

**Beacon Small-Group
Bible Studies**

Proverbs

Beacon Small-Group Bible Studies

PROVERBS

Wisdom for Today's Challenges

by

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HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE

Before You Begin This Adventure in a Small-Group Bible Study . . . Read These Pages of Introduction

God has created us with a basic human need for close personal relationships. This may take place as you gather in a small group to apply the Bible to your life.

I. What Should Happen in Small-Group Bible Study?

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship . . . and to prayer" (Acts 2:42, NIV).

Each group is different . . . yet all should include three kinds of activity—

DISCUSSION BIBLE STUDY

SHARING EXPERIENCES

PRAYING TOGETHER

The time you spend in Bible study, sharing, and praying will vary according to the needs of the group. However, do not neglect any of these activities.

The Bible contains God's plan for our salvation and gives us His guidance for our lives. Keep the focus on God speaking to you from His Word.

On the other hand, just to learn "Bible facts" will make little difference in a person's life. To give opportunity for persons to share what the truth means to them is to "let God come alive today." Learn to listen intently to others and to share what you feel God's Word is saying to you.

Allow time for prayer. Personal communion with God is essential in all fruitful Bible studies. Determine to make prayer more than a "nod to God" at the beginning or end of each session. As members participate in sincere, unhurried prayer—you will be amazed how God's power will meet needs in your group . . . today!

II. How to Begin Your First Session Together

The leader of a new group may wish to prepare name tags with first and last names large enough to be seen plainly.

It is important to order the *Beacon Small-Group Bible Study* guides and give one to each person in your group at the beginning of the first session. Pass out the guides and refer the group to this section of the introduction. Then ask each person to consider the following:

One thing I would like to gain from sharing in this time together is:

Rank the following in order using number one (1) to indicate the most important and number five (5) the least important.

- () 1. Learning to know Bible truths and apply them to my life.
- () 2. A chance to begin all over again in my spiritual life.
- () 3. To grow in my personal faith in God.
- () 4. To deepen my friendships with others in the group as we study the Word together.
- () 5. Other purpose _____

Take time to go around the group to introduce yourselves. Then let each member share what he or she would like to gain from this Bible study by filling in the blanks and by discussing this statement: I chose _____ as number one because _____ I put _____ as number five because _____

At this point, pause for prayer, asking God to bless this Bible study and especially to meet the needs just expressed by the members of the group.

III. A Key to Success . . . Make a Group Commitment

What should be included in the group commitment? At the first or second meeting, read the following points, then discuss each one separately.

1. Agree to make regular attendance a top priority of the group.
Commitment to each other is of vital importance.
2. Where and when will the group meet?
Decide on a place and time. The place can be always in the same home or in a different home each week, at a restaurant, or in any other relaxed setting. Plan to be on time.
The time _____ the place(s) _____
How often? () Every week
 () Every other week
3. Decide on the length of the meetings.
The minimum should be one hour—maximum two hours. Whatever you decide, be sure to dismiss on time. Those who wish may remain after the group is dismissed. Length _____
4. Decide whether the same person will lead each session, or if you prefer a group coordinator and a rotation of leaders.
Our leader or coordinator is _____
5. Agree together that there shall be no criticism of others. Also no discussion of church problems, and no gossip shall be expressed in the group. Our goal in this Bible study is to affirm and to build up each other.
6. Decide on the maximum number of people your group should contain. When this number is reached you will encourage the formation of a new group. We want our group to grow. Newcomers, as they understand and agree to the group commitment, will keep things fresh. Feel free to bring a

friend. Whenever our group reaches an average attendance of _____ persons for three consecutive weeks, we will plan to begin a new group.

Do not become a closed clique. This would eventually lead to an ingrown group. Our goal is outreach, friendliness, and openness to new people.

7. Our time together as a group will be more fulfilling if all of us complete our personal Bible reading before we come together again.

Are group members deciding to make this commitment to personal Bible reading and reflection? _____

8. Decide on the number of times you wish to meet before you reevaluate the areas of your commitment. (Enter below)

**MY COMMITMENT TO CHRIST
and THE MEMBERS OF MY GROUP**

I agree to meet with others in my group for _____ weeks to become a learner in God's Word.

I commit myself to give priority to our group gatherings, to a thoughtful reading of the Bible passages to be explored, and to love and support others in my group.

Signed _____ Date _____

IV. Guidelines

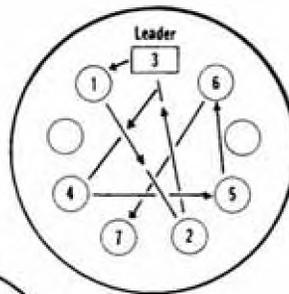
1. Get acquainted with each other; get on a first-name basis.
2. Each one bring your Bible and keep it open during the study.
3. As you read the Bible passage, each person may ask himself three questions:
 - What does the passage say?
 - What does it mean?
 - What does it mean to me?
4. Stay with the Bible passage before you. Moving to numerous cross references may confuse a person new to the Bible.
5. Avoid technical theological words. Make sure any theological terms you use are explained clearly to the group.
6. The leader or coordinator should prepare for each session by studying the passage thoroughly before the group meeting, including reviewing the

questions in the study guide. In the group study, the leader should ask the study guide questions, giving adequate time for the discussion of each question.

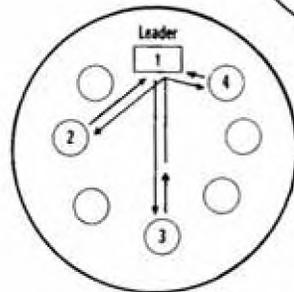
Remember, the leader is not to lecture on what he has learned from studying, but should lead the group in discovering for themselves what the scripture says. In sharing your discoveries say, "The scripture says," rather than, "My church says . . ."

7. The leader should not talk too much and should not answer his own questions. The leader should give opportunity for anyone who wishes to speak. Redirect some of the questions back to the group. As they get to know each other better, the discussion will move more freely.

The flow of discussion in an effective group looks like this:



And not like this:



8. In a loving and firm manner maintain the guidelines for the group. Discourage overtalkative members from monopolizing the time. If necessary, the leader may speak privately to the overtalkative one and enlist his aid in encouraging all to participate. Direct questions to all persons in the group.
9. Plan to reserve some time at the end of each session for prayer together. Encourage any who wish to lead out in spoken prayer in response to the scripture truths or personal needs expressed in the group.

Even if you do not complete all the study for that particular meeting, *take time to pray*. The main purpose of group Bible study is not just to cover all the facts, but to apply the truth to human lives. It will be exciting to discover your lives growing and changing as you encourage each other in Christ's love.

A highly effective way to pray in a group like this is "conversationally." "Conversational" prayer includes:

- a. Each group member who wishes to do so tells God frankly what he has to say to Him.
- b. Praying is in a conversational tone—directly, simply, briefly.
- c. Only one thing is prayed about at a time—a personal concern.
- d. Once a group member has introduced his concern, at least one other member, and probably several, by audible prayer "covers with love" their friend's concern.
- e. Then there is a waiting in silence before God. Each person listens to what God is saying to him.
- f. Following the listening period, another member may introduce a personal concern in prayer. The prayer time continues with members feeling free to pray several times.

V. Aids for Your Study

For Group Leaders

You will find helpful, *How to Lead a Small-Group Bible Study*, by Gene Van Note, available from the Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, Box 527, Kansas City, MO 64141.

For Leaders, Coordinators, and Participants

Bible commentaries should not be taken with you to the study period, but it is often helpful to refer to sound commentaries and expositions in your preparation. We recommend:

Beacon Bible Commentary
 Volume 3—Job—Song of Solomon
Adam Clarke's Commentary on the Entire Bible:
One-Volume Edition

It is helpful also to refer occasionally to some general Bible resources, such as:

Know Your Old Testament, by W. T. Purkiser
Halley's Bible Handbook

The above resources are available from Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City or from your publishing house.

—This Introduction by Wil M. Spait

Introduction

The quest for wisdom is universal.

Centuries ago the sage of old asked, "How does a man become wise?"

After contemplation, he replied, "The first step is to trust and reverence the Lord!" (Prov. 1:7, TLB).

Thus Proverbs was born and this verse becomes the major theme of the entire book.

Written about 700 B.C., the book contains thousands of proverbs or pithy sayings. Most of them were written by King Solomon, who reigned 40 years in Israel.

Solomon was not perfect. He made some tragic mistakes. But by and large his brilliant career as a king was marked by achievements in administration, architecture, engineering, and writing. He composed more than 3,000 proverbs and 1,000 songs.

He was noted for his great wisdom. Because Solomon loved the Lord and prayed for an understanding heart, God granted him the wisdom to rule effectively, to serve as a family counselor, and to answer tough questions posed by monarchs from other nations.

The wisdom expressed in Proverbs guides us to focus on God as the center of life. Over and over Solomon reiterates man's need to gain wisdom from God and not from himself (3:5-6). He warns against violating God's direction in life, and calls for total commitment to God's will. He pleads for man to seek understanding rather than riches, because happiness can be found only in wisdom.

It is around these entreaties that this study guide is written. Although we cannot cover every facet of proverbial wisdom, 12 subjects have been chosen as the basis of our studies. We begin with the need for wisdom and conclude with a call to trust God for all we do in our lives.

Sandwiched between these two subjects are practical matters that most people face in the course of their lives.

For most helpful studies it has seemed wise not to attempt a chro-

nological treatment of the book. We have therefore selected what seemed the 12 most important and characteristic themes of the book.

Each study contains relevant questions to help the student think the subject through in light of what God's Word has to say about it. The student must refer often to the Bible—to Proverbs, and to other sections as well.

Nor is every scripture reference for each subject given. It is wise to have a concordance available. Through this method of study, the pupil becomes familiar with what the Bible has to say, and thus answers are formed from a biblical perspective rather than personal opinion.

