

# HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY

## TAKING THE PERPLEXITIES OUT OF PROVERBS

### Abstract

A study from the Book of Proverbs about some of the opposite characteristics Solomon told his sons to develop and to avoid. This study will not focus on just a comparison of good choices and bad choices; but on the use of opposite characteristics in Proverbs; like the need to be a generous person and the need to not be a greedy person. As we study both the negative and positive characteristics; my hope is that we will have the complete thought that God and the Book of Proverbs has for us.

*By Dr. Thomas Haney*

Summer 2021

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**'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'**

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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### INTRODUCTION: Comparing Opposite Characteristics in Proverbs

'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs' will be a 10-week study about some of the opposite characteristics Solomon told his sons to develop and to avoid. The word "proverb" in Hebrew is "mashal" and it means, 'a comparison'. A very famous comparison is:

**Proverbs 6:6-11:** *"Go to the ant, you sluggard, consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man."*

A very profound comparison of ambition vs. laziness. Our study this summer will not focus on just a comparison of good choices and bad choices; but on the use of opposite characteristics in Proverbs; like the need to be a generous person and the need to not be a greedy person. As we study both the negative and positive characteristics; my hope is that we will have the complete thought that God and the Book of Proverbs has for us.

Each of these 10 studies of opposite characteristics will help us to see how we can gain the most from proverbial truths.

1. "Becoming Wise and Refusing to Become Foolish"
2. "Becoming Generous and Refusing to Become Greedy"
3. "Becoming Joyful and Refusing to Become Angry"
4. "Becoming a Voice of Praise and Not a Voice of Slander"
5. "Choosing Good Companions and Not Choosing Bad Companions"
6. "Choosing to Become Content and Refusing to Become Embittered"
7. "Choosing to Become Humble and Refusing to Become Proud"
8. "Being Willing to Take Instruction and Unwilling to be Rebellious"
9. "Choosing Forgiveness and Not Revenge"
10. "Choosing to be Full of Integrity and Refusing to Use Falsehood"

We will cover some of the Proverbs but not every reference to these opposite characteristics. My desire is that you have a clearer and better understanding of why God told us to model some characteristics and to flee others. This will be a study for you to grow as a Christian and a follower of Christ. We pray that this will encourage you in your walk with the Lord and especially, to give you even more self-confidence and personal respect as you live out what the Bible tells each of us to do.

I think you will find that God had a clear purpose in mind when He inspired Solomon to write this manual to his sons, that is "TO HAVE THE BEST LIFE POSSIBLE AND MAKE A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF ALL YOU MEET!!"

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### **'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'**

Let's tackle Proverbs together. I think we will all be better Christians as we "Get it done!"

The Proverbs have been impactful for millennia. The practical advice from Solomon/ the teacher to his sons and, many feels, also all his children, has resonated with people for all times. We will look at two characteristics each week that are opposite; one good and one bad and see how Solomon uses these opposite characteristics to explain both the way you should go and the way you should avoid. God is the God of cause/effect; blessings and curses, shall and shall not, so God wants to see both dimensions. My hope is that you will have the complete thought that God has for you, by learning both the negative and positives and how they influence your life.

Blessings to all who partake of this study:

OUR TEAM for the "Hope Looks Up Bible Study with Dr. Tom Haney"

- Dr. Tom Haney, Teacher and fellow Proverb learner
- Francine Masterson, Technical Support and Research Development for this series on Proverbs
- Chuck Eaton, Bible Study Host and Publisher for "Hope Looks Up" Bible Study
- Linda Eaton, prayer Leader and Leader of Pastoral Outreach for "Hope Looks Up" Bible Study

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### WEEK 1: Becoming Wise and Refusing to Become Foolish

The first pair of these opposite characteristics will be "Becoming Wise and Refusing to Become Foolish". We might also call these characteristics: the virtue and the vice, here the virtue is "Wise" and the vice is "Foolish".

