



PROVERBS

JOURNAL







WELCOME TO PROVERBS

This ancient collection of the sayings of the wise may be one of the most important books written for our times. We are people on-the-go, constantly bombarded with all kinds of information from all corners of the world. In Proverbs, we find bits of wisdom that, at first, seem disconnected. But the more we ponder them, the more we begin to see that they work together, providing a needed grid and filter for all that we are bombarded with in the name of wisdom and truth. Best of all, these sayings are certified by God as wise. He put them in His book! As such they are of immense value to us in our pursuit of recapturing the life Jesus has for us, especially in the various roles we have as money managers, employers, employees, parents, students, Christians, friends, neighbors.

The sayings in Proverbs can be read quickly or slowly. We can ponder them for a lifetime and we will find that they refresh our journey often. Their language is such that they stick in our minds. From there they are lifted by the Spirit into our conscious thought where they instruct us at just the right moments.

Our prayer together is that we become wiser and, through that wisdom, become more credible sources of life to all who cross our paths!

How will Proverbs speak to you?

-THE ELDERS OF RED MOUNTAIN COMMUNITY CHURCH

We would love to help you answer any questions you may have as you go through this journal. Just send a quick email to info@rmcchurch.org with your question(s) and one our pastors will get back to you as quickly as possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HELPFUL HINTS FOR READING PROVERBS PAGES I - III

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE:
THEY ARE THE SAME PAGE IV

WEEK 1: PROVERBS 1-5 PAGES 1-10

WEEK 2: PROVERBS 6-10 PAGES 11-20


WEEK 3: PROVERBS 11-15 PAGES 21-30

WEEK 4: PROVERBS 16-20 PAGES 31-40

WEEK 5: PROVERBS 21-25 PAGES 41-50

WEEK 6: PROVERBS 26-30 PAGES 51-60

WEEK 7: PROVERBS 31 PAGES 61-64



COMPELLING PROVERBS	PAGES 65-66
APPENDIX 1: ON THE FEAR OF THE LORD	PAGE V
APPENDIX 2: PROVERBS AND EVANGELISM	PAGES VI-VII
SURVEY	PAGE VIII

INTERACTING WITH THE PROVERBS

SEVEN IDEAS AND PRINCIPLES THAT WILL HELP

1 USING THE JOURNAL

The reading for the journal is divided into seven weeks, with readings for five out of the seven days. Each day, there are three to four questions to help facilitate your study of the biblical text. The point is not necessarily to find out the exact answers to each question, but rather to facilitate a personal interaction with God through His Word.

2 WHAT AM I READING? WHEN I READ IN PROVERBS, I AM READING:

1. observations about life put into memorable form. These are statements that capture the “aha” moments in life.
2. descriptions of how things *generally* work. These are not *absolute and invariable* laws (Proverbs 15:1). In other words, they are not axioms like in geometry (all triangles have three sides, and you will never find a triangle that doesn’t have them). Here is a proverb that our experience generally confirms; “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man” (Proverbs 6:10-11). But sometimes lazy people hit the lottery, or their rich uncle dies and leaves them with millions. The Proverbs are true, but they are truths for living in a rough-and-tumble world where there is a constant need for adjustments, interpretations, generalizations and troubleshooting as you go. A lazy bum sometimes does have that wealthy uncle—but you’d be wise not to stake your own life on it!
3. statements that capture a tiny cross-section of truth (Proverbs 26:4-5).

4. statements of varying length:
 - » short sayings characterized by parallelism (like Proverbs 10:13-15).
 - » long poems (like Proverbs 1-9 or the alphabetic acrostic in Proverbs 31:10-31).
 - » numerical Proverbs (Proverbs 6:16-19).

3 THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

1. Proverbs provides instruction in wisdom. This does not necessarily have to do with *thinking* skillfully, but rather *living* skillfully. Proverbs talks about success in living that is constrained by what is right. It is set in the context of the covenant. It is not interested in just what works, but what works within the constraints of the fear of the Lord.
2. Since we don't have a walkie-talkie conversation with God, Proverbs is here to describe the way life works. Proverbs came about as people used their God-given perceptual abilities to discover the truth that is to be found in living for God in a fallen world.
3. Proverbs equips us to make decisions on matters about which God has been silent. It helps us balance prayer with Spirit-enabled wisdom. The result is that our thought processes are enabled in a way that we arrive at good decisions.
4. Proverbs reminds us that we must cultivate and preserve wisdom to become wise (Proverbs 26:7, 9). Wisdom doesn't just automatically come.
5. Proverbs provides us with instruction on important subjects: wisdom, folly, diligence, laziness, the problems caused by a bad temper, the wise use of money, friendship, the use of the tongue, and parent/child relationships.

4 WHEN YOU'RE CONFUSED

When you come across a confusing proverb, note that it might make more sense as you read on in the book. Oftentimes it will be repeated later on in a slightly different form, or with a different contrast to add a fuller

meaning. Oftentimes proverbs are put next to each other in such a way that one “comments” on the other.

5 PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE

Sometimes the best thing to do is to slow down and meditate on one particular proverb. Other times the best thing to do is to keep reading and look for similar or repeating wording and themes. As with many things in life, there will always be proverbs that elude your understanding. It takes much diligence, practice and communal help to grow in our understanding of this book. But the journey toward wisdom is the right journey! Discerning how to navigate this is part of learning and growing comes only with the repeated experience of trying, failing and pressing on.

6 GENDER IN PROVERBS

When reading Proverbs we are reading our translation of the rendering of the Hebrew version of the Scriptures. The Hebrew used the male gender to speak of people in general. So it is important when we read to understand that when a proverb speaks of “the man who . . .”, it should be read as “the person who . . .”. Also, “son” can be understood also as “daughter.” In the same way a term like “adulteress” should be understood as addressing any person who engages in adultery. A woman of folly can be understood as a person of folly and a proverb that speaks of a “wife” can be understood as addressed to a “spouse.”

