

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 1

Last week we started a teaching on the role of the Holy Spirit in the Kingdom of God. However, from the feedback I've had, I believe the approach was a little complicated and difficult to follow, so I have decided to discontinue that study, but you might like to read the book yourself, *The Most Important Person on Earth*, by Myles Munroe.

I have been praying about teaching a couple of sessions on the Wisdom in Proverbs and have read and studied Proverbs a lot lately. There are so many gems that I would like us to focus on in the next few weeks. Proverbs has 31 chapters, and it may be a good idea to read a chapter a day, thereby covering the whole book in a month. It actually makes good reading as a daily devotional, with many wise sayings, that can challenge us on every front.

Well, let's first look at wisdom. What is wisdom really? The Oxford dictionary says, "*It is experience and knowledge together with the power of applying them practically*". In other words, it is more than just knowledge, but being able to apply that knowledge. I would also like to say that wisdom is seeing or knowing what the consequences of some action would be, and knowing what would be the best decision concerning a matter. Proverbs also speaks of "*understanding, discretion, insight, instruction, sound judgement, learning, training, prudence.*" Then also it shows the opposite of wisdom, as folly, foolish behaviour, and refers to the fool, who is wise in his own eyes; the dull, the simple, the mockers, and the obstinate, with sometimes severe consequences to their folly. The fool tries to live his life in his own independent way and resents correction.

But Proverbs does not merely teach us manners; it offers us

a key to life. The wisdom is God-centred, and even if it most down-to-earth, it deals with the handling of one's affairs in God's world. Now many of these sayings came from Solomon, but there are also wise sayings written by a few other men, which cover many different subjects, including marriage, social behaviour, friendships, justice, finances, poverty, wealth, family, love, laziness and warnings against drinking and adultery. But we know that one greater than Solomon came, Jesus, in whom lie hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. 1 Cor 1:30 says, *“Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God – that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”*

And in Ephesians 1:17, Paul prays, *“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.”*

Wisdom is for anyone who wants it, yet at the same time it is as costly as character. Wisdom comes to the one with a hungry heart, to the one who asks. Prov 2:3-5 says, *“If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”* Prov 2:6 says God gives it, *“For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*

Wisdom brings many blessings as described in this book. Prov 1:9 tells us that *“Wisdom will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.”* Chapt 3:13 says, *“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies, nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand, in her left hand are riches and*

*honour. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed. It says of wisdom and understanding, "Do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck. Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble, when you lie down, you will not be afraid, when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet." Also 4:6-9, "Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme, therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her and she will exalt you, embrace her and she will honour you. She will be a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendour."*

It goes on to say in 4:13 *"Guard it well, for it is your life,"* and verse 20, *"for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body."* 8:10-11 says, *"Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her. Vs 17, "I love those who love me and those who seek me find me. With me are riches and honour, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. Vs 34 -35, Wisdom is personified here. I believe that Jesus is this wisdom, the Holy Spirit is our wisdom. "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life and receives favour from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death." Chapt 9:11-12, " For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, wisdom will reward you."*

But all these amazing blessings are what we are all searching for in life – beauty like an adornment; a better investment than any bank can give us, even gold or precious stones; long life; wealth and riches; honour and recognition; a great sense of peace; safety and

security; no fear or insomnia; protection from danger; life and blessing; health to our bodies; and great, great favour and reward. Wow! We need this. I want wisdom.

Prov 1:7 starts by telling us that *“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”* And again in 9:10 it repeats this verse and adds, *“and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”* What is the fear of the Lord? It is not a fear that runs away from God, but an awe of His greatness, and knowing that only with Him there is safety, favour and blessing. Outside his favour is where the enemy has authority to destroy one's life. It is not being afraid of God that he will punish us, because as we have studied in the last few weeks, Jesus was already punished on our behalf. But I believe the fear of the Lord is a worshipping submission to God, putting your life into his hands, and then He pours out all those blessings upon you.

James 1:5,6 says, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”* So wisdom is by faith. It is a supernatural gift and we have to receive it without doubting His goodness, and knowing that God does not withhold it because he finds fault with us. We must believe that it has nothing to do with our performance. It is an abundantly generous and gracious gift from God - if we believe and we don't doubt. God is ready to add new blessings to former ones without any end or limitation. And double-mindedness here speaks of trying to face two opposite directions at once – wisdom comes by faith, it cannot come to us by our human effort, or any other way.