In all honesty, we could categorize every Proverb into one of these two categories; "Wise or Foolish" and we will see each week how true that is. But I want to speak about the Proverbs that just contrast the two actual words.

#### Becoming Wise

Let's spend a little time first on what does it mean to "Become Wise". God is the giver of wisdom—Contrary to popular thought, age does not make you wise; nor does schooling and education make you wise; you are not made wise by the amount of knowledge you have accumulated; and no university or school have as a major to "making you wise." I like the way one author put it when he said, "common sense is not as common as you would think." That is so true. Even as a child I often heard people describe someone as "Book Smart" or "College Educated" but would then add; "But that doesn't always mean a lot."

Ask your military buddies if someone who came in as a college graduate, a Lieutenant, was better prepared or 'wiser' than those leaders who had come up through the ranks. Ask yourself, if that new college educated middle management person at your job really has more "wisdom than all the workers that they now lead." The list could go on and on, the new young preacher, is he or she steeped in 'wisdom' or just knowledge. Many Church fights and even splits could have been prevented if wisdom was the most valued characteristic of all involved.

Proverbs addresses this subject immediately:

**Proverbs 1:7** says: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

The contrast between Wise and Foolish continues:

**Proverbs 1:9-10** *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."*

When I had just graduated from Lincoln Christian College with my Bachelor's degree, I needed to get a job for the summer. We were going to move to the Walnut Grove Church in September but I

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needed a job until then. I was hired to be a building director at the Illinois State Farm Mental Institution. I was that college educated person who was working with a staff that had run the building and directed it before I arrived. There were many things that were amazing to me about the job but the worst was the way the meals were handled in the cafeteria. I was in charge of a building of men (150 total), age 45-60 who had equivalent intelligence quotas of 18 month to 30-month-old children. The meal time was chaos and many of the men did not get the food they needed, but spent the meal time tossing the food at each other and playing with it. I knew I did not have all the answers. I was wise enough to see that, so I asked the day charge employees to help brainstorm with me how we could improve that process. I suggested that we line the men up, file them in, and seat them. She tried that for a few days and it did not change the decorum of the men, food fights and a giant mess was still the result of every cafeteria event. Then when we met again to plan where a charge director said to me, "What if we said grace, had a prayer before they ate and then sat them down after the amen?" I thought to myself; "I'm the preacher and she came up with the idea to pray!" But instead, I said, "Fine, but who are we going to have pray, I am not here for all the meal times." "No," she said, "But I am and I and Ann on my day off will be glad to lead the men in a prayer for their food." I need to tell you; I had not seen a spiritual bone in her body and thought of her as a foreman at the factory that had closed who just moved onto the State Mental Farm to lead a new group of workers. But, let me tell you, it worked out beautifully and meal time became a very special time for most of the men and "Her saying the prayer" was the key. I realized then that "wisdom or having the wisdom of God" is much more important than anything I could ever read, learn, or gain from knowledge.

Wisdom is God given and James says it so succinctly:

**James 1:5** *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him."*

Proverbs points out that God is the giver and He, most often called "the Lord" in Proverbs gives wisdom through His Word and Proverbs also says, though 'Godly parents'.

**Proverbs 2:6-8** *"For the LORD gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds victory in store for the upright. He is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the ways of His faithful ones."*

### Becoming Foolish

Now, I want to direct our attention to what Proverbs says about "Becoming Foolish". Proverbs lists many fruits that come with foolishness.

**Proverbs 1:22** *"fools hate knowledge"*

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Foolish people have a disdain for the Word of God and the instruction of God **Proverbs 1:23-27**; foolish people have no recourse for help because they reject the advice of the Lord, hate knowledge, and choose not to honor or respect God. **Proverbs 1:30-32**.

Proverbs says some foolish actions reap terrible results: the fruit that comes from foolishly being involved in adultery is severe: foolish adulterers find that others enjoy the wealth they have earned; they become weak in body and spirit; and they will develop serious trouble with those who maintain a higher moral standard. **Proverbs 5:3-14**.

