



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PROVERBS

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

The book of Proverbs is one of three books in the Bible known as Wisdom Literature, along with Job and Ecclesiastes. Each of these books approaches wisdom in its own way. The book of Proverbs focuses on the pursuit and nature of wisdom itself.

The word *wisdom*, as used in the book of Proverbs, generally means “skill in judgment” or “discernment.” The Godly wisdom spoken of here is characterized by prudence and humility, based on the fear of God.

Solomon, traditionally regarded as the author of most of the book of Proverbs, was as much a student and collector of wisdom as he was a writer and teacher of wisdom. We can draw this conclusion because portions of the biblical book of Proverbs are very similar to other, earlier texts from Mesopotamia and Egypt. Archeology has shown that wise men could be found in most royal courts of ancient Near Eastern countries. The nurturing of wisdom seems to have been a major duty of ancient kings—to increase the effectiveness of their officials and the success of their reign as well as to prepare their successors for rulership. Modern governments would do well to follow their example.

Not only did Solomon draw on other cultures to compile his wisdom, but God made Solomon a source of wisdom for other nations. In 1 Kings 4:29-34, Solomon is described as “wiser than any other man.” The passage describes how Solomon’s reputation spread throughout the civilized world, and how kings of “all nations” sent their scholars to study and learn from Solomon.

The teachings in the book of Proverbs apply to the basic human problems faced by ordinary individuals from any cultural background or any period of history. They are

practical, down-to-earth advice for any human being who wishes to enjoy success in this life, and who wishes to avoid failure and shame. They teach that virtue and wisdom lead to well-being, while vice and folly lead to disaster and suffering.

However, merely avoiding failure and achieving success is not the main point of this book. The inspired wisdom of Proverbs points us to the source of all wisdom—our loving Creator. Proverbs clearly demonstrates that we fall far short of living in accord with the wisdom of God. Even so, he is willing to save us.

He comes to us in the person of Jesus, the wisest man who ever lived. He, the source of Solomon's wisdom, gives us redemption from our foolishness and makes his dwelling with us.

We would be wise to accept his gift.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don't be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each "daily" lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges .

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

•**Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. *The CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

•**Abbreviations Used in the CWR Bible Survey**—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

PROVERBS

Wisdom
for Living
a Holy Life

Introduction to Proverbs

Authorship: Most of Proverbs appears to have been written or collected by King Solomon. The book itself notes him as author of several sections:

1:1–9:18, “The proverbs of Solomon son of David, King of Israel.”

10:1–22:16, “The proverbs of Solomon.”

25:1–29:27, “These are more proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah king of Judah.”

In addition to Solomon, the book of Proverbs indicates that contributions were made by others:

22:17–24:34, “The sayings of the Wise.”

30:1–33, “The sayings of Agur son of Jakeh.”

31:1–9, “The sayings of King Lemuel.”

Date: Most scholars place Solomon’s 40-year reign between 970–930 B.C. He established a reputation as a compiler and writer of many proverbs and songs (1Ki 4:32). However, scholars believe many of the sayings in Proverbs may have been compiled and edited into book form centuries later, possibly around 700 B.C.