7 THE BEAUTY OF PROVERBS

The inadequacy of rules as a means of being accepted by God is well-documented in Scripture. Rules must exist where there is a lack of wisdom. The Proverbs are not rules. They have all the concrete particularity of legalistic rules, but none of the rigidity. They have all the flexibility of license, but with none of the stupidity and sin. If you take the book of Proverbs as a guidebook for practical Christianity, the way it was given, you will have wisdom that can deal with obvious problems without resorting to a clunky rule. Take, for example, your entertainment standards. Leonard Ravenhill once said that entertainment is the devil’s substitute for joy. Wisdom tells us to deal with what you watch with the eye of proverbial wisdom, and not the wall of rigid restrictions.

THEY ARE THE SAME

THINGS TO TRACK THROUGHOUT THE STUDY

1 There are three proverbs that are repeated nearly word-for-word in the book of Proverbs. Look for and record the duplicate of:

a. Proverbs 6:10-11 _____

b. Proverbs 14:12 _____

c. Proverbs 19:5 _____

Reflect on why the Spirit thought these were important enough to repeat for us.

2 There are many proverbs that are very similar. In the course of this study write down all the proverbs you discover that have the same message as the ones listed below:

a. Proverbs 11:2

b. Proverbs 13:3

c. Proverbs 14:31

d. Proverbs 16:32

e. Proverbs 15:18

f. Proverbs 18:12

g. Proverbs 28:12



WEEK 1

PROVERBS 1-5

*The fear of
the LORD is
the beginning of
knowledge*

PROVERBS 1:7



WORDS TO WATCH FOR: You will see the phrase “my son” almost immediately as you begin reading Proverbs. That little phrase occurs 17 times in the first seven chapters. It has two effects. First, we feel like we are being addressed by someone older and wiser who wishes to impart lessons that will help us avoid pain and get a head start on life. Second, and maybe not quite as obvious, is that this motif is preserved in God’s book to us. God has appropriated it as His advice to His children, both sons and daughters. So in this book we are being mentored by the king of the ages, the ancient of days, who knows the end from the beginning and to whom there is nothing new and nothing to learn.

DAY 1:

PROVERBS 1 – AS YOU READ THIS CHAPTER, MARK THE VERSES THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT BEING TEACHABLE AND THOSE THAT SAY SOMETHING ABOUT BEING CLOSED-MINDED AND WILLFUL.

1. Verse 7 is an important verse. The call to “fear” Yahweh - what does it mean? Why do you think we are told this is the beginning of knowledge? For more help on this subject, see Appendix 1 in the back of the journal.

2. Verses 20-33 present wisdom as a person inviting people to listen and learn. What is wisdom as opposed to knowledge? According to these verses what are some ways in which we become wise?

3. What was one verse you read in this chapter that challenged you? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 2 – IN THE FIRST SEVEN CHAPTERS OF PROVERBS THERE ARE FIVE RATHER LENGTHY SECTIONS THAT DEAL WITH THE DANGERS OF FALLING INTO ADULTERY. THE FIRST OF THESE BEGINS AT 2:16 (SEE ALSO 5:1-14; 6:20-35; 7:6-27; 9:13-18). THESE RE-OCCUR NOT ONLY BECAUSE THEY ARE GOOD ADVICE, BUT ALSO BECAUSE THEY SERVE THE PURPOSES OF THE WRITER. THEY ARE AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE OF PROVERBS AS A PART OF THE SCRIPTURE.

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: As you read this chapter, notice the “if-then-for” pattern in verses 1-15. Underline the words “if,” “ then” and “for” when you see them. Notice also that verse 16 and verse 20 begin with the word “so.” Many of the chapters in Proverbs have an intentional structure or flow to them. Try to notice these as you read.

1. In chapter 1 we were told how important the fear of Yahweh is for all of life (verse 7). In this chapter Solomon tells his son some things that develop this fear of Yahweh in him. List these and add a sentence about what each might look like in your life.

2. Solomon warns his son about certain kinds of people (verses 12-15). What kinds of people do we need to use discretion toward?

3. Solomon also warns his son about what adultery does to those who engage in it (verses 16-19). What stands out to you about his words?

4. What is a verse in this chapter that addresses an area in which you need to grow? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 3 – IN PROVERBS 3:3-12 WE FIND A DESCRIPTION OF WHAT PEOPLE WOULD LOOK LIKE IF THEY REMEMBERED THE TEACHINGS AND IF THEIR HEARTS KEPT THE COMMANDMENTS IN THIS BOOK. IN OTHER WORDS, WE FIND WHAT GOD WOULD LIKE TO TRANSFORM US INTO. IT IS A FIVE-FOLD DESCRIPTION OF THE PERSON WHO HAS BECOME WISE. IN THE REST OF THE BOOK WE WILL FIND BITS OF WISDOM THAT STEER US TOWARD THESE FIVE THINGS THAT ARE CHARACTERISTICALLY LAID HOLD OF BY THE ONE WHO GAINS WISDOM.

1. What is your favorite piece of advice in verses 1-8? Why? Is there someone in your life with whom you could share this verse?

2. Verses 9-10 talk about honoring Yahweh with our wealth. What do you think the term “first fruits” means in terms of 21st century American culture?

3. How have you experienced the loving discipline of the Lord who takes great delight in you? How is His voice of discipline different than your voice of discipline for yourself? How is it similar? What is your biggest fear when you think about God disciplining you? Do these verses address that fear?

4. As you read this chapter, what verses did you add to your collection of “compelling proverbs?” (see **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65).

DAY 4:

PROVERBS 4

1. Make a list of the things in verses 1-9 that we must do if we wish to be wise. What are some things these verses say will come our way through wisdom?

2. Verse 18 makes an important observation about the path of righteousness. What does it say about it and why is this an important piece of information?

3. Read the command in verse 23. What does it mean to “keep your heart with all vigilance”? It says that the springs of life flow from your heart. What is so important about our hearts?

4. What is something you are more motivated to do after reading this chapter?

DAY 5:

PROVERBS 5

1. Extramarital affairs are a reality of our times. Solomon was no stranger to them. He addresses this chapter to his son, a male, but it is equally important for both spouses. What are some of the consequences of having an affair that Solomon speaks of in this chapter?