The best teacher of wisdom is the Holy Spirit. He is our Counsellor and he will show us how to be wise in all things. We can ask him. He knows all things and will lead us into paths of life. You may want this life, this wisdom. It begins with Jesus, who has become for us wisdom. He died to give us his life, his righteousness, his holiness. Come this morning by faith and invite him and his blessings into your life. Choose wisdom, choose Jesus, choose life. God bless you till next week as we continue this study of wisdom in Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 2

Last week we started our study on wisdom from the Proverbs and said that God gives wisdom without finding fault. The rewards of wisdom are amazing: beauty, a better investment than any bank can give us, long life; wealth and riches; honour and recognition; peace; safety and security; life and blessing; health, great favour and reward. Jesus became for us wisdom, and in choosing Jesus, we will have wisdom and life.

Today we want to look at wisdom regarding our words, as we learn from Proverbs. 30:5 tells us that *“Every word of God is flawless,”* and 4:20 tells us, *“My son (my daughter) pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart, for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's body.”* In other words, God's words will be life to us, spiritually and physically. 22:11 gives us a promise, *“He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.”*

Two verses later it warns us about our own words. It says we must put away perversity from our mouth and corrupt talk from our lips. Derek Kidner says that corrupt words we speak can be cynical words, grumbling, half-truths, careless, negative words, filthy language. These begin to react on our minds, and then begin to harden into well-established habits of thought. And those thoughts begins to form our character.

Proverbs 6:16,17 tells us there are 6 things that the Lord hates, which are detestable to him. Two of these have to do with what we say, namely a lying tongue and a false witness who pours out lies. 14:25, *“A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful.”* Many have become

accustomed to half truths or lies, to protect themselves, or to get out of a difficult situation. Lies can be excused to be little white lies, but if we understand the origin of lying, we will be much more careful to only speak the truth. In John 8:44 Jesus describes the devil. He says, he *“was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth; there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* So if we belong to Jesus, who is the truth, we can be set free from lying. The Lord hates lying, because it is the language of Satan, the father of lies.

In 8:7, wisdom speaks and says, *“My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.”* 12:19 says, *“Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.”* Verse 22, *“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful.”* Wisdom tells us to always speak only the truth, because the truth has power to free us. 16:13, *“Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.”* So your employer will value you if your are known for honesty and truthfulness. 19:5 warns us that *“a false witness will not go unpunished, and he who pours our lies will not go free.”* This exact verse is repeated again in verse 9, and the book ends in 30:8, *“Keep falsehood and lies far from me.”*

On the contrary, *“wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning”*. To be discerning is to be able to distinguish between good and evil. In verse 19 we are warned to be careful what we say. *“When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise. The tongue of the righteous is choice silver,”* and verse 21, *“The lips of the the righteous nourish many,”* and also, *“The lips of the righteous know what is fitting.”* We need to pray the prayer David prayed in Psalm 141:3, *“Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord, keep watch over the door of my lips.”* When we are

faced with a disagreement in a relationship, maybe our marriage, we need to consciously pray that we will speak few words and not use words that will tear down. 11:12 says, *“A man of understanding holds his tongue.”* We all know 15:1, *“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”* 17:27, *“A man of knowledge uses words with restraint.”* 21:23, *“He who guards his tongue keeps himself from calamity.”* 24:26, *“An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.”* A soft answer does not show weakness, but actually, great strength, as we see in 25:15, *“A gentle tongue can break a bone.”* It says in 20:15, *“Lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.”* Listen also to this beautiful description of words that are compared to a piece of jewellery, in 25:11, *“A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”* 31:26 describes a wife of noble character, and says, *“She speaks with wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue.”*

Another caution Proverbs gives us is about gossiping. *“A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.”* It also says in 12:13, *“An evil man is trapped by his sinful talk,”* and *“reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”* 11:9 says, *“With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbour.”* 16:28 says, *“A gossip separates close friends,”* and 18:8 says, *“The words of a gossip are like choice morsels, they go down to a man's inmost parts.”* *“A fool's mouth is his undoing.”* 20:19, *“A gossip betrays a confidence, so avoid a man who talks too much.”* Let us rather be those who stop the gossip stories spreading any further, as 26:20 tells us, *“Without wood a fire goes out, without gossip a quarrel dies down.”*

Another truth we glean in this book of Proverbs is that our words will literally determine what we will receive in life. 12:14 says, *“From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things.”* This exact verse is repeated in the next chapter. In other words, we can have what we say and declare. 18:20,21 *“From the fruit of his mouth a man's*

*stomach is filled; with the harvest from his lips he is satisfied. The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*” These are very strong words – life or death can result from our words. We can very easily be defeated by our own words. You may have heard people say, *“I must have a flu injection, because I know I will get sick this winter, I do every year.”* Or you hear them say, *“I will never get a good job in this economic climate.”* The truth is, you will eat the fruit of your words. Jesus also said in Matt 12:37, *“By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”* Chapter 6 tells us that we can become trapped by what we say or ensnared by the words of our mouth. Our words can actually condemn us, or our words can set us free.