Included with this study is a *Private Prayer Journal*. Entries of specific needs should be made at the conclusion of each study. When the book is finished, this page may be removed and placed in your Bible for further prayer and meditation.

In addition to the passages on which our 12 studies are based, you will find it beneficial to do further reading in the Book of Proverbs. One or more of your favorite translations will be rewarding for this added reading.

May God bless you richly and reward you as you mine for the truths contained in this delightful Book of Proverbs!

1

The Beginning of Wisdom

PROVERBS 1:1-7; 2:10-11; 3:13-20; 6:9-10

A. Introduction

A man once approached Dwight L. Moody and related a moral disaster that had happened in his life.

"Now," he said to Mr. Moody, "what would you do if you had gotten into such an immoral situation?"

"Well," replied Moody, "I would never have gotten into it."

When Lindbergh landed in Paris from his first trans-Atlantic flight, his associate sent him an offer of \$1 million. Fearing that accepting the offer would jeopardize his goal, he quickly responded, "You must remember this expedition was not organized to make money but to advance aviation."

Wisdom, says the dictionary, is the ability to understand "what is true, right, or lasting." It was Thoreau who said, "It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things."

Moody understood what was right; Lindbergh knew what was lasting. Neither would be ensnared by the desperate. Moody would not have entangled himself in immorality because wisdom taught him that right living has better results than wrong living. Lindbergh understood that the value of advancing aviation was more important than gaining wealth. Wisdom had taught him that some things have no price.

Wisdom is good, but how does one acquire it? This question has been asked by men of every clime and age.

"Where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?" (Job 28:12, NASB). Then Job proceeds to answer: It is not found in man or in the sea. It cannot be purchased with gold or silver; its value is above precious gems and stones. Only God is the Author of wisdom. He made it and declares it. Job concludes his analysis: "Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (v. 28).

Solomon, who gained a reputation for being the wisest man who ever

lived, became wise because he loved the Lord and prayed for a wise heart; God granted his desire.

Like Job, he concluded that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7).

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 1:1-7. Why do you think a man who finds wisdom is happy? _____

In your own words define wisdom.

Write out here

Read Prov. 3:13-20. Read aloud Col. 2:2-3, 8, and Jas. 1:5-8.

1. Who is the Source of wisdom? _____. Why do you think this must be true? _____

2. What kind of philosophy is not the source of wisdom (see Col. 2:2-3, 8)? _____

3. What is the value of prayer in obtaining wisdom (Jas. 1:5-8)? _____

4. Why is it worthwhile to spend money to acquire truth and wisdom (see Prov. 23:23)? _____

5. How does one mine for wisdom? _____

6. Why is wisdom better than silver, gold, and rubies? _____

7. How can wisdom provide riches and honor? _____

8. Will wisdom fail? Yes _____ No _____

List ways you can develop godly wisdom in your life.

1. _____

2. _____

Name ways wisdom helps in daily living.

1. _____

2. _____

What is the result of securing God's wisdom versus earthly wisdom (see Prov. 2:10-11)? _____

Read aloud the story of Solomon's decision in the case of the two mothers (1 Kings 3:16-28). If you had been in Solomon's place what would you have done? _____

Using your favorite translation write out here

Prov. 1:7

How does a man become wise? (You may want to refer to the introduction again and to 1:7.)

1. _____
2. _____

Read aloud 1 Kings 3:1-15. How did Solomon become wise? _____

What promise did God give to Solomon? _____

What promises does God give to the person who heeds wisdom (see Prov. 1:23)?

1. _____
2. _____

Read again Prov. 1:1-7.

What part does learning have to do with achieving wisdom (1:5)? _____

What does God expect us to do to grow wise? _____

What do you think is the difference between wisdom and knowledge?

<i>Wisdom</i>	<i>Knowledge</i>

What five characteristics of a wise man are suggested in 1:1-7?

- v. 2 _____ v. 6 _____
 v. 3 _____ v. 7 _____
 v. 4 _____

1. How does a wise man differ from some others?
 Prov. 6:9-10 _____
 Prov. 12:27 _____
 Prov. 16:27 _____
 2. Why does a wise man have greater ability to choose his relationships and associates? _____

 3. Why does a wise man plan for the future?
 a. Prov. 22:3 _____
 b. Prov. 27:12 _____
 4. Why is a wise man a constant learner?
 a. What is his source of knowledge? _____
 b. What should be hid in his heart? _____
 c. Can a person acquire too much knowledge? Yes ____ No ____
- Why? _____

5. Using what you have learned from this lesson, carefully consider the steps you intend to take to become wiser.
 a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

C. Reflection

Share briefly one insight you have learned from today's lesson. How could you implement this into your life?

D. Prayer Time

As we have learned, God is the Source of wisdom. Therefore, let us ask liberally for His wisdom.

Share one of your prayer concerns with the group.

Enter this concern, or something you did not wish to share, in your Private Prayer Journal. Indicate there the action you plan to take to cause it to happen.

As a group, pray for the concerns that have been mentioned.

E. Something to Think About and Do

Most of us want to be wiser, but let us seek the wisdom that God teaches. Centuries ago Jeremiah put his finger on it when he wrote, "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me" (Jer. 9:23-24).

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 4:1-10.

2

A Listening Heart

PROVERBS 4:1-10

A. Introduction

How adept are you at listening?

Most of us are so distracted by noise pollution that listening requires more concentration than we are willing to give.

I have a friend who loves to talk. He doesn't like to listen. His mind is so busy racing ahead to what he intends to say next that he does not hear what others say to him.

Perhaps he is not unusual. Most of us would rather talk than listen. Centuries ago, Solomon emphasized the importance of listening more than talking when he wrote, "Don't talk so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth. Be sensible and turn off the flow!" (10:19, TLB).

Epictetus was on target when he said, "Nature has given to man one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others twice as much as we speak." And Calvin Coolidge said, "Nobody ever listened himself out of a job."

A study conducted some years ago concluded that of our waking hours, over 70 percent are filled with communication: 11 percent in writing, 15 percent in reading, 32 percent in talking, and a whopping 42 percent in listening. Wilson Misner writes, "A good listener is not only popular everywhere, but after a while, he knows something."

Good listening, however, involves more than the ears. It is done with the mind and heart; by grasping the speaker's ideas through directed and purposeful attention. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus said, "We listen to the essence of things."

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 4:1-10. Discuss at the outset of today's study how you think one may grow wise through listening. List here two ideas to share with the group.

1. _____
2. _____

Make a list of barriers to effective listening:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Agree/Disagree

After completing the following Agree/Disagree, discuss each point as a group.

A D

- ___ ___ Listening is not the same as hearing.
- ___ ___ Listening is hearing with a purpose.
- ___ ___ Listening can be learned.
- ___ ___ Listening to gain wisdom is an active, concentrated process.
- ___ ___ Listening should be done objectively and opinions formed only after the speaker has finished.
- ___ ___ Listening is the single most important communication we do each day.
- ___ ___ We should listen courteously and not interrupt the speaker.
- ___ ___ By listening without interruption we are saying to the speaker, "You are worth listening to."
- ___ ___ A good listener gives the speaker his undivided attention.

Name two steps you can take to become a better listener.

1. _____
2. _____

Solomon gives several proverbs on listening. Answer each question and then discuss as a group.

Prov. 1:5. Can a person really learn and become wise if he will not listen? Yes ___ No ___ Why? _____

Prov. 2:2. Amidst all the clutter one has to listen to, how can a person become a discerning listener, sorting out that which has true value? _____

Prov. 4:10. If he is to be wise, what must a person do more than to hear the truth? _____

Prov. 5:1-2. Why does Solomon give instruction to listen to him? _____

Prov. 8:4-7. Why must one listen to the voice of wisdom and not to his own inclinations? _____

Prov. 19:20. Why does a listening heart take advice willingly? _____

There are at least four barriers to listening. Check those you need help with and discuss as a group.

<i>Barrier</i>	<i>I Need Help</i>
Passivity (Lazy listener)	_____
Concern with nonessentials (Distracted easily)	_____
Self-preoccupation (Not really paying attention)	_____
Inflexible/Resistant to ideas that contradict me	_____

There are four steps one can take to become an active listener. Use these as discussion starters and indicate ways you can improve.

<i>Steps to Active Listening</i>	<i>I Could Improve Here</i>
1. Listen objectively (not emotionally)	Yes ____ Maybe ____
2. Listen thoughtfully	Yes ____ Maybe ____
3. Listen receptively	Yes ____ Maybe ____
4. Listen courteously	Yes ____ Maybe ____

After the tragic death of her children, Isadora Duncan went to see Eleanora Duse. She writes: "I realized that if I had not been able to bear the society of other people, it was because they all played the comedy of trying to cheer me with forgetfulness. Whereas Eleanora said, 'Tell me about Deidre and Patrick,' and made me repeat to her all their little sayings and ways, and show her their photos, which she kissed and cried over. She never said, 'Cease to grieve,' but grieved with me, and for the first time since their death, I felt I was not alone."

What does this example teach about listening?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Can you think of one or two guidelines for when to talk and when to listen?

1. _____
2. _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight you have learned from today's lesson.

D. Prayer Time

Record in your Private Prayer Journal one thing God has showed you about listening that you need to work on, and the action you intend to take to make it happen.

Pray together that God will make each one more responsive as others talk.

E. Something to Think About and Do

Someone has penned the following rules for listening:

- We learn by listening, not by talking.*
- We bolster the other person's ego by listening.*
- When a situation is tense, listen.*
- When someone is angry, let him talk.*
- When someone is unhappy, listen.*
- When someone needs encouragement, listen.*

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 16:12-24; 18:1-21

3

Creative Communication

PROVERBS 16:12-24; 18:1-21

A. Introduction

The story is told of a woman who came to a London minister and informed him that the bands on his pulpit robe were too long and that they annoyed her. She said she would like permission to shorten them. Confident he would allow her the privilege, she had brought scissors with her. Calmly the pastor agreed and handed over the offending bands. Carefully she cut them to the length she thought they should be and then handed the trimmed bands back to the minister.