2. What is some advice you can take from these verses that we should remind ourselves of when we find ourselves attracted to someone other than our spouse or when we are tempted in the many other forms of sexual immorality?

3. Verses 21-23 make some sobering statements about the aftermath of sin. What are some lessons you can draw from these verses?

4. What are some things you learned or re-learned from this chapter?



WEEK 2

PROVERBS 6-10

*The fear of the
LORD prolongs life,
but the years
of the wicked
will be short.*

PROVERBS 10:27



DAY 1:

PROVERBS 6

1. There are some people whom we should not allow to become key influencers in our lives. According to the first 15 verses of this chapter, who are some of these people? What are some poor people choices you have made? How have these affected you?

2. Read about the six things Yahweh hates in verses 16-19. Which ones have you seen in yourself? Why do you think this list is given to us?

3. For the second time so far in Proverbs we see a warning against adultery. Read verses 31-35 and complete this sentence: If I commit adultery these things will come about: (list as many things as you see mentioned or inferred in these verses).

4. What have you been taught through these verses about changes God wants to make in you?

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 7

1. This chapter is almost entirely about keeping ourselves from adultery. The first five verses give advice on personal values that will keep us from this sin. What are those?

2. What are some things that happen in a marriage that make one vulnerable to the advances of others?

3. As you read this account, list some of the things that make the fantasy of an affair intoxicating. What realities are spoken here (verses 22-27) about the aftermath of an affair?

4. What verses did you highlight in your Bible in this chapter that God has emphasized to you today? (*record these in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 8 – WISDOM BEING PERSONIFIED IN CHAPTERS 8-9 HAS THE EFFECT OF ALLOWING IT TO SELL ITSELF AND MAKE A PERSONAL APPEAL TO THE READER. THE EFFECT IS THAT WISDOM, WHILE SEEMINGLY BEYOND US, BECOMES INVITING AND ATTAINABLE TO US. A STRIKING FEATURE OF CHAPTERS 8 AND 9 IS THAT TWO WAYS OF LIVING AND THEIR OUTCOMES ARE PORTRAYED THROUGH TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF WOMEN. ONE AUTHOR HAS OBSERVED THE FOLLOWING ABOUT THIS CARICATURE OF WISDOM: "IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS, TWO DIFFERENT KINDS OF WOMEN ARE GIVING INVITATIONS TO COME AND TASTE, COME AND EAT. ONE IS LADY WISDOM, A NOBLE LADY PRESIDING OVER A GREAT TABLE IN A GREAT BANQUETING HALL. THE OTHER IS DAME FOLLY, BLOUSE UNBUTTONED, ENTICING THE SIMPLETONS. THE DRASTIC DIFFERENCE IN THE NATURE OF THESE INVITATIONS SETS UP THE CONFLICT THAT IS PERVASIVE THROUGHOUT THE ENTIRE BOOK OF PROVERBS—THE CONFLICT BETWEEN WISDOM AND FOLLY AS THEY RELATE TO EVERY IMAGINABLE DETAIL OF LIFE. THESE TWO WOMEN ARE EVERYWHERE." (DOUGLAS WILSON BLOG—WHILE HIS THEOLOGY DOESN'T LINE UP WITH OUR CHURCH IN SEVERAL RESPECTS, HIS COMMENT HERE IS SPOT ON!)

1. According to this chapter, wisdom is elusive. Why do you think it generally eludes humanity?

2. According to verses 12-21, what are some of the things that come our way through the wisdom we gain?

3. Since wisdom was brought forth by Yahweh, shouldn't Christians be the wisest people on earth? What are some of the reasons for discrepancies between God and His people?

4. In verses 32-36 Solomon mentions some things that help us gain wisdom. What are some of these things? In which ones do you need to do better?

In the eighth chapter of Proverbs, wisdom is described in terms that go well beyond a normal description of an attribute or quality. It is as if the composer says to us, "If the wisdom of Yahweh became embodied in a human, this is what that person would look like." For various reasons, it seems wise to see this description of "wisdom" as a glorious metaphor for the Son of God. Christ is expressly identified as the wisdom of God in the New Testament by Paul when he writes; "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:24). You have read in Proverbs chapter 8 a description of our savior, Jesus of Nazareth, crucified, buried and risen. He is the all-wise King!

DAY 4:
PROVERBS 9

1. What are some things you think of when you read the “simple ways” in verse 6?

2. Compare and contrast the calls of wisdom (verses 1-6) and folly (verses 13-18). What are the differences and similarities? Which difference strikes you the most?

3. Verses 7-12 give some very pragmatic advice to wise people. Which of these stands out as significant with respect to your life right now?

4. What are some things you read earlier in Proverbs that you noticed were repeated in this chapter?

DAY 5:

PROVERBS 10 – A SHIFT IN STYLE BEGINS WITH VERSE 1 OF CHAPTER 10. FROM THIS POINT UNTIL 22:16, TWO-LINE PROVERBIAL STATEMENTS OCCUR ONE AFTER THE OTHER. IN A FEW CASES, THERE MAY BE LOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THEM, MOST OFTEN THERE IS NOT. AS MENTIONED EARLIER, THESE ARE ALL BITS OF WISDOM, NEARLY 400 OF THEM! THEY PAINT A COMPREHENSIVE PICTURE OF THE INFINITE IMPACT OF WISDOM ON HUMAN BEHAVIOR. THERE ARE NO HIDDEN PLACES THAT WISDOM LEAVES UNSHAPED.

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: As you read this chapter, highlight the verses that speak about the tongue.

1. Verse 9 speaks about security. Does this verse teach that choosing to take the high road will always pay off? What are some things that we falsely rely on for security?

2. Verse 12 is an important verse for friendship and for all who are a part of the church. What does it mean to “cover all offenses”? What do you do when you feel hate building in you? How does verse 18 relate to this?

3. A “sluggard” is a lazy, unreliable person. What does verse 26 say about a sluggard? What are some ways in which you have been unreliable and lazy? How important is it to you to be dependable and credible?