James 3:2 tells us that *“If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check.”* It also says the tongue is like a rudder that can steer a big ship, and although a small part of the body, it can steer our lives towards life or towards death.

So if you are wise, your words can result in blessing and breakthrough. Your words can even protect you. It says, *“The lips of the wise protect them.”* So let's not keep confessing that crime is a threat to us, but rather confess that Jesus will always be our protection. Prov 10:11 says, *“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life,”* and 15:4, *“The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life.”* 15:23, *“A man finds joy in giving an apt reply – and how good is a timely word!”* 16:21,24 speaks of pleasant words that are a *“honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”* There has been a study on the effect of sound waves in one's body. Every word you speak vibrates through your bones, and pleasant words have been found to assist healing, whereas angry or negative words have a negative effect on one's health.

So remember, the tongue has the power of life and death. Let us confess life to our physical bodies, life to our finances, life to our spirits, life to our children, life to our marriages, life to our jobs. Let the fruit of our lips fill us with good things. When our words are full of faith in power of God, the sky is the limit!

God bless you till next week as we continue this study of wisdom in Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 3

Last week we spoke about wisdom regarding our words, and we shared the Proverbs that tell us that God hates lying and false witness, but that *“he delights in men who are truthful.”* We shared many Scriptures regarding gossip that separates close friends, compared to the lips of the righteous that nourish many. The tongue also has the power of life and death. If you speak life, you will find that, *“from the fruit of (your) lips a man is filled with good things.”*

Today we want to look at wisdom in the Proverbs regarding our finances and wealth. Firstly we can take note of 22:2, *“Rich and poor have this in common, the Lord is the Maker of them all.”* This means that one's value does not lie in one's wealth or in how much he possesses, because in God's eyes we are all the same - he made us all. And verse 4 tells us that *“Humility and the fear of the Lord bring wealth and honour and life.”* Blessings come from the Lord, financial, and eternal blessings. *“The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and he adds not trouble to it.”* (10:22)

But Prov 23:4 warns us, *“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint. Cast but a glance at riches and they are gone for they will surely sprout wings, and fly off to the sky like an eagle.”* That is such a good description of money. It certainly seems to sprout wings and fly off to the sky! And 27:24 says, *“riches do not endure forever.”* 15:16 advises us, *“Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil.”* And riches will certainly not buy one's way to heaven, as stated in 11:4, *“Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.”* Only as we receive the righteousness of Jesus, will be we saved from the wrath of God. Also 11:28, *“Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the*

*righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*” A warning is given to those who want to get rich quickly, as that will surely lead one into trouble. A very wise proverb is found in chapter 30:8, *“Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonour the name of my God.”* We need to come to a point in our lives where we realise that there is great gain in being content with what we have, instead of always longing and coveting for more and more. Jesus told us in Luke 16:13 that you cannot serve both God and Money – either you will *“hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.”*

In the first chapter we are warned that if sinners entice us and ask us to throw in our lot with them to share a common purse, or it could mean, start a business venture with them, it says, *“do not go along with them”*. That is wisdom.

Then Chapter 22:7 says that *“the rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”* There is truth in the fact that money gives a person power, but as God's people, we must be careful how we use that power. But the warning here to us, is not to borrow or make debt, because you become a servant or slave to the lender. Romans 13:8 also tells us, *“Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another.”* Then there is a very good word of wisdom in 22:26 that says, *“Do not be a man who puts up security for debts; if you lack the means to pay, your very bed will be snatched from under you.”* Many people have put up security for a friend or relative, and have lost all their assets, because of the other party that went bankrupt. This is a clear warning not to do this.

Then, Prov 13:11 warns us against corruption and theft. *“Dishonest money dwindles away, but he who gathers*

*money little by little makes it grow.*” So the slower, honest way will always prove the best way. Stealing will give the enemy a right to come in and bring destruction in your life. 21:17 describes it well, *“Food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man, but he ends up with a mouth full of gravel.”* And 21:6 says that *“a fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapour and a deadly snare.”* Rather be strong in the face of temptation to be dishonest with money, because 22:1 says, *“A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold.”* Jesus also said in Luke 16:10, that *“whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own?”* Your greatest test is how honest you are with the money or possessions of others, eg your boss.

We also learn from Prov 3:9 to honour the Lord with our wealth, with the firstfruits of all our crops; for *“then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”* It is not in man's nature to be generous, as one always wants to take or keep the best for oneself. But when we come to know Jesus, he changes our hearts and puts in us His nature, that is the nature of giving and sacrificing for others, like He did himself for us. Here we see clearly that we honour the Lord if we give him the firstfruits of our harvest or finances. Many teach us to give God the first tenth of our income. But it rather means giving generously to the Lord from our income, before we spend it all on ourselves. This will lead to further increase and prosperity in our business ventures or income. Giving is the nature and heart of God. He gave us his only Son, his best, his all, to save us. And as we have this attitude of giving generously to God and His Kingdom, it will certainly lead to blessings in our finances.

