

Proverbs And The Christian



**Studies Designed to Help Christians
Get More Out Of The Book Of Proverbs**

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Proverbs and the Christian

The Christian's Guide To Wisdom

INTRODUCTION

1. The walk of the Christian is to be with **wisdom** as we go through life - **Ep 5:15-17**
 - a. Because time is fleeting, and the days are evil, we must make the best use of our time
 - b. Too many people today are wasting both their time and their lives by failing to exercise wisdom in their daily lives
2. Since the Word of God claims to equip man unto every good work (**2 Ti 3:16-17**)...
 - a. It is only natural to assume that it provides us with sound advice concerning daily living
 - b. And indeed it does, especially in **The Book of Proverbs** found in the Old Testament
3. The purpose of this series is to...
 - a. Introduce **The Book Of Proverbs** as a source of great wisdom
 - b. Encourage Christians to utilize this source in their efforts to walk wisely

[Let's begin by examining...]

I. THE PURPOSE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

A. CLEARLY STATED IN THE FIRST SIX VERSES OF THE BOOK...

1. "To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding"
2. "To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity"
3. To give to the...
 - a. Simple (naïve) - "prudence"
 - b. Young man - "knowledge and discretion"
 - c. Wise man - "increased learning"
 - d. Man of understanding - "wise counsel"

B. THE BOOK IS THEREFORE DESIGNED...

1. To make a person wise!
2. To learn how:
 - a. To act wisely and righteously
 - b. To treat others with fairness
3. To give...
 - a. To the ignorant, common sense
 - b. To the young, sound advice
 - c. To the wise, even more wisdom

[At this point, it might be appropriate to ask: "What exactly is wisdom, and why is it so valuable?"]

II. THE DEFINITION AND VALUE OF WISDOM

A. DEFINING WISDOM...

1. “Wisdom...may be defined as a realistic approach to the problems of life...” - **20th Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge**
2. **Homer Hailey** offered this definition of wisdom: “**Wisdom is insight into the underlying causes and significance or consequence of things, which insight enables one to apply to the best end the knowledge which he has.**”
3. To illustrate:
 - a. You are yelled at by your boss, wife, or brother in Christ...
 - 1) You could react in different ways
 - a) You could strike back physically, or verbally
 - b) You could do nothing
 - c) You could react with a soft, kind reply - cf. **Pro 15:1**
 - 2) Wisdom is that insight which helps you to decide what is the best thing to do
 - b. Someone makes sexual advances towards you...
 - 1) Again, you could react in several different ways
 - 2) But wisdom will enable you to react in the proper way

B. THE VALUE OF WISDOM...

1. The first nine chapters of **The Book Of Proverbs** are actually discourses extolling the value of wisdom
2. The virtue of wisdom is seen in the prosperous life it can produce - **Pro 3:13-18**
3. Wisdom’s value is also found in guarding us against many pitfalls that are out there - **Pro 3:21-26**
4. Some of the “pitfalls” that are frequently warned against in **The Book Of Proverbs** :
 - a. **Evil companionship - Pro 1:10-19**
 - 1) They want you to join them in their wrong doing
 - 2) But if you do, you will be caught up with them in their own self-destruction
 - 3) Wisdom would preserve you from this
 - b. **The immoral woman - Pro 5:1-14**
 - 1) An “affair” might appear exciting and harmless
 - 2) But immorality is one of the quickest ways to destroy one’s self physically, emotionally, and spiritually!
 - 3) The exercise of wisdom would spare one from total ruin
 - c. **Laziness - Pro 6:6-11**
 - 1) It may be good to do nothing
 - 2) But sloth guarantees failure and poverty
 - 3) Wisdom provides a much better way of life

[Certainly we should see that wisdom is of great value. But let’s go one step further and notice in particular the value of **The Book Of Proverbs** in regards to having wisdom...]

III. THE VALUE OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

A. WISDOM IS NORMALLY GAINED THROUGH ONE OF TWO SOURCES...

1. **Through years of trial and error**

- a. This is the source when a person chooses to listen only to one's own experiences
 - b. But there are disadvantages to gaining wisdom this way:
 - 1) Much of one's lifetime can be wasted trying to learn through trial and error
 - 2) One is forced to live with the consequences of their errors
 - c. Sadly, this is the only way many people gain wisdom, and that only if they survive their errors!
2. **Through the proven experience of others**
- a. This is possible only if one is willing to heed the advice of others
 - b. There are clear advantages to gaining wisdom this way:
 - 1) You can avoid wasting years of your life through trial and error, thus living life to its fullest measure!
 - 2) You experience life unburdened with the consequences of earlier mistakes
 - c. Certainly this method of gaining wisdom is far superior!

