



tweets from heaven

Godly Tweets
for
Daily Living

Studies from the Book of Proverbs

Prepared by
Gerhard Venter



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Study method

This study booklet is based on an outline referred to by the acronym T.E.A.M.S. The word TEAMS provides us with different aspects of learning, enabling us to make the most of any study. It is normal to associate “teaching” with someone taking the lead, talking for a while, targeting the brain, hoping to increase our knowledge. The normal expected outcome is that those who listen (the “students”) will apply the teaching to their own lives. However, most of us know that this is not always the case. The teacher needs to take some extra steps, such as modelling, illustrating, guiding, equipping, coaching and delegating. This is the idea behind the TEAMS approach of learning.

The outline found in each of the studies follows this approach:

T - Truth. Biblical truths are discovered, discussed and shared in the group setting – the group leader may take the lead by sharing this aspect, but the emphasis is on learning and sharing together around a basic truth. You will be directed to references in the Book of Proverbs or other passages in the Bible to learn more about what God is saying to us. The main question in this section is: What does GOD SAY to us in His Word?

E - Equipping. The truths that we discover in the Bible, during this study and in the group sessions are applied to our own lives in order to equip us for living the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. The biggest question during this part of the study is: How does the truth APPLY to my own life?

A - Accountable. We will be asked every week to do some “homework” or preparation for the group meeting. During the meetings there will be an opportunity to share with one another how we are progressing on our journey, struggles and spiritual growth. We learn best when we know that we will be “checked on”! Each time we will also “check in” with each member of the group. You are encouraged to be open and honest with one another in order to journey together. The question that we ask in this part is: How are YOU doing?

M - Mission. We are saved by God’s grace in order to be a blessing to others in our family, circle of friends and colleagues at work. Every study includes some suggestions or questions that encourage us to share with other people what we have learned, or to become involved in some way in putting the truths we are learning into practice. This is a very good way of learning and making the truths your own and becoming more missional (focused on God’s mission in this world). The question here is: What did you DO with the truth?

S - Supplication. This is another word for “prayer” or asking God for help. Group time also gives us an opportunity to pray for one another and to commit to support one another in and through prayer. Prayer shows us how important it is to express our dependence on God in every area of our spiritual growth and our lives in general. The question in this section is: How do we INVOLVE GOD in our journey of learning?

How to use this study guide

This booklet is meant to be used as a study guide, in other words you are not told what to believe, but rather pointed in the direction of self-discovery of truth and how it applies to your own life. It is meant to facilitate your learning, your spiritual growth, your journey of self-discovery of what God is doing in your personal life, as well as how you can benefit from the study in a group setting. Therefore, the “teaching” sections are kept to the minimum, but the questions will lead you to discover and apply the truths from the references in Proverbs.

You will benefit most from this study if you do the following:

- Complete most of the questions at home in preparation for the group meeting.
- Be honest in answering the questions.
- Select the most important questions for group discussions. You will not be able to cover all the questions every week. It is more important that you talk, open up, discuss issues and are honest with each other.
- Focus on allowing members of the group to assimilate the truths and make them their own, rather than trying to “get through the study”.
- Each study begins with a key verse, which can become a memory verse to “drive home” the Biblical truth for the week. Try to memorise the verse for each study.
- Think about practical ways to apply the truths of the Word to your own life.
- Make a concerted effort to practise what you have learned or decided from one study to the next. Both the ACCOUNTABILITY and MISSION sections will assist you to do this.

Background Information

Wisdom in the Ancient East

Wisdom, whether verbal or written, was a well-known style of communication in the Ancient Middle East. The reasoning was that people needed wisdom to interpret their situation and cope with the reality of life. Hebrew poetry and wisdom differed from that of other Ancient Near Eastern nations by going further and deeper than just human insight and struggles: true wisdom was based on the “fear of the Lord” (Proverbs 1:7, 9:10).

“Wisdom” in the ancient world in general and in the Old Testament in particular needs to be understood as more than “being clever” or being smart. It was an all-encompassing concept which included practical skills, insight, knowledge, intellectual ability, experience and good common sense. In addition to wisdom (being wise) in general we find the basic definition of wisdom in the OT as “serving the Lord”, often expressed as “the fear of the Lord”. Wisdom was sometimes very practical, as we will see in the Book of Proverbs, while at other times more philosophical, speculative and even pessimistic, as can be seen in the Books of Job and Ecclesiastes.

The wise man (sage) was an important part of the Jewish (and other ancient) societies. They had a very practical role to fulfill, providing guidance for general living, as well as sharing their insights for specific situations. Wise men seem to have been present in Solomon's court, learning from him and collecting some of his sayings, some of which we have collected in the Book of Proverbs. It is even possible that there have been a "school" of wisdom, attended by those who wanted to acquire the skills of wisdom, similar to the "schools" or groups of the prophets we encounter in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 10:5-7; 9-11; 2 Kings 6:1).

Old Testament wisdom was practical, teaching people ways of serving God. Psalm 1 provides a good example of such wisdom. Good behaviour or lifestyle was emphasized as the wise and correct way to live. Life was often divided into two sharp contrasting concepts or realities; on the one hand we find the righteous, wise and upright person; on the other there is the wicked, the "fool" and unfaithful person. Of particular importance in the Old Testament was the contrast between the "wise" and the "fool", as we will witness in the Book of Proverbs.