The fruit that comes from foolishness in the area of arrogance is severe: it says that:

- Corrupt fools will expose their folly, **Proverbs 13:16**;
- They cause harm to their companions, **Proverbs 13:20**;
- They create their own punishment, **Proverbs 20:22**;
- They are very self-assured but it leads to their demise and death, **Proverb 16:23**
- They destroy the honor they receive
- They are not to be argued with except to point out their own foolishness because they are incapable of giving or receiving messages in an acceptable manner
- They are often incompetent
- They continually repeat the same mistakes by doing the same dumb things **Proverbs 26:1-12**

You are probably thinking, who in their right mind would want to become foolish and I would say a majority of people. Most of our world follows the "thoughts and goals of this world" and that often eliminates the wisdom from God, which is foolishness.

1. Is it wise to say that abortion is really about women's rights and she should have ultimate say over her own body or is that just a foolish way to gain permission to do what people already wanted to do, abort any babies that might seem like a complication?
2. Is it wise to believe in evolution even though the DNA of each specific animal, plant, and creation on this earth is enough different that it has not been duplicated? Cloning is just the reproduction of the DNA already present and it is not the invention of any new or altered DNA. Or is evolution just a foolish way to eliminate having any responsibility to do what God would have you do. After all, if there is no creator then we do not have any creator to tell us how to live.
3. Is it wise to value amoral secular education and not moral Christian education? Let me share another story from my days as a building director at the Illinois State Farm Mental Institution. I was informed that we would have a group from Illinois State University in Bloomington, Illinois visiting and observing the next week at the Farm. As soon as the group of eight psychology students arrived, they begin to tell me what a waste it was of

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taxpayer's dollars to take care of men like this. They were merely vegetables and should be removed from life. It was very hard to think that anything they said after that was a serious inquiry or a genuine thought. They did not think these men should be allowed to live and yet some of them would eventually work at this very same facility. I

4. Is it wise to demean Home-Schooling when many of our best scholars are being trained at home? Or do these forms of teaching need to be scoffed at primarily so that the traditional style of University training will still be considered the ultimate intellectual law of the land.
5. Is it wise to keep all the money that you earn for yourself or will it not harden the soul, make a person greedy and cause them to be calloused towards those who really need help? Or is it just a way to excuse greedy people from ever having to help the really needy through acts of charity.

This list could go on and on, because the world has bought into the ideas that it thinks up and has called them "The right ideas", however, they often lead to death and destruction in the lives of people who follow these ideas because they are foolish thinking as opposed to what God teaches. I want us to compare Becoming Wise and Becoming Foolish and see the results from the Scriptures we are studying tonight.

### Comparing Becoming Wise and Becoming Foolish

#### **Proverbs 8:1-7** [NIV]

*"1 Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? 2 At the highest point along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand; 3 beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud: 4 "To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. 5 You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it. 6 Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right. 7 My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness."*

This passage from Proverbs 8 is the call of Wisdom to follow what Wisdom or God has to offer. Remember all wisdom is from God. Following God and what He says are the paths to becoming Wise.

With wisdom you will have:

- Wisdom is a clear call to follow what is good for you
- Wisdom gives an answer when you are in the power structures of your life and you will have the advice you need



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- Wisdom will give those who lack the knowledge a clear and direct way of saying what they need to say
- Wisdom will also speak the truth and be helpful
- Wisdom will never twist words to make them mean something else

In short those who Become Wise will have great advantage over those who Become Foolish.

Those who Become Foolish will:

- Fools provides no improvement or help for those who lack clarity and understanding
- Fools do not provide improvement for others who also have foolish thinking
- Fools will speak lies and use dishonest speech
- Fools detest truth and desire lies and untruthful speech instead.

**Proverbs 14:12** [NIV] *"There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death."*

Becoming Wise always gives you clarity and understanding about what you should do regardless of the pain or effort, whereas Becoming Foolish seems like a 'lark in the park', but it ends in the death of the soul as well as the death of the body. Why do you think there is often such a huge gulf between what seems right to us and what is truly wise?