B. THE SUPERIOR WAY OF GAINING WISDOM IS WHAT MAKES THE BOOK OF PROVERBS SO VALUABLE...!

1. Instead of wasting our short time here on earth trying to discover wisdom through the process of trial and error, we can go straight to **The Book Of Proverbs**
2. There we can find wisdom that is:
 - a. Divinely inspired by God!
 - b. Proven to be true by generations of righteous men and women who lived out their lives by the teachings found in it
 - c. Expressed concisely in ways easy to remember (**Proverb: "a short sentence based on long experience"** - Cervantes in Don Quixote)
3. Yes, the value of **The Book Of Proverbs** is that it provides the wisdom of God Himself!
 - a. This is not to say that it takes little effort to glean from this wisdom - cf. **Pro 2:1-6**
 - b. But for those who will look to God through His Word and prayer (cf. **Ja 1:5-8**), the promise of God is that wisdom will be granted them
 - c. And this is a far better way to find wisdom than the way most people do it!

CONCLUSION

1. I hope this introductory lesson has made you want to study **The Book Of Proverbs** in order to glean it's treasures of wisdom waiting for us
2. In succeeding lessons, we will survey **The Book Of Proverbs** by considering the wisdom it offers pertaining to various relationships we have in this life (e.g., with family, work, God)

Of course, no discussion concerning wisdom can be complete without mentioning Jesus Christ...

"in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Co 2:3)

Without Jesus Christ in your life, there is no way to be truly wise. Have you come to Christ...?

Proverbs and the Christian

Wisdom In Selecting A Spouse

INTRODUCTION

1. The value of **The Book Of Proverbs** is that it provides wisdom from God to guide us in every realm of life
2. Whether it be family, business, social or spiritual relationships, we can find **inspired advice** that enables us to walk in wisdom, “redeeming the time, because the days are evil” - **Ep 5:15-17**
3. The purpose of this series is not to present an exhaustive study of the Proverbs, but to demonstrate in a few lessons its practicality in providing wisdom for the Christian today

[In this study, the first of three dealing with **family relationships**, we shall glean what wisdom we can from **The Book Of Proverbs** in regards to selecting a spouse...]

I. ADVICE IN SELECTING A WIFE

A. THE IMPORTANCE OF MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE...

1. Much happiness in life depends upon make the right choice - **Pro 12:4**
 - a. A good choice greatly enhances the life of the husband
 - b. But the wrong choice can destroy a man from the inside out!
2. It is folly to think that a mistake in this area can be easily corrected
 - a. Many think divorce can be an easy solution
 - b. But God hates divorce (**Mal 2:16**), and remarriage may not be a viable option for the disciple of Christ - **Mt 19:8-9**
 - c. Even when it is, if there are children the selection you made will **always** be the mother of your children (for better or worse!)

B. SOME GUIDELINES FOR FINDING A GOOD WIFE...

1. Seek help from God - **Pro 19:14**
 - a. Success in this “venture” may depend more upon God than we think!
 - b. In view of the seriousness of this matter, dare we go about it alone?
2. Do not place priority on “good looks” alone - **Pro 31:30**
 - a. Beauty is skin-deep, temporary, and to which we can easily grow accustomed
 - b. It is therefore a poor foundation upon which to build a lifelong relationship
 - c. Sadly, most marriages are built on little more than physical attraction
3. Instead, look for these characteristics in a woman:
 - a. The fear of the Lord - **Pro 31:30**
 - 1) Such a woman possesses the beginning of wisdom - **Pro 1:7**
 - 2) Having a wife who is a devout Christian, then, should be a primary concern
 - b. Discretion - **Pro 11:22**
 - 1) This is the ability to do the right thing at the right time

- 2) Without this, beauty is worthless, and can even be the object of ridicule (e.g., “dumb blonde” jokes)
- c. Wisdom - **Pro 14:1**
 - 1) With this virtue in a woman, a good home can be built
 - 2) Without it, efforts by the husband will be undermined by the wife!
4. To be avoided is the woman who is contentious (argumentative)!
 - a. Picturesque descriptions of such a woman are found in **Pro 19:13; 27:15-16**
 - b. My grandmother (a faithful Christian who as a widow raised six children through the Great Depression, and remained a widow for over fifty years), pointed out these two verses to me when I was a teen-ager: **Pro 21:9, 19**

[It is better to be single and alone, than to be married to the wrong person. To be married to a godly woman, is a wonderful blessing from the Lord (**Pro 18:22**). With the help God gives us in **The Book of Proverbs**, we can increase the likelihood of finding a good spouse. The same is true for women seeking a good husband. Much of what was said earlier is applicable, but there is more we can glean from the Proverbs...]