Introduction to the book of Proverbs

The Hebrew name for the book (misjle) comes from Proverbs 1:1, translated as "sayings" or "proverbs", while our English title is derived from the Latin word proverbial. We read in 1 Kings 4:32 that Solomon was responsible for 3,000 proverbs (and a number of songs), leading us to believe that he was the author of many or most of the proverbs we have in the Book of Proverbs. Other collectors or authors include the men of Hezekiah (25:1), Agur (30:1) and Lemuel's mother (31:1).

It is very likely that an editor (or more than one) collected and put these proverbs together in one volume at a date no longer known to us. The book as we know it today was known and used by the time of the last events described in the Old Testament (about 400BC). There are at least 35 direct or indirect references to Proverbs in the New Testament, proving its use by ancient Israel. The proverbs or sayings attributed to Solomon would have originated as far back as 950BC, while some of the sayings may even be based on earlier traditions. We certainly have in the Book of Proverbs not only God's revealed word, but ancient and proven wisdom from people who lived long before us!

Proverbs (or wise sayings) and wise men were used by the nation and the kings of Israel as a guide in decision-making. We also make decisions on a daily basis and will do well to learn more from ancient wise people about how to live our lives on a daily basis.

Definition of a proverb

The online NIV Study Bible gives description of a proverb in this way:

"The Hebrew word translated 'proverb' is also translated 'oracle' (Numbers 23:7, 18), 'taunt' (Isaiah 14:4) and 'parable' (Ezekiel 17:2), so its meaning is considerably broader than the English term. This may help explain the presence of the longer discourse sections in chapters 1-9. Most proverbs are short, compact statements that express truths about human behaviour. Often there is repetition of a word or sound that aids memorization. In 30:33, e.g., the same Hebrew verb is translated 'churning,' 'twisting' and 'stirring up.'"

www.ibsstl.org/niv/studybible/proverbs.php

Outline of the Book of Proverbs

Before looking at different studies or topics from the Book of Proverbs, it is important to get an overview of the book as a whole. The following outline gives an idea of how the book has been organized:

- 1:1 **Title and purpose**
- 1:8-9:18 **The way of wisdom:**
Guidance given by a father and Wisdom herself to those who need to learn
- 10:1-22:16 **Proverbs of Solomon:**
Short sayings of advice, observations and guidance in a wide range of life issue
- 22:17-24:34 **Anonymous wise sayings:**
A collection of proverbs from unknown sources
- 25-29 **More proverbs of Solomon**
- 30-31 **Appendices**
 - * **30 Sayings of Agur**
 - * **31:1-9 Sayings of Lemuel**
 - * **31:10-31 Acrostic poem on the ideal wife**
(using the Hebrew alphabet as headings)

The first study in this booklet draws mainly from the first nine chapters of the book, laying a foundation for the rest of the topics to be unpacked. Most the chapters of the Book of Proverbs include short, wise sayings, seemingly with no context, almost like “tweets” on Twitter or short comments on Facebook. However, the book as a whole and the background of wisdom in Ancient Israel provide us with the broader context in which to read, interpret and apply the never-ageing truths found in Proverbs.

There are different kinds (classifications or types) of proverbs in the Book of Proverbs. The table on the opposite page from ‘americanbible.org’ gives an idea of how proverbs can be understood.

(see <http://stories.americanbible.org/bible-resources/bible-resource-center>).

the Form or pattern of a proverb

<p>1. Opposite Parallel</p> <p>The same statement or instruction is given twice, but in opposite ways.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hatred stirs up trouble; love overlooks the wrongs that others do. 10:12 ◦ Always do the right thing, and you will live; keep on doing wrong, and you will die. 11:19
<p>2. Similar Parallel</p> <p>The same statement or instruction is given twice in similar ways. The same idea is restated in different words. Sometimes, the second line makes the point more strongly than the first line did.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ God's people avoid evil ways, and they protect themselves by watching where they go. 16:17 ◦ Use wisdom and understanding to establish your home; let good sense fill the rooms with priceless treasures. 24:3,4
<p>3. Single Statement</p> <p>Some proverbs are a single statement describing some truth. These are often short, bold statements or simple warnings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Even fools seem smart when they are quiet. 17:28 ◦ You may think you are on the right road and still end up dead. 14:12
<p>4. Statement with an Explanation</p> <p>The first line is a concrete image which is then explained by the second line.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Just as iron sharpens iron, friends sharpen the minds of each other. 27:17 ◦ An angry ruler is like a roaring lion—make either one angry, and you are dead. 20:2
<p>5. Comparison</p> <p>Some proverbs use striking images that compare one thing or person to another. These are called “metaphors.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ A beautiful woman who acts foolishly is like a gold ring on the snout of a pig. 11:22 ◦ Our inner thoughts are a lamp from the LORD. 20:27 ◦ A ruler who mistreats the poor is like a roaring lion or a bear hunting for food. 28:15
<p>6. Descriptive List</p> <p>Usually three or four answers that follow a statement based on an unspoken question.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ There are three or four things I cannot understand: How eagles fly so high or snakes crawl on rocks, how ships sail the ocean or people fall in love. 30:18,19
<p>7. “If...then” Statements and “Or Else” Instructions</p> <p>The second part explains the consequences of doing or not doing something. The “or-else” is usually implied but not stated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ If you obey God, you will have something to leave your grandchildren. 13:22 ◦ Make fun of wisdom, and you will never find it. 14:6 ◦ It's better to take hold of a mad dog by the ears ◦ than to take part in someone else's argument. 26:17



Tweets about wisdom

God on wise living

BEFORE YOU GET GOING...

