anyone, even an impersonal Web site, would call me friendless was upsetting. Friends are essential for our emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Friends listen to our heartaches without blaming us for having problems. They defend us when we're under attack. They are happy when we succeed and sad when we fail. They give us wise counsel to keep us from making foolish choices. They even risk making us angry for the sake of making us right. My friends have done all of this and more for me.

Perhaps the best-known friendship in the Bible is that of Jonathan and David. Jonathan was heir to the throne of his father Saul. But he knew that the Lord had chosen David for that role, so he risked his own life to save his friend (1 Sam. 20).

As the Bible shows us, we need to choose friends carefully (Prov. 12:26). The very best friends are those who are friends with God and who strengthen our relationship with Him (1 Sam. 23:16).

I do not ask for many friends,

But give me, Lord, the few

Whose loyalty and faithfulness

Are first of all to You. —Meadows

True friends are like diamonds—precious and rare.