11:24 says, *“One man give freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.”* 22:26

says, *“the righteous give without sparing”*, in other words they are generous. Jesus said in Luke, that it is in **giving** that one is blessed, *“Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”* The reverse is also true, if you keep for yourself and withhold from others, then what you have will be lost or decrease. 28:22 says that *“a stingy man is eager to get rich and is unaware that poverty awaits him.”*

There is also a warning against taking advantage of the poor in order to become rich, as it says in 22:16, *“He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth and he who gives gifts to the rich – both come to poverty.”* Also verse 22 says, *“Do not exploit the poor because they are poor, and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case and will plunder those who plunder them.”* And 27:8 says that *“He who increases his wealth by exorbitant interest, amasses it for another, who will be kind to the poor.”* Today we know of many business people that get rich by charging very high interest rates to those (usually the poor) who borrow money from them. This warning says, that your wealth will be given to someone else who will be kind to the poor.

There are a great many verses about helping the poor. 21:13, *“If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered.”* Also 22:9 tells us, *“A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor.”* And then a promise and warning in 28:27, *“He who gives to the poor will lack nothing, but he who closes his eyes to them receives many curses.”* Some people may be surprised to find out that the reason for all their financial trouble and curses, is that they ignored the plight of the poor and did not reach out to help when they saw a great need before them. 14:21 tells us, *“Blessed is he who is kind to the needy,”* and *“whoever is kind to the needy honours God.”* And this next one is one of my favourites, *“He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done.”* The Lord gives huge dividends and interest when He rewards and pays back on behalf of the poor, who cannot do it themselves.

So, don't trust in your wealth, be honest with money, share and give generously. Then see the financial miracles begin to happen to you. God bless you till next week as we continue this study of wisdom in Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 4

Last week we spoke about wisdom in the Proverbs regarding our finances and wealth. We said that riches do not endure forever and that it is better not to make debt, as you become a slave to the lender. We also spoke about dishonest money that will dwindle away and a fortune made through lying is a deadly snare. We were encouraged to give God the first fruits of our income, and to be generous to his kingdom and to the poor. Many promises of blessing and prosperity come from generous giving.

Today we look at wisdom regarding work and labour from this book of Proverbs. There are an amazing number of proverbs regarding laziness, so I felt that we should take note of them today. The first one in 6:6 tells us, *“Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”* So wisdom here encourages us to work hard. 10:4 also says, *“Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.”* Also, *“Laziness brings on deep sleep, and the shiftless man goes hungry.”* This one is quite funny and repeated in the following chapter, *“The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!”* 20:4 says, *“A sluggard does not plough in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.”* 20:13 *“Do not love sleep or you will grow poor. Stay awake and you will have food to spare.”*

21:25, *“The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.” “As a door that turns on its hinges so a sluggard turns on his bed.”*

The last section describing laziness is in 24:30 – 34, *“As I went past the field of the sluggard, past the vineyard of the man who lacks judgement, thorns had come up everywhere, the ground was covered with weeds, and the stone wall was in ruins. I applied my heart to what I observed and learned a lesson from what I saw: A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”* This is a repetition of 6:6. These seem to imply that laziness often has a direct bearing on poverty in a man's life. We quoted many Proverbs last week about sharing with the poor and that the Lord has compassion on the poor and wants us to help them. There are many poor in most countries, but some of the poverty is due to simple laziness to work the land. When people cannot find employment, they may be discouraged and disillusioned, but we can encourage them to grow food and work hard to help themselves. On a trip I made to Zimbabwe a few years ago, I was so impressed to see the motivation of their people to grow mealies on every vacant piece of land, even on the islands between the dual lanes in parts of the city of Harare. If the unemployed in our country would work hard to grow mealies or any food on any available piece of land, I am sure we would see major changes in many of our poorer communities.

Many more verses compare the lazy with the diligent man: 13:4 *“The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.”* There is great promise for those who work hard. 12:11 says, *“He who works his land will have abundant food, but he who chases fantasies lacks judgement.”* Many people look for an easier way to make their living, which can end in nothing at all, but hard work is

always rewarded with “*abundant food*”. 12:14 echoes this, “*The work of his hands rewards him.*”

Then we read that diligence will lead to promotion and will bring people into positions of leadership. 12:24 says, “*Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labour.*” In other words those who work hard will in the end become employers over those who will remain labourers. 13:4 says, “*The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*” 28:19 says, “*He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.*” Also 18:8 says, “*One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.*”

Wisdom encourages us to work hard at our jobs in 14:23, “*All hard work bring a profit but mere talk leads only to poverty.*” “*The plans of the diligent lead to profit.*” (21:3) I love the following promise in 22:29, “*Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.*” Excellence and skill in whatever we do, will always be recognised in the end.