Is it that we often let others, the world, or even our idea of common knowledge become more powerful to us than the Word of God? I have often found that if you never swim upstream, you are not really being wise or gaining wisdom and knowledge from God. True wisdom has some resistance, but foolishness is the only mind-set that has no resistance. What seems right and enjoyable does not mean that it brings life to a person.

It is the difference between getting more and more out of life, versus those who get increasingly diminished returns out of what they are doing. The difficult thing is that when we are "Becoming Foolish" we never seem to be aware of the traps that we have put into our lives. We just continue on doing the same things and thinking that it will all turn out just right. I was watching a day-time drama that my wife had on last week while I was eating lunch. It was interesting to see how they had a 5-year-old child wrestle with death. Not a mention of God, Jesus, following the Lord, belonging to Jesus or God taking care of His children. No, the two things they settled on were: Heaven—"was it big enough to hold this person who died" and will "angels help look after you". You see there is no resistance when you follow the foolishness the world has to offer. However, nowhere in the Wisdom of God, His Word and His teaching does it even imply that you will go to heaven because you believe heaven is big enough to hold everyone and no one will be saved because they believe there are angels. In fact, the angel that reveals the Book of Revelation stops John on multiple times from worshipping him because he says that is blasphemy. Is it wrong to believe there is a heaven? Of course not, but heaven only takes on reality when you realize that it has been created for those who follow Jesus. Is it wrong to believe in angels? No, but it is wrong to pray to angels, to seek angels out

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as your source of protection and leadership, or even to think that somehow an angel will be able to help you gain eternal life. Angels are the working arms and feet of God Almighty; His Mighty Son and Absolute Spirit and they do not do what they want or even have the power to do what they desire, because they are created to serve and honor God.

**Proverbs 15:12** [NIV] *"Mockers resent correction, so they avoid the wise.*

Becoming Wise always means that the truth is the North Star Compass direction for your life. You never have to worry about who you told what because you always will tell the truth and the same truth to everyone. It is so true about the truly wise that people who do not want to hear the truth will not seek the truly wise out to ask them about much of anything. The foolish do not want truth, they want affirmation of their thoughts.

Becoming foolish means that you constantly resent anyone telling you to do something different than the way you want to do it. It means that you often make fun of or mock those who try to tell you to do something a different way. It means most of all that you avoid those who are Becoming Wise because you do not want to know the truth in your life?

**Proverbs 21:30** [NIV] *"There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD."*

No Proverb is more definitive than this one to tell us what the advantage is of Becoming Wise and the disadvantage of Becoming Foolish. Becoming Wise is literally gaining the very mind-set of God and allowing Him to guide your life. You want to live completely within the Will of God for your life? Then your goal must be to become wise because the Greek word and the Hebrew word for wise literally mean, "Having the mind of God/Christ." When the Proverbs encourages us to become wise, it is literally telling us to "think like God!" God has said that if any of us lack wisdom, knowing what God would have us do, then let that person ask God because God will freely give you wisdom, regardless of mistakes, faults, sins, or past problems. It will be what you need at the time you need.

Becoming foolish is once more shown as the worst situation to ever be in when it comes to a relationship with God. Because the greatest plans, the greatest human wisdom and even the greatest human insights are simply not going to destroy or damage anything that the Lord has set up to last.

Three take-aways about Becoming Wise and Becoming Foolish as taught in the Book of Proverbs:

1. Wisdom brings life and Foolishness brings death and destruction.
2. Wisdom is from God and Foolishness truly originates from the Devil.
3. Wisdom makes you a better person with an eternal hope and Foolishness feels good but has an eternal kicker of destruction.

My best advice from this study on the effects of Becoming Wise or Becoming Foolish is:

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- Let the Word of God convict you to change things that do not match what the Scripture says; remember and
- Remember to apply the truths that your Godly parents and grandparents taught you, if they were Godly.
- Most of all remember that the wisdom of this world is like the Sahara Desert; it constantly shifts with every wind and looks entirely different every generation. It is full of sand and no substance and it will not support any life.