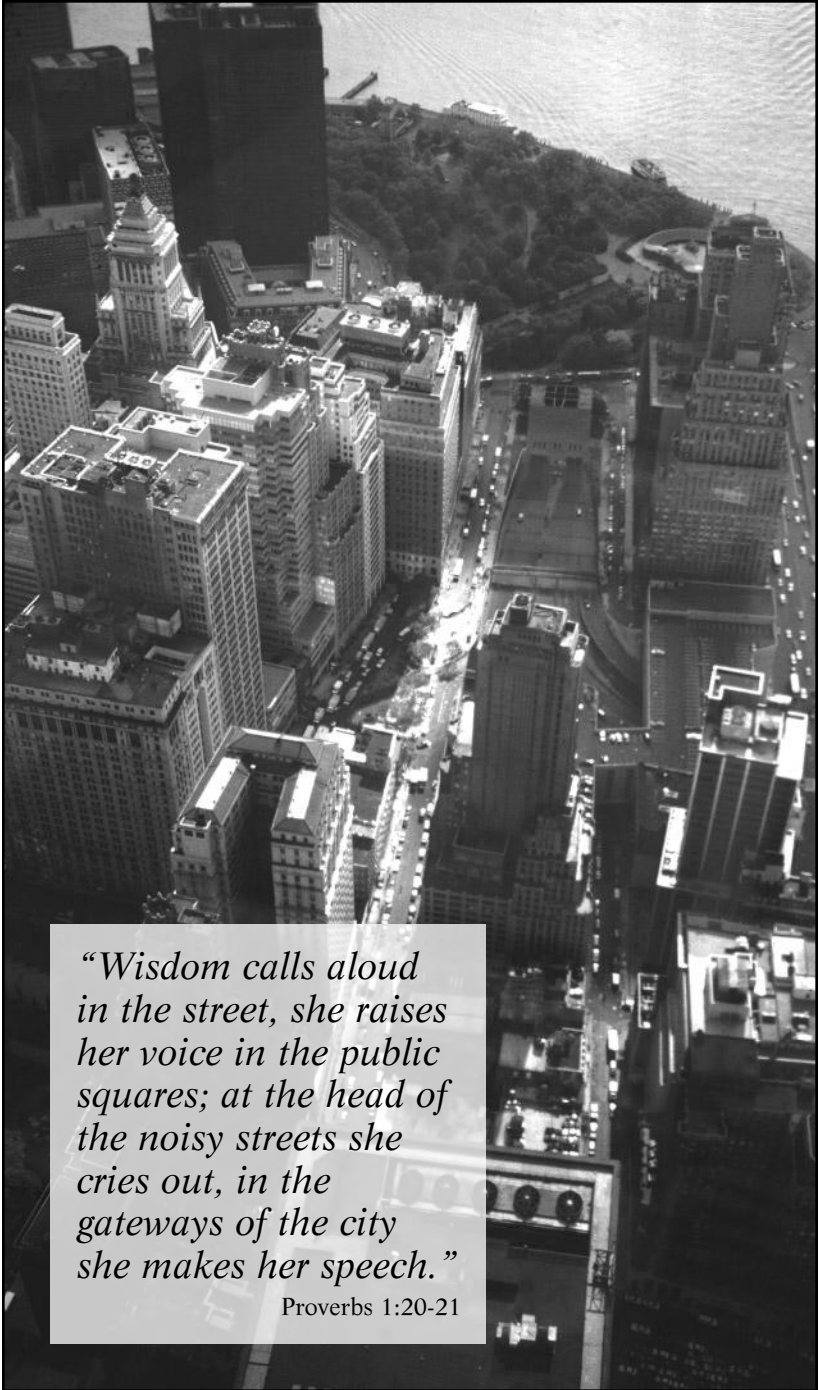
Setting and purpose: A proverb is wisdom condensed into a short sentence and stated in a way that makes it easy to remember. Proverbs covers an amazingly wide variety of practical topics such as business ethics, friendship, personal discipline, family life and knowledge of God.

Distinctive features: The book of Proverbs offers readers a sharp distinction between knowledge (accumulating facts) and wisdom (the application of facts to daily living). According to Proverbs, wisdom is more than mere intellectual knowledge. True wisdom involves devotion to God. That theme is sounded early in Proverbs: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline” (1:7). With that distinction in mind, we can learn from Proverbs how wise

people live as compared to foolish people. For example, the wise have true friends and the foolish have false friends; the wise build strong marriages while the foolish weaken their marriages; the wise are disciplined and diligent while the foolish are lazy.