Then Proverbs 3:27 says that we are not to withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in our power to act. As employers we need to honour or reward those who deserve it or who have really done well.

Then we are warned as business owners to be honest in our advertisement and what we are promoting or selling. 11:1 says, “*The Lord abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*” If we are selling a product which states to be a certain weight or value, then it should be that. Also 16:11 says, “*Honest scales and balances are from the Lord; all the weights in the bag are of his making.*” 20:10, “*Differing weights and differing measures – the Lord detests them both.*” 20:23 repeats this, “*The Lord detests differing*

*weights, and dishonest scales do not please him.” 14:12 and 16:25 both warn us that “There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death”. And 21:2 “All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart.”*

There are even Scriptures that speak against bribery. 15:27, “*A greedy man brings troubles to his family, but he who hates bribes will live.*” In other words, there is curse that is brought on the family of someone who lives by bribery and greed. Many get their way by being willing to bribe those who have power or influence, but v 23 clearly spells out the end, “*A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice.*” And there certainly is no blessing in store for the wicked! We know the effects that bribery and corruption have on the economy of a country. 29:4 shows this, “*By justice a king gives a country stability, but one who is greedy for bribes tears it down.*”

There is a wonderful proverb for the wise servant or worker. It says in 17:2 that “*A wise servant will rule over a disgraceful son, and will share the inheritance as one of the brothers.*”

We know that God wants to be involved in all the details of our businesses and our jobs. And he is the one who ultimately brings blessing and success. It lies in our relationship with Jesus, who paid the price on the cross for our success. 16:3 tells us, “*Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed.*” The more we live in total dependence on God, the more we will see breakthroughs in our businesses and jobs.

So let us choose wisdom in the work place and then there will be blessing. The Scripture in Ecclesiastes tells us in 9:10, “*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.*” Also 1 Cor 10:31 says, “*Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God,*” and Col 3:23 is one of my favourite Scriptures, “*Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*”

God bless you till next week as we continue our study of wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 5

Last week we spoke about wisdom regarding work and labour in the Proverbs. Many Scriptures warn about laziness; but diligence will be rewarded with plenty. We said God hates dishonesty in weights and scales, and we showed that bribery ends up tearing down a country, and ruining the briber's family. We were reminded to work as unto the Lord, who himself will reward us.

Today we are going to look at wisdom in the Proverbs for relationships in our families. Firstly we are reminded to live in peace in our homes, rather than in wealth with stress and strife. 7:1 advises, *“Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.”* But let's look at many of the Scriptures that speak of children honouring and taking seriously the advice and wisdom from their parents. Prov 1:8 says, *“Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.”* Chapter 4:1 says, *“Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction; pay attention and gain understanding. I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender and an only child of my mother he taught me and said, ‘Lay hold of my words with all your heart; keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom, get understanding.’”* Eph 6:1-3 tells us, if children honour their parents and the truth they teach, there is great blessing promised. In fact, much of Proverbs is the instruction of a father to his sons – instruction to avoid the traps of evil, the temptations of immorality, and to pursue godly ways. 6:20 repeats it, *“My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck ... for these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light*

*and the corrections of discipline are the way to life.” 13:1 says, “A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.” 15:20, “A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.” Every child should know that their parents want what is best for them, and those who love God want them protected from evil. The way of wisdom is the way of discipline, and parents' restrictions are to shield children from the dangers of the enemy. 23:22, “Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.” Then v24 “He who has a wise son delights in him. May your father and mother be glad; may she who gave you birth rejoice!” 10:17 says, “He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.” And “He who loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.”*

The family is God's idea and unit for protection and blessing. And we are shown the child who ignores this wisdom. 13:18, *“He who ignores discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honoured.”* 15:5 says, *“A fool spurns his father's discipline”.* And 17:25 says, *“A foolish son brings grief to his father and bitterness to the one who bore him”.* 19:26 *“He who robs his father and drives out his mother is a son who brings shame and disgrace.”* 20:20 gives a severe warning, *“If a man curses his father or mother, his lamp will be snuffed out in pitch darkness.”* And 28:24, *“He who robs his father or mother and says, 'It is not wrong' – he is partner to him who destroys.”* (the devil).

Proverbs shows that grandchildren are a blessing. *“Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”* Prov 14:26 shows that parents can bring protection on their children. *“He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress and for his children it*

*will be a refuge.*” There are also verses that tell about the blessings of inheritance from parents and grandparents. Even grandchildren are blessed through the lives of their grandparents. 19:14 says, *“Houses and wealth are inherited from parents.”* *“A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children”*. Wisdom leads to generational blessings.