II. ADVICE IN SELECTING A HUSBAND

A. THERE ARE WAYS TO LEARN A LOT ABOUT A MAN...

1. How does he treat animals? This reveals a lot about his character - cf. **Pro 12:10**
2. Does he listen to the advice of others? That will tell you whether he is a fool, or a wise person - **Pro 12:15**
3. What type of company does he keep? You might be destroyed right along with him - **Pro 13:20**
4. Is he quick-tempered? That determines whether he is a person of understanding - **Pro 14:29**
5. How does he make money? You will suffer the consequences of his business decisions - **Pro 15:27**
6. Does he feel like he always has to put in his “two-cents” worth? If so, he lacks knowledge and a calm spirit - **Pro 17:27-28**
7. Does he have compassion for the poor? If so, his prayers will then be answered - **Pro 21:13**

B. MEN TO AVOID...

1. The womanizer (or flirter). He will destroy himself and hurt all those involved - **Pro 6:27-29**
2. A quick-tempered man. You will become like him and destroy yourself as well - **Pro 22:24-25**
3. A drinker - cf. **Pro 23:29-30**

CONCLUSION

1. Some of the most important decisions we make in this life will be...
 - a. With whom shall I spend my life? (Divorce and remarriage is not an option for the faithful Christian, with one exception - **Mt 19:9**)

- b. Who shall be the father or mother of my children? (This choice cannot be undone once the children are born)
2. Dare we make such decisions without consulting the wisdom found in the Word of God?
 - a. This certainly does not exhaust all that the Book of Proverbs has to say about selecting a spouse
 - b. But I trust that we are seeing that the Proverbs are extremely practical, worthy of our careful study and application to our lives
 3. In the next lesson, we shall consider “gems” of wisdom in regards to **being a good spouse...**

Speaking of important decisions...have you made the most important decision you will ever make in your life concerning Jesus Christ?

Proverbs and the Christian

Wisdom In Being A Good Spouse

INTRODUCTION

1. We saw in our last lesson that **The Book Of Proverbs** can be a helpful guide in giving us wisdom for **selecting** a good spouse
2. In this study, I want to continue to illustrate the value of this book by considering what it says about **being** a good spouse
3. The importance of such a subject should be evident:
 - a. Our happiness in this life is greatly affected by how successful we are in our marriage relationships
 - b. Even our usefulness to the Lord is affected by the relationship husbands and wives have to one another; e.g., a husband's prayers can be hindered by his treatment of his wife - **1 Pe 3:7**

[Appreciating the importance of this subject, then, consider first that beautiful passage in **Pro 31:10-31** where we find...]

I. HOW TO BE A GOOD WIFE

A. THE IDEAL WIFE...

1. Is **trustworthy** and **dependable** - **Pro 31:11**
 - a. The husband can safely entrust her with his income
 - b. She will not squander what he gives her, but use it in a manner that benefits them both
2. Is filled with **an enduring love** - **Pro 31:12**
 - a. Devoted to doing her husband good all her life
 - b. Just as she vowed in the wedding ceremony
3. Has **developed practical skills**
 - a. Such as sewing - **Pro 31:13,21-22**
 - b. And cooking - **Pro 31:14-15**
4. Is **industrious** - **Pro 31:16-19,24**
 - a. This often raises a question: Can a mother work outside the home?
 - b. The virtuous woman in this passage evidently did, to some degree
 - 1) She bought land and worked on it
 - 2) She made clothing and sold it in the marketplace
 - c. In answering the question today, one should consider several things:
 - 1) Can she do it without neglecting her responsibilities as a wife and mother? - **1 Ti 5:14; Ti 2:4-5**
 - a) Some women can, others cannot
 - b) Just as some men are multitalented, and others not
 - c) If a woman is unable to do both, her responsibility is first to fulfill her God-given duties

- 2) Is it essential?
 - a) There may be times when even the “one-talent” woman has no choice, but must work outside the home to provide income for the family
 - b) But often times it is not a necessity, but only a desire for luxuries that prompt many women to work outside the home
 - c) If that is the case, heed should be given to **1 Ti 6:8-10**
 - 3) Is the extra income worth what it might cost the children?
 - a) Some studies have indicated that children of mothers who work out of the home suffer greatly
 - 1/ They are more likely to suffer academically - from Chicago Tribune’s women’s writer Joan Beck:
 - a/ “Would mothers of very young children be willing to work full time outside the home if they knew it could lower their youngsters intelligence measurably?...”
 - b/ “Evidence continues to pile up that the role a mother plays in the life of her child during the first three years of life has a crucial, lasting effect on his intelligence. And the components of this relationship include critical elements which cannot easily be supplied by mother substitutes or day-care centers...”
 - c/ “Newest bits of evidence linking a young child’s intelligence with the quality of mothering and the amount of mental stimulation in the home comes from the Journal of Educational Psychology. It reports new studies showing that for both black and white youngsters the quality of early home life is much more closely related to mental test scores later on than such other factors as socioeconomic status.
 - d/ “These finds on the effects of early learning and mothering back up other continuing studies on babies and toddlers at Harvard and elsewhere. All show consistently that intelligence, competence, and creativity develop best when a young child has plenty of stimulating things to do and a mother nearby to keep feeding him appropriate words almost continually.
 - e/ “It isn’t the kind of mothering you can concentrate into a grudging, tired hour after a full day of work outside the home.”
 - **Joan Beck, “Mothers May Have To Weigh Job Vs. Tot IQ,” Fort Worth Star-Telegram, 11 April 1978**
 - 2/ They are more likely to suffer attitudinal problems - “D. Farran of the University of North Carolina reports that day-care children display negative aggressive acts fifteen times as often as home-care children.” - **Moody Monthly 3/84**
 - b) Is it worth sacrificing the children, simply for material gratification?
5. Is **compassionate** - **Pro 31:20**
 - She cares not only for her own family, but for the less fortunate as well
 6. Is concerned with **developing the inner person** - **Pro 31:25**
 - a. Character matters, and she has developed a strong one
 - b. Just as Peter stressed in **1 Pe 3:3-4**
 7. **Speaks words of wisdom & kindness** - **Pro 31:26**

