

PROVERBS: THE WAY OF WISDOM

INTRODUCTION

The book of Proverbs is part of the wisdom literature of the Bible, which includes such works as Job, Ecclesiastes, Proverbs and James. There are two types of wisdom offered in these books. Some of them, like Job and Ecclesiastes, wrestle with the big questions of life: Why are we here? Why do bad things happen to good people? What is the meaning of life? Other books, like Proverbs and James, offer practical advice on how to live a good and Godly life.

The book of Proverbs contains many sayings which might be considered secular or non-religious; sayings which might be found in any time or any culture. Actually though, Proverbs would see these universal sayings as pointing to the created reality we all share and to the God who created things this way. This book assumes that there are universal moral truths which undergird all societies because they are established in our world by our Creator. Because they are universally true, it is impossible to imagine a healthy society which would not value truth, justice, liberty, temperance, wisdom and courage for example. As well as a healthy society that would not speak against folly, cowardice, greed, self-indulgence and injustice. Some cultures might define these ideas a little differently and certain societies might value them a little differently, but vices and virtues are seen to be universal.

Proverbs emphasizes that we have the freedom to make choices; to choose rightly or wrongly, wisely or foolishly. Meaning, the choices we make matter to us and to God. You define yourself and your life by the choices you make. Your choices can bless you and others, or they can harm you and others. Your choices can draw you closer to God or push you away from Him.

Finally, it is important to realize that proverbs require discernment. For example there are proverbs in our society which seem contradictory. "Haste makes waste", we say; but we also say, "He who hesitates is lost." We say, "Look before you leap", but we also say, "Seize the day." We say, "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts"; but we also say, "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth." Which one is it? Actually, that is a misleading question. Proverbs are meant to be held in a kind of creative tension with each other. It requires discernment, the guidance of the Holy Spirit and experience to know which one to apply when.

Proverbs is a challenging book to read in big doses. So don't! Read it in small chunks. Read it slowly. Meditate on what it has to say to you. Think about how you want or need to apply its truths to your life. May this study bless you and help you to grow.

God Bless,

Pastor John

LESSON THREE

MONEY, GREED AND GIVING

PROVERBS 22: 1-2

INTRODUCTION

There are four things that we need to learn to do with money. We need to learn how to earn it, how to spend it, how to save it and how to give it. Above all, we need to learn to see money from a spiritual perspective; so that it has the proper place in our lives. There are over 100 proverbs on money in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs has much to tell us about how to handle and look at money.

PART ONE: IS WEALTH GOOD OR BAD?

1) What do we learn about wealth from proverbs 10:15?

2) What do we learn from Proverbs 14:20?

3) What do we learn from Proverbs 30:7-9?

4) What do we learn from Proverbs 22:2?

5) What do we learn about wealth from Proverbs 18:11?

6) Proverbs 10:22 is one of the most positive statements in the book of Proverbs on wealth. How do you think it fits in with the other statements we have on wealth?

PART TWO: WHAT CAUSES US TO BE RICH OR POOR?

1) Look at Proverbs 6:6-8. What does it tell you about how to gain wealth?

2) Look at Proverbs 6:10-11. What does it tell you about one cause of poverty?

3) What do we learn about making wealth last from Proverbs 13:11?

4) Proverbs 22:16 warns about gaining wealth through dishonest means. Do you think this is always true?

PART THREE: GREED AND GIVING

1) Look at Proverbs 1:19. What does it tell you about greed? Why do you think that greed robs someone of life?

2) What does Proverbs 3:27 tell you about giving?

3) What does Proverbs 14:31 tell you about what God wants you to do for the poor? Why?

4) Proverbs 19:27 indicates that it is to our profit to help the poor? Do you think this is true? Why or why not?

PART FOUR: WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN WEALTH?

1) Proverbs 23:4 warns us about devoting too much of our life to the pursuit of wealth. Why is that not a good idea?

2) What does Proverbs 28:6 tell us is more important than money?

3) What does Proverbs 19:1 tell you about the value of wealth?

4) What does Proverbs 11:4 tell you about wealth?

5) What does Proverbs 8:18-21 tell you is more valuable than wealth?

Prayer for Financial Integrity

Dear Lord, we live in a world where honesty and integrity is severely lacking, but I want to be a wise steward of all I have, honest in all my dealings with those I come in contact and to give of my best to my employer, when it comes to money matters.

Keep me, Lord, from having a grasping attitude, but rather may I develop a generosity, combined with wisdom that only comes from You and help me to spend whatever money I have in a manner that is pleasing to You,

Amen.

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-about-Money>

4) How does a humble person approach others? Look to see what Proverbs 12:15 has to say on this topic?

5) Proverbs 16:18-19 is still quoted today. What does it say?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) What does it mean to be humble?

2) What does it mean to be proud?

3) Why does pride lead to a fall?

4) Why should we listen to the word of God and the advice of others more than “doing what is right in our own eyes”?

5) Proverbs 8:23 connects pride and arrogance with evil. Why is that?

6) Proverbs 22:4 promises that humility will bring a reward. How is that true?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) Would you describe yourself as more proud or more humble?

2) Do you tend to look to the word of God and others for direction?

3) What New Testament stories and passages speak of the importance of humility?

4) Has pride ever brought destruction to your life?

5) The Bible tells us that God can reach the humble much more easily than the proud? Has that been your experience?

A Prayer For Humility

O Lamb of God, who, both by your example and precept, instructed us to be meek and humble, give me grace throughout my whole life, in every thought, and word, and work, to imitate your meekness and humility. Mortify in me the whole body of pride; grant me to feel that I am nothing and have nothing, and that I deserve nothing but shame and contempt, but misery and punishment. Grant, O Lord, that I may look for nothing, claim nothing; and that I may go through all the scenes of life, not seeking my own glory, but looking wholly unto you, and acting wholly for you.