Then there are many Proverbs about how to discipline children. The famous one in 22:6, *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”* That has great promise for a parent. 19:18, *“Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.”* These are great warnings to us as parents, who can change the direction of our children's lives if we are diligent to correct them the Biblical way. *“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”* We know that the trend today is for parents to give their children everything they want, and parents don't like to oppose or cross their kids. We know that spanking is even against the law in certain countries. But this book speaks repeatedly that there is a place for the rod (obviously in a controlled way) which will change the course of a child's life and save him from destruction. 22:15 *“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”* I have only one teenage son in the home. The following Scripture is one I often reminded myself of while I was doing the unpleasant job of disciplining my kids. 23:13 *“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, **he will not die.** Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”* The older version says, *“Save his soul from hell”!* And again 29:15,17, *“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother... Discipline your son and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul”*. If we want peace and delight in our families, the way of wisdom is the rod, according to Proverbs. Let us not be afraid to discipline God's way in God's love.

Now Proverbs gives some wisdom regarding marriage. Prov 18:22, *“He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord.”* 19:14 says, *“A prudent wife is from the Lord”*. But we

know a wife always responds to love. Prov 30:21-23 says an *“unloved woman who is married”* will cause the earth to tremble! So to husbands then – love your wife! Love will always be rewarded.

Then there are Scriptures about the role of a wife in marriage. We as wives have the ability and potential to be a great blessing to our husbands, or to bring great trouble to them. 12:4 says, *“A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.”* There are further verses about wives who make life difficult for their husbands. 21:9 and 25:24 both have this same verse, *“Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.”* Again it says, 21:19, *“Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife.”* Even another in 27:15, *“A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand.”*

Then of course there is the famous Prov 31 chapter describing the wife of noble character. This is an example of a super-woman, with a super attitude, super energy and super vision. Her worth, it says, is far more than rubies. *“Her husband has full confidence in her and he lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.”* It seems to imply that her husband is one of her priorities as it is mentioned here first, and that he has no unmet needs – that would imply practical needs, love needs and sexual needs. Well, we can all certainly take note of her example.

It continues to show her ability to work hard and provide food for her family and servants. She has a gift for business and seems to be able to make a good income. She has a heart for the poor and all her family are well clothed. Her husband is respected (because of her it seems) and it says, *“She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks wisdom and faithful instruction is on her tongue.”* Even her children call her blessed and her husband praises her, as well as the people at the gate. And the key? It says, *“A woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”* It is the fear of the Lord that makes her that super-woman. And that is possible for you and me – let us fear the Lord and allow his Spirit life to fill us and flow out of us. That wisdom will bless our families. God bless you till next week as we continue our study of wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 6

The last time we spoke about wisdom from the Proverbs concerning relationships in our families. Children are to listen and obey the wisdom taught them by their parents. We are not to be afraid to discipline our child with the rod. Proverbs says, that will save his life from hell. We also looked at a godly wife, who is full of wisdom and the fear of the Lord, with amazing gifts to care for her family.

Today we look at wisdom in the Proverbs concerning sexual relationships. God intended sex to be enjoyed only in the context of marriage. Proverbs exposes the traps of the devil that make people believe that what feels good, is okay. The Bible says that with sex you become one with the other person, there is a bonding of bodies, of emotions, a bonding of spirits, even with their demons. And if you have repeated immoral relationships, you will end up with disturbed, broken emotional, spiritual and even physical health. Only God can set one free from the power of ungodly sex. Any immoral behaviour begins in the mind, James says in 1:14. *“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.”*

Today the bombardment of temptations on the internet, movies and television make it extremely hard for a man to walk in purity and victory. I heard recently that about 9 out of every 10 young guys today are deeply into internet pornography. This becomes a very strong unclean sexual addiction that controls a person and is almost humanly impossible to break loose from. They need stronger and stronger stimulation and ultimately it destroys a man's life. Only when you draw on the grace and power of God, these

strongholds of darkness can be broken, and any victory sustained.

Wisdom tells you to stay away from the places or paths of temptation. Proverbs 2 says that wisdom will save a man from the adulteress, or the wayward woman with her seductive words. It says in 2:17 that *“Her house leads down to death and her paths to the (evil) spirits of the dead. None who go to her return or attain the paths of life.”* Today the media portrays immorality and adultery as okay if it can be kept a secret or if a marriage is difficult. But Proverbs repeatedly warns us that sex outside of marriage, will lead to death – death to your reputation, death of your self-worth, death to your peace of mind, death to your joy and victory, death to your destiny and future, death to your testimony as a believer, death to God's best plans for your life or your ministry, death to your marriage, death to your relationships with your children, death to your their well-being and security, even possible death to your physical body.