4. Which verse in this chapter was particularly important for you today? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

WEEK 3

PROVERBS 11-15

PRAYER

Ps 103:1 The prayer ends with the psalmist bowing to God, praising and worshiping. **27** *Remember your will, O Lord: your calling was the justice and mercy, thus in the ascending words of kingdom-centered prayer. The Father, then, allows both the communion-seeking and kingdom-seeking kinds of prayer.*

Beyond looking at the actual prayers of the Bible, we should consider also the Scripture's theology of prayer—the reasons in God that we are created so that human beings are able to pray. We are told that Jesus Christ stands as our mediator so that we, though unworthy in ourselves, can boldly approach God's throne and cry out for our needs in the name of Jesus (1 John 4:14–16; 2:28). We are also told that God himself dwells within us through the Spirit (Rom 8:9–11) and helps us to pray (Rom 8:26–27), so that even now by faith we may gaze and contemplate the glory of Jesus (2 Cor 3:17–18). Thus the Bible gives us theological support for both communion-centered and kingdom-centered prayer.

A little reflection will show us that these two kinds of prayer are neither opposites nor even discrete categories. Adoring God is done through with supplication. **14** *Supplicate God as we pray; challenged by the Spirit, we seek to see that the world lies before us that all would honor him as God. But both an adoration-centered supplication and kingdom-seeking prayer must include prayer to know God himself.* The Westminster Shorter Catechism tells us that our purpose is to “glorify God and enjoy him forever.” In this famous sentence we see reflected both kingdom prayer and communion prayer. These two things—**glorifying God and enjoying God**—are not always coincidental in this life, but in the end they must be the same thing. We may pray for the coming of God's kingdom, but if we don't enjoy God supremely with all our being, we are not truly honoring him as Lord.¹⁷

Finally, when we consult many of the greatest Christian writers

*Better is a little
with the fear of the
LORD than great
treasure and
trouble with it.*

PROVERBS 15:16



DAY 1:

PROVERBS 11

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: Highlight the verses in this chapter that speak of justice and honesty. For additional comments on Proverbs 11:30, See Appendix 2.

1. In verses 3-11 a number of contrasts are made between righteousness and wickedness (see chapter 10 for even more contrasts). Which of these meant the most to you?

2. Verses 24-26 all address being generous with our money. What principles about handling our finances do you see in these statements?

3. Look at verse 29. What do you think this proverb is expressing to us?

4. What verse would you pick out of this chapter today as the one God had for you? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 12

1. Read verse 1. Is it hard for you to accept reproof? What does your reaction tend to be when someone corrects you?

2. Verse 9 talks about posturing, trying to look good, which we can find ourselves doing even as Christians. What are some classic things people do in order to appear greater than they are? What about you?

3. Verses 13-19 express some thoughts about the tongue, and in the middle are a couple of verses about fools (verses 15-16). What stood out to you in this section?

4. What verse did you mark today as one that applied specifically to you? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 13

1. Verse 3 is another great verse on the tongue. Have you ever gone through a season when you intentionally tried to talk less? Have you ever entered a conversation intent on saying nothing about yourself? Try doing that today.

2. Verse 11 is an astute saying about money. If we believed it, what kind of things would it protect us from? What are some things you remember that Proverbs has said so far about money?

3. Verse 20 is sound advice on the kinds of people we should have around us. Based on what you have read so far in Proverbs, what are some of the characteristics of wise people that you would look for as close friends?

4. What Proverb jumped out at you as you read this chapter today? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 4:

PROVERBS 14

1. What is the message of verse 4? How can you apply this to some of your tasks and responsibilities in life and in the Church?

2. The proverb in verse 12 is an important one. What does this say about decision-making in the course of our lives? What things can you add to your own decision-making process to heed this warning?

3. Verses 29-30 make some statements about our emotional health. What are some things you know about God that bring tranquility to your heart? What is God leading you to do that will help you know Him even better? What are some things in others that you have caught yourself envying?

4. As you read this chapter, what verses did you add to your collection of “compelling proverbs”? (see **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65)

DAY 5:

PROVERBS 15

1. Verse 1 tells us how we can defuse a volatile conversation. In what relationship in your life can you practice this?

2. Do you find yourself wondering if being good pays off in the end? What proverbs in this chapter are important to re-visit at such times? What are some situations where your response needs to be shaped by what these proverbs say?

3. By this time you have read a lot of proverbs like the ones in verses 31-33. Why is receiving rebuke so important to gaining wisdom?

4. What were the proverbs in this chapter through which you felt the Lord speaking to you? (*record these in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)



WEEK 4

PROVERBS 16-20

*The fear of the
LORD leads
to life, and
whoever has
it rests satisfied*

PROVERBS 19:23



DAY 1:

PROVERBS 16- STARTING IN ON PROVERBS 16 AT THIS POINT MIGHT FEEL EITHER A LITTLE REPETITIVE OR LIKE A 'FIRE HOSE' OF INFORMATION. THE TEMPTATION, THEN, IS TO DEVELOP A CALLOUSNESS TOWARD THESE NEXT FEW CHAPTERS; TO JUST READ THEM AND 'GET THROUGH' THEM. IF YOU'RE FEELING THIS, RESIST THE TEMPTATION (AND MAYBE SOME OTHERS THAT YOU'VE NOTICED) AND ASK THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP YOUR MIND TO ENGAGE THE READING THIS WEEK. BUT EVEN IF YOU'RE FEELING ENERGIZED AND READY TO KEEP READING, IT'S STILL GOOD TO ASK FOR HIS HELP.

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: Highlight the proverbs in this chapter that have to do with justice.

1. Verse 2 touches on a critical life skill. What steps do you take to make sure you have a truthful evaluation of yourself – an accurate self-awareness?

2. Verses 27-30 have to do with people of whom we should beware. Which verse has special meaning to you? How should we behave toward those in whom we see such things?

3. Verse 32 is a great proverb about handling anger and other impulses. What are acceptable ways of managing anger and what are unacceptable ones? What do you think is an area of your “spirit” that you need to “rule”?