Our Next Study will be:

'Becoming Generous and Refusing to Becoming Greedy'

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### WEEK 2: Becoming Generous and Refusing to Becoming Greedy

God Jehovah is a God that recognizes and warns His people about cause and effect; He gave commandments almost in equal number all through the Bible in two forms: 'You shall' and 'You shall not'; and He continually lists both the blessings and curses that come from obedience and disobedience covering the same subjects.

In this study we take two opposite characteristics that Solomon teaches, the virtue and vice characteristics, and see what is the total impact of the good effects and bad effects of these opposite characteristics. We will look at 'Generosity' contrasted to 'Greediness' or "Stinginess".

#### Becoming Generous

Let's look first at what it means to "Become Generous.' Generosity is something that God commands us to do and it is not an option if you want to have a contented and blessed life. Solomon makes this point often about the generous person.

***Proverb 19:17** says, "Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward them for what they have done."*

God regards the generous help for the poor as a gift to Himself and blesses the person who blesses the poor. Jesus was very clear in His great parable of the 'Sheep and the Goats', it could have also been labeled the "Parable of the Generous and the Stingy". In the parable Jesus is explaining what will happen when He returns and divides the sheep and the goats. He will say to those on His right, those who have helped the poor and been generous to the needy, "*The King will reply, 'Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.'*" **Matthew 25:40** It is clearly taught in both the Old Testament, in the teachings of Jesus, and in the rest of the New Testament; that when a generous person helps those in true need, he is carrying out the very work of the Lord and God considers that a personal gift to Him.

Proverbs tells us that great blessings await those who are generous.

***Proverbs 22:9** says, "The generous will themselves be blessed, for they share their food with the poor."*

We spend our time debating whether the poor are truly poor and if they created their own poverty and therefore should not be rewarded with help or even if they are actually poor. I have sat in Sunday Bible Classes where people say, "Well, the poor in the United States still have it better than

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most of the rest of the world." I have always wondered; So, if that is true, would you be willing to live in the same conditions and situations they live in?

This idea is so far outside the guidelines that God gives for us to be generous. He tells us we are to help the truly poor and give to meet their needs. Those who are in abject poverty because of the behavior of their parents or those who are hungry but still employed or organizations that have been created to help with the truly needy: St. Mary's food Bank; Salvation Army; Teen Challenge; ministries designed to get captured and held young women and also young men out of sex slave trafficking—don't need our Pharisaical scrutiny—they need the generous support of each of us who have plenty and are willing to be generous.

The generous person takes up the cause of the wrongly accused and falsely indicted.

*Proverbs 24:11* says, "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter."

The generous person gives time, effort, legal help and all that they have in their possession to help those who are wronged by the system or even those just being wronged because the person oppressing them has more wealth and influence. Proverbs goes so far as even saying that 'ignorance' is not an excuse.

*Proverbs 24:12* says, "if you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?"

When I was ministering in Indianapolis, I became very involved in the Prison Ministry in our town. This was right at the time Chuck Colson was starting his ministry 'Prison Fellowship' and I was very motivated to become a part of this outreach. We had a federal prison in one of the Suburbs of Indianapolis, Fortville located on the East side of Indy and I recruited several members of the Church where I preached, "Indian Creek" and we took a team up twice a month to minister in the prisons. It was there I met a man who had a very active prison ministry in Terre Haute, Indiana and he invited Sharon and I to his home one night to talk about the ministry. They lived about half-way between Indianapolis and Terre Haute in a small town off Interstate 70. As he shared his challenge with me to bring some of our Church members and minister regularly with him, I said that Terre Haute was just too far to get a team to go on a regular basis and after I shared that, and was finished he asked me if I would hold a revival at the Farm Prison in Terre Haute. This is not the Maximum-Security Federal Prison in Terre Haute, the man I was talking with had only been allowed in that prison three times in 15 years and each time, it was to give testimony about someone who he had been in contact with in his ministry at the Farm or outside of prison.