Proverbs 5 goes on to describe the tempting woman whose *“lips drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. (Today she uses seducing pictures.) Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.”* In some cultures a woman may visit a witchdoctor to buy muti for power to break up a marriage, so that a man can become her lover. But today the cell phone or internet becomes the vehicle for many seducing spirits that lure people into immoral relationships and behaviour.

Prov 5:8 goes on to say, *“Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enriches*

*another man's house. At the end of your life you will groan when your flesh and body are spent.” It means you open yourself up to demon spirits that in the end will steal everything from you.*

*Prov 5:15 says, “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love. Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress/ Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?” It goes on to say, “He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly”.*

In the moment of enjoying the temptation all else may dim compared to the seeming pleasure of the moment. But Proverbs wants you to look ahead – you are selling your soul, your life. 9:17 says, *“Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious! But little do they know that the dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of the grave.”*

Prov 6 says that wisdom will keep you from the immoral woman(or prostitute or wife). *“Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.”* 6:32 says, *“A man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself. Blows and disgrace are his lot and his shame will never be wiped away; for jealousy arouses a husband's fury, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge. He will not accept any compensation; he will refuse the bribe however great it is.”*

We must know that when marriage is what God intended it to be,

that will give much more satisfaction without the guilt or bondage. And for the unmarried - waiting for marriage is not impossible, and it is God's plan for blessing in your life.

Prov 7 is written like a story, *“With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose till an arrow pierces his liver, like a bird darting into a snare, little knowing it will cost him his life.”* It goes on to say, *“Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading to the chambers of death.”* In 23:26 wisdom speaks, *“My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways, for a prostitute is a deep pit and a wayward wife is a narrow well. Like a bandit she lies in wait and multiplies the unfaithful among men.”*

I want to say to you, that if you are already in this trap of an immoral relationship, or lifestyle, or pornography, and you want to be freed, turn to Jesus today. He will forgive you and only He has power to break the devil's control over you. Receive His life by faith and let him break this yoke. He loves you and wants to save you, to renew your mind and set you free from the *“spirits of the dead”*.

And if you are a believer, I want to remind you that your old life has died. You have His new life in you and you need no longer walk in those patterns of life. You can say, “NO” to any ungodliness, because of the wonderful power of Jesus in you. You are not condemned, and sin is no longer your master. Believe that and begin to walk in that truth by faith. Then the powerful life of the Holy Spirit will begin to change your desires. I want to advise you to speak to a godly friend or a pastor to pray with you and to hold you accountable as you begin to walk away from these paths of death.

If your marriage is already in deep trouble, you may need counselling to learn how to restore the trust and love in your marriage. Don't throw away your marriage for something that may taste good for the moment, but is laced with poison that leads to death. Turn back to the path of wisdom – it will guard and protect your life and that of your family. God bless you till next week as we then will finish this series on the wisdom in Proverbs.

## Wisdom from the Proverbs

### Chapter 7

Last week we looked at the wisdom in the Proverbs concerning sexual relationships. We are warned that immorality leads to death and that God's plan is to enjoy sex within one's marriage. We also said that if you have fallen into sexual sin, God will forgive you and set you free from any addictions or bondages in this area. Receive His life.

Today we are looking at the last study in the book of Proverbs that tells us about the blessings that follow the righteous. Now we need to first make it clear that in the New Covenant we do not attain any righteousness by what we do or do not do. That is the Old Mosaic covenant, and no man is able to keep the whole law anyway. That is why Jesus, who is the perfect righteous Son of Man, came to take our punishment for sin and exchange his righteousness for our sinfulness. In Romans 3:10 it describes mankind, "*There is no one righteous, not even one.*" Or one could say, there is no-one blameless. But on the cross Jesus became sin for us, and we become the righteousness of God, when we receive his grace and salvation. So righteousness is never earned, but received by faith as a gift from God. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "*God made him who had no sin so be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*". Romans 10:4 also states, "*Christ is the end of the law, so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.*"

So then, all the promises in the Bible made for the righteous, are now available to us who have believed in Jesus. So the first step is for each one to admit our sinfulness and need of a Saviour, and to believe that Jesus died to take away our sin and to give us his life and righteousness. That is what qualifies us all for these amazing promises of blessing for

the righteous. Here are some of these promises.