- a. She is thus concerned about what proceeds from her mouth
- b. Just as Paul stressed in **Ep 4:29**
8. **Diligently sees to the need of her family - Pro 31:27**
 - a. Makes whatever preparation necessary - cf. **Pro 31:15**
 - b. So that her family does not go in want - cf. **Pro 31:21**
9. Is one who **fears the Lord - Pro 31:29-30**
 - a. She understands that this quality is more important and praiseworthy than physical beauty
 - b. With the fear of the Lord, she has the potential for great wisdom - **Pro 1:7**

B. BRIEFLY, WHAT A WIFE DOES NOT WANT TO BE...

1. Contentious - cf. **Pro 21:9,19**
2. Hateful - **Pro 30:21-23**
- Both characteristics can make it where the husband does not want to be around her

[Enough about being a good wife; where can we go in **The Book Of Proverbs** to learn...]

II. HOW TO BE A GOOD HUSBAND

A. WHERE IS THE PASSAGE DESCRIBING “THE VIRTUOUS MAN”...?

1. A question often raised by women, sometimes suggesting there is none
2. But it may help to bear in mind that the Proverbs are primarily addressed to the man!
 - a. The entire book contains advice, which if followed, would make a husband any woman would be proud to have
 - b. Whereas there is half a chapter describing the “virtuous woman”, there are thirty and a half chapters describing the “virtuous man”!

B. HERE ARE JUST A FEW THOUGHTS TAKEN FROM THE PROVERBS...

1. From **Pro 31:31**
 - a. Allow your wife the opportunity to develop her own abilities
 - b. Let her reap the benefits of her own labors
 - c. I.e., don’t treat her simply as an appendage of yourself
2. From **Pro 31:28b-29**
 - a. Be sure to praise her frequently
 - b. Don’t take her for granted
3. From **Pro 31:11**
 - a. Demonstrate a willingness to trust her
 - b. In such areas as her intelligence, her faithfulness, her abilities
 - c. Don’t be jealous and suspicious
4. From **Pro 5:15-21**
 - a. Be content with your wife’s love
 - b. It will save you and your family much harm

CONCLUSION

1. The importance of using wisdom in building healthy family relationship is described in **Pro 1:29...**

“He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind,”

2. So much of the joy and meaning of life that God would have us enjoy is lost if there is not a good family life. As Solomon wrote in **Ecc 9:9**...

“Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.”

3. **The Book Of Proverbs** can also guide us in developing wholesome families; in our next study we shall consider examples of inspired advice on providing for a family and on raising children

But as important as physical families may be, the most important thing in life is to be a member of the family of God, for this can easily fill whatever gaps there may be in our physical families. Have you been “born again” into the family of God? - cf. **Jn 3:3-5; Ti 3:5; Mk 16:15-16**

Proverbs and the Christian

Wisdom In Family Matters

INTRODUCTION

1. As we continue our study of the Proverbs, we should keep in mind two things:
 - a. Life is short
 - b. Our eternal existence is greatly influenced by how we live during this short life
2. It is imperative, then, that we not waste our time through rash and foolish decisions...
 - a. Which not only jeopardize our eternal destiny
 - b. But can also make this life miserable
3. The value of wisdom is especially seen in family relationships...
 - a. ***“He who troubles his own house will inherit the wind...” - Pro 11:29***
 - b. Life is too short and families grow too fast for us to raise a family through “trial and error”
4. We must seek advice in this all-important task...
 - a. But where shall we go?
 - b. To so-called “experts” who authoritatively give advice, but then all too often change their views later on after the damage has been done? (e.g., Dr. Spock and his earlier views on child-raising)
5. Fortunately, in His grace God has preserved in His all-sufficient book the wisdom needed to provide for and raise a family. Much of this wisdom is found in **The Book Of Proverbs** !

[To illustrate, let’s first consider some...]

I. WISDOM IN PROVIDING FOR A FAMILY

A. CONSIDER WHAT MANY PEOPLE THINK IS MOST IMPORTANT IN PROVIDING FOR A FAMILY...

1. Many would say it is the “necessities” of life
 - a. Such as food and clothing
 - b. And a place of shelter
2. Most would feel that other things are also necessary...
 - a. Such as the “finer things” (luxuries) for the children, which parents never had as children
 - b. A good “education” for the children, so they too can be affluent

[While there is some merit in these things, inspired wisdom from **The Book Of Proverbs** teaches us not to place emphasis upon such material things...]