I said, "Sure I would be glad to come and hold a revival for the Farm Prison in Terre Haute". I knew this would just be a gift to the ministry. They were not flush with funding nor had they attracted many generous givers and the man and his wife often supplemented the ministry from their own

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accounts. I was surprised about two things that happened out of this revival at the Farm Prison. The Chapel we held the revival in was only a few hundred feet from the massive prison walls of that Maximum-Security Prison, and walking into the Chapel or out of it you could see the walls, the great lights, the steel wire barriers all over the wall to prevent escapes. It was ominous and imposing.

But we had a tremendous revival and with 35 men getting baptized that week, it was one of the most successful one-week revivals I had held up to that point in my ministry. The two surprises:

1. The men wanted to worship, they longed for the sermons to continue on into the night, and they responded with open hearts and open minds. I left every night filled and blessed.
2. But more surprising, the legal battle over building permits, flood zones, and other concerns that Indian Creek Christian Church was fighting with Marian County, literally the city of Indianapolis had been going for months and now it was suddenly decided in the Church's favor and we were finally cleared by the city to begin to survey our land and start our building project.

What was simply an act of generosity to a man who I admired and who I respected for the sacrifices that he was giving to prison ministry. It morphed into a tremendous blessing for my ministry as an evangelist and God moving the political machinery to finally get us past the last obstacle keeping us from putting our first building on our property.

I had no idea that either result would happen when I said, "Yes, I will do the revival", but God did and to those who are generous with time, talents and funds God gives His great blessings. Because He does repay those who do His work generously. It could have been a generous act done on purpose or a generous act done out of ignorance but God will reward both. God loves and blesses generous people.

### Becoming Greedy

Let's also look at what Proverbs says about Becoming Greedy or Stingy. Proverbs says that a greedy and stingy person will not get much help when they have a need.

**Proverbs 21:13** says, *"Whoever shuts their ears to the cry of the poor will also cry out and not be answered."*

It is amazing that the drive for wealth and 'the need to feed the greed' has led to very neglectful attitudes toward family. Several people were appalled several years ago when an enterprising family in Japan started a business called, "Rent a Family". The business was directed towards the elderly who were lonely because their families ignored them in their pursuit of wealth. The agency offered a stand-in family that visits these lonely elders for a few hours and acts like "real family." The packages varied but the most expensive package was \$1,000.00 per month. The president of the "Rent-a-family said, "There are a lot of people who feel lonely because everyone is chasing money and no one

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pays attention to the human need for love and acceptance. Mrs. Suzuki, a retired doll-maker who rented a family, wrote about it and said, "From the bottom of my heart, I felt as though they could be my family. I know they are not my real family, but there was a real feeling of warmth. How sad. Older people pay younger people to give them a little attention because their own families ignore them. Do you think these neglectful sons and daughters will have a lot of success in getting their children to visit them when it is no longer profitable or enjoyable?"

Proverbs says that we can become so greedy and stingy that God can step in and demand our life.

*Proverbs 22:23-24* says, "Do not exploit the poor because they are poor and do not crush the needy in court, for the Lord will take up their case and will exact life for life."

In the same parable that Jesus taught about the Sheep and the Goats or the Generous and the Greedy, Jesus says that when he returns, He will also address the goats, here those who are greedy and selfish and will say to them, "Depart from me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. Because you never came and gave me any help." Jesus closes the parable saying that He will say to all the goats, "Truly, I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me."

*Proverbs 29:14* says, "If a king judges the poor with fairness, his throne will be established forever."

So, that Proverb clearly teaches that even kingdoms rise and fall based on whether the leaders are generous or greedy.

