

Get Smart: Wisdom for Life from Proverbs
Discussion 1 Handout: “Get Smart (The Fear of the Lord – Wisdom)”

Proverbs 4:7 in the NIV 2010 version says *“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”* And the Message translation states it this way, *“Above all and before all, do this: Get Wisdom! Write this at the top of your list: Get Understanding!”*

What makes this such an important verse in the context of Proverbs? Why do you believe wisdom is so valuable?

There are 4 Key Principles to consider when approaching the lessons of the Word:

1. Truth in its very essence is narrow. (Read John 14:6).
 - What does Jesus say about truth?
2. The Holy Spirit is a guide and a teacher, but you can never ignore the Word, and even good sense. (Read John 14:16-17 and John 16:13).
 - How does the Holy Spirit guide and teach us?
 - Have you ever experienced this in your own life? Explain.
3. Many parts of the Bible are conditional promises or “if-then” promises. (Read Proverbs 2:1-6).
 - What is the condition (“if”)?
 - What is the promise (“then”)?
4. General truth...observations...good guidance...is a critical aspect of wisdom; but they are not necessarily the case for every situation.

Read and compare Proverbs 1:1-7 and 1 John 4:18 and answer the following questions:

1. Where does wisdom come from? Why does the fear of the Lord lead to wisdom?
2. Do you think we are too cavalier in our attitude toward our Creator? In our prayers, our worship?
3. Do you fear the Lord? How is this evident in your life?

Read Proverbs 9:10. We discover and learn about the Lord as we stand in awe and respect of Him.

Read Proverbs 10:27. In light of the principles we suggested earlier (see Point #4 above), does it make sense that to fear the Lord will lengthen your life? In what ways might this be true?

Read Proverbs 14:26. In what ways might the fear of God provide security and protection for you and your family?

Read Proverbs 14:27. How is it that life springs out of the fear of the Lord? (*Thought: Wisdom; avoiding poor decisions; friends; finances; moral choices.*)

Read Proverbs 15:16. How is this verse true?

Read Proverbs 19:23. What are the implications of this verse? (*Thought: This verse is about confidence that comes from putting your trust in the Almighty.*)

Read Proverbs 22:4. How is humility connected to the fear of the Lord?

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Read Proverbs 29:25. What is the difference between the “fear of man” and the “fear of the Lord”? Can you think of any biblical examples? (*Thought: King Saul feared man’s thoughts more than God’s perspective; Peter denied Christ 3 times in one evening.*)

Read Proverbs 31:30.

- For the ladies: explain how this may be true.
- How could this apply to men? (*Thought: Natural gifts, abilities, good looks, station in life all provide some benefit; but the knowledge of the Creator brings everlasting benefits.*)

Do you believe that fearing the Lord produces instantaneous wisdom? If not, how long do you think it takes to gain true wisdom?

What do you think you need to do to become a wiser person?

A “Wise” Suggestion: There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. Read one chapter of Proverbs each day for the corresponding date (i.e. On March 20, read Proverbs 20, etc.).

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Discussion 2 Handout: “Get Guidance (Wise Decisions, Wise Counsel)”

If God appeared to you and said, “Ask for whatever you want and I will give it to you,” what would you ask for?

Read 1 Kings 3:5-28 and then answer the following questions.

1. What did Solomon ask for?
2. What did God give him?
3. What did Solomon do with the wisdom God gave him?
4. Have you ever asked for wisdom? Why or why not?
5. How are you encouraged or challenged by this passage?

Wisdom is not just primarily intellectual capability; it is skills and ability. Wisdom is more than plans and strategies; it is about purpose. Wisdom is more than the boss laying down the rules; it is about a father laying down guidance for a successful life.

There are 3 benefits of embracing wisdom.