4. Which verse in this chapter was particularly important to you today? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 17

1. A rebuke often stings, yet verse 10 says to pay attention to it. What have you found gets in the way of learning from a rebuke? There are many proverbs that talk about fools. What does this verse say is characteristic of fools?

2. Read verse 15. Why is this important for us in American culture right now? What have you learned about walking the fine line between being judgmental and being truthful?

3. The proverb in verse 28 is about our speech. What principle is it trying to get across? What is your reaction to someone who talks too much? What about those who just want to talk about themselves? What are the top three things God wants you to change about your speech?

4. How did the Holy Spirit challenge you as you read these verses?

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 18

1. The proverb in verse 1 is about being too independent. Do you think it is possible to mature as a Christian without the help of others? Why or why not? What are some things you could do to be more closely supported by others spiritually?

2. Read verse 2. How can you become a better listener? What kinds of questions do you need to learn to ask to friends, acquaintances and family?

3. Verse 17 is an important verse to remember in supporting others who are going through hard things. When you hear someone's explanation of what has gone wrong in a relationship (or their job, home, etc.) what do you have to remember?

4. As you read this chapter, what verse spoke sound wisdom to you that seemed particularly for you today?

DAY 4:
PROVERBS 19

1. Verse 3 speaks of a common human tendency. What is it?

2. Verse 11 is yet another one that deals with the subject of anger. How does the second half of the proverb challenge you personally today? Is there an offense you need to overlook? Do you think we as a culture are getting better or worse at getting over things?

3. Verses 17-21 have some particularly good thoughts. Which of these proverbs is of greatest interest to you today? Try and write out its meaning in one sentence.

4. As you read this chapter what verses did you add to your collection of “compelling proverbs”? Why? (see **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65)

DAY 5:

PROVERBS 20

1. What is the meaning of the proverb in verse 9? Make a list of some of the important implications of this.

2. What does verse 17 teach you about embellishing your abilities when interviewing for a job or when trying to gain credibility? What is its application to our activity on social media?

3. The proverb in verse 30 says something that applies to friendship. What friends do you have that tell you the hard things? Does anyone have permission from you to speak truth to you even if it hurts?

4. A proverb is stated twice in this chapter. You have seen the idea stated in earlier proverbs. What is it? Why do you think it is stated multiple times in Proverbs?

A close-up photograph of a woman with long dark hair kissing a baby on the forehead. The woman's face is in profile on the left, and the baby is in the center. The baby is wearing a white knit hat and a patterned bib. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. A semi-transparent grey box is overlaid on the image, containing the text.

WEEK 5

PROVERBS 21-25

*Let not your heart
envy sinners,
but continue in the
fear of the
LORD all the day*

PROVERBS 23:17



DAY 1:

PROVERBS 21

1. What are two things that the proverb in verse 2 teaches you about yourself?

2. Verse 3 is a parable that Jesus reinforced (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). What kind of person will you become if you do not learn this lesson?

3. The proverbs in verses 9 and 19 speak about wives specifically, but give general wisdom on how to be a good spouse. If you are married, what are some ways in which you could make life better for your spouse?

4. This chapter begins and ends with statements about the sovereignty of God. When you see corrupt governments or human suffering, how do you justify their existence with the fact that you believe God is sovereign?

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 22 – BEGINNING AT VERSE 17, YOU WILL NOTICE A SHIFT AWAY FROM THE TYPICAL TWO-LINE PROVERBIAL STATEMENTS. THE PROVERBIAL SAYINGS BECOME LONGER, ANYWHERE FROM FOUR TO 20 LINES IN LENGTH. THEY NOT ONLY CONTAIN WISDOM, THEY ARE MIXED WITH APPEALS TO THE READER TO EMBRACE WISDOM. SO, WE ARE SHIFTING FROM MORE DETACHED STATEMENTS TO MORE PERSONAL AND EMOTIONAL STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE SUBJECT OF WISDOM.

1. Verse 1 is a proverb about a “good name.” From what you have observed in Proverbs so far, list five things that constitute a “good name.”

2. Verse 10 lists three things that “scoffers” bring into relationships. What are the three things? What is a “scoffer” and why is the language so strong about dealing with them?

3. Why does a “sluggard” say what he says in verse 13? You have seen the word “sluggard” several times in proverbs. What is a “sluggard”?

4. Verses 22-29 give sound advice for different choices we make as we live. Which pieces of advice have special meaning to you today?

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 23

1. In verses 1-9, there is some subtle and not-so-subtle advice about dealings with certain kinds of people. In today's terminology, what are some kinds of people/situations we need for which we need special wisdom?

2. Verses 4-5 are great verses on material things. What sort of wealth do you find yourself coveting?

3. When might the statements of verses 17-18 be really good for you to remember? What can you do with these words so that you recall them?

4. As you read this chapter, what verses did you add to your collection of “compelling proverbs”? What did they challenge you to do? (*record these in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 4:

PROVERBS 24

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: Highlight the verses in this chapter that say something about our attitudes/behavior toward different people who are part of our world.

1. In verses 3-4 there are good words about building a strong marriage, a family, or even a business. What are some insightful ideas that you can draw from this?

2. What did verse 27 mean to the readers of Solomon's day, most of whom were farmers? What are some applications we could make from this for our own lives?

3. This chapter ends with a parable about a lazy man (verses 30-34). Write some sentences about what you think spiritual laziness looks like in a person.

4. Which verse in this chapter did you find either inspiring or convicting? (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 5:

PROVERBS 25

1. What is the message of verses 6-7? To what type of situation might this be applicable in your life?

2. What does verse 16 teach about pleasure (see also verse 27)? What do you think it is about us as humans that makes us loathe things that were once pleasurable? What similar idea does verse 17 teach us?

3. Verse 28 speaks of the important life skill of self-control, with which the Spirit helps us (Galatians 5:22). What is its message? What are some areas of your life that once were out of control that God helped you put under His control? What is an area of self-control for which you need prayer?

4. How have you been challenged by the Holy Spirit as you read these verses and which verse were you reading when this happened?