B. WHERE THE EMPHASIS SHOULD BE IN PROVIDING FOR A FAMILY...

1. Instilling a **fear of the Lord** - **Pro 15:16**

- a. More important than riches is providing for your family through your own example a deep and abiding respect for the Lord
 - b. For the fear of the Lord provides:
 - a. The beginning of knowledge - **Pro 1:7**
 - b. A means to prolong life - **Pro 10:27**
 - c. The key to avoiding sin - **Pro 16:6**
 - d. The key to true wealth - **Pro 22:4**
 - c. The fear of the Lord, then, is perhaps the most important “provision” that one can give to his or her family
2. Giving them **love** - **Pro 15:17**
 - a. Providing an environment where love reigns is more important than providing material abundance
 - b. Troubled children come from homes where “love” is lacking, not money!
 3. Providing a **peaceful family life** - **Pro 17:1**
 - a. Where there is peace and tranquillity in a family, material affluence matters little
 - b. But what value is there in wealth, if we are always fighting over the things it provides?
 4. A wise father (or mother) realizes that **spiritual** provisions are more important than **material** ones
 - a. They will see that the family receives what is truly important
 - b. Even it means cutting back on less important things

[But when God’s wisdom is truly followed, it won’t be necessary to go without material necessities! To see why, consider...]

C. WHAT CAN BE DONE TO ENSURE ADEQUATE MATERIAL PROVISIONS FOR THE FAMILY...

1. Be **righteous** - **Pro 20:7**
 - a. Today that means putting the kingdom of God first in your life - **Mt 6:33**
 - b. Then God will watch out for you and providentially see that your needs are adequately met!
 - c. Children of righteous parents are truly blessed!
 - d. But parents who fail to put God first go through life without God’s providential help, and their children may suffer as a result!
2. Concentrate on acquiring **wisdom** and **knowledge**, not wealth - **Pro 24:3-4**
 - a. This would involve a careful study and application of God’s Word, especially a book like Proverbs
 - b. But it also involves living a dedicated life as a disciple (learner) of Jesus Christ, in whom are hidden the treasures of wisdom and knowledge - cf. **Co 2:2-3**

[From the Proverbs, then, we learn that the best and wisest thing parents can do for their family is to provide themselves as obedient servants of God, and to instill such faith in their children. If this is done, God will see that their material needs are met! But what about the matter of raising children, in particular the question of discipline?]

II. WISDOM IN RAISING CHILDREN

A. INSPIRED WISDOM IS EXPLICIT IN THE PROPER USE OF CORPOREAL PUNISHMENT...

1. Used properly, it is a demonstration of true love - **Pro 13:24**
2. Proper discipline has proper objectives...
 - a. To remove foolishness from the child - **Pro 22:15**
 - b. To save the soul of the child - **Pro 23:13-14**
 - c. To impart wisdom and to avoid shame - **Pro 29:15**
3. Proper discipline has its rewards - **Pro 29:17**
 - a. Such as “rest” and “delight”
 - b. A child who will love you and live in such a way as to bring you delight
4. Of course, there must be the proper application of corporeal punishment - **Pro 19:18**
 - a. To be applied before the situation gets out hand (“while there is hope”)
 - b. To be applied under controlled circumstances (“do not set your heart on his destruction”)
 - 1) I.e., do not put it off until you strike in anger
 - 2) There **is** a difference between proper “spanking” and “child abuse”!
 - c. Corporeal punishment should never be a vent for letting off steam...
 - 1) Rather, a controlled use of one method to discourage bad behavior
 - 2) To be accompanied with love! - cf. **Ep 6:4** (as implied by the word “nurture”)

B. MORE WISDOM FROM A FAMILIAR VERSE - Pro 22:6

1. As commonly translated: *“train up a child in the way he should go”*
 - a. This allows for the common interpretation in which a child’s outcome is virtually dependent upon his training, especially in spiritual matters
 - 1) I.e., if the child is brought up right by godly parents, the child must turn out all right
 - 2) So if a child is not a faithful Christian, it must always be a failing of the parents
 - b. But this view suggests “environmental predestination”, or “behavioral determinism” (shades of B. F. Skinner, cf. his book “Walden II”)
2. Literally, the verse can be translated: *“train up a child according to his way”*
 - a. That is, train up a child according to his or her inclinations
 - b. For example, don’t try to force a child who is mechanically inclined to be a doctor or a lawyer
 - c. Rather, bring up a child according to his or her aptitude, and they will likely continue what they start out in life doing (i.e., no “mid-life” crisis or career changes)
 - d. Therefore, this verse, like so many in Proverbs, is simply giving us practical advice in raising our children (without necessarily any spiritual implications)
3. However, I might add that trying to force a child to go against their “aptitude” may encourage a child to rebel in **all** areas of parental influence (including spiritual)

CONCLUSION

1. Again, my purpose in these lessons is not to provide an exhaustive treatment of each of these subjects as covered in **The Book Of Proverbs**
2. Rather, to illustrate its value to Christians in all areas of our lives, so that we will study it more often

3. Since so much of our happiness or lack of it is affected by our family life, we should want to take advantage of the wisdom offered in this area by **The Book Of Proverbs**
4. In the next study, we shall endeavor to glean wisdom from the Proverbs in the matter of having and maintaining good friendships

Speaking of friendships, let me remind you of the basis of our friendship with the Lord Jesus Christ...