Make sure you have read and that you understand the concept of TEAMS, as explained in the introductory section of this booklet. The explanation given creates the context for the learning method used in this booklet.

Since the first study is foundational and rather long, you may need to divide it into two sessions. If so, you can use the first week as an introductory week of study, familiarising yourself with the "Introduction to Proverbs" (above) and breaking down the reading of Chapters 1-9 into two sections. As an alternative you can focus on the TRUTH section (below) during the first study and complete the rest of the sections during the second week.

MEMORY VERSE

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,
but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

Proverbs 1:7

TRUTH

- Read the introductory sections of this booklet. You will learn more about the background to the Book of Proverbs, as well as gain a better understanding of the concept of wisdom in the ancient world. Write down any questions related to the introduction and background information and raise them during your group meeting.
- In your group meeting, ask one person to read Proverbs 1:1-7 slowly and meaningfully.
- What is your immediate response to what the author is saying about "attaining wisdom and discipline"?

- Discuss (or meditate on) the author's purpose in this introduction. List the different words used to describe wisdom. Do you think these different words are synonyms, all related to "attaining wisdom"?

- What is true wisdom and where is it found? See Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10.

- Let members each share their own understanding or explanation of "the fear of the Lord"?

- Read selections from (or briefly scan) Proverbs 1 to 9 in order to "get a feel" for the author's approach to wisdom.
- Here are some suggested passages. Write brief comments about your understanding of the main emphasis in each passage:
 - * 1:8-10 _____
 - * 1:32-33 _____
 - * 2:1-6 _____
 - * 2:12-17 _____
 - * 3:1-12 _____
 - * 4:1-9 _____
 - * 4:18-19 _____
 - * 5:21-23 _____
 - * 6:9-11 _____
 - * 7:1-5 _____
 - * 8:12-21 _____
 - * 9:10-12 _____
- See if you can define wisdom from both a positive and a negative angle. List some ideas under two headings: On the one hand Wisdom (wise living) and on the other hand Foolish (unwise) living.
Wise Living: _____
Foolish Living: _____
- Compare what you have discovered so far with the Epistle of James' description of godly wisdom (James 3:13-18).

REFLECTING...

None of us would argue against the value of wise living or the need to gain and use wisdom in life. In fact, we are quick to acknowledge our need for more wisdom in making every-day decisions and, if we are honest, confess that we have acted very unwisely (foolishly) many times in our lives!

How and when do we become wise in all that we say, do and decide? There is no simple answer to this question and we spend a life-time gaining wisdom. Wisdom is gained by growing up, heeding sound advice from parents and mentors, learning from our own mistakes, gaining experience as we grow older (and wiser!) and being teachable and open to input from others. There is certainly truth in the belief that wisdom comes with grey hair!

But the Word of God (the Bible) provides us with much help in giving us a good, balanced and godly perspective on wisdom and wise living. The Bible has much to say in general about wisdom, but also makes it clear that ultimate wisdom is found in “the fear of God”, meaning that submission to God, worshipping and acknowledging him as Lord of our lives is the only real way in which to become wise.

True wisdom is not found in withdrawing from life, but rather by living our lives under the guidance and authority of the Lord as revealed to us in his Word. Wisdom, even godly wisdom, is not found by doing a once-off prayer, receiving a miraculous touch by God or by attending some course. Rather, it is more like a process of getting to know more about God, drawing closer to him, learning from mature believers, digging into the Bible and praying daily for wisdom in how to live, what we say, what to avoid and how to impact others around us. Gaining wisdom is therefore a journey.

In this study we will look at what the Book of Proverbs has to say about wisdom, mainly by focusing on different topics addressed in the Proverbs. You will do well if you include the Proverbs regularly in your Bible reading – it is packed with godly wisdom and advice!

Enjoy the journey of wisdom!

equipping

- Would you describe yourself as a wise person? Explain your response.

- Who has been the greatest human influence in your life in learning about wisdom or making wise choices or decisions?

- Do you understand the Proverbs’ description of the “fear of the Lord”? Discuss.

- How do you go about learning more about godly wisdom in your own life?

accountability

- Have you read the prescribed sections of Proverbs for this study?
 - Can you recite the memory verse for this study?
 - What was your “gut reaction” to the reading?
-
- Tell the group about a time you made a foolish decision, said something stupid or simply acted unwisely.
 - If the group knows each other well enough, use this time to encourage one another by making comments about the wisdom you see in each other.

mission

- Discuss the following question: How does godly wise living impact the unsaved world around us?
- List the people in your immediate family, extended family, work-place or friendship circle on whom your life of wisdom (or lack thereof!) has an influence.

- Is it possible that godly, wise living could be a tool to bring unsaved people to salvation in Jesus Christ?

supplication

- Spend time praising God for his gift of wisdom.
- Let group members share areas of need in relation to wise living and spend time praying. List the prayer requests and commit to pray for each other during the next week.
- Pray for any general prayer requests, either in the group or needs in the church.