When he received them, he thanked her and then said, "Now, my good woman, there is something about you that is altogether too long, and which has annoyed me greatly, and I would like permission to shorten it."

"Certainly," said the woman. "You have permission to do so, and here are the shears."

Whereupon the pastor said, "Very well, madam. Put out your tongue."

God has given each of us a tongue with which to communicate, but the choice of good or bad communication is up to the individual.

Nothing gets man into trouble like the tongue. Washington Irving said, "A sharp tongue is the only edge-tool that grows keener with constant use"; and Quarrels said, "Give not thy tongue too great a liberty lest it take thee prisoner. A word unspoken is, like the sword in the scabbard, thine; if vented, thy sword is in another's hand. If thou desire to be held wise, be so wise as to hold thy tongue."

As Christians we have a responsibility to carefully guard our tongues so that our communication is creative and profitable. Christians are judged not only by what they do, but by what they say. If our conversation is in keeping with Christian ethics and standards, the world knows it.

To help us better understand the role of the Christian communicator, Solomon gives some do's and don'ts. As we study them, let us reflect on

two important thoughts: (1) the image we project through our words, and (2) the effectiveness of our communication in presenting Jesus Christ to a lost world.

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 16:13-24 from your favorite translation.

Agree/Disagree

Allow two to five minutes for the following exercise—then discuss.

A D

- — We talk primarily to convey an understandable message.
- — We communicate by words, body language, and gestures.
- — The most powerful means of communication is verbal.
- — Eye contact is not important in communication.
- — What one says is not as important as what one does.
- — Words have no meaning in themselves—they mean what one perceives them to mean.
- — A wise man always says what is on his mind regardless of how it may sound or whom it may hurt.
- — Communication requires listening as well as talking.

Speaking is a problem for many people. Some can talk well on a one-to-one basis but not in a crowd. Others can speak well in front of an audience, but cannot hold a conversation. Why is this? _____

Make a list of things you think hinder effective communication.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Do you have difficulty saying what you think? Yes _____ No _____
Answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

	Yes	No	Sometimes
1. Can you be heard when you speak?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do you speak distinctly?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you talk about things that interest only yourself?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do you talk about things that interest other people?	_____	_____	_____
5. Do you mispronounce words?	_____	_____	_____

- | | | | |
|---|-----|-----|-----|
| 6. Do you use appropriate (simple) words when you talk? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 7. Do you speak to impress? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 8. Are you sincere in what you say? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 9. Do you speak too rapidly? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 10. Do you listen when others talk? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 11. Do you constantly interrupt others when they talk? | ___ | ___ | ___ |
| 12. Do you try to help others complete their sentences? | ___ | ___ | ___ |

You may wish to discuss these habits and the effect they have on communication.

The Bible has much to say about proper communication, especially what comes from the heart through the mouth. Solomon understood the importance of when to speak, and when to be still.

Read aloud Prov. 18:1-21. After reading, discuss the following verses and questions.

V. 2. Why is one who “deigns in airing his own opinions” a fool (NIV)?

Discuss why one’s own opinion is often *subjective* rather than *objective*.

V. 4. (Also see 10:11.) “An intelligent man has in him a treasure of useful things, which furnishes him with something to say that is pertinent and profitable” (Matthew Henry).

a. How does one secure this treasure of useful things? _____

b. What determines a pertinent conversation? _____

c. Name ways a conversation can be profitable and unprofitable.

Profitable:

1. _____ 2. _____

Unprofitable:

1. _____ 2. _____

V. 6. A foolish man meddles in other people’s affairs—where he has no business.

a. Who is hurt by a person’s meddling? _____

b. How may a man’s tongue “bring him . . . a beating”? _____

c. Do contention and strife destroy effective communication? _____

d. Does an angry man change other people’s opinions? Yes _____
No _____ Why? _____

V. 8. How is gossip like a poison that enters the stomach (compare the

translation of v. 8 in KJV and another translation)? _____

- a. Why do gossips relish their conversations? _____
- b. How does the Lord look on the gossip (Lev. 19:16)? _____

V. 13. Why is listening to all sides of an issue important to effective communication?

- a. Family life _____
- b. Work _____
- c. Friendship _____
- d. Government _____

V. 15. Why must we put knowledge into our hearts as well as into our minds to become good communicators? _____

V. 20. Why is the character of a man often judged by his conversation (see also Matt. 12:36-37)? _____

What do you think Jesus means by "idle words"?

- a. Useless _____
- b. Careless _____
- c. Malicious _____

V. 21. (Also see Jas. 3:1-10.) In what ways can the tongue cause death?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

How can it bring life?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

1. Why is the tongue so difficult to tame? _____
2. What is the cure of an untamed tongue? _____
3. What do you think is the cure for "praise and cursing" coming out of the same mouth (Jas. 3:9-10)? _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight you have gained from today's lesson.

D. Prayer Time

List in your Private Prayer Journal any area that God has shown you needs to be corrected in your life. List what action you intend to take to make it happen.

Communication is difficult for many people. Perhaps there are those in the group who are unable to express their feelings. Pray together that God will help each person in your group become an effective communicator for Him.

E. Something to Think About and Do

In closing, read aloud this poem:

*When over the fair fame of friend or foe
The shadow of disgrace shall fall, instead
Of words of blame, or proof of thus and so,
Let something good be said.*

*Forget not that no fellow being yet
May fall so low but love may lift his head;
Even the cheek of shame with tears is wet,
If something good be said.*

*No generous heart may vainly turn aside
In ways of sympathy; no soul so dead
But may awaken strong and glorified
If something good be said.*

*And so I charge ye: by the thorny crown,
And by the cross on which the Saviour bled,
And by your own soul's home of fair renown,
Let something good be said!*

—James Whitcomb Riley

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 12:1; 13:18-20; 16:32; 25:28.

4

Developing Self-control

PROVERBS 12:1; 13:18-20; 16:32; 25:28

A. Introduction

In his book *The Disciplined Life* Richard S. Taylor tells of a woman who was on the verge of a nervous collapse through strain and overwork. She could not sleep. Tortured with the sensation of crawling things on her skin, she had an irresistible urge to claw at her flesh. When hospitalized, the doctor told her frankly that whatever drugs might be given, getting well depended on her mental self-control and her ability to refrain from scratching.

She was a disciplined person, and self-discipline came to her rescue. She lay quietly with arms at her side even when her entire nervous system begged her to scratch, scream, and writhe. After a few days the condition subsided, and rest created healing in her body. Discipline had paid off.

It is at the point of self-control that many people fail, whether it be of the body, finances, family relationships, or personal morality. Such poor self-control is often excused because "everyone else does it."

Self-discipline is what most of us need the most but want the least. When adversity or temptation come, our self-control tends to cave in. At these times our spirits need to take on a new surge of power. Madame Guyon had found this power when in prison she wrote:

*My cage confines me round;
Abroad I cannot fly,
But though my wing is closely bound,
My heart's at liberty.
My prison walls cannot control
The flight, the freedom of the soul.*

How does one develop this life of self-control?

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 12:1.

Every Christian has problems of self-control. We are still human, even though we may be sanctified. Somewhere there must be a proper balance between God's power and our choices. We have our part in maintaining a warm, clean heart. Our scripture deals with man's part in keeping his mind and body under the Spirit's control through developing self-control.

Read Prov. 12:1 aloud from several translations. What kinds of self-discipline are suggested?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Read aloud 2 Cor. 12:9-10. For the Christian, where does self-control begin? _____

Name some reasons a person should exercise self-control in his life.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

Using your favorite translation, write out here

—1 Cor. 9:25-27—

What do these verses suggest to you about self-discipline? Discuss your answers with the group.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

How rigid should one be in disciplining his body? Extreme _____
Reasonable _____ Lax _____

What discipline does the Christian give his mind (2 Cor. 10:5)? _____

The following is a list of human emotions or inclinations. Indicate by yes or no those you feel are natural. Check those you need help with, remembering that different people have different problems.

	<i>Natural</i>	<i>I Need</i>		<i>Natural</i>	<i>I Need</i>
	(Yes-No)	(Yes-No)		(Yes-No)	(Yes-No)
Anger	_____	_____	Passivity	_____	_____
Workaholic	_____	_____	Laziness	_____	_____
Sexual Appetites	_____	_____	Evil Thoughts	_____	_____
Covetousness	_____	_____	Wandering Thoughts	_____	_____
Gluttony	_____	_____	Desire for		
Desire for	_____	_____	Possessions	_____	_____
Power	_____	_____	Disagreeableness	_____	_____
Constant	_____	_____	Bad Dreams	_____	_____
Recreations	_____	_____	Lust	_____	_____
Depression	_____	_____	Worry	_____	_____
Immorality	_____	_____	Envy	_____	_____
Fear	_____	_____	Speak Without		
Hatred	_____	_____	Thinking	_____	_____
Gossip	_____	_____	Slander	_____	_____
Low Moods	_____	_____	Dependability	_____	_____
Poor Priorities	_____	_____	Accepting the		
Ill Feelings Toward			Authority of		
Others	_____	_____	Others	_____	_____

Do you feel that those areas where you need help can be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

How to bring my wrong inclinations under the control of the Holy Spirit:

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

Most people do not exercise enough discipline in their lives. There are, however, dangers to be avoided. Check below the bad attitudes that you have observed in overdisciplined persons.

- a. Pride _____
- b. Extremes _____
- c. Asceticism _____
- d. Superiority _____

When does discipline become a tyrant rather than a servant?

- a. When I demand it of others. Yes _____ No _____
- b. When I feel good about it as I look back. Yes _____ No _____
- c. When I feel confused about it as I look back. Yes _____ No _____

Which is more important: people, or our system of discipline? _____
 Why? _____

Read aloud Prov. 13:18-20. In verse 18, what are the results of a failure to discipline oneself? _____

What are the rewards of self-discipline? _____

In verse 20, what impact do companions have on our self-discipline?