1. It increases your value.
 - Proverbs 8:19 says “*My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.*” How is this true?
 - Proverbs 22:29 says “*Do you see someone skilled in their work? They will serve before kings; they will not serve before officials of low rank.*” What is the meaning of this verse? How does it live out in practical living?
2. It will help you avoid some stupid decisions.
 - Proverbs 15:22 says “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*” Have you experienced this in your own life? Do you currently have some wise advisors whom you can talk to? If not, how are you going to find some?
 - Read Proverbs 3:5-6 and discuss each phrase:
 - “*Trust in the Lord*”...it all starts with trust.
 - “*With all your heart*”...are you “all in”?
 - “*And lean not on your own understanding*”...in other words, wise up.
 - “*In all your ways submit to Him*”...do you know Him intimately?
 - “*And He will make your paths straight*”...the benefit of following His guidance.
3. It provides greater protection from the manipulation and schemes from deceitful people.
 - Proverbs 28:20 in the Message Bible says: “*Committed and persistent work pays off; get-rich-quick schemes are rip-offs.*”
 - “*Wisdom is the poser to see and the inclination to choose the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.*” -J.I. Packer

Is there any area of your life where you are NOT exercising wisdom? In other words, you know what to do, but you are NOT doing what you should? What are you going to do to change?

Is there any area of your life where you DON'T know what to do and you need God's wisdom? What are you going to do to get it?

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Discussion 3 Handout: “Get Life (The Power of Words)”

What we say makes a lasting impact. It can produce great good, but it can also hurt others deeply. Read Proverbs 12:18 and Proverbs 15:4. Fools hurt others with reckless words, but the wise person heals others with carefully chosen words. We can be a source of strength and growth or our words can crush a person’s spirit.

1. How do our words bring healing or health to our own lives?
2. How do our words bring healing or health to the lives of others?

Our words encourage and build up others or destroy and tear them apart. Read Proverbs 18:21 and answer the following questions.

1. What does this mean? Have you ever spoken “death” over yourself or someone else? What was the result?
2. Have you ever spoken “life” over yourself or someone else? What was the result?

“The great test of a man’s character is his tongue.” – Oswald Chambers Read Matthew 12:33-37 and answer the following questions about this passage.

1. What stands out to you about this passage?
2. What does Jesus say about the power of our words?
3. How are you convicted or challenged by Jesus’ words?
4. Based on your words, what is the condition of your heart?

WORDS DESCRIBED IN PROVERBS

1. Wise and Foolish Words – (Proverbs 14:3; 15:2; 15:7; 16:23)
 - Are you speaking wise words? If not, what are you going to do to start speaking them?
2. Righteous and Wicked Words – (Proverbs 10:20-21; 10:30-31; 11:11; 12:13-14; 13:2; 15:28; 17:4)
 - What does it mean to speak “righteous” words? How can you speak righteous words on a daily basis?
3. Appropriate Words – (Proverbs 15:23; 16:21; 16:24)
 - When speaking to others, do you take into consideration the timing of your words? (This is especially important in marriage!)
4. A Time for Silence – (Proverbs 10:19; 12:23; 13:3; 17:28; 18:13)
 - Do you talk too much? Have you ever tried to cultivate the art of effective silence?
 - Are you known as a person of prudent (wise, discreet) speech? If not, what do you think you would have to do to change?
5. Words Under Control – (Proverbs 15:1; 17:27; 25:15; James 1:19)
 - Do you remember a time when you said something and you wished you could take it back? Why did you say it? Do you say such things often?
 - Are you working hard to become a person who says helpful things and not harmful things?

WORDS HAVE THE POWER OF ENCOURAGEMENT

We have great power in our words to help people reach their potential and become all that God gifted them to be. Encouragement is one of the most powerful forces on earth. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and answer the following questions.

1. Do you remember a time when you were especially encouraged by something someone said to you? Why do you think you were so encouraged by their words?
2. Do you try to encourage others in the same way? On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate yourself on the subject of being an encourager (10) or critical (1). If you don't try to encourage others, why not?
3. What are some ways you encourage your spouse? Your children? Other people?

WHEN YOU GIVE THANKS, YOUR WORDS RELEASE POWER

- We should offer up praise and thanksgiving at ALL times (Hebrews 13:15).
- Do all things without complaining or grumbling (Philippians 2:14).
- Always give thanks (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Ephesians 5:20).
- "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my Rock and Redeemer." – Psalm 19:14.

Remember:

- The tongue has the great power for good or evil.
- The words from our tongue reflect the condition of the heart.
- God has given us words and He expects us to be accountable for the power that is carried in them.