Tweets about words

God on gentleness

MEMORY VERSE

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

Proverbs 15:1

TRUTH

- Write down what you learn from the following verses in Proverbs about being wise with your words:

* **10:31-32**

* **11:11-13**

* **12:6**

* **12:18**

* **15:1**

* **15:2**

* **15:28**

* **18:6-8**

* **22:11**

* **29:20**

* **31:26**

- How does the wisdom in the Book of Proverbs with regard to our speech compare with James 3:1-12? Be prepared to share your findings with your group members when you meet.

- Read Colossians 4:5-6 and discuss the importance of Paul's directive to the members of the church at Colossae.

REFLECTING...

It is clear from the selection of proverbs about words or speech that our tongues have the power of life or death! Speech can promote or destroy you. Many have ruined their lives by saying the wrong thing. In the last while there have been too many well-known figures getting themselves in trouble with their postings on Twitter, Facebook or some other social media. So, whether the words are uttered in speech or in written form, they can have major ramifications for relationships, job positions and one's future happiness. But of course, the reverse is also true: Words can bring healing while some people have been exalted for kind and wise words. Your speech will bring God and man's blessings or curses.

We need the power of the Holy Spirit to give us wisdom when we speak, to know when to speak, what to say and how to respond to others. James (1:19) advises us that "everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" – not-so-easy advice to apply on a consistent basis! Words uttered cannot be retracted – even if we say we are sorry, we still cannot take the words back. Many an adult walks around wounded because of harsh or damaging words said to or about them by a parent, school teacher or friend.

equipping

- In an honest assessment of your own habits of speech, how are you doing in the following areas?
 - * **Listening before speaking/responding (or even reacting!)**

 - * **Weighing your words before you speak**

 - * **Losing your cool and lashing out at other people**

 - * **Building up or breaking down**

 - * **Waiting for emotions to cool off before speaking**

- Do your words (what you say) encourage more than criticise? If your speech (words) could be recorded for a whole day, how much of it is wholesome (building up) rather than breaking down?

- What do your words reveal about your attitude towards your family, friends, colleagues, government ... and your church?

accountability

- Can you recite your memory verse for this study? You may be asked to do so during your meeting time.
- Did you complete the mission assignment for the previous study? Be prepared to answer questions about this during your next meeting.
- Have you recently hurt someone with your words? Can you recall the occasion and what you said?

- Are you willing to contact the person (or persons) you offended to confess and ask for forgiveness? Write down your response and intentions below.

- Can you think of another (better) way you could have responded or spoken?

mission

- Decide now how to be more careful with your words in the future. The best is to decide on specific actions, such as writing down the name of a person to whom you want to say something positive this week. This can be someone in your sphere of influence (spouse, children or parents, colleague, friend).

- Do you know a non-Christian or nominal Christian with whom you can start a conversation, using words that build up and (ultimately) bring glory to God? Write the person's name and how and when you plan to engage in a conversation with him/her.

supplication

- Turn to Psalm 141:1-4 and pray this prayer for yourself.
- Use some of your prayer time to bring words of praise to God (see Psalm 40:9-10; 71:8).
- Pray for wisdom to use your words to build up, avoid conflict, soften negative emotions. Ask God to fill you with his Holy Spirit to enable you to use words wisely.
- Pray for any needs mentioned by group members.



Tweets about work

God on diligence

MEMORY VERSE

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise."

Proverbs 6:6

truth

- Look up the following references in the Book of Proverbs about work and work-related issues. Give a summary statement of the truths or guidelines highlighted by each reference.

* **6:6-11**

* **10:5**

* **12:11**

* **12:24; 13:4**

* **16:26**

* **18:9**

* **20:13**

* **21:5**

* **22:29**

* **23:4-5**

* **24:27**

* **24:30-34**

* **31:10-20**

- o Compare the principles found in Proverbs with passages in other parts of God's Word:
- * **Genesis 2:15** _____
 - * **John 4:34** _____
 - * **Colossians 3:22-24** _____
 - * **2 Thessalonians 3:8-13** _____

REFLECTING...

We have been created to work. Not a very attractive thought if you hate your job! However, it is clear from the creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 that God's will for us is to work to earn a living and to "subdue the earth". We therefore fulfil our God-given mandate by working diligently and earning an honest income.

Seeing work (in general) as God's calling to us to be creative and to play our part in bringing about the Kingdom of God in this world, makes a big difference to how we approach our work, job or position. It is clear from the Scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments that laziness has no place in God's economy and his design for us. He himself is referred to as having "worked" in creating the universe, so that he "rested" from his work (Genesis 2:2). It should therefore not surprise us that he expects us to work as well.

The different proverbs referring to working hard or diligently are a great help in understanding the importance of doing our best, earning an honest income and providing the means for living a fruitful life for God here on earth. Our attitude towards work, as well as the way we diligently fulfil our duties at work, can be a way in which we can draw others to God.

equipping

- What is your attitude to work in general? Do you understand and agree with the principle of work mentioned in the Bible?

- o What is your attitude towards your specific job, position and company/organization for which you work?

Where would you plot yourself on the continuum below? Discuss this in your group.

Where would you plot yourself on the continuum below? Discuss this in your group.

-10 -9 -8 -7 -6 -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Enslaved by work Healthy balance Lazy

- Does working hard mean that you can neglect other aspects of your life (family, church, friends, etc)? If not, how do you suggest you can maintain a proper balance?

- Do you personally work too hard and therefore neglect your health, family and other relationships?