Test yourself against the following checklist. In column 1 indicate your strengths. In column 2 indicate where you feel you need help.

	<i>I do</i>	<i>I need help</i>
1. Orderliness (putting things away after use)	_____	_____
2. Do the hard things first each day	_____	_____
3. Avoid procrastination—do it today	_____	_____
4. Plan your work and work your plan	_____	_____
5. Organize your mind and sharpen it with good thoughts and material	_____	_____
6. Cultivate a habit of self-restraint (avoid undesirable impulses)	_____	_____
7. Cultivate dependability	_____	_____
8. Determine to become a responsible person	_____	_____
9. Work on punctuality (avoid the starting-late to arrive-late syndrome)	_____	_____
10. Quit worrying; turn your cares into fulfillment in Christ	_____	_____
11. Create a spiritual pattern for daily living (Bible reading, prayer, thanksgiving)	_____	_____

What do you think of this tribute to self-control? "It is better to be patient than powerful. It is better to win control over yourself than over whole cities" (Prov. 16:32, TEV). _____

Read aloud Prov. 25:28. Why is an undisciplined person so open to attack? so defenseless?

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight you have learned from today's lesson. How do you plan to implement this into your daily life?

D. Prayer Time

Self-control is one of the most difficult problems we have. It is easy to

become lax. Share one of your weaknesses with the group. Enter this, or a matter you wish to keep private, in your Private Prayer Journal.

As a group pray for one another's problems that have been shared.

E. Something to Think About and Do

The aim of discipline is to make us better, not intolerable. The disciplined Christian does not push and shove his way through to the goal at any cost. He is not obstinate or unfeeling. Rather he is flexible and compassionate. Hence he becomes more useful because he does not ignore people and their needs.

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 10:12; 14:17, 29; 29:8-9, 11, 20, 22; 30:33.

5

Bleeding Noses

PROVERBS 10:12; 14:17, 29; 17:14; 29:8-9, 11, 20, 22; 30:33

A. Introduction

Dale Carnegie once visited a place where the grizzly bears are fed in Yellowstone National Park. As he watched, a big grizzly came into the clearing where the garbage had been dumped. The guide told the group that this bear could whip any animal in the West, with the possible exceptions of the buffalo and Kodiak bear. As Carnegie sat with others in the bleachers, he noticed that the grizzly allowed only one animal to eat with him—a skunk.

Perhaps the bear resented the skunk and would have liked to punish him for his brashness. But he didn't. The grizzly could have won the fight—but oh, the high cost of winning!

That bear was smarter than a lot of human beings who spend sleepless nights trying to concoct ways to get even with their adversaries. Resentment has probably ruined more families, toppled more marriages, severed more friendships, and caused more people mental anguish than any other cause.

Horace wrote, "Anger is momentary madness, so control your passion or it will control you." The person controlled by this madness is affected mentally and physically. That is why Paul admonished Christians to put off "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions" (Gal. 5:20) and to put on "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness" (v. 22).

Solomon's writings show that he understood human relationships. To punch a man and give him a bleeding nose solves no problems. Love prevents the growth of resentment and its twin children, mental anguish and physical suffering.

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

The first nine chapters of Proverbs give us some fairly lengthy discourses, each unfolding a unified theme. But in the main section of the

book (chaps. 10—22) we find 375 short sayings that give us varied counsels for successful living. The compiler of the book did not attempt to group these truths under any plan or organization. Each stands on its own merit as counsel for the reader.

For this reason we must select a number of isolated verses when we seek to understand the full teaching on a theme selected for study.

Read Prov. 10:12; 29:22; 30:33 from a favorite translation. Picture in your mind the image given of "the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood" (30:33).

How do you feel when you are in the presence of people who have outbursts of anger?

- Comfortable _____ Uncomfortable _____
- The angry person is: Responsible _____ Irresponsible _____
- The angry person is: Wise _____ Foolish _____

Outbursts of anger can:

Agree	Disagree	
_____	_____	Bring harmonious relationships between friends
_____	_____	Solve most problems
_____	_____	Set straight the person in the wrong
_____	_____	Bring personal happiness because revenge is sweet
_____	_____	Cause physical ailments and diseases
_____	_____	Breed bitterness
_____	_____	Bring on suicide in order to get even
_____	_____	Result in divorce
_____	_____	Result in murder

Read Prov. 29:8-9, 11, 20, 22.

What did Solomon see in chapter 29 as the results of anger?

- 8 _____
- 9 _____
- 11 _____
- 20 _____
- 22 _____

Read Prov. 14:17, 29.

How did Solomon describe short-tempered men?

- 14:17 _____
- 14:29 _____

When was the last time you were angry? _____

- What could you have done differently? _____
- Did it solve or create a problem? _____
- Did you lose or win the case? _____
- What happened to your relationships? _____

e. How did you feel when it was all over and you had cooled down?

Write here your favorite translation of Eph. 4:26-27:

When you are angry:

- | | Yes | No |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1. Are you as tolerant of other people as you should be? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Do you demand your own way too much? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Do you insist you are right in spite of the facts? | ___ | ___ |
| 4. Do you deal with people on an emotional basis rather than on the basis of the facts? | ___ | ___ |
| 5. Do you confront the person calmly? | ___ | ___ |
| 6. Do you allow pride to keep you from admitting you're wrong? | ___ | ___ |

After you have been angry:

- | | | |
|--|-----|-----|
| 1. Have you asked the Lord to help you with the one who irritated you? | ___ | ___ |
| 2. Have you confessed your sin and asked God to forgive you? | ___ | ___ |
| 3. Have you asked the person you were angry with to forgive you? | ___ | ___ |

What do you think is the root of anger?

Human nature: Yes ___ No ___

Sinful nature: Yes ___ No ___

Selfishness: Yes ___ No ___

What is the difference between carnal anger and righteous anger?

Place the answers below in the correct column:

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------|
| selfish anger | personal motives |
| concern for others | social goals |
| sinful anger | anger against sin |
| siding with the oppressed | personally wronged |

Carnal Anger

Righteous Anger

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What can a person do to control his temper?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

How do you think the experience of entire sanctification helps a person with a "short fuse"? _____

The following are some proven methods of helping a person bring his emotions under control. Check those areas where you need help.

<i>Suggestion</i>	<i>I need help</i>
1. Look at the facts, not your emotions.	_____
2. Focus on the reason for your anger.	_____
3. Decide not to take your anger out on people not involved (wife, children, friends).	_____
4. Decide on a positive reaction, rather than a negative one.	_____
5. Don't pout and make yourself a martyr.	_____
6. Recognize the humanness of others and of yourself.	_____
7. Don't harbor resentments.	_____
8. Clarify your communication; restate your message in positive terms.	_____
9. Engage in physical activity—running or walking.	_____
10. Decide not to argue (see Prov. 17:14).	_____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one significant insight you have learned from today's lesson. How do you plan to implement that insight this week?

D. Prayer Time

If there are those who have areas of need, give opportunity for them to share that need with the group. Pray for all who express special need.

Note your own shared or unexpressed need in your Private Prayer Journal. Indicate the action you intend to take to bring your life into conformity with God's plan.

E. Something to Think About

Is there someone of whom you need to ask forgiveness? Why not ask God to help you do it? It will take courage and prayer, but the result will be worth the effort.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger" (Prov. 15:1). At the battle of New Orleans, Andrew Jackson stopped the cannonballs of the British artillery with bales of cotton!

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 10:4; 11:4, 24-28; 13:8; 16:19; 19:1; 28:21; 31:18.

6

The Secret of Contentment

PROVERBS 10:4; 11:4, 24-28; 13:8; 16:19; 19:1; 28:21; 31:18

A. Introduction

A Quaker landowner put up this sign on a vacant lot next to his house: "I will give this lot to anyone who is really satisfied." A wealthy farmer rode by and noticed the sign. He decided that since the land was going to be given away, he might as well have it. He thought to himself, I am rich. I have all I need, so I am able to qualify.

When the old Quaker answered his knock, the farmer explained why he had come.

The owner asked, "And is thee really satisfied?"

The farmer replied: "I have all I need, and I am well satisfied."

"Friend," said the Quaker, "if thee is so satisfied, what does thee want with my lot?"

Greed is not new to our age. It is basic to human nature to want more, not less. Our materialistic world seeks the eternal fountain of happiness through money and possessions, but its thirst is never slaked.

Such an attitude is mirrored by the monkey with his fist stuck in a coconut shell grasping a fistful of peanuts. He must make a choice: the peanuts or freedom. He can't have both.

An ancient Greek philosopher said, "A wise man is he who does not grieve for the things which he has not, but rejoices for those things which he has."

The simple truth of contentment is expressed by John Greenleaf Whittier:

*No longer forward nor behind
I look in hope or fear;
But grateful, take the good I find,
The best of now and here.*

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 11:24-28. What attitude should we take about the use of money?

Write comment here

Dr. Herb True writes: "In the U.S. we have reached a peak of teaching people how to be rich, how to be popular, how to be famous . . . how to make a living, but we have failed miserably in showing them how to be happy or to attain happiness."

Do you think money can give us happiness? Yes ____ No ____ Why?

The Money Test

Read Prov. 10:4; 11:4; 22:2; 28:21; 31:18; Mal. 3:8-10; Matt. 19:23; 1 Tim. 6:10. Carefully answer each question and indicate why you answered as you did. Use the questions as discussion starters.