Get Smart: Wisdom for Life from Proverbs **Discussion 4 Handout: “Get Surplussed (Finances)”**

“Money never made me happy yet, nor will it. There is nothing in its nature to produce happiness. The more a man has, the more he wants. Instead of its filling a vacuum, it makes one. If it satisfies one want, it doubles and triples that want another way.” – Benjamin Franklin

- Do you agree or disagree with this quote and why?

How to Get “Surplussed”

1. Know that it’s all God’s.
 - Proverbs 3:9-10 says “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”
 - What does it mean to “honor” God with your finances?
 - What are your “firstfruits”?
 - Have you experienced the benefits and blessings in your own life by obeying this? Explain.
2. Know that you’re the manager of it.
 - Read Matthew 25:14-30 and answer the following questions.
 - What stands out to you about this parable of Jesus?
 - What is Jesus teaching us about stewardship of our lives (in general)?
 - What can we learn about stewardship of money?
 - Some wise tips on managing your money and choosing the right investments
 - a. Pay attention to where the money is going.
 - b. Bad investments/management leads to debt.
 - c. Budget/Plan: The Simple Budget is: “GIVE 10%, SAVE 10%, LIVE ON THE 80%”.
 - Do you budget your money? Does it work for you?
 - What do you think of this Budget Plan (10-10-80 Principle)?
 - d. Be generous.
 - e. Work hard and use time in your favor.
3. Know that you can’t take it with you (but you can send it ahead of you!).
 - Do you honestly think more money will make you happier? Why or why not?

If our money is not ours, why are we so quick to spend it on things we don’t need (Starbucks, clothes, shoes, electronics, etc) and so hesitant to give it back to God?

- Idea (no pressure at all, only if you want to do it): In Malachi 3:10 it says “‘Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.’” For the next 30 days, what is one thing that you can “fast” from (Starbucks, going out to eat, shopping, etc) and sow that money back into the Kingdom of God?
- What is the primary change (decision/action) you need to make in your finances based off this discussion?

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Get Smart: Wisdom for Life from Proverbs
Handout – Discussion 5: “Get Diligent (Hard Work vs. Laziness)”

According to Proverbs, the way to prosperity is hard work. But the lazy person who avoids honest labor and thinks of himself too clever to do things the hard way dooms himself to poverty.

Read Genesis 1:31-2:3 and answer the following questions.

1. What stands out to you in this passage?
2. What did you learn about God and work?
3. Does this affect your view of hard work in any way?

“If a man is called to be a street sweeper, he should sweep the streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper who did his job well.’” – Martin Luther King, Jr. We should see everything that we do as service to Christ. Whatever we do, in labor, profession, or hobby, we should do to His glory.

Read Proverbs 10:4; 12:24 & 27; 13:4; 14:23 and answer the following questions about these passages.

1. What strikes you about these verses?
2. What are the benefits, or blessings, of diligence? What are the curses, or hardship, of laziness?
3. Have you ever tasted the results of blessing for hard work? How did it impact you? What did you learn from it?

Some practical wisdom about honoring God in your work:

- Accept that you are working for God.
- Consider your work environment part of the world God wants you to reach for Christ.
- Do your job as well as you can – not less well, and not better than you can; the first approach underachieves, and the other gives ulcers!
- Be moral and have integrity.
- Treat other people with dignity and respect.
- Be prepared to give a verbal testimony of your faith in Christ.
- Leave all results to God.

Read Proverbs 15:19; 20:4; 24:30-34 and answer the following questions.

1. What lessons do we learn from “the sluggard”? (What unwise decisions does he make?) What are the consequences of his decisions?
2. Have you ever tasted the results of hardship for laziness or irresponsibility? How did it impact you? What did you learn from it?
3. According to the standard in Proverbs, do you consider yourself to be a diligent person? Why or why not?

In conclusion:

- Hard work is a requirement for good living.
- Always remember: you are working for the Lord. Do your work well, and you will eventually get your reward from him.
- If you love others who depend on you, work hard for them, too. Laziness and carelessness hurt them, as well.
- Being careless, lazy, and irresponsible not only brings financial hardship into our lives, but it also dishonors God.