- What is your true purpose for working?

accountability

- Did you memorise the verse for this study?
- Share with each other if and how you completed the MISSION assignment for the previous study.
- Share with your group what your work-week has been like.
- Ask group members (or even your family/spouse at home) to give you feedback about your attitude to your work

* **Do you have a positive attitude?**

* **Do you constantly complain about your work?**

* **Do you maintain a healthy balance between work, family and personal health?**

mission

- If you are employed, tell someone (or more than one person) this week that you love the fact that you can work. It would be great if you could do this with your boss, a colleague or co-worker. Write down the name(s) of the person(s).

- If you have displayed a negative attitude towards your work, confess this to the Lord and look for an opportunity to apologise to those you have influenced negatively by your attitude.

- Look for an opportunity to mention to someone (at work or at home) the truth you learned this week (ie that work is God's design for us as humans). This may lead to a spiritual conversation, which in turn may lead to an opportunity to share the Gospel in some way.
 - How can you be intentional about seeing and approaching your work/job as a God-given opportunity to serve him?
-

supplication

- If the Holy Spirit has convicted you of any wrong attitude or sin, confess it to the Lord and accept his offer of forgiveness.
- Pray for each member in your group to display a positive attitude towards work in general and in their specific job.
- Pray for members who face difficulty at work. Ask for specific prayer requests in this regard and write them down as a reminder to pray for them.

- Make a note of any other prayer needs in the group and commit to pray for them during the next week.

- Write a brief prayer to God about the truth you learned in this study.



Tweets about friendship

God on relationships

MEMORY VERSE

"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Proverbs 27:19

truth

- Read the following verses in Proverbs and summarise in your own words what you can learn about the positive impact of good friendships

- * **13:20** _____
- * **17:9** _____
- * **17:17** _____
- * **18:24** _____
- * **27:6** _____
- * **27:9** _____
- * **27:10** _____
- * **27:17** _____

- Not all friendships have a positive influence on us. Read the following verses in Proverbs and describe the reasons why some friendships may have to be avoided:

- * **14:20 & 19:4** _____
- * **16:28** _____
- * **17:9** _____
- * **19:7** _____
- * **20:19** _____
- * **22:24-25** _____

- Can you think of any friendships (or good relationships) in the Bible? List and discuss what you can learn from these. You can read the following passages: 1 Samuel 17:57-18:4; 1 Samuel 23:14-18; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; John 11:11.

REFLECTING...

Most of us understand the value of good friendships, as well as the danger of bad friendships! After all, God created us with a need to be in good and healthy relationships. The commonly-used expression, 'No man is an island', underscores the need for us to live with an awareness of other people around us and to strive to live in harmony with them. Even God said of Adam: "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18).

The wisdom found in the Book of Proverbs points to our need to consider the value of good friends and how to avoid bad influences. We should seek to have friends who can build us up, support us in time of need and shape our lives in a positive way. But we must also learn that some relationships may lead us astray or cause damage to ourselves and our focus on God.

Although Proverbs does not provide us with an all-encompassing list of do's and don'ts as to how to make friends or how to treat our friends, it does give great advice with regard to the value of friendships. We will do well to follow the guidelines provided in God's Word about how to select friends and how to be a good friend to others.

equipping

- List the names of five of your best friends (near or far, regular or irregular contact). Consider the value of each of them, what contribution they have made to your life and development.

- When last did you express your appreciation to each of them for being a friend?

- When you look at the verses under "TRUTH" about friendship, is there anyone in your circle of friends that you should avoid? If so, why?

- Share with your group some snippets of how friends have been a support to you when you needed them.

- Would you describe yourself as a good friend? Are you...
 - ☐ Faithful ☐ Supportive ☐ Irritable when a friend contacts you for help?
 - ☐ Loving and caring? ☐ Honest and open when sharing with your friends?

accountability

- Did you memorise the verse for this week? Try to recite it as a group together.
- Did you complete the reading and assignments under the "TRUTH" section?
- How are you doing in the areas we have studied thus far? Go back and check the topics and mission assignments of the previous studies.
- Share with the group how you feel about yourself as a friend to others (see the last question under "EQUIPPING").
- Do you need help in making friends? Or being a good friend?
- Do you need help in dealing with a destructive relationship or friendship?

mission

- Make contact with a couple of friends closest to you in the next week or two. Simply express your gratitude to them for being a friend. A card, an email, SMS or even coffee together could help to show your appreciation.
 - If you have a friend who is not a believer, consider ways in which you can share the love of Christ with him/her.
-
- Consider how you can be a good friend this week. Make a note below as a reminder of what you plan to do in order to support a friend.
-

supplication

- If you have not done this before, add your friends' names to your prayer list. You could pray for them one-per-day, one-per-week or pray for them all each day.
- Make contact with your friends and ask them how you can pray for them.
- Pray in your group for one another to be good friends and have good friendships.
- If someone in your group is struggling with a destructive relationship, make a special effort to pray specifically for him/her.



Tweets about honesty

God on integrity

MEMORY VERSE

"An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips."

Proverbs 24:26

TRUTH

- Look up the following verses in the Book of Proverbs and write a summary statement about living an honest life. The truth highlighted in each of these proverbs may be something positive to learn or something negative to avoid.

* 4:23; 17:3

* 4:24-27

* 10:9

* 11:1; 16:11

* 11:3

* 12:17; 14:5; 14:25

* 12:19

* 16:13

* 24:26

* 28:13

- How would you summarise in one statement the truths learned in the verses above?