	Yes	No	Why
1. Do you tithe your income (Mal. 3:8-10)?	_____	_____	_____
2. Do you save something each week?	_____	_____	_____
3. Do you spend money:			
a. Competitively (to keep up with the Joneses)?	_____	_____	_____
b. Compulsively (spending just to spend—money burns a hole in your pocket)?	_____	_____	_____
c. Impulsively (instant gratification—later misery)?	_____	_____	_____
d. Wisely (by planning rather than chance)?	_____	_____	_____
4. Do you shop for bargains you can really use (Prov. 31:18)?	_____	_____	_____

5. Do you have a monthly budget to guide your spending? _____
6. Do you buy what you need, rather than what you want? _____
7. Are your purchases made on the basis of advertisements alone? _____
8. Before buying, do you compare products—quality, not just price? _____
9. Do you often buy, then regret the purchase later? _____
10. Do you return products that are defective? _____
11. Are you realistic in your desires for possessions? _____
12. Do you control the use of your money (or does it control you)? _____

One survey indicated that most Americans would like 25 percent more money. Do you think more money is the answer to most people's financial problems? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

Do you think tithing might help a person get his financial house in order? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

If you began to tithe after you became a Christian, be prepared to share your experience with the group.

Is it wrong to be rich? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

Is there anything morally wrong with being poor? Yes _____ No _____ Why? _____

What is one danger in poverty (Prov. 28:21)? _____

How does God view the rich and the poor (see Prov. 22:2)? _____

Where is the danger—money, or the love of money (see 1 Tim. 6:10)? _____

Why do you think Jesus said it is hard for a rich man to enter heaven (see Matt. 19:23)? _____

Why do you think lazy men soon become poor and hard workers often get rich (see Prov. 10:4)? _____

Is there anything wrong with using plastic money (credit cards)?
Yes ____ No ____ Why? _____

Read again Prov. 11:24-28. If God loves a cheerful giver, how tightly should we hold on to our money? _____

What is the Bible promise made to the generous giver? _____

What are the results of being selfish with our money? _____

What are the results of trusting in riches? _____

Do you recall an experience where you have been tempted to use money for yourself, but gave it to help someone else? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, how do you feel about it now as you look back? Be prepared to share the experience with the group.

Roswell Dwight Hitchcock writes: "Money spent on myself may be a millstone about my neck; money spent on others may give me wings like the angels."

John Wesley's guideline on money was "Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can." Would you modify it in any way now, 200 years later? Yes ____ No ____ Why? _____

Name some ways money can be misused, keeping in mind the Russian proverb, "When money speaks, the truth is silent."

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

In the following proverbs, what is more important than money?

11:4 _____

13:8 _____

16:19 _____

19:1 _____

22:1 _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one significant insight you have gleaned from the lesson.

D. Prayer Time

Perhaps the Lord has put His finger on something concerning your use of money. If so, note this in your Private Prayer Journal and the action you intend to take to bring your use of money into conformity with God's will for your life.

As a group, pray together that God will help each person use his possessions wisely. If some members are having financial difficulty, pray for them.

E. Something to Think About or Do

Someone has written: Money is something which buys everything but happiness and takes a man everywhere but to heaven.

*Dug from the mountainside, washed from the glen,
Servant am I or master of men.
Steal me, I curse you;
Earn me, I bless you;
Grasp me and hoard me, a fiend shall possess you;
Live for me, die for me,
Covet me, take me,
Angel or devil, I am what you make me.*

—Anonymous

E. For Next Week

Read Prov. 11:9; 16:28; 17:9, 17; 18:19, 24; 19:4, 6-7; 27:6, 9, 17.

7

Cultivating Friendships

PROVERBS 11:9; 16:28; 17:9, 17; 18:19, 24; 19:4, 6-7; 27:6, 9, 17

A. Introduction

Samuel Johnson writes: "If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself alone. A man, sir, should keep his friendships in constant repair."

A prize was once offered for the best definition of a friend. The winning entry was: "A friend is a person who comes in when every other person has gone out."

A real friend is one who cares and loves and understands. When John Huss was on his way to the executioner's stake, an old friend, without a word, gave him a strong grip of the hand. That handclasp took courage, because to be identified with Huss could have meant death. Huss turned and whispered, "Only God and I know how much that handclasp means to me."

That is why it is important to choose one's friends carefully.

*Choose your friend wisely,
Test your friend well;
True friends, the rarest gems,
Prove hard to tell.
Winter him, summer him,
Know your friend well.*

—Unknown

"Without friends," wrote Aristotle, "no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."

Therefore, let us be careful how we treat our friends and follow the advice of Shakespeare:

*Those friends thou hast, and their
adoption tried,*

*Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledg'd comrade.*

—Hamlet, act I, sc. 3, l. 62

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 17:17; 18:24; 27:9.

In your own words define what a friend is, including at least three essential ingredients.

Write definition here _____

- | | |
|----|-------|
| a. | _____ |
| b. | _____ |
| c. | _____ |

Agree/Disagree

The following assessment of friendships has been given by noted people of the past. Do you agree or disagree with them? Be prepared to discuss your reasons.

<i>Agree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	
_____	_____	The difficulty is not so great to die for a friend, as to find a friend worth dying for—Henry Home.
_____	_____	The only way to have a friend is to be one—Ralph Waldo Emerson.
_____	_____	On the choice of friends, our good or evil name depends—John Gay.
_____	_____	One friend in a lifetime is much; two are many; three are hardly possible—Henry Brook Adams.
_____	_____	Misfortune shows those who are not really friends—Aristotle.
_____	_____	Some friendships are made by nature, some by contract, some by interest, and some by souls—Jeremy Taylor.
_____	_____	Forsake not an old friend, for the new is not comparable unto him—Aprocrypha; Ecclesiasticus 9:10.

List ways a person may show himself friendly to make a new friend.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

From what you have studied thus far, which of the following ingredients should be used to determine friendship?

	Yes	No
Social status	_____	_____
Wealth	_____	_____
Common interests	_____	_____
Work	_____	_____
Character	_____	_____
Personality	_____	_____
Family background	_____	_____
Religion	_____	_____
Moral values	_____	_____
Opposite ideals	_____	_____
Neighbors	_____	_____

The following proverbs describe how persons have sought to make friends. Discuss each one to decide if it is a Christlike method.

<i>Proverbs</i>	<i>Methods Used</i>	<i>Christlike (Yes or No)</i>
17:17	Love	_____
18:24	Stick close	_____
19:4	Money	_____
19:6-7	Do favors	_____
27:6	Deal honestly	_____
27:9	Give counsel	_____
27:17	Stimulates	_____

Just as friendships can be made, they can be destroyed. Solomon shows great wisdom at this point. Read each proverb and name the cause that destroys friendships.

<i>Proverb</i>	<i>Cause</i>
11:9	_____
16:28	_____
17:9	_____
18:19	_____

Make a list of those you consider to be your closest friends, and why you are attracted to each other.

<i>Friend</i>	<i>Attraction</i>
a. _____	a. _____
b. _____	b. _____
c. _____	c. _____
d. _____	d. _____

Name some ways you might strengthen your friendships.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

List several people you would like to have as your friends.

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

What could you do to win their confidence and friendship? _____

Reflect on your personality. Do you have some traits that turn people off so that they do not wish to be your friend? Consider such things as:

	Yes	No	Not sure
Gossip	_____	_____	_____
Betray confidences	_____	_____	_____
Argumentative	_____	_____	_____
Upmanship	_____	_____	_____
Eccentric	_____	_____	_____
All-knowing	_____	_____	_____

If you have any of these problems, what do you think you can do to improve? _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight you have learned from today's lesson. What do you intend to do to become a better friend to others?

D. Prayer Time

1. As you studied, perhaps the Lord showed you an area of need in

your life. Note this in your Private Prayer Journal and the action you intend to take to correct this problem.

2. As a group pray that God will help each person become more friendly, and learn how to cultivate new and old friends.

E. Something to Think About or Do

The true friend is one who may lack luster, but is faithful in adversity.

Once upon a time the shadow said to the body, "Who is a friend like me? I follow you wherever you go. In sunlight or in moonlight I never forsake you."

"That is right," said the body. "But where are you when there is neither sun nor moon to shine upon me?"

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 4:20-27; 15:26; 20:9; 21:8; 22:24; 30:12.

8

The Pure in Heart

PROVERBS 4:20-27; 15:26; 20:9; 21:8; 22:24; 30:12

A. Introduction

A clerk leaned over his counter and asked J. G. Morrison, "Brother Morrison, how little religion can a man have and still get to heaven?"

Quick as a flash, Dr. Morrison replied, "Just enough to make him comfortable in the presence of Jesus."

The only way a man will feel comfortable in the presence of Jesus is when his heart has been made pure and clean from sin. Richard S. Taylor writes: "The minimum measure of grace acceptable would be an intense desire for the maximum measure of grace attainable."

Solomon understood the importance of this spiritual law when he wrote, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (4:23, NIV). He knew that without a clean heart man is inclined to evil, and that continually.

The hymn writer expresses the Christian's yearning for inner cleansing in these lines:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart today.
Try me, O Saviour; know my thoughts, I pray.
See if there be some wicked way in me;
Cleanse me from every sin, and set me free.*

—J. Edwin Orr

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Carefully read Prov. 4:20-27 and note key ideas from this passage.

Write here

v. 20

v. 21

v. 22

v. 23
vv. 24-27

Read the following proverbs and list the key idea for each one.

<i>Proverb</i>	<i>Key Idea</i>
15:26	_____
20:9	_____
21:8	_____
30:12	_____

True-False. Circle the correct answer. If the statement is false, restate it so that it will be a true statement.

- T F (1) Purity is maturity.

- T F (2) A person with a pure heart cannot backslide.

- T F (3) A pure heart is attained by good works.

- T F (4) Read Matt. 5:8. Jesus did not mean that a pure heart is necessary for entrance into heaven.

What did you learn from the above exercise? _____

How does a person receive a pure heart? (Read 2 Tim. 2:21-22; Jas. 4:8.)

Write your answer here _____

Read 1 John 3:3. What does it mean to you?