Reading outline

Day	Text	Theme
1	Proverbs 1	A Photograph of Wisdom
2	Proverbs 2	What Are You Listening For?
3	Proverbs 3	Creeds and Deeds
4	Proverbs 4	Father Knows Best
5	Proverbs 5	Closing the Door to Temptation
6	Proverbs 6	Troublemakers and Troublemaking
7	Proverbs 7	The Moral of the Story
8	Proverbs 8	Rising to the Call
9	Proverbs 9	Make Your Choice
10	Proverbs 10	Sharing Knowledge
11	Proverbs 11	Honesty Is the Best Policy
12	Proverbs 12	"I Don't Mean to Be Critical, But..."
13	Proverbs 13	How Hope Can Help You Cope
14	Proverbs 14	Beware of Fools
15	Proverbs 15	Watch Your Mouth
16	Proverbs 16	Life's Invisible Partner
17	Proverbs 17	Taking a Spiritual Inventory
18	Proverbs 18	Listen Before You Speak
19	Proverbs 19	Blaming God
20	Proverbs 20	Social Sewage
21	Proverbs 21	The King of Kings
22	Proverbs 22	What's in a Name?
23	Proverbs 23	Whatever Happened to Gluttony?
24	Proverbs 24	Build a Life, Not Just a House
25	Proverbs 25	Being Kind to an Enemy
26	Proverbs 26	People to Avoid
27	Proverbs 27	Maximum Support
28	Proverbs 28	I Confess!
29	Proverbs 29	Control Yourself!
30	Proverbs 30	Poetic Wisdom From an Ancient Sage
31	Proverbs 31	A Wife of Noble Character



*“Wisdom calls aloud
in the street, she raises
her voice in the public
squares; at the head of
the noisy streets she
cries out, in the
gateways of the city
she makes her speech.”*

Proverbs 1:20-21

A Photograph of Wisdom

DAY 1

Proverbs 1

Who is the wisest human you know? What do you think makes him or her wise? Can you describe this person intellectually and spiritually to form a “photograph” of wisdom? Has that person’s wisdom helped you?

1. Verses 2-6 explain why Solomon compiled the book of Proverbs. What were his reasons?

2. Why do you think wisdom is cited in the feminine—“she (wisdom) raises her voice in the public squares” (v. 20)?

3. The absence of wisdom results in immature and foolish living. What are the results of living that way (vs. 28-32)?

1. Were your parents wise people? What parental advice did you receive that you found beneficial? Do you feel other people view you as having wisdom?

2. What are some of the ways that sinners in today’s culture entice people? Are you tempted by them? What is an effective way of separating oneself from those who tempt you to do wrong?

3. Define complacency (v. 32)? How is complacency self-destructive?

4. How does wisdom provide us with a safety-net (v. 33)?

*Don’t misunderstand the word **fear** in verse 7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” Fear is simply another word for reverence or worship. Try reading verse 7 aloud, replacing fear with the word reverence.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

What Are You Listening for?

Proverbs 2

OPENING
up to the Word

Throughout our lives, we “turn our ear” to hear things—words of approval, words of love, words of encouragement. What are you listening for today? What do you need to hear?