- Read the following passages and write down what you learn about honesty and integrity

* 1 Kings 9:4

* Job 2:3

* Psalm 7:8

REFLECTING...

The world should be a place where we live honestly with one another, where business dealings are transparent and where you can trust everyone with anything. Unfortunately, since sin entered our world, this is not the case. Why is it that we hesitate to have dealings with some business people? Why can't we leave a handbag on a table without wondering if it will still be there when we return? The answer is that sin has affected our honesty and integrity in a real way, resulting in lying, stealing, dishonesty, bribery, and a whole host of other shortcomings. Even as far back as the writing of the proverbs found in the Bible there is evidence of this sin in the world.

God created the world to be a reflection of his glory and to bring glory to him. Jesus came to the world to die for sinners, pay the penalty for sin and redeem us from the grip of sin. Those of us who believe in God should be at the forefront of changing an evil, dishonest and broken world by living lives of honesty and integrity. The wisdom of the Proverbs goes a long way to assist us in our yearning to bring glory to God in our every-day living.

equipping

- What did you learn from the Bible verses about being honest or living an honest life?

- List some ways in which honesty and integrity should be experienced (such as in relationships, business dealings, etc).

- How can the directives in the verses from Proverbs be applied to our modern-day society? Are they still applicable? If so, why and how?

- Share some stories about integrity or honesty, either encouraging (surprising) or negative ones (lack of honesty).

- Look up the word "integrity" in a dictionary. How can you apply the meaning of the word to your Christian life?

- Can you list the names of two people whom you regard as honest and whose integrity you do not question? Explain what makes you hold them in high regard.

ACCOUNTABILITY

- Did you complete the mission assignment for last week? Share with the group how you felt you did in this regard or share some stories of how it worked out when you completed the assignment.
- Did you memorise the verse for this study? Recite the verse and discuss its application to our modern-day context.
- Are you willing to be held accountable by your family, friends and Community Group in the area of honesty and integrity? Spend time discussing HOW you can hold one another accountable in this regard.
- Have you ever offered or agreed to pay a bribe for some deal? After this study, do you feel that this is the way to live? What do you think God expects of you?

mission

- Do you know of any dishonesty (eg telling a lie, clinching a dishonest deal) in your own life that you must confess to God and another person? If so, write down your commitment to do so and decide when to do it.
-
- Can you tell anyone at home or work that you are a Christian, without wondering whether the Name of Christ will be dishonoured if they know who you really are? In other words, does your speech, behaviour and life display the integrity that is expected of you by the Lord Jesus Christ?
 - Look for an opportunity to talk to someone (in your family, neighbourhood or work) about the issue of dishonesty in our society. Do it in such a way as to not simply complain about it, but to give some positive input about how you want to live a life of integrity. This may create an opportunity to tell the other person that you are a Christian and even to share the Gospel.

supplication

- Pray for one another to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to have the conviction to live lives of honesty and integrity.
- Confess to the Lord any sin of dishonesty, lying or living under false pretences. Ask his forgiveness and commit to living a life of integrity.
- Share prayer needs of the members of your group and pray for one another.
- Commit to pray for each member of the group during the coming week. Write down any specific prayer requests you share in the group.



Tweets about stewardship

God on responsible living

MEMORY VERSE

*"Better a little with the fear of the LORD
than great wealth with turmoil."*

Proverbs 15:16

TRUTH

- Money is both a much-needed commodity and a possible snare. Look up the following verses from Proverbs and see if you can identify the lesson taught about good stewardship.

- * **10:4** _____
- * **10:21** _____
- * **13:7** _____
- * **13:8** _____
- * **14:20** _____
- * **15:16; 16:8** _____
- * **16:16, 19** _____
- * **18:23** _____
- * **22:2** _____
- * **22:7** _____
- * **28:6** _____
- * **28:8** _____
- * **28:11** _____
- * **28:20** _____

- Compare the lessons from Proverbs with Ecclesiastes 5:10-12. Write a summary statement in your own words of the principles found in this passage.

- Read Paul's teaching about contentment in 1 Timothy 6:6-11. What is the danger about money that is to be avoided?

REFLECTING...

Surely Paul knew what he was talking about when he told Timothy that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10). What was true in the time of the Apostle Paul has proved to be an ever-growing problem in the world, showing itself as greed, bribery, get-rich-quick schemes, and much more. The "love of money" is as much a danger in our time as it was at any other time in history.

There is plenty of evidence in the world today that people get enticed by the desire to have more. People will use any means to get rich, to own more, to pursue a never-satisfying desire for more. Even people who don't have much may be overcome by a constant desire to possess more than they have, resulting in theft, crime, cheating and many other sinful expressions of desire.

Christian believers are tempted as much in regards to wealth and money as anyone else in the world. The authors of Proverbs understood the danger of relying on money or material possessions for our security, hence the warnings and guidelines given to assist those who seek to be wise in this regard. We can't live without some form of income, money or possessions, but we need to heed the warning of our Lord Jesus Christ that we cannot serve God and money (Matthew 6:24).

In this study we have an opportunity to evaluate our own approach and attitude to our earthly possessions.

equipping

- What is your attitude towards money and possessions?

- What are your true desires and ambitions regarding gaining possessions and wealth?

- What do you know about the Biblical teaching on stewardship?