1. It refers to every Christian: Yes ____ No ____
2. We can purify ourselves: Yes ____ No ____
3. We purify ourselves by asking God to cleanse us: Yes ____
No ____
4. We seek to be pure because God is pure: Yes ____ No ____

Using your favorite translation, write out here:

Phil. 4:8

Read Ps. 24:3-5. In your own words write below what you think these verses mean.

Write here

Read Rom. 12:1-3. J. B. Phillips interprets verse 2, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould."

When a person has a pure heart, what differences do we note in the following areas?

1. Devotion to God (Rom. 12:1) _____
2. Values (Rom. 12:3) _____
3. Life Goals (Phil. 3:12-14) _____
4. Life-style (Rom. 12:2) _____
5. Communication (Eph. 4:29) _____
6. Associations (Prov. 22:24) _____
7. Love of God (Deut. 6:5) _____

The word "transformed" (v. 2) is in a continuous sense, i.e., one's complete life-style keeps on being made like the spirit of Christ. How do you think this can happen?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Name three things about a pure heart that you did not know until you studied this lesson or that have been reemphasized for you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one significant idea you have learned from the lesson. How do you plan to implement this into your life this week?

D. Prayer Time

As you studied, perhaps the Lord placed His finger on something in your life that needs changing concerning heart purity. Note this in your Private Prayer Journal and the action you intend to take to live a pure life.

Pray together that God will give each person the desire to live in close relationship to Him.

E. Something to Think About and Do

John A. Knight notes, "To be 'Christian' is to be like Christ. To be like Christ is to be holy. Therefore, to be 'Christian' is to be holy.

"To be becoming increasingly 'Christian' is to be becoming increasingly like Christ. To be becoming increasingly like Christ is to be becoming increasingly holy. Therefore, to be becoming increasingly 'Christian' is to be becoming increasingly holy.

"In short, Christlikeness is holiness, and increasing Christlikeness is increasing holiness."¹

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31.

9

The Divine Design

PROVERBS 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31

A. Introduction

"Marriage is the impossible relationship," writes Dr. James D. Hamilton. "That is, it is impossible for it to function without some degree of friction. This is so for two reasons: (1) each individual cannot fully understand himself, and (2) each cannot fully understand the other."¹

Perhaps that is why the German proverb says, "Marriage is heaven and hell."

Still, with all the fun poked at marriage, it is God's plan for mankind—one man for one woman and one woman for one man. The plan was instituted by God in the Garden when He created Eve for Adam and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18).

Jesus reinforced the divine design of marriage when He said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). And Paul wrote, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Eph. 5:31).

If this is the divine design for marriage, why are so many marriages in trouble? Is it because marital roles have become blurred? Is self-centeredness a factor—each wanting to do his own thing? Could it be that the biblical laws of marriage have been violated and broken?

Because of the very personal relationships of husband and wife, some questions may be omitted or treated generally in the group discussions.

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 18:22 and 12:4.

On the basis of scripture, how important do you think it is to maintain the family unit through marriage?

Unimportant Important Supremely important

In marriage, both partners are equally obligated to make the union work. Solomon understood this, but most of his proverbs relate to the wife.

Read Prov. 31:10-31. Using your favorite translation, write out here:

Prov. 31:10-12

Using chapter 31:13-30, note the key characteristics of a woman who creates a harmonious marital relationship and builds a strong home.

How did the ideal wife of Bible times help with the economic needs of the family?

Read the verses indicated, then write the answer in column 1. In column 2 indicate whether that function would be the same or different in today's home.

	Function	Function in Today's Home (Same or Different)
Vv. 13, 19	_____	_____
V. 14	_____	_____
V. 15b	_____	_____
V. 16	_____	_____
V. 18a	_____	_____
V. 24	_____	_____

What characteristics did Solomon appreciate in a wife? Read the verses indicated and write your answer in column 1. In column 2 indicate whether or not that trait is still a strength in a wife.

	Characteristic	A Strength in Today's Home (Yes, No)
Vv. 15a, 18b, 27b	_____	_____
V. 17	_____	_____
V. 20	_____	_____
V. 21	_____	_____
V. 22	_____	_____
V. 23	_____	_____

- V. 25 _____
- V. 26 _____
- V. 27a _____
- V. 28 _____
- V. 30b _____

What is the husband's part in creating harmony in the home? Make a list of six things an ideal husband can do to provide good economic support for the family.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Let the ladies make a list of 11 characteristics that they appreciate in a husband.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 6. _____ | |

Check the following areas of your marriage as you see them.

Area	Needs	
	Improvement	Is Sound
Spiritual growth	_____	_____
Communication	_____	_____
Emotional balance	_____	_____
Forgiveness	_____	_____
Understanding	_____	_____
Decision-making process	_____	_____
Working hours as a hindrance	_____	_____
Recreation, time together	_____	_____
Financial	_____	_____
Agreement on values	_____	_____
Discipline of selves	_____	_____

	<i>Needs</i>	
	<i>Improvement</i>	<i>Is Sound</i>
Discipline of children	_____	_____
Attitudes	_____	_____
Sexual fulfillment	_____	_____

What are the hindrances or problems that prevent you from attaining needed improvements? _____

What changes would help improve areas that you feel need to be improved?

List changes that you could make, and changes you wish your spouse would make. Share your feelings with each other but not with your group.

My Life	My Spouse
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

I am willing to _____

in order to make our marriage more successful.

If you have not discovered any weak points, that is great. If you have, it is time to think about the good points of your marriage. Write down the things in your marriage that you like about yourself and your spouse.

My Life	My Spouse
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

A big part of successful marriage is understanding our partners. In his book *Harmony in the Home*, Dr. James D. Hamilton lists six differences between men and women. From your personal experience indicate whether you agree or disagree with Dr. Hamilton's conclusions. If you agree that this is true of your mate, indicate what attitudes or actions you could take to give him or her greater support.

1. Men tend to approach life headfirst; women, heart first.
Agree ____ Disagree ____ If this is true, I could _____

2. Men tend to externalize; women, to internalize. Agree ____
Disagree ____ If this is true, I could _____

3. Men tend to be concerned with principles; women, with details.
Agree ____ Disagree ____ If this is true, I could _____

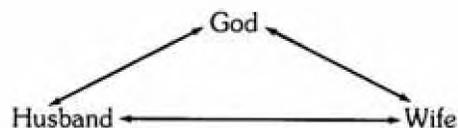
4. Men tend to talk for practical purposes; women, for recreational
purposes. Agree ____ Disagree ____ If this is true, I could ____

5. Men desire, but often fear, emotional intimacy; women need and
crave emotional intimacy. Agree ____ Disagree ____ If this is true,
I could _____
6. Men have a driving need for success; women, for security.²
Agree ____ Disagree ____ If this is true, I could _____

How does your spouse perceive you? Place a check (✓) after each attitude or action you believe your spouse would use to describe your relationship to him or her.

Loving ____ Listens ____ Honest ____ Tender ____
Communicates ____ Flexible ____ Kind ____ Supportive ____
Perceptive ____ Caring ____ Open ____ Spiritual ____

For a marriage to be successful, the proper relationship between husband, wife, and God must be kept. It would appear as follows:



Read aloud Eph. 5:22-33 as God's pattern relationship for husband and wife.

Ephesians' Marital Checklist

(If not married, use the Agree/Disagree column to check attitudes that make for better relationships in general, or that you believe would make a marriage better.)

<i>Husband</i>			<i>Wife</i>		
<i>I do</i>	<i>I need help</i>	<i>Agree/Disagree</i>	<i>I do</i>	<i>I need help</i>	<i>Agree/Disagree</i>
Love wife as myself	_____	_____	Adapt to husband	_____	_____
Love wife as Christ loved the Church	_____	_____	Consider husband head of the home (not dictator)	_____	_____
Respect wife as my own flesh	_____	_____	Respect and reverence husband	_____	_____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight from the lesson which you have not considered seriously before. How do you plan to implement this into your marriage this week? (If not married, into your life.)

D. Prayer Time

You have surveyed the marriage relationship from a biblical perspective. Perhaps you have found your marriage to be wholesome and exciting, with no major difficulties. If so, rejoice and thank God as you pray. If on the other hand you have found some areas that need improvement, note these in your Private Prayer Journal and indicate what action you intend to take to fulfill this need to become a better marriage partner.

As a group pray for one another's marriages. If there are singles in the group, think of one or two strong marriages known to you, and thank God for them. If you know of struggling or broken marriages, pray silently for the hurting partners.

E. Something to Think About

For several years a tradition was carried on at the famous Church in the Wildwood. Following the wedding ceremony the minister would say to the bride, "Now pull the bell-rope that will ring the bell announcing to the community that your wedding has been performed." The bell was specially rigged so that the bride alone was not strong enough to ring it.

The minister would then instruct the groom, "Help her pull it." Their combined strength would announce to the community that the wedding

had been performed. Then the minister said: "That is the way it will be in your marriage. It will be easier if you both pull together."

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 1:8-9, 3:1-2, 11-12; 4:3-4; 6:20-25; 10:1; 13:24; 19:18; 20:7; 22:6, 15; 27:11; 29:15, 17; 31:2-3.

10 Discipline: Bane or Blessing?

PROVERBS 1:8-9; 3:1-2, 11-12; 4:3-4; 6:20-25; 10:1; 13:24; 19:18; 20:7; 22:6, 15; 27:11; 29:15, 17; 31:2-3.

A. Introduction

Parenting is one of the difficult tasks assigned to human beings, a task that takes mountains of wisdom.

In his book *Heaven Help the Home*, Dr. Howard G. Hendricks amplifies the difficulty many parents have in child rearing by succinctly describing the overly disciplined parent versus the overly permissive parent.

The strict disciplinarian assumes “the role of a Simon Legree,” punishing every misdemeanor. The overly permissive parent is “paralyzed” by his “child’s behavior.”

“If Junior decides to throw a brick through a plate glass window, don’t stop him. After all, you are likely to curb his genius for throwing bricks.”¹

Most parents recognize that no two children are alike in personality traits, ambition, or behavior. Parents therefore hurt because they don’t know how much discipline to apply.