DIGGING
into the Word

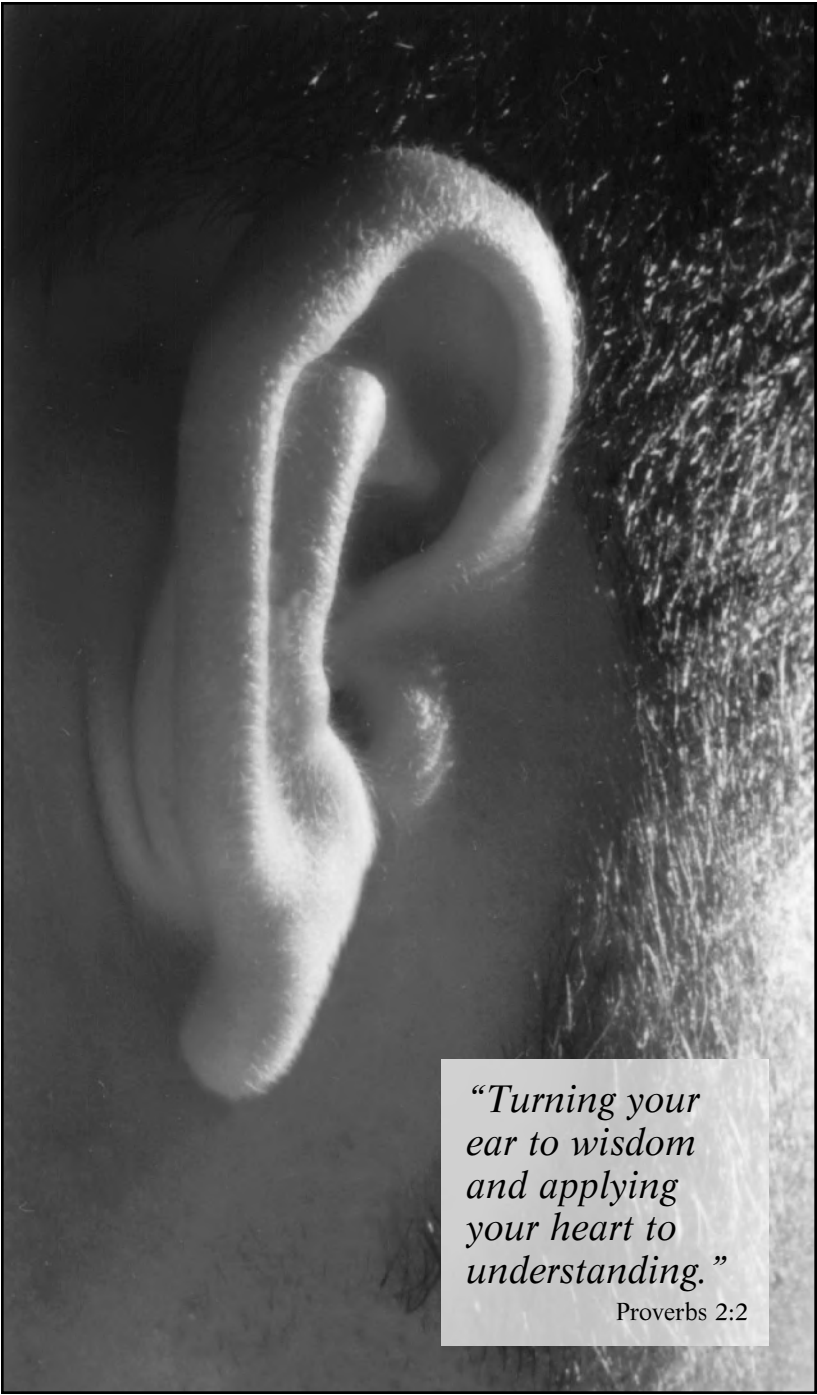
1. Who is addressed in this chapter? Is this a child, teenager or young adult? Is the person being addressed experienced and educated or naïve?
2. What does God give us (v. 6)? What benefits of believing in God are listed in verses 6-9?
3. What does wisdom save us from?
4. How are people described who have turned away from wisdom (vs. 12-19)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Has anyone tried to pass their wisdom on to you? Were you open and receptive or were you offended and closed-minded?
2. Focus on verses 6-9. Have you experienced God’s wisdom? God’s victory? God’s shielding? God’s guarding and protecting?
3. Unfortunately, affairs and adulterous relationships are common. Chances are, you know someone who is, or was, engaged in such a relationship. Were the consequences immediate, long-term or both? Do you think there is an inevitable outcome of adultery?
4. Have you known anyone who was “seductive,” or something that was overwhelmingly tempting (v. 16)?
5. Have you met people who “delight in doing wrong” (v. 14)? What impact did they have on you?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The word **path** is used several times in this chapter, suggesting that life is about direction and not drifting—that if we are to avoid instability, we are to be intentional about how we live. Note these other verses where the word path is used in a spiritual sense: Psalm 119:35; 119:105; Proverbs 15:24; Isaiah 40:14.*