- Does your attitude towards money affect your relationship with the Lord negatively? Explain.

- Find and discuss in your group some definitions of the word “materialism”.

- Would you describe yourself as a materialist? It may help to plot yourself on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents being completely free of materialism and 10 being a complete materialist.

accountability

- Do you know your memory verse for this week? Can you recite it?
- Have you completed your mission assignments from the previous study?
- Are you willing to share with your group members what your attitude to money and possessions is? There will be an opportunity during group time to discuss this.
- Is it your ambition to get rich? To gather more and more possessions? If so, why? If not, explain.

- Are you willing to part with some of your possessions if this would prove that you don't see them as defining who you are?

mission

- Discuss ways and means in which we can become less dependent on or defined by our possessions.

- The topic in this study gives an ideal opportunity for the group to discuss some project where you can give away or serve, rather than be on the receiving end. Come to the group meeting prepared to discuss some service project that you can do together (or report back to the group next time, if you are doing it separately). Brainstorm some service ideas to complete within the next few weeks.

- If anyone in your group is lacking in material possessions, discuss how the group can assist in giving, find a way out, offer help, etc.

- Find out from the church how you can be more involved in giving rather than receiving.

supplication

- Confess to God any wrong approach to money and possessions. Ask him to help you in your attitude towards money.
- Pray for one another in your group to be more open to the Holy Spirit's guidance in the area of stewardship.
- Make a list and pray for any needs within the group.

- Pray for any needs in the church or community. You can get more information from the church about people in need of care and help.
- Write a prayer (or a commitment) in the space below about your own convictions, needs or commitment to be a good steward of the possessions God has entrusted to you.



Tweets about citizenship

God on politics

MEMORY VERSE

*"Fear the Lord and the king, my son,
and do not join with the rebellious..."*

Proverbs 24:21

TRUTH

- The following verses from Proverbs give guidance for those in power. Write down the main truth you learn from each of the references below:

- * **8:15–16** _____
- * **14:28** _____
- * **16:10** _____
- * **16:12** _____
- * **16:15; 19:12; 20:2** _____
- * **20:8; 20:26** _____
- * **20:28** _____
- * **21:1** _____
- * **28:2** _____
- * **28:12** _____
- * **28:16** _____
- * **29:4** _____

- Proverbs also has advice for those who must submit to authority. Summarise the main lesson or principle in the following passages:

- * **24:21–22** _____
- * **25:6–7** _____
- * **29:26** _____

* **31:4-9**

- Compare your findings from Proverbs with the following examples or guidelines:

* **David's attitude in 1 Samuel 24:6**

* **Jesus' teaching on taxes in Matthew 22:21**

* **Paul's guidance on governments in Romans 13:1-7**

* **If you have time, you can also look at Titus 3:1 and 1 Peter 2:13-17**

REFLECTING...

Being a good follower of Jesus Christ impacts every aspect of our lives, including how we live in the society of which we are a part. Becoming a Christian does not remove us from the day-to-day responsibilities, such as marriage, work, citizenship and social structures. In fact, part of our calling in this world is to make a difference by extending the rule (Kingdom) of God to every area of society.

All of us are involved in relationships or structures where we are required to submit to authority, while many of us are also in positions of authority. When Paul provided Christian slaves and owners in a First Century context with guidelines about their responsibilities to each other, he reminded both of them that they stand under God's ultimate authority (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1).

The Book of Proverbs contains many sayings, guidelines and principles to assist us in understanding the roles of the person in authority (normally referred to as "king"), as well as how we should submit to authority. Combined with other principles in the Word of God it provides us with much food for thought and practical advice for living in a way that will reflect our worship of our Saviour and Lord.

This week's study helps us understand the importance of being good citizens of our country.

equipping

- What is God's ideal for people in power? Write down some key words or ideas. You can look at Proverbs 8:12-16 for some thoughts.
 - If you are in a position of authority (ruler, leader, boss), how do the guidelines from Proverbs help you to live a God-honouring life?
-

- What is your attitude towards people in power (government, manager, head, owner, boss)?

- Are you able to submit to authority?

- What is your honest response to having to pay taxes to the government?

- Is it acceptable for Christians to disobey human authority? If so, when and why?

accountability

- Did you memorise the verse for this week?
- Were you able to complete the mission assignment for the previous study? If so, be prepared to share some stories with your group during your weekly meeting.
- Are you cheating on your income tax? Where do you draw the line between acceptable ways of saving on tax, as opposed to evading tax?

- Are you obeying the basic laws of the country? Brainstorm some ways in which we may be breaking the law, without necessarily doing it on purpose. For example, very few of us would get involved in using illegal drugs, or murder or robbery, but we may think nothing of speeding, skipping a stop sign, etc. Can you think of other examples?

- How do you treat those who work for or under you? Share some ideas about how you can treat those who report to you more fairly.

mission

- Make a commitment to obey the laws of our country this week in every respect. You may need to write down specific areas where this is applicable to you.
- Consider how your actions at home, at work or where you mix with friends and family may impact them for good or for bad. Be especially aware of your conversations, which can easily only focus on the negative things happening in our country.
- Make a conscious effort to be a positive influence on others around you during this week and work on making it a life-style.

supplication

- If you have mistreated someone working for you or were disrespectful (disobedient) to someone in authority, confess your sins to the Lord.
- Pray for grace and love in dealing with those who work for you.
- Pray for grace in submitting to and respecting people in power. Make a list of people in government and pray for them by name.
- Pray for group members who have special needs, related to the topic in this study or anything else they share with you. List the needs as a reminder to pray for them.