“If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

- Jn 14:15

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.”

- Jn 15:14

Have you obeyed the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ? - cf. **Mk 16:15-16**

Proverbs and the Christian Wisdom In Matters Of Friendship

INTRODUCTION

1. As social creatures living on an inhabited planet, it is impossible to avoid associations with fellow human beings
2. As Christians, it is important that our dealings with other people be conducted in wisdom
3. As Paul wrote to the Colossians (though speaking specifically of our conduct with those not Christians, it would apply to Christian friends as well):

“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” - Co 4:5-6

4. In His all-sufficient Word, God has provided the wisdom necessary whereby we can develop good relations with those around us, and avoid the pitfalls that too often destroy good friendships
5. Again, a good portion of this “wisdom” is found in **The Book Of Proverbs**

[Turning to this book of the Bible, let’s note first what it says about...]

I. THE VALUE OF A GOOD FRIEND

A. A FRIEND IS SOMEONE WHO CAN BE A SOURCE OF COMFORT...

1. In good times and in bad times - **Pro 17:17**
2. In some cases, even better than that provided by a brother - **Pro 18:24b**

B. A FRIEND IS SOMEONE WHO CAN BE A SOURCE OF GOOD COUNSEL...

1. Counsel can that “delight the heart” - **Pro 27:9**
2. The value of counsel in general is seen in **Pro 11:14**

[A friend who can be trusted to be a source of good counsel is certainly a blessing. But having friends who are dependable is not always easy. Consider, then some...]

II. ADVICE ON THE SELECTION OF FRIENDS

A. PEOPLE YOU DO NOT WANT AS FRIENDS...

1. Gossips - **Pro 20:19**
2. Short-tempered - **Pro 22:24-25**
3. Those given to drinking and gluttony - **Pro 23:20-21**
4. Those given to change - **Pro 24:21-22**

5. Liars, those untrustworthy, and those inconsiderate - **Pro 25:18-20**
6. Those given to violence - **Pro 1:10-19**

B. THE SORT OF FRIENDS YOU WANT...

1. Those who display wisdom themselves - **Pro 13:20**
2. For their teaching (counsel) will help lead you in the right way - cf. **Pro 13:14**

[As Paul said, the wrong kind of friends can be a corrupting influence (cf. **1 Co 15:33**); but a friend who is good and wise is one you want to hold on to! To avoid losing good friends, here is some...]

III. ADVICE ON MAINTAINING GOOD FRIENDSHIPS

A. THINGS TO AVOID, WHICH CAN DISRUPT A GOOD FRIENDSHIP...

1. Don't repeat everything you hear - **Pro 17:9**
2. Avoid senseless arguments - **Pro 17:14**
3. Don't overstay your welcome - **Pro 25:17**
4. Don't meddle in affairs not your own - **Pro 26:17**
5. Don't play bad jokes - **Pro 26:18-19**
6. Don't be a "talebearer" - **Pro 26:20**
7. Don't be contentious - **Pro 26:21**
8. Don't engage in insincere flattery - **Pro 27:14**

[Following such advice, one is less likely to offend his or her friends. But sometimes we do, and regaining their confidence is not easy (cf. **Pro 18:19**). What can be done? Consider...]

B. SOLVING PROBLEMS WITH OUR FRIENDS...

1. Make sure that you are at peace with the Lord - cf. **Pro 16:7**
2. Be slow to anger - **Pro 15:18**; cf. **Ja 1:19-20**
3. Be slow to respond - **Pro 18:13**
4. Avoid quarreling - **Pro 20:3**
5. Speak gently - **Pro 15:1**
6. Speak briefly - **Pro 10:19**
7. Be quick to show love - **Pro 10:12**
8. But if necessary, rebuke rather than flatter - **Pro 28:23**

CONCLUSION

1. Properly applying the wisdom of God found in His Word can assure that we enjoy the blessings of good friends in this life, and can look forward to enjoying these dear friends in life eternal!
2. Rather than depend upon "trial and error" to learn "how to win friends and influence people", let God's Word be your guide!

But of all the friendships we could possibly develop, none can excel the one we can have with **Him** who truly "sticks closer than a brother" - our Lord Jesus Christ!

Have you become His friend? Consider what He has done for us...

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (Jn 15:13)

Consider what He asks of us...