*“Turning your
ear to wisdom
and applying
your heart to
understanding.”*

Proverbs 2:2

“CONDENSED GOOD SENSE”

The Oxford dictionary defines the English word proverb as “a short, pithy saying in general use, held to embody a general truth.” The Hebrew word for proverb (mashal) has a special significance. It is a similitude, repetition or comparison—a condensed parable capable of being expanded. Sometimes the lesson of the proverb is clear; other times it is obscure, requiring interpretation. Here are quotes from various sources about proverbs.

A proverb is no proverb to you till your life has illustrated it.

- John Keats

One man’s wit and all men’s wisdom.

- John Russell

A little gospel.

- Spanish proverb

The condensed good sense of nations.

- James Mackintosh

Pointed speeches.

- Francis Bacon

The wisdom of the streets.

- William G. Benham

A short sentence based on long experience.

- Miguel de Cervantes

Little sermons.

- Gelett Burgess

A proverb is the child of experience.

- English proverb

A short saying oft contains much wisdom.

- Sophocles

Creeds and Deeds

DAY 3

Proverbs 3

A creed is a set of fundamental beliefs or guiding principles. Do you have a personal creed?

1. What does this chapter teach us about God?
2. What additional benefits of acquiring wisdom are contained in verses 13-20?
3. Verses 21-35 contain practical advice about neighborliness. From these verses, what are the characteristics of a good neighbor? Does this describe you? Your neighbors?

1. What verse in this chapter speaks most to you? Why?
2. Who or what comes to your mind when you read the words: "Honor the Lord with your wealth . . ." (v. 9)?
3. Which warning in this chapter is the one that makes you the most uncomfortable? Could it be the one you need to hear and heed right now?
4. Do your deeds match your creeds? How does the gospel deal with the discrepancy (Ro 5:8)?

Verse 13 notes that **those who find wisdom are blessed**. To be designated a "wise" person is a high accolade in scripture. Some who have been described as wise include: Joseph—a wise leader who helped Egypt survive a major famine (Ac 7:10); Bezalel—a wise artist who designed and supervised construction of the Tabernacle (Ex 31:1-5); Daniel—a wise counselor who solved complex problems with God's help (Da 5:11,12); Stephen—a wise leader who organized food distribution for impoverished widows (Ac 6:8-10).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

DAY 4

Father Knows Best

Proverbs 4

OPENING
up to the Word

Is there a father or father-like person in your life whom you would describe as *wise*—who has guided and mentored you? What is your most memorable parent-child conversation?