Tweets on purity

God on moral values

MEMORY VERSE

*"A wife of noble character, who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies."*

Proverbs 31:10

truth

- Summarise the truths or principles about sexual purity, high moral values and marriage found in the following references in the Book of Proverbs:

- * **5:1-11** _____
- * **5:15-19** _____
- * **6:23-29** _____
- * **7:24-27** _____
- * **15:17** _____
- * **18:22** _____
- * **19:13; 21:9; 21:19** _____
- * **22:14** _____
- * **27:15-16** _____
- * **30:20** _____
- * **30:21-23** _____
- * **31:10-11** _____
- * **31:29-30** _____

- Compare your findings with the following New Testament references:

- * **1 Corinthians 7:2-5** _____
- * **Colossians 3:5-6** _____
- * **Hebrews 13:4** _____

- Describe in your own words what the Bible teaches about sex, marriage and purity.

REFLECTING...

God's plan for us as people created in his image (Genesis 1:26) is that we should live in such a way that we reflect his perfect design for us. We learn more about God's design for man and woman in the union called marriage in Genesis 2:18-25. It is clear that God wants husband and wife to be happy and experience perfect harmony and unity. However, when sin entered the world (Genesis 3) it caused major damage to the world we live in, including the way we approach sexual enjoyment and marriage.

It is clear from many episodes in the Bible, as well as the world we live in, that it is not far from any of us to fall prey to sexual immorality or act in a way that threaten the harmonious marriage relationship (if we are married). It should therefore not take us by surprise that the Book of Proverbs has much to say about sexual purity and honouring the uniqueness of the marriage bond.

Dabbling with immorality, sex outside of marriage or extra-marital affairs, not only destroys our own bodies, relationships and marriages, but also causes major damage to our relationship with God. We would therefore do well to take to heart the lessons learnt in Proverbs.

equipping

- What is your honest view of sex outside of marriage (pre-marital or adultery)?

- Do you think the Bible (Proverbs, Paul, etc) is too harsh and critical when it comes to adultery? Why?

- If you are married, how do you view your spouse?

<input type="checkbox"/> A God-gift to me	<input type="checkbox"/> A nagging nuisance
<input type="checkbox"/> Someone to tolerate	<input type="checkbox"/> Someone to love and cherish
- If married, how does your spouse make you feel?
☐ Loved ☐ Respected ☐ Honoured ☐ Rejected ☐ Tolerated
- Are you fulfilled in your marriage? Explain.

- If you are not married (yet), how do you deal with your emotions, passions and desires in the area of sex and relationships?

accountability

(If you think it would be helpful to allow members of the group to share openly and honestly, you may decide to meet separately as men and women for the accountability session)

- Do you know your memory verse for this week? You may be asked to recite it during your group meeting.
- Did you complete the mission assignment for the previous study? If not, discuss this with your group and decide on some action steps.
- Let members of the group share principles and guidelines they discovered in relation to sex, morality and marriage. How are you applying these principles in your own life?

- Whether married or not, do you struggle in the area of sexual temptations? How can you avoid or overcome these temptations (or situations you find yourself in)?

- If married, how would you describe your marriage relationship?

- Whatever your answer to the previous question, would your partner agree with your assessment?

- Whether married or not, what is your deepest desire for your (present or future) marriage?

mission

- Do you know someone who needs help with dealing with temptations of a sexual nature? What can you do to help this person? Decide on some action.

- What can we as Christians do to impact the immoral world around us with the message of the Bible? Brainstorm some ideas.

- What can you say or do this coming week to make your spouse feel loved and respected? Write down some action and/or words to make it happen.

supplication

- Pray for one another to live pure lives.
- Pray for anyone in the group who may be struggling in the area of morality, marital problems or giving in to temptations.
- Pray for the church to be more effective in equipping members to impact our world through example, word and action.
- Pray for your own attitude towards sex, morality and marriage.

Final conclusion

Thank you for taking this journey through the Book of Proverbs. I trust you have been blessed by God's tweets about living life for his glory.

If you are interested in further studies in Proverbs, there are plenty of resources available to assist you in this; sermon series, commentaries and articles (even on the Internet). However, the best way to get more from this study is to slowly and regularly work your way through the Book of Proverbs itself. You can decide to read a chapter, read a limited number of proverbs or even to read one single proverb each day.

As you read, pray for the Lord to instil the principle or guideline of the proverb in your mind; meditate on it, apply it to your own life, and pray again for the courage to put the principle into practice in every aspect of your life.

May the Lord give you wisdom for life!

Most of us would pay large sums of money to be taught to make wise decisions and to live wisely. We soon discover that wisdom is not available in a once-off course or study, but is gained through experience and the development of our character over time.

From a Biblical perspective, wisdom is gained by getting to know God and his guidelines for life and living. The Book of Proverbs is a good example of lessons we can learn about living wisely.

In this eight-week study the approach to wisdom and some of the teachings of Proverbs are discussed and applied using a method of teaching that discovers the truth of Scripture and focuses on how we can apply the guidelines to our own lives in a very practical way. Using eight relevant themes from the Book of Proverbs we can grow in our understanding of living in a way that brings glory to our Lord.



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