Prov 3:33 says, the Lord *“blesses the home of the righteous.”* In Prov 8:20 wisdom says, *“I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.”* 13:6 continues, *“Blessings crown the head of the righteous”*. Listen to this one: 10:24 and 13:4 both repeat the same verse, *“What the righteous desire will be granted.”* That is an amazing open-ended promise. Let's dream big and believe big, because our God is big and his heart of love is very, very big. His mercy and grace are never ending. 11:23 says, *“The desire of the righteous ends only in good.”* We need never think that God only favours those who have been on the way for a long time. The only requirement is, that we must believe that God is good and agree with an *“Amen”* for the promises to be realised in our lives. 2 Cor 1:20 says, *“No matter how many promises God has made, they are “Yes” in Christ. And so through him the 'Amen' is spoken by us to the glory of God.”*

There are promises for provision and blessing for the people of God. 10:16 says, *“The wages of the righteous bring them life.”* We've seen how money in the hands of the ungodly, often leads further to their downward spiral, but in our hands it brings life. 10:2 says, *“Righteousness delivers from death. The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry,”* and 13:25 says, *“The righteous eat to their heart's content.”* What wonderful promises that we can hold onto even in difficult times. Also 13:21: *“Prosperity is the reward of the righteous,”* and *“a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.”* 21:23: *“He who pursues righteousness and love finds life, prosperity, and honour.”*

Then there are declarations and promises we must believe to become a reality in our lives. 10:11 says, *“the mouth of*

*the righteous is a fountain of life.*” 10:20 says a similar thing, *“the tongue of the righteous is choice silver”* and *“the lips of the righteous nourish many.”* V31: *“the mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom,”* and *“the lips of the righteous know what is fitting.”* Let's take these for ourselves.

And what is the impact of the righteous in the world? It says in 10:28, *“The prospect of the righteous is joy,”* and v7 *“The memory of the righteous will be a blessing.”* Even the city is blessed because of God's people as 11:10 tells us, *“When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices.”* 14:34 says, *“Righteousness exalts a nation“.* 16:12: *“A throne is established through righteousness.”* It means we can take charge and use our authority as the children of God, in our places of influence. 28:12 says, *“When the righteous triumph there is great elation, but when the wicked rise to power, men go into hiding.”* Also *“When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.”* *“The righteous care about justice for the poor, but the wicked have no such concern.”* *“The righteous detest the dishonest.”* It also says in 14:19 *“Evil men will bow down in the presence of the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.”* It also says, *“The wicked become a ransom for the righteous.”*

Then there are many promises for difficult times, like 11:8, *“The righteous man is rescued from trouble.”* 12:13 also says, *“a righteous man escapes trouble.”* 12:21: *“No harm befalls the righteous.”* 14:32 says, *“Even in death the righteous have a refuge.”* 24:16 says, *“For though a righteous falls seven times, he rises again.”* That does not mean that a righteous person never sins, but he does not lose his righteousness. Proverbs shows that the distinguishing trait is that he gets up if he has fallen. 18:10 is that wonderful promise in the face of danger, *“The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.”* 28:1 says, *“The righteous are as bold as a lion.”* And in the difficult times, *“A righteous one can sing and be glad.”* (29:6)

The righteous are also compared to a tree of life. 11:30, *"The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life."* 10:30 and 12:3, *"The righteous will never be uprooted,"* and *"the righteous will thrive like a green leaf."*

We are likened to light, just as Jesus said that we are the light of the world. 4:18 says, *"the path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn shining ever brighter till the full light of day."* This means there is more and more revelation for the righteous, and progressively more light shining on our way. 13:9 says, *"The light of the righteous shines brightly."*

There are promises for their families. 15:5, *"The house of the righteous stands firm."* and the *"house of the righteous contains great treasure."* 23:24 says, *"The father of a righteous man has great joy."* Then it says, *"Gray hair is a crown of splendour; it is attained by a righteous life."* Prov 20:7 *"The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him."* The blamelessness is because of Jesus, and these blessings continue to our children and on to the next generation.

Then it describes the distinguishing behaviour of God's people. *"The righteous man cares for the needs of his animal."* I like that. 12:27: *"A righteous man is cautious in friendship"*. 13:5 *"The righteous hate what is false."* 15:28: *"The heart of the righteous weighs its answers."* *"The righteous give without sparing."* 21:26.

Then lastly some more promises: *"The truly righteous man attains life,"* and *"those who are righteous will go free."* 15:9 says that *"the Lord loves those who pursue righteousness,"* and 15:29, *"he hears the prayer of the righteous."* *"The righteousness of the blameless makes a straight way for them."* And *"The plans of the righteous are just."* (12:5) *"In the way of righteousness there is life; along the path is immortality."* That means we have eternal life!

So I want to encourage you to receive Jesus' salvation if you have not done so yet, because then you, too, will qualify to inherit these wonderful promises as a righteous man or woman. It is a righteousness that is by grace through faith in Jesus.

Well, that is the end of our study in Proverbs. God bless you till next week as we begin another study, on *Some Lessons from Luke*.