DIGGING
into the Word

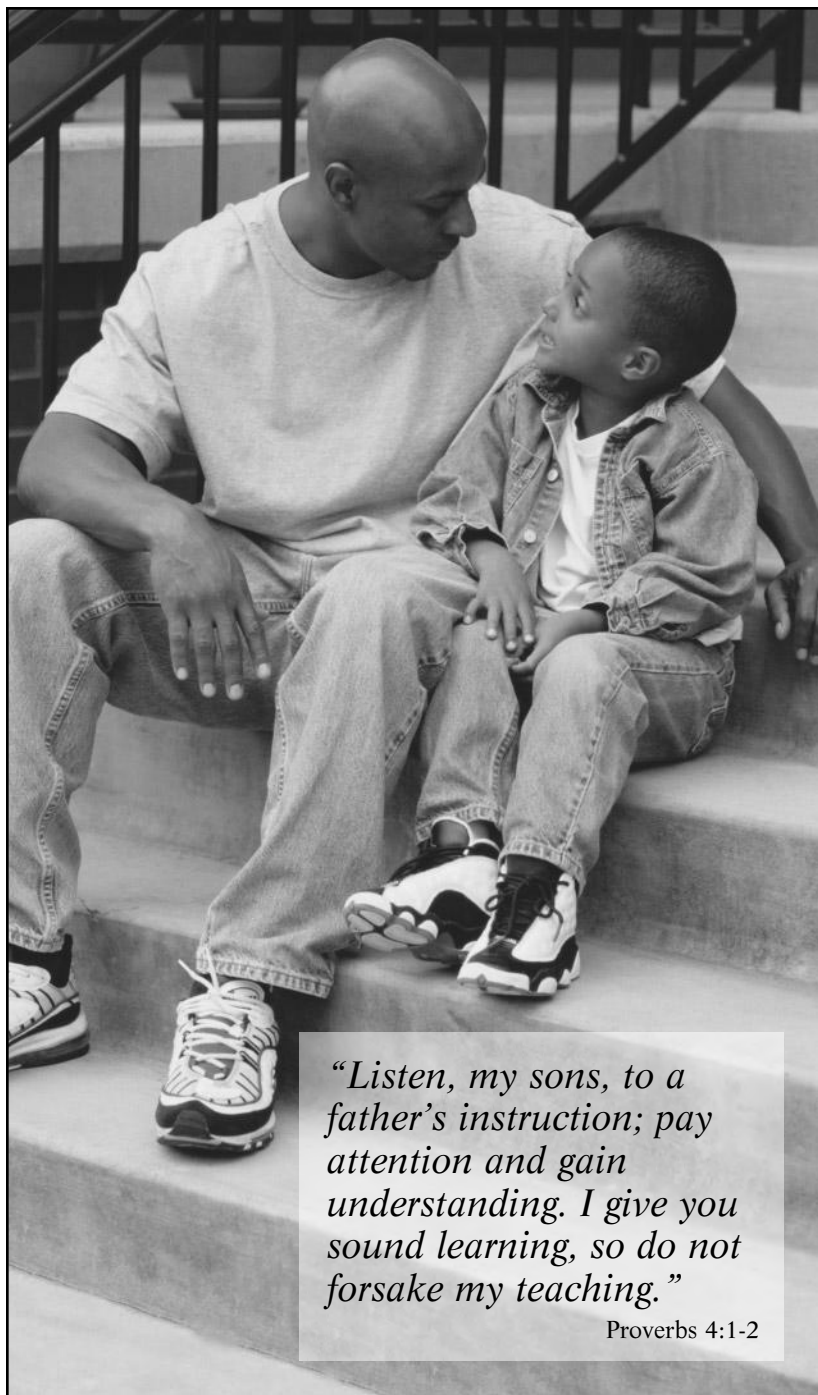
1. What is the author's source of wisdom (vs. 3-4)?
2. What advice is being passed on? What lessons do you see in verses 1-12?
3. Describe in today's terms what might be a "wicked path" and what would be the "path of the righteous" (vs. 14-18).
4. What warnings do you see in verses 20-27?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Is anyone in your family a source of wisdom and insight—a grandparent, mother, father, uncle, etc. How do you think that person became wise?
2. Verses 10-27 describe two paths, one good and one bad. What path are you on currently? Have you ever changed paths? What was the result?
3. Who gives you "sound learning" (v. 2)? Recall some examples of that good teaching and how it helped you.
4. In what ways can you make "level paths for your feet" (v. 26)?