“You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.” (Jn 15:14)

Have you done what He commands? - cf. **Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16**

Proverbs and the Christian

Wisdom In Matters Of Business

INTRODUCTION

1. Responsibilities that accompany the privilege of being a Christian are many, one of which is the necessity of providing a proper example to the world...
 - a. We are to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth - **Mt 5:13-16**
 - b. This requires outstanding and honorable conduct on our part - **1 Pe 2:12**
 - c. This is especially true as we go about the business of making a living - cf. **2 Th 3:11-12**
2. But how can we be sure that we behave properly toward outsiders in our business affairs?
3. Again, the Book of Proverbs has much to say and wisdom to offer in all areas of life, including matters of business!

[As one who was employed in secular work for a number of years before devoting my full energies to the preaching of the gospel, I found the Proverbs to be especially helpful in this area. For example, from the Proverbs I learned...]

I. HOW TO KEEP BUSINESS IN ITS PROPER PLACE

A. REMEMBER WHAT SHOULD TAKE PRIORITY...

1. It is a fact of life that we must work to live and provide for our families
 - a. If we aren't willing to work, the church is under no obligation to help us - **2 Th 3:6**
 - b. If we don't provide for our families, we are worse than unbelievers - **1 Ti 5:8**
2. But misplaced priorities can be very harmful to our well-being!
 - a. Righteousness, not riches, is what is truly profitable - **Pro 11:4**
 - b. One should therefore seek to be righteous, not rich - **Pro 11:28**
3. It is better to have a little with righteousness, than to be rich and wicked - **Pro 16:8**

B. INVOLVE GOD IN OUR BUSINESS AFFAIRS...

1. Because then our efforts are more likely to succeed - **Pro 16:3** (cf. the example of how the Lord blessed Joseph - **Gen 39:2-5**)
2. We are more likely to be able to enjoy what we receive - **Pro 10:22**; cf. **Ecc 5:18-6:2**

C. REMEMBER THAT BUSINESS HAS A MAJOR SHORTCOMING...

1. We never know what might happen tomorrow - **Pro 27:1**; cf. **Ja 4:13-16**
2. Wealth is a fleeting commodity not worth killing yourself in order to obtain - **Pro 23:4-5**

[Many people come to learn these truths only after a lifetime, when they realize they wasted their years on things not truly important, but the beauty of the Proverbs is that even the young can know them early and apply them to their lives! From the Proverbs I also learned...]

II. HOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL LABORER

A. WHAT “NOT” TO DO...

1. Be lazy, for it will greatly irritate your boss! - **Pro 10:26**
2. Be slothful in your work, for it will ruin your company as quick as a competing company (and how long will your job last if your company can't compete?) - cf. **Pro 18:9**

B. HERE IS WHAT YOU “SHOULD” DO...

1. Develop skill in your work (it will not go unnoticed) - **Pro 22:29**
2. Be diligent in your work to ensure your promotion - **Pro 12:24**
3. Impress people with the quality of your work, not the quantity of your words - **Pro 14:23**

[In today's competitive job market, the best “skills” one can have are such things as “diligence” and “honesty”. Heeding the wisdom from the Proverbs can help one become a valuable commodity! The Proverbs also provide wisdom on...]

III. HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MANAGER OR EMPLOYER

A. TO BE A WISE MANAGER...

1. Be diligent in your planning, and not too hasty in getting things done - **Pro 21:5**
2. Nurture and utilize counsel from others - **Pro 15:22**
3. Stay on top of your job! - cf. **Pro 27:23-27**

B. TO BE A GOOD LEADER...

1. Don't be oppressive - **Pro 28:16**
2. Be concerned for the rights of your employees - **Pro 29:7**
3. Provide good treatment, and you will gain loyalty and love - **Pro 29:21**
4. Help the employee see how his work benefits himself as well as the company, so he will be diligent in his efforts - **Pro 16:26**

CONCLUSION

1. My own experience as both a laborer and a manager gave me opportunity to test the wisdom found in **The Book of Proverbs**...
 - a. I found that if one...
 - 1) Keeps the need to work in proper perspective
 - 2) Applies the principles found in Proverbs and other Scriptures
 - b. That God not only provides you with the necessities of life, but more often than not a good degree of material abundance!
2. The important thing to keep in mind is that throughout our business dealings, we must always heed the words of Jesus: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness!”* (Mt 6:33)

In our next and final lesson, we shall consider wisdom from the Proverbs as it pertains to our relationship with God...

Proverbs and the Christian Wisdom In Our Relationship With God

INTRODUCTION

1. In this brief survey of **The Book Of Proverbs**, I have tried to stress...
 - a. That this book contains inspired wisdom that relates to every relationship we face in the course of life (family, friends, work, etc.)
 - b. That as Christians who are to conduct themselves with wisdom (**Ep 5:15-16**), this book can serve as a valuable guide in such areas of daily living
2. But of all the relationships that we have, the one in which it is most imperative that we possess wisdom is our relationship with God Himself! - **Ep 5:17**
3. Here again, **The Book Of Proverbs** has much to say that can benefit the Christian, even though we live under the New Covenant of Jesus Christ, and not the Law of Moses

[For example, in our relationship with God, we learn from Proverbs that...]