Let me never speak any word that may tend to my own praise, unless the good of my neighbor requires it; and even then let me beware, lest, to heal another, I wound my own soul. Let my ears and my heart be ever shut to the praise that comes from men.

Give me a dread of applause, in whatsoever form, and from whatsoever tongue, it comes. Deliver my soul from this snare of hell; neither let me spread it for the feet of others. Whosoever perishes thereby let their blood be upon their own head, and let not my hand be upon them.

O giver of every good and perfect gift, if at any time you please to work by my hand, teach me to discern what is my own from what is another's, and to render unto you the things that are yours. As all the good that is done on earth you do it yourself, let me ever return to you all the glory. Let me, as a pure crystal, transmit all the light you pour upon me; but never claim as my own what is your sole property,

Amen.

John Wesley

Source: <https://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Humility#149>

LESSON FIVE

TEMPERANCE

PROVERBS 23:29-35

INTRODUCTION

Temperance is a word that has gone out of fashion today. But it is an important word that we Christians need to reclaim. It's most common use is as "abstinence from alcoholic drink". Actually though, the word has more to do with keeping our appetites under control. It has as much to do with moderation and self-restraint as it does with abstinence. Here is one definition. "It is the Spirit-empowered ability to control appetites, emotions and attitudes. It is the capacity to resist sin. It is the ability to turn down opportunities for the excess of good things."

PART ONE: WHAT DOES THE PASSAGE SAY?

1) What does Proverbs 25:16 have to tell you about your appetite?

2) Proverbs 25:28 and Proverbs 16:22 go together. What do they jointly say?

3) Proverbs 23:1-3 tells us to be cautious when others offer you things. They might have ulterior motives. What else does this passage say?

4) Proverbs 23:29-35 is a long speech about the dangers of drink. What does it say to you?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Temperance involves both abstinence and moderation. Why do we sometimes need one and sometimes the other?

2) In the Christian life, is self-discipline more of a product of your will or the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

3) Does Proverbs 23:29-35 tell us to abstain from alcohol or deal with it in moderation?

4) What are the greatest dangers of overindulging according to Proverbs 23:29-35?

5) Does Proverbs 23:29-35 refer only to alcohol. To what else could it apply?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO US?

1) Is it easier for you to abstain from something or to handle it in moderation?

2) What things are addictive in your life?

3) What healthy or essential things in your life do you struggle to keep in moderation?

4) What are some things that you totally abstain from?

5) If you are enslaved or addicted to something, what does that say about your Christian walk?

A PRAYER FOR TEMPERANCE

Jesus, You practiced temperance;
You were the Model of self-restraint,
Never over-indulging in the temporal.
My body being the Temple of the Lord,
I must treat it with ongoing respect.
Self-abuse destroys the body;
Be it alcohol, drugs, or excess food.
Lord Jesus, bestow fortitude upon me
For my soul to control my body,
To practice the virtue of temperance.
Jesus, You are the source of my vigour.
Through You, all is possible!

Catholic Doors Ministry

4) Does this passage have anything to say about saving?

5) Can you find other proverbs which praise hard work?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) Why is it important to be industrious?

2) Why is laziness so bad?

3) Why do we need to save for the future?

4) Only one Proverb warns about working too much: Proverbs 23:4. What do you think it is trying to tell us? Why do you think there aren't more proverbs about resting and relaxing?

5) The Ten Commandments are listed twice in the Bible. Once in Exodus 20 and again in Deuteronomy 5. The lists are virtually the same except for the reason given for honoring the Sabbath. What two reasons are given for resting?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) It has been said of Americans that we "worship our work, work at our play and play at our worship." Is that true of you?

2) Do you struggle to be hard working? How much do you expect others (your spouse, your children, your friends, etc.) to be hard-working?

- 4) What does Proverbs 1:8-9 have to tell us about parents? What other scripture does it remind you of?

- 5) Proverbs 7:6 says what about family?

- 6) What do 29:15 and 29:17 have to tell us about the importance of discipline?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- 1) How important is it for parents to seek to pass on their faith and wisdom to their children?

- 2) What makes for a truly happy home?

4) What happens when we marry a bad spouse? What do Proverbs 21:9 and 15:7 have to tell us about good marriages and happy homes?

5) What happens when we do things to mess up our homes? See Proverbs 11:29 and Proverbs 6:32. What do they say?

PART TWO: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

1) If wisdom is what we are to pursue, what does that tell us about the kind of spouse we should be after?

2) Is a spouse something that all people should seek to have?

3) Proverbs 1:8 urges a child to listen to both their father and their mother. Why is that significant?

4) Why is adultery self-destructive (Proverbs 6:32)?

5) What does adultery do to our marriages and our homes?

PART THREE: HOW DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

1) What kind of a spouse (did, are, should) you look for?

2) What does that tell you about the kind of spouse you should be?

3) Proverbs 31:10-34 describes an ideal wife (there is no description of an ideal husband, so extrapolate from this what he would look like). What do you think of this description?

4) Do you think you have been a good spouse, child, or parent? Has that been a goal for you?

5) Can you choose one thing you could do that would make you a better spouse, child or parent?

Prayer

Father, thank you for my family. Thank you for the laughter, the learning, the tears, and the triumphs that fill this home. It is my desire that my family would seek you, Lord. Jesus, I invite you into this house. Teach us. Root us in your word. We belong to you, God. May we honor you with our actions and our words. May we build each other up according to your principles. May we extend forgiveness when there is hurt. May we glorify you in our victories! In Jesus' mighty name, Amen.