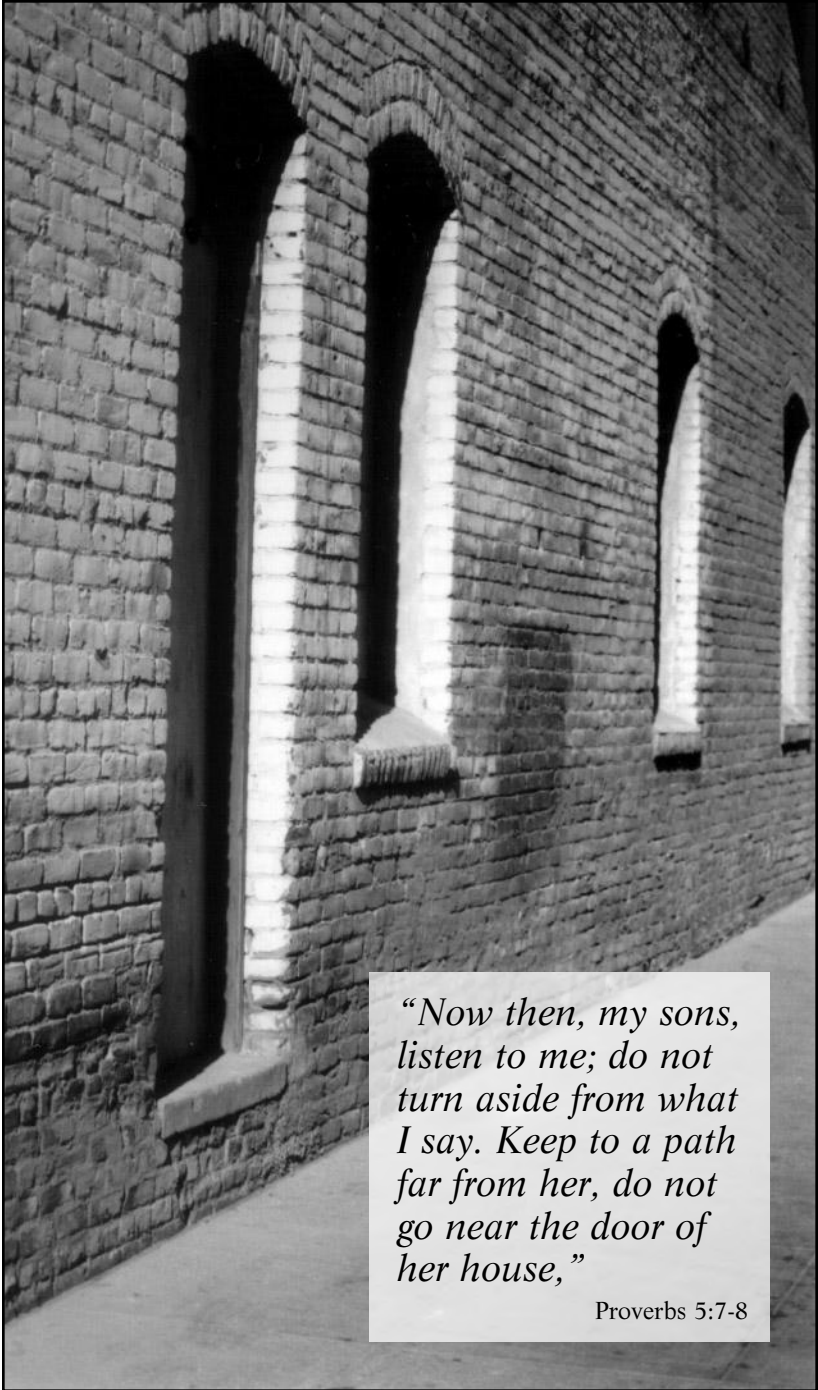
WINDOW
on the Word

Verse 23 cautions: "guard your heart." This is a reminder that life-changing decisions can be made more from the heart than from the mind. This verse challenges us to be certain that choices made by the heart lead us down the right path. As you reflect on your own heart-choices, be encouraged by the biblical truth that even when we have made poor choices, God can renew our hearts (Ps 119:161; Ps 51:10; Eze 36:26) and restore our lives.