WEEK 6

PROVERBS 26-30

MATTHEW 10:1-7

*Blessed is the
one who fears the
LORD always, but
whoever hardens
his heart will
fall into calamity*

PROVERBS 28:14



DAY 1:

PROVERBS 26

1. Verses 1-11 contain some proverbial statements about fools. Why is this an important subject? How did these verses point to some ways in which you are foolish?

2. What purpose does verse 12 serve in following verses 1-11 and the talk about fools?

3. What is the message of the proverb in verse 17? In what kinds of situations should you remember it? Does this mean you should not seek to be a peacemaker? What might the difference be between “meddling” and “peacemaking”?

4. Verses 20-28 focused us on issues created by how we talk. What was a particularly good reminder to you about your own speech, something that reminded you about how you are versus how you want to be?

DAY 2:

PROVERBS 27 – HERE YOU WILL NOTICE THAT THERE IS ONCE AGAIN A SHIFT IN STYLE AND WE ARE RETURNED TO A SERIES OF TWO-LINE PROVERBIAL STATEMENTS. THIS STYLE PERSISTS THROUGH THE END OF CHAPTER 29.

1. Verses 1-2 apply to how we present ourselves to others. We have read other proverbs about this. As you have thought about this, what truths do we know from God that help us moderate this need for praise from others?

2. Verses 5, 6, 10 and 17 are about friendship. Which of these has special meaning to you in terms of close friendships and relationships?

3. Verse 21 says that a man is tested by the praise accorded him. What are the ways in which this statement is true? When you receive praise, how does this test you?

4. What proverbs in this chapter does the Lord seem to want to speak through today?

DAY 3:

PROVERBS 28

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: Highlight the proverbs in this chapter that address being a person of principle and integrity.

1. Verses 4, 7, and 9 have to do with the Law, the things written in the first five books of the Bible. According to these proverbs, why do you think God's Law is important for us to pay attention to today?

2. What are some reasons why it is important to practice the proverb in verse 13 in our marriages and in our other close relationships?

3. Notice that a hard heart is the opposite of one who “fears the Lord.” What are some things you do to follow verse 14, to practice the “fear of the Lord”? What are some things that you have found tend to harden your heart toward God?

4. Pick the proverb from this chapter that you found most applicable to your life today. (*record this in your **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65*)

DAY 4:

PROVERBS 29

WORDS TO WATCH FOR: As you read this chapter, highlight the verses that have special application to those who lead and govern people.

1. We all love praise. The proverb in verse 5 is one of several in the book that address flattery. What is the “net” that the praise of some spreads for our feet? Do you think God would say that the approval and praise of others plays an unhealthy role in your life right now?

2. Verse 18 is an important statement about “prophetic vision.” What is prophetic vision? How is it connected to “he who keeps the law”? How do you think it occurs today?

3. Verse 27 speaks of a strange reality that was observable even in the ancient world. What is it? How have you noticed this in your world?

4. As you read this chapter, what verses did you add to your personal collection of “compelling proverbs”? (see **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65)

3. Verses 24-26 must be aimed at helping us draw some conclusions about wisdom and weakness. What do you think are some of those conclusions?

4. As you read this chapter, what verses did you add to your collection of “Compelling Proverbs?” Why? What did they challenge you to do? (see **Compelling Proverbs List** on page 65)

A group of people are sitting around a campfire in a desert setting. The campfire is built with large, flat stones and is burning brightly. In the background, there are rocky hills and some sparse vegetation. The people are dressed in casual outdoor attire. A semi-transparent dark brown banner is overlaid on the image, containing the text "WEEK 7" and "PROVERBS 31" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

WEEK 7

PROVERBS 31

*Charm is deceitful,
and beauty is vain,
but a woman who
fears the LORD
is to be praised*

PROVERBS 31:30



This concluding chapter of Proverbs is said to be “the oracle” taught to Solomon by his mother. His mother was Bathsheba. We do not know when Bathsheba delivered this “oracle” to her son. Whenever it was, those who collected these sayings chose to place it at the end of the collection. This decision was purposeful. We should always pay attention to the ordering of passages in Scripture. So it seems that we should look for that purpose in the placement of Bathsheba’s oracle.

We observed in an earlier note at chapter 2 that in the first seven chapters of Proverbs there are five rather lengthy warnings against adultery. We know that Bathsheba had an adulterous affair with Solomon’s father, King David. It was an affair that led to the murder of her husband and to national consequences for Israel. We know that the child that resulted from that affair died, but Solomon was born later to David and Bathsheba. Bathsheba was likely very sensitive to the consequences of this error. We also know that Solomon had multiple wives and concubines. We know that these wives turned his heart away from Yahweh, for which there were serious consequences to Solomon personally and to the nation for generations to follow (see 1 Kings 11:1-13). Solomon’s legacy, once so promising, was forfeited.

So, we have a collection of Proverbs that paint adultery as a most dangerous enemy of wisdom and paint wisdom as a most desirable and accessible virtue. The collection is closed out by an appeal of Yahweh to Solomon through his mother that begins with the impassioned plea,

“What are you doing, my son?”

“What are you doing, son of my womb?”

“What are you doing, son of my vows?”

Bathsheba goes on to speak of the dangers of a man giving his strength to wine and women, which Solomon undeniably did (see 1 Kings 11). She then outlines and instructs Solomon on a virtuous wife. While admitting that such a woman is hard to find, it is still fantastic counsel for a man who was self-destructing. The result is that we have a work that extols wisdom associated with a man who, by everyone’s judgment, was considered wise and is so to the present day. Yet he failed to live by wisdom.

The result is further affirmation of the testimony of the Law, that our hope is in One. Even so great a force as wisdom, when it is nurtured and embraced, cannot rescue us from the evil that resides in our hearts.