I. TRUE WISDOM RECOGNIZES A NEED FOR THE FEAR OF THE LORD

A. WHY IS THERE A NEED FOR “THE FEAR OF THE LORD”...?

1. It is the beginning of wisdom itself - **Pro 1:7**
2. Unless a person has a proper “fear of the Lord”, he will not be receptive to the Word of Lord - cf. **Pro 1:7b** (“fools despise wisdom and instruction”)

B. THE VALUE OF “THE FEAR OF THE LORD”...

1. It prolongs life - **Pro 10:27**
 - a. By keeping one away from evil - **Pro 16:6**
 - b. And thus keeping one untouched by evil - **Pro 19:23**
 - c. People often shorten their lives due to wickedness...
 - 1) For some illnesses are directly caused by wicked behavior (e.g., STD’s)
 - 2) Emotional stress as a result of the emotional guilt of sin taking it toll on the body
 - 3) But one who fears the Lord and heeds His Word is spared from all this!
2. It increases the quality of life - **Pro 22:4**
 - a. By giving one a strong confidence - **Pro 14:26a** (life is one of confidence, not despair, knowing that one is being led by the Lord)
 - b. By providing refuge - **Pro 14:26b** (we have help in troublous times, unlike those who face them without God’s help)
 - c. By making life an overflowing experience - **Pro 14:27a** (every day can start afresh, for in God we have forgiveness, joy, and peace)
 - d. By helping us to avoid the pitfalls which destroy so many - **Pro 14:27b** (thus “quality of life” as well as “quantity of days”)

[So from the Proverbs we learn the value of the fear of the Lord in our relationship with God (something which Christ and His apostles continued to recognize - cf. **Mt 10:28; Ac 10:34-35; Ph 2:12**). From Proverbs we also learn that...]

II. TRUE WISDOM RECOGNIZES SOME THINGS ARE AN ABOMINATION TO GOD

A. DEFINING THE WORD “ABOMINATION”...

1. Something which is “worthy of or causing loathing or hatred; something which is detestable”
2. In other words, true wisdom understands...
 - a. That there are some thing which God hates with a loathing disgust
 - b. That one would not be wise in his or her relationship with God if they continue in things described as an “abomination”

B. SOME THINGS WHICH ARE ABOMINATION TO THE LORD...

1. Seven are listed in **Pro 6:16-19**
 - a. A proud look (“pride”) - cf. **Pro 16:5**
 - b. A lying tongue - cf. **Pro 12:22**
 - c. Hands that shed innocent blood (murder)
 - d. A heart that devises wicked plans - cf. **Pro 15:26**
 - e. Feet that are swift in running to evil (i.e., quick to do evil rather than good) - cf. **Pro 15:9**
 - f. A false witness who speaks lies (and thus perverts justice) - cf. **Pro 17:15**
 - g. One who sows discord among brethren
2. Other abominations to the Lord...
 - a. False weights, by which others are cheated - **Pro 11:1**
 - b. A king committing wickedness - **Pro 16:12**
 - c. The sacrifice (worship) of the wicked - **Pro 15:8**
 - d. The prayers of those who ignore the law of God - **Pro 28:9**

[Understanding these things are that which God detests and loathes, a Christian walking in wisdom before his God will certainly avoid such! Finally, consider that from the Proverbs we also learn that...]

III. TRUE WISDOM RECOGNIZES OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD IS AFFECTED BY OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHERS - Pro 21:3

A. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POOR AND NEEDY...

1. How we treat them reflects how we treat God! - **Pro 14:31**
2. If you make fun at their plight, beware! - **Pro 17:5**
3. The Lord will bless those who are gracious to the poor - **Pro 19:17**
4. And the Lord recompense His anger on those who rob the poor - **Pro 22:22-23**

B. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH WIDOWS AND FATHERLESS...

1. God is concerned for the widow - **Pro 15:25**
2. And He will redeem the fatherless who are abused - **Pro 23:10-11**

C. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR ENEMIES...

1. The Lord is not please when we rejoice over the defeat of our enemies - **Pro 24:17-18**
2. And the Lord will reward those who show kindness to their enemies - **Pro 25:21-22**

CONCLUSION

1. What wisdom can we therefore glean from **The Book Of Proverbs**? Simply that if...
 - a. We have the fear of the Lord in our hearts so as to do those things that please Him
 - b. We avoid those things which the Lord hates
 - c. We treat others with righteousness and justice...our relationship with God is on a solid foundation!
2. I hope that this brief survey of **The Book Of Proverbs** has stimulated you to study it more on your own, to let its wisdom guide you in your life

As we close this series, I leave you with both a promise and a warning from the Proverbs themselves...

The promise: *“He who heeds the word wisely will find good,
 And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he.” (Pro 16:20)*

The warning: *“Every word of God is pure;
 He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.
 Do not add to His words,
 Lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar.” (Pro 30:5-6)*

Have you placed your trust in the Lord by humbly submitting to His Words...?