*“Listen, my sons, to a
father’s instruction; pay
attention and gain
understanding. I give you
sound learning, so do not
forsake my teaching.”*

Proverbs 4:1-2



*“Now then, my sons,
listen to me; do not
turn aside from what
I say. Keep to a path
far from her, do not
go near the door of
her house,”*

Proverbs 5:7-8

Closing the Door to Temptation

DAY 5

Proverbs 5

Consider this Latin proverb: “We all have a propensity to grasp at forbidden fruit.” Do you agree? Disagree?

OPENING
up to the Word

1. This chapter can be divided into four sections—1-6; 7-14; 15-20; and 21-23. What titles would you give each section?

DIGGING
into the Word

2. What penalties can result from adultery (vs. 1-14)?

3. What joys of marriage are spoken of in verses 17-19?

4. According to this chapter, do the consequences of adultery come as a sudden downfall or a gradual decline? What verses support your answer?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Who gave you “words of insight” (5:1) concerning sexual matters? Do those words make more sense to you now than when you first heard or read them?

2. According to Solomon, adultery exacts a high price. How far reaching are the consequences of adulterous relationships in our times?

3. How does this proverb reinforce the teaching of this chapter: “Pheasants are fools if they invite the hawk to dinner.”

4. Do you know someone who rejoices in the mate of their youth (v. 18)? Describe their relationship.

WINDOW
on the Word

*In verse 19 a wife is described as **a loving doe, a graceful deer**. These images for intimacy are drawn from nature to describe the form and beauty that emerge from a loving relationship between a husband and a wife. This imagery suggests a delicate and fragile beauty of the marriage relationship that should be appreciated and not neglected. See Song of Songs, chapter 4 for further expressions concerning the joy of sex within marriage.*

DAY 6

Troublemaking and Troublemakers

Proverbs 6

OPENING
up to the Word

Have your attempts to help a friend ever backfired on you? Did your friendship survive? What lessons did you take away from that experience?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Why do verses 1-5 urge caution before co-signing on a loan?
2. What differences are listed here between an industrious ant and a lazy person (v. 6-11)?
3. What is the central issue in verses 12-15?
4. In your own words, describe the “six things the Lord hates.”
5. Verses 20-35 contain further warnings against adultery. What dangers are cited in these verses?

LIVING
out the Word

1. What is the lesson from the ant in verses 6-11? (a) save up for a rainy day, (b) provide for the future, (c) be disciplined, (d) work hard. How does this square with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 6:19?
2. Have you had any experience with the type of person described in verses 12-15?
3. How can adultery reduce you to a “loaf of bread” (v. 26)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Verses 30-35 show how **society may sympathize with some wrong behavior**. However, the point is not to justify theft, but to make this distinction: if someone steals food and is caught, the thief can make restitution to the person who was robbed. However, if someone “steals” another man’s wife, no restitution would be sufficient to appease the angry husband.*

The Moral of the Story

DAY 7

Proverbs 7

Recall a time when you did something foolish or wrong. If you wrote a story about the experience, what moral would you conclude with?

1. Most of chapter 7 is told in the form of a story beginning with verse 6. Imagine the story divided (vs. 6-23) into a three-act play. What would you expect the play to depict in :

Act I (vs. 6-9)

Act II (vs. 10-20)

Act III (vs. 21-23)

2. What is the moral of the story (vs. 24-27)?

1. What does it mean to regard wisdom as a “sister” (v. 4)? (a) wisdom is like a good, older sister who offers advice and protection; (b) wisdom is like an older, experienced sister who shares her insights based on experience. Any other interpretations?

2. In addition to sexual temptation, there are other ways we can be seduced. Describe a time when you were “seduced” into doing something you later regretted.

*In many versions of the Bible, this chapter is titled **Warning Against the Adulteress**. Some women may object, feeling that all women are being unfairly stereotyped as seducers. But this chapter makes an important distinction: both the man and the woman are equally guilty. The man described in this chapter is morally undisciplined. He is guilty of seeking out an illicit relationship (vs. 8-9). The woman is equally guilty of seducing the man (v. 10).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word