PROVERBS 31 – LEMUEL IS ANOTHER NAME FOR SOLOMON AND AN AWFUL AND TRAGIC STORY LIES BEHIND THE WORDS OF PROVERBS 31. THESE WORDS ARE SAID TO BE AN 'ORACLE' (A DIVINE MESSAGE) TO SOLOMON FROM HIS MOTHER (BATHSHEBA). OVER THE NEXT FIVE DAYS, PROCESS THESE FIVE QUESTIONS:

1. In spite of his wisdom, there was one area of Solomon's life in which he did not apply wisdom. Read 1 Kings 11:1-13. What was the one area? List some of the personal, family, and national consequences of this that are recorded or implied in these verses in 1 Kings. In the story of Israel, how significant are the consequences of Solomon's failure?

2. We don't know when Bathsheba taught these things to Solomon. Knowing the record of 1 Kings and seeing the emotion of Bathsheba in Proverbs 31:2-3 ("What are you doing!"), when do you think she had this talk with him? What were some things you can imagine her being concerned about as you read these words?

3. Why do you think Bathsheba spoke to Solomon as she did in verses 4-9? What in Bathsheba's personal background (see 2 Samuel 11-12), may have added to her passion to get these things across to her son? Why are her concerns so important to leaders and to the welfare of those they lead? How can you be a better voice for those with no voice?

4. Throughout Proverbs we have seen repeated warnings to listen to instruction and to the voice of wisdom. Solomon was outspoken in advocating that we be teachable. What do you think happens in us that causes us, like Solomon, to ignore instruction and advice? How will you avoid this awful error? How does being teachable increase your value as a spouse, parent, employer, employee, citizen? What might be the significance of this chapter closing out a book about wisdom?

5. Imagine yourself speaking to someone about the kind of spouse they should search for. That is the subject at hand in this chapter. What thoughts (stated and implied), from this chapter would you pass along to them? If you are married, how do these words inspire you as a spouse?

COMPELLING PROVERBS

Below, list the proverbs that make an impact on you during the course of your reading. This would be a great list to re-visit at the end of our study to help summarize all that the Holy Spirit might be working on in you and through you.



APPENDIX 1

ON THE FEAR OF THE LORD

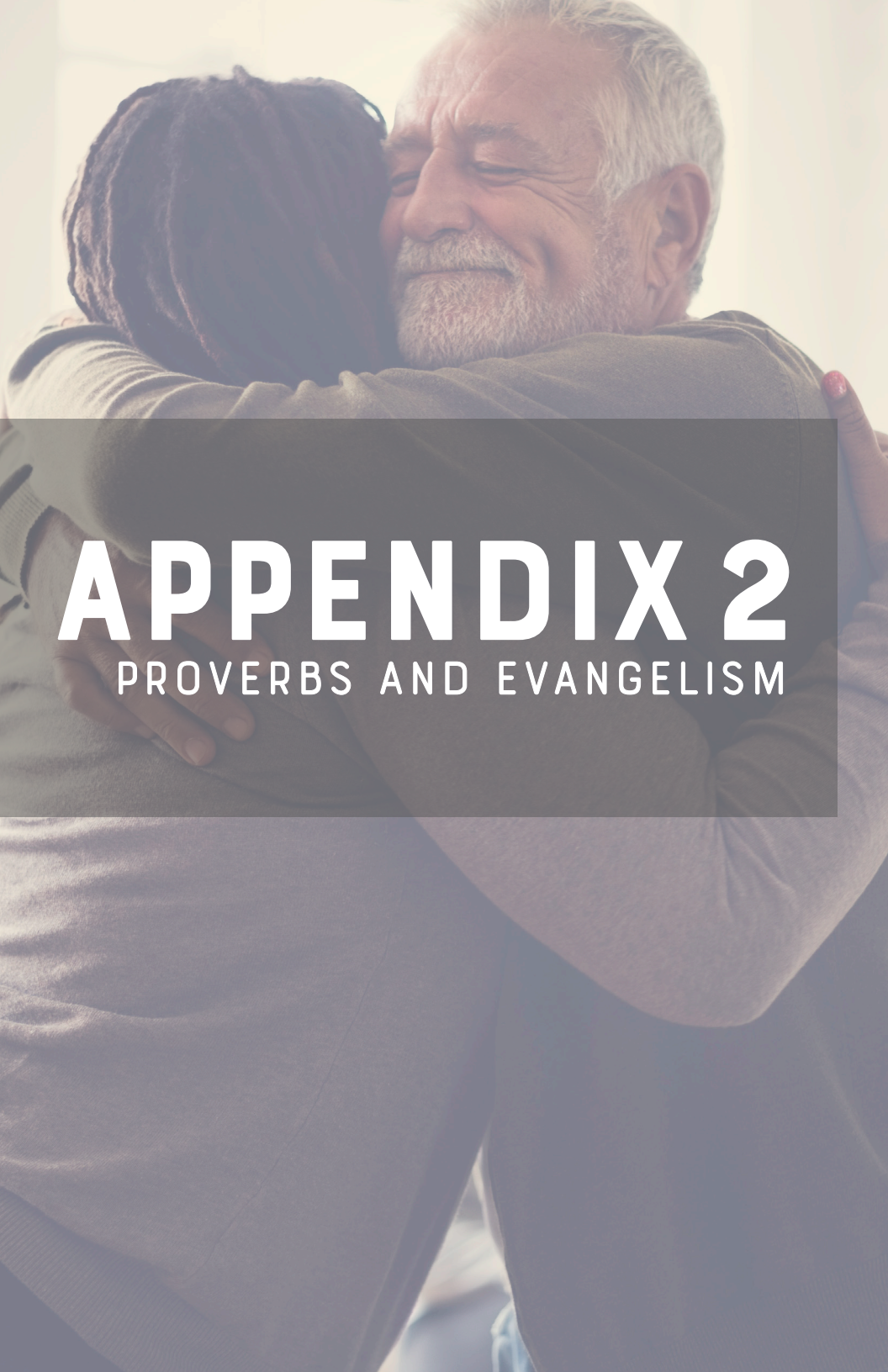
THE FEAR OF THE LORD

You will observe a number of proverbs that speak of “the fear of the LORD.” This is presented as an important and desirable quality that we would do well to pursue. Here are some things the Scripture teaches about it.