Matthew Henry writes: “There are two ways a child could go. First the way *he would go*. Second, the way *he should go*.”

The overriding question then, is, where do parents learn successful parenting so that their children will go the way *they should* rather than the way *they would*.

God gave Solomon pearls of wisdom for child rearing that are excellent guidelines for parents of every age. If followed, they will keep our homes from fragmenting until like Humpty Dumpty, “all the king’s horses and all the king’s men” could not put the home back together again.

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Proverbs 22:6, 15—perhaps from several translations.

In your opinion, how absolute is the assurance of v. 6 (consider such

factors as free choice and environment)? 1. Always true ____ 2. A dependable guideline ____ 3. Seldom true ____

In what ways do you think children are gifts from God (read Ps. 127:3; Prov. 17:6)?

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

Following is a list of proverbs on child rearing. List the key idea of each one:

Proverbs	Key Idea
1:8-9	
3:1-2	
3:11-12	
4:3-4	
6:20-24; 31:2-3	
10:1; 27:11	
13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 29:15, 17	
20:7	

Agree/Disagree

Use the following Agree/Disagree test as a discussion stimulator.

Agree *Disagree*

- _____ _____ A parent can be guaranteed that his child will die a Christian, if he trains him in the church.
- _____ _____ When disciplining a child, it is wise to use comparisons such as, "Your brother would never do that!"

- _____ Making fun of a child's weaknesses will help him become more conscious of areas he needs to correct and thus help him mature more quickly.
- _____ Threats and bribes are excellent teaching techniques and solve many discipline problems.
- _____ If a parent says no to a child's request, the child will probably turn against the parent because he will believe his parent does not love him.
- _____ Maturity of the child should dictate appropriate discipline.
- _____ Discipline is a long-range process and results should not be measured immediately.

Read Col. 3:21 and Eph. 6:4, recalling Matthew Henry's wisdom: "There are two ways a child could go. First the way he would go. Second, the way he should go." There are two forms of discipline—*corrective* and *preventive*. List several of each kind below.

- | <i>Corrective</i> | <i>Preventive</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| a. _____ | a. _____ |
| b. _____ | b. _____ |
| c. _____ | c. _____ |

Read again Prov. 13:24 and Eph. 6:4. Indulgent parents often pay a tremendous price in heartaches in years to come for failure to properly discipline their children. What steps can parents take to maintain a balance between discipline and overindulgence?

- a. Follow discipline with love: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____
- b. Explain to the child why he is disciplined: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____
- c. Before punishment, take time to listen to the child: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____
- d. Other _____

List three ways you might improve your discipline methods:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Discuss ways parents can:

1. Instill responsibility in a child and diminish the parents' authority.
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

2. Release a child to become himself and still show a caring, loving attitude.

- a. _____
- b. _____

Read Heb. 12:5-11 and write below all the words that speak of discipline, and each time they occur.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 14. _____ |

List some ways parents can serve as models in the following areas:

Attitudes toward authorities

- a. _____
- b. _____

Obeying God's commands

- a. _____
- b. _____

Honesty

- a. _____
- b. _____

Reactions to adversity

- a. _____
- b. _____

Read Exod. 20:12; Lev. 19:3; Col. 3:20. What methods can parents use to win the respect of their children?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

List two desires you have for each of your children.

- | <i>Child One</i> | <i>Child Two</i> | <i>Child Three</i> |
|------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 1. _____ | 1. _____ | 1. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 2. _____ | 2. _____ |

How do these fit into the thinking of your children? The child shares the desire: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

How are you trying to help your children accomplish their goals?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Discipline, respect, responsibility are all important functions of parenting, but can these be taught without playing with one's children and spending time with them? Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

How much time do you spend each week doing things with each of your children? One hour ____ Two hours ____ Other _____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight from the lesson which has been most significant to you. Can you think of some way to put it into practice this week? Yes ____ No ____

D. Prayer Time

1. You may have decided what specific area you need to grow in. Enter this into your Private Prayer Journal.

2. As a group, join hands and pray for one another, asking God to help each parent to do a better job of parenting. If there are specific concerns that have been shared, remember these in prayer.

E. Something to Think About

It should be remembered that the proper combination of love and discipline begins at birth and not when the child is a teenager. Hence, wise parents will follow the biblical admonition in a *joint effort* from the birth of their children to train them to be respectful and responsible.

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 25:15-28.

11

Distinctly Different

PROVERBS 25:15-28

A school superintendent in Tokyo was seeking qualified teachers to fill vacancies. He approached Dr. Nitobe, a leading Japanese Christian educator, for recommendations. Dr. Nitobe gave him 10 names. After interviewing each one, the superintendent returned and said, "I have chosen only 4 out of the 10 whose names you gave me. They seemed to have a different spirit in their work from the others and appeal to me as the most qualified."

Dr. Nitobe pointed out that the four chosen were Christians.

A different spirit!

What is it that makes godly people distinctly different from the rest of society? It begins with the work of God in the new birth. It continues as we pursue a life-style of holy living. This pursuit affects every facet of life and is expressed outwardly in a life-style that glorifies God. Of such a life Robert Leighton writes: "A holy life is a voice; it speaks when the tongue is silent, and is either a constant attraction or a perpetual reproof."

Solomon coined some proverbs that were designed to enable his people to live such godly lives. Recorded by Hezekiah, king of Judah, they are still essential ingredients to holy living. As we study them, let us ask God to search our hearts and help us become more devout.

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 25:15-28 from your favorite translation.

Using the following list, write a contrasting word in the right-hand column.

Dispositional Trait	Contrasting Word
1. Impatience (v. 15)	_____
2. A sharp tongue (v. 15)	_____
3. Excess (vv. 16-17)	_____
4. False witness (v. 18)	_____
5. Unfaithfulness (v. 19)	_____
6. Insensitivity (v. 20)	_____
7. Hatred (vv. 21-22)	_____
8. Slander (v. 23)	_____
9. Compromise (v. 26)	_____
10. Self-seeking (v. 27)	_____
11. Undisciplined (v. 28)	_____

These negative dispositional traits cause conflict in the Body of Christ. All are detrimental to spiritual growth and to a vital Christian witness. In contrast the positive traits enrich life by making us more Christlike. Let's review each one in depth.

1. *Patience vs. impatience* (v. 15)
 - a. How important is patience (Prov. 16:32)? _____
 - b. With what other virtues does Paul list a patient spirit (1 Tim. 3:3)?
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 - c. What is Peter's synonym for patience (2 Pet. 1:6)? _____
2. *A gentle vs. an explosive tongue* (v. 15)

A Turkish proverb says, "One drop of honey catches more bees than a ton of vinegar."

What does a gentle tongue do (Prov. 15:1)? _____

What do harsh words do? _____

3. *Excess vs. moderation* (vv. 16-17)

What is the opposite of being in your neighbor's house too often?

How does one strike a balance that encourages friendship? Jot down two suggestions to share with the group.

- a. _____
 b. _____

4. *Untruthfulness vs. truthfulness* (v. 18)

Solomon likens him who speaks falsely against another to him who uses instruments of war and death: A club, a sword, or an arrow. Has anyone ever lied about you? Yes ____ No _____. If yes, choose three words to describe the hurt you felt.

- a. _____
 b. _____
 c. _____

5. *Unfaithfulness vs. faithfulness* (v. 19)

Solomon's analogy is that an unfaithful man can be depended upon about as much as a broken tooth or a dislocated foot. He fails when he is needed most. The Bengal maxim is: "A loose tooth and a feeble friend are equally bad."

List three contrasting characteristics of an unfaithful person versus that of a faithful person:

	<i>Faithful</i>	<i>Unfaithful</i>
a.	_____	_____
b.	_____	_____
c.	_____	_____

6. *Insensitivity vs. thoughtfulness* (v. 20)

In Eccles. 3:4, Solomon declares there is "a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance." Christlikeness includes sensitivity to the needs of those around us. Can you think of two ways to become more empathetic?

- a. _____
 b. _____

7. *Hatred vs. love* (vv. 21-22)

Read Prov. 10:12 and Matt. 5:44. Who quoted the proverb of 25:21-22 in the New Testament (see Rom. 12:20)? _____

"Heap coals of fire upon his head" means "Not to consume, but to melt him into kindness" (Adam Clarke).

Can you think of several ways love melts an enemy to kindness?

- a. _____
b. _____

8. *Slander vs. encouragement* (v. 23)

The NIV translates v. 23, "As a north wind brings rain, so a sly tongue brings angry looks."

Have you ever been slandered? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what is the natural reaction to the one who has maligned you? _____

What is the normal reaction to an expression of confidence and encouragement? _____

If one seeks to live by the golden rule, how often will he try to speak an encouraging word? _____

9. *Compromise vs. principle* (v. 26)

"Like a muddied fountain and a polluted spring is a righteous man who yields, falls down and compromises his integrity before the wicked" (v. 26, Amp.)

Read Matt. 10:33. Have you ever failed to live up to your understanding of God's will? Yes ____ No ____ If yes, what would you say was the reason for your failure?

- a. Fear: Yes ____ No ____
b. Spiritual weakness: Yes ____ No ____
c. Other _____

What is the Christian's best defense against compromise? _____

10. *Self-seeking vs. preferring others* (v. 27)

Read Prov. 29:23 and Matt. 23:12. What is wrong with self-seeking?

Does it tend to become selfish? Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

Does it violate the golden rule? Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

How close is self-seeking to pride? The same ____ One encourages the other ____ Not connected ____

Jesus condemns self-seeking: Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

11. *Undisciplined vs. disciplined* (v. 28)

Read Prov. 16:32. Discuss: "The man of patience and self-control is honored above the hero of the battlefield."¹

In what ways is the man who lacks self-control like people in a city with broken walls?