1. It's the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10).
2. Its basis: recognizing God is God and we are His creation (Exodus 20:18-21; Job 37:22-24).
3. It can be learned
 - a. from revelation and obedience (Deuteronomy 17:18-19).
 - b. from worship (Deuteronomy 14:23).
4. Obedience is its essential characteristic (Genesis 22; Job 28:28).
5. It involves a choice (Proverbs 1:20-33, 8:14).
6. It produces God-like character (Psalm 111-112).
7. It involves a relationship with God based upon forgiveness (Psalm 25:14; 130:4).

TO PUT THIS ALL TOGETHER ...

Practically, as followers of Christ, we should seek to fear the Lord. This begins with some basic choices to *hate* evil and *cling* to what is good. We should seek to learn to hate the evil so prevalent in our culture today: materialism, gossip, pornography, lying, and hunger for power. Along with this comes the humble admission that we need God to sustain us in this life. He alone provides deliverance from evil that which we hate. We cannot do this on our own. Not only should this choice be at the beginning point of discipleship, but at every decision along the journey as we continue to learn who God is and develop a deeper understanding of what it means to be in relationship to Him. We, as Abraham did, need to put the promises and character of God in the forefront of our hearts and put our own desires and expectations in the background, as He is the one who will get us through life. If there were a New Testament equivalent to “the fear of the LORD,” it might be to “live by faith.” As we live by faith, then, we can see and understand the fear of the Lord.



APPENDIX 2

PROVERBS AND EVANGELISM

PROVERBS & EVANGELISM

The style of Proverbs gives us some great pointers on how we should present truth to the people God brings into our lives. This is not to suggest a “cookie-cutter” approach to evangelism. Rather, it is to suggest some things that make information compelling and memorable. Here are eight observations on Proverbs and the wisdom they might give us on our presentation of the Gospel.

1. THE MESSAGE IS PERSONAL; SO IS OUR MISSION - The dialogues in Proverbs are not impersonal, detached, and distant, but close, intimate and warm. It’s one person to another person, first person singular. To second person singular, it’s an “I” addressing a “you,” not a “we” addressing a “they.” The personal dimension is further enhanced by the frequent addressing of the reader as “my son,” especially in the first nine chapters. Even if the person we’re evangelizing to is not our literal son, that’s the way we should view them and speak with them. It’s not about winning an argument, but about building a relationship.

2. THE PROVERBS ARE PERSUASIVE - Solomon is not a lecturer, he’s a *pleader*. Solomon is not simply reciting facts, he’s persuading souls. He marshals multiple arguments, varied illustrations, pithy sayings and memorable narratives to convince and persuade his reader to turn from folly to wisdom. He’s calling, alluring, beseeching, appealing, and imploring. This great king is not ashamed to beg for attention and for change. He’s a passionate and compassionate orator.

3. THE LANGUAGE IS VIVID - Whereas the Apostle Paul’s main evangelistic weapon was his systematic and logical reasoning, Solomon’s weapon was vivid word pictures. He personifies Lady Wisdom and Madam Folly. He then paints each of these contrasting ladies in graphic and striking colors: folly in all its lurid ugliness; wisdom in all its compelling beauty. He scours the world for unforgettable images and metaphors to bring home the truth to the conscience.

4. THE MESSAGE IS CONVICTING - Every Proverb is traceable to one of God’s moral laws, summarized in the Ten Commandments. We, therefore, should not be surprised if the Proverbs often leave us

feeling guilty and condemned. We read one after another of these incisive little epigrams and sometimes feel as if our souls are being strafed with a machine gun. The cumulative impact is humbling and heartbreaking. As we read the early parables in the book, often portraying a young man choosing foolish paths, we shake our heads until we realize that we are reading our own biography.

5. THE MESSAGE IS ATTRACTIVE - Solomon doesn't just show us how ugly sin is to scare us off. He also shows us how winsome wisdom is. Wisdom captivates, fascinates, intrigues, attracts, allures, and enthralls until we are drawn, not just willingly but irresistibly, to her magnetic charms. Yes, we need to dissuade from sin, but the biggest dissuader is the beauty of divine wisdom.

6. THE MESSAGE IS CLEAR - Solomon never used light gray when he could use luminous highlighters. There's no middle ground in Proverbs, no confusing fog, no fudgy compromises. There are two ways, two choices, two destinations, and only two. There is the way of wisdom, which ends in everlasting life or there is the way of folly, which ends everlasting death. The choice could not be made any clearer, not even in the lengthy dialogues of Proverbs 1-9, and especially not in the multiple proverbs that present the choice repeatedly from chapter 10 onwards. We are left in no doubt that we are on one of two ways, heading to one of two terminals.

7. THE MESSAGE IS CHRIST-CENTERED - Proverbs is not just a choice between two philosophies but a choice between two people. It's a choice between a person who is folly (the devil) and a person who is wise (the Son of God). Proverbs 8 hints at a person in the Godhead who especially embodies the Wisdom of God. But it's the New Testament that finally confirms Jesus as the Wisdom of God (Matthew. 11:19; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3), as the One who perfectly embodied all that Wisdom was in Proverbs. Reading the book of Proverbs through that New Testament lens puts a whole different light on the book.

8. THE APPROACH IS PRACTICAL - Once we come to Christ, the Wisdom of God, and see Him as the One who alone kept this book and who gives us His Proverbs-Righteousness, we can see the Proverbs not so much as a condemning AK-47 but as a detailed manual to help us figure out how to live in multiple areas of life. How merciful of God to give us not just incarnate Wisdom, but such practical everyday wisdom to help us live in grateful obedience to the God who made us wise unto salvation.

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SURVEY

Thanks for journaling through the book of Proverbs. We hope that your experience with the journal brought growth in your relationship with God. Please take a few minutes and let us know what you thought about our Proverbs series by answering the questions below. When finished, you can tear along the dotted line and place your completed survey in the offering bag:

1. Did this booklet actually aid you in journaling through Proverbs?
How so?

2. What was your favorite aspect of the journal?

3. What suggestions do you have for future journals?

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