He does foolish things: Yes ____ No ____

He lacks defense against opposition: Yes ____ No ____

He acts impulsively: Yes _____ No _____

Other _____

Listed below are some areas where many people need to be more disciplined. Perhaps you would like to add to the list. Opposite each one evaluate how you feel about the need for greater discipline in your own life.

	<i>Satisfied</i>	<i>Could Improve</i>	<i>Need Help</i>
1. Use of money	_____	_____	_____
2. Attitude toward the opposite sex	_____	_____	_____
3. Management of time	_____	_____	_____
4. Child rearing	_____	_____	_____
5. Bible study and prayer	_____	_____	_____
6. Church attendance	_____	_____	_____
7. Work habits	_____	_____	_____
8. Other _____	_____	_____	_____

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight from the lesson which has been most significant to you. How do you plan to implement this into your life this week?

D. Prayer Time

You have decided what you need help with to become more like Christ. Enter this in your *Private Prayer Journal*, as well as the action you intend to take to live a brighter, holy life-style.

Thank God in your prayer time that He has showed you an area of need. Thank Him that His grace is sufficient to help you with this problem.

As a group, pray for each other, focusing on the needs represented in the group.

E. Something to Think About and Do

"Cold words freeze people," wrote Blaise Pascal, "and hot words scorch them, and bitter words make them bitter, and wrathful words make them wrathful. Kind words also produce their own image on men's souls; and a beautiful image it is. They soothe, quiet, and comfort the hearer."

May God give us the kindness in our hearts to make us distinctly different, even through our tongues.

F. For Next Week

Read Prov. 3:1-6; 22:19; 28:25; 29:25; 30:5.

12

The Experience of Trust

PROVERBS 3:1-6; 22:19; 28:25; 29:25; 30:5

A. Introduction

Recently an elderly lady asked, "Is it a sin for a Christian to be depressed?"

A man related the circumstances facing his son-in-law's family. The husband was unemployed and although the daughter worked at a part-time job, they could not make ends meet. "The harder I pray for them," he lamented, "the worse things become. Should I stop praying so things will get better?"

A new Christian, saved out of a life of terrible sin, said, "Pastor, I love the Lord, but it is difficult to live a Christian life at work. How do I keep from slipping back into my old way of living when there are so many temptations?"

Depression, unanswered prayer, and temptation—these are typical of the problems facing Christians in our complex age.

The sage of old knew that every person following God would face problems that would often appear insurmountable. Nonetheless, he gives the ultimate solution to these problems in our scripture: "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (3:5-6).

B. Scriptural Analysis and Application

Read Prov. 3:1-6.

1. When I trust in God, what do I acknowledge to be true (v. 1)?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
2. When I trust in God, what promise do I accept for my life?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____

3. When I trust in God, what attitudes do I make the foundations of my life (v. 3)?

- a. _____
b. _____

4. In verse 4, what promises are made to him who trusts God?

- a. _____
b. _____

In your own words define trust and its synonyms:

1. Trust _____
2. Faith _____
3. Confidence _____
4. _____
5. _____

The Bible urges us to trust God fully. Since faith and trust are synonymous, take the "Faith Test" to see where you are in your journey of faith.

<i>Degrees of Faith</i>	<i>I Am Here</i>	<i>I Need Help</i>
1. No faith (Mark 4:40)	_____	_____
2. Little faith (Matt. 14:31)	_____	_____
3. Weak faith (Rom. 14:1)	_____	_____
4. Dead faith (Jas. 2:17)	_____	_____
5. Great faith (Luke 7:9)	_____	_____
6. Full faith (Acts 11:24)	_____	_____
7. Steadfast Faith (Col 2:5)	_____	_____
8. Rich faith (Jas. 2:5)	_____	_____
9. Unfeigned (sincere) faith (1 Tim. 1:5)	_____	_____
10. Precious faith (2 Pet. 1:1)	_____	_____
11. Holy faith (Jude 20)	_____	_____

Is there something that keeps you from trusting God more fully? If so, what is the problem? _____

Read Ps. 37:5. Have you committed this problem to God? Yes _____
No _____ I'm trying _____.

When you make the effort to commit your problem to God, what happens to your sense of trust? Nothing _____ It increases _____ It decreases _____.

Write here God's promise for trusting Him. Choose the wording from your favorite translation.

Prov. 3:6-7

Examine the following four views of trust. Do you agree or disagree with them?

"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen" (Ralph Waldo Emerson). Agree ____ Disagree ____

"You may trust the Lord too little, but you can never trust Him too much" (Anonymous). Agree ____ Disagree ____

"We trust as we love, and where we love. If we love Christ much, surely, we shall trust Him much" (Thomas Benton Brooks). Agree ____ Disagree ____

"Trust in God does not supersede the employment of prudent means on our part. To expect God's protection while we do nothing is not to honor but to tempt" (Pasquier Quesnel). Agree ____ Disagree ____

Read the following proverbs of trust and indicate what you think they mean:

Prov. 22:19 Trust grows with knowledge:

Agree ____ Disagree ____

Prov. 28:25 If I trust God:

I will prosper in every way. _____

Life will be better than if I fail to trust God. _____

I will always prosper financially. _____

Prov. 30:5 If I trust God:

I will never be hurt. _____

I will be spared many injuries. _____

Nothing can finally destroy me. _____

Earl Wolf has written, "Human wisdom is inadequate, but divine wisdom is sufficient guidance for life. The assurance is that God will direct our lives and enable us to reach our destination."¹

Human Wisdom Alone Is Inadequate

Following are some things in which we put our trust in everyday life. Are they always dependable?

1. A bank account guarantees that we will have money when we need it. Yes ____ No ____
2. A new car is dependable. Yes ____ No ____
3. Teachers give our children sound instruction. Yes ____ No ____
4. Food and drugs in the store are pure. Yes ____ No ____

Even though our trust is sometimes mistaken, is it wise to keep our trust in society? Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

If we trust men who are less than perfect, should we trust God even when his way seems hard? Yes ____ No ____ Not sure ____

What does the biblical writer mean when he says, "Don't ever trust yourself" (3:5, TLB)?

Never trust your senses: Yes ____ No ____

Never trust your judgment: Yes ____ No ____

Never trust your opinion when it goes contrary to God's revealed will: Yes ____ No ____

The Adequacy of Divine Wisdom

The wise man writes, "Rely with all your heart on the Eternal" (3:5, Moffatt).

Answer the five "Ws" of trust:

1. *Whom* can I trust (3:5)? _____
2. *What* can I trust (3:6)? _____
3. *Where* can I trust God (3:6)? _____
4. *When* can I trust God (3:6)? _____
5. *Why* can I trust God (3:6)? _____

When a Christian trusts God, why doesn't he always have an easy road in life? Reflect on Moffatt's translation of 3:6: "Have mind of him wherever you may go, and he will clear the road for you." How does God clear the road for us in difficult circumstances?

- a. Sometimes removes the difficulty: Yes ____ No ____
- b. Gives strength to triumph in spite of the circumstances: Yes ____ No ____
- c. Gives assurance of His presence with us: Yes ____ No ____
- d. Other _____

What are the consequences of trusting self versus trusting God?

- a. "Self-sufficiency and self-dependence have been the ruin of mankind ever since the fall of Adam. The grand sin of the human race is their continual endeavor to live independently of God, i.e., to be without God in the world. True religion consists of consid-

ering God the fountain of all good from him" (Adam Clarke).
Agree ____ Disagree ____

- b. "We must have a continual regard to God's providence, must depend upon it in our affairs, both by faith and prayer" (Matthew Henry). Agree ____ Disagree ____
- c. "We must believe that he is able to do what he will, wise to do what is best, and good, according to his promise, to do what is best for us, if we love him, and serve him" (Matthew Henry).
Agree ____ Disagree ____

What are some of the rewards of trusting God?

"A reputation for good judgment and common sense" (3:4, TLB).

3:2a _____

3:2b _____

3:6 _____

What methods can we use to become more trusting on the Lord?

Discuss:

1. Self-surrender
2. Active faith
3. Prayer
4. Bible reading

Charles Spurgeon wrote, "When you have no helpers, see all your helpers in God. When you have many helpers, see God in all your helpers. When you have nothing but God, see all in God; when you have everything, see God in everything. Under all conditions, stay thy heart only on the Lord."

C. A Reflection

Share briefly one insight from the lesson which has been most significant to you. How do you plan to implement this into your life this week?

D. Prayer Time

You have decided in what area you need help to become more trusting. Enter this in your Private Prayer Journal, as well as what action you intend to take to trust the Lord more fully.

Someone has said, "Feed your faith, and your doubts will starve to death."

Thank God for situations in your life that He uses to teach trust to you. Thank Him for new friends made and for lessons learned in this study of Proverbs.

As a group pray for each other, focusing on the needs represented by the group.

E. Something to Think About and Do

Dwight L. Moody used to quote, "I will trust, and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2). Then he would say, "You can travel first class or second class to heaven. Second class is, 'When I am afraid, I will trust.' First class is, 'I will trust, and not be afraid.'"

David put it like this: "He has no fear of evil tidings, he trusts the Eternal with a steady heart" (Ps. 112:7, Moffatt).

My Private Prayer Journal

As you study each subject, prepare a journal of needs or prayer requests for that area affecting your life or the life of someone you know. Make your entries in the space below. When finished with the study, remove this page and place in your Bible for continued prayer.

Lesson No.	Date of Entry	Prayer Request/Need	Action I Intend to take	Date Answered
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				

Personal Comments:

Reference Notes

LESSON 8

1. John A. Knight, *The Holiness Pilgrimage* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1973), 17.

LESSON 9

1. James D. Hamilton, *Harmony in the Home* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1977), 37.

2. *Ibid.*, 39-41.

LESSON 10

1. Howard G. Hendricks, *Heaven Help the Home* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1973), 66.

LESSON 11

1. Earl C. Wolf, "Proverbs," *Beacon Bible Commentary* (Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1967), 3:506.

LESSON 12

1. *Ibid.*, 470.

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