Once again you are probably thinking, who in their right mind would ever want to be greedy and selfish? The answer is many people choose this path on purpose and pursue it with all their might. Because unless you are so magnanimous in your generosity that you catch the world's attention, the world will pay no attention to what you are doing in the area of generosity. It highlights the 500 hundred wealthiest men and women in Forbes; the list of Billionaires starts and ends with only those who have accumulated at least one Billion dollars, and although they give lip service to how much the small gifts mean in helping charitable drives, the names on buildings, the ribbon-cutters and even the ones who are listed on the plaque right inside the door are usually those who have given the most. Our world accepts and cheers the greedy and selfish and usually only honors the generous when their generosity seems to fly right in the face of our worship of greed.

The widow who gave all the money she had, two mites or pennies, and was honored by Jesus, would she be granted much adulation and praise in our society? Would the person who turned down the high paying job to work for small wages and make a big impact ever be honored except at that one human interest story at the end of the hour-long news cast or 60 Minutes? Our world is built on the concept of greed and selfishness and very few people get out of that rat-race.

Once again, this list of ways the world encourages greed and selfishness could go on and on, because the world has bought into the ideas that it thinks up and has called them, "The right ideas". But greed

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destroys both the poor who suffer under the direction of the greedy and also the greedy because those on a "power trip" even if that is only a "money power trip" will be destroyed by what they worship unless it is God.

#### Comparing Becoming Generous and Becoming Greedy

The following Scriptures have been marked for this study and see the comparison of the Generous to the Greedy/Stingy.

**Proverbs 3:27-30**, *"Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act. Do not say to your neighbor, 'Come back tomorrow and I'll give it to you,'—when you already have it with you. Do not plot harm against your neighbor, who lives trustfully near you, do not accuse anyone for no reason—when they have done you no harm."*

The Proverbs are very clear, those who know they should be generous and yet who are not generous are doing evil towards God. The idea here is to do all the good that you can do when you can do it. The neighbor in the Bible is not someone whose property touches your property or lives a few houses down the block, no your neighbor is anyone in need that God brings across your path. This includes false legal action against someone. It is clear that the generous person will always take the high road in relationships while the greedy person will do whatever it takes to part someone from their money or property and claim it for themselves.

Proverbs even compares the two traits at times—generous and greedy:

**Proverbs 11:17** says, *"Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves."*

These results are so clear—the kind, generous person blesses everyone, even themselves—but the greedy and selfish—here called the cruel actually cause their own demise and ruin.

**Proverbs 11:24-26** even gives a principle of how that works. *"One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous person will prosper, whoever refreshes others will be refreshed. People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell."*

The results are obvious. The generous person actually receives more than they had before they started being so generous but the one who is stingy and greedy will actually end up in poverty. Maybe that poverty is not that the person passed and ended up a pauper; maybe it is just that they passed and took none of it with them, so with no righteous works to take with them, they did not lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, the gods of money and wealth they worshipped are gone... Each year thousands of people visit the renowned Hearst Castle on the west coast, the home of the fabulously wealthy William Randolph Hearst. He accumulated "3,500 Egyptian's statues, medieval Flemish tapestries, and centuries-old hand-carved ceilings, and some of the greatest works of art of



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all time. He built a house of 72,000 square feet to put his stuff in. He acquired property for his house; 265,000 acres and originally owned fifty miles of California coastline. He collected stuff for 88 years. Then you know what he did? He died. Yes, he died. You know how much William Randolph Hearst left behind? That's right, all of it.

**Proverbs 12:10** says: *"The righteous care for the needs of their animals, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel."*

The idea of being generous or greedy even affects the way you treat your pets or your co-workers and a greedy, selfish person, here called wicked never does anything that is not self-serving.

**Proverbs 14:21** says, *"It is a sin to despise one's neighbor, but blessed is the one who is kind to the needy."*

Although the contrast in this proverb does not seem readily clear, it is. The source of greed and selfishness is the lack of concern and love for others; but the generous one will always be kind by meeting needs and defending rights of the poor and the needy and God will bless them. The same chapter of Proverbs goes on to say:

**Proverbs 14:31**: *"Whoever oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."*

This contrast of the Greedy and the Generous points out the very basic thought of Proverbs; Greedy behavior and actions mean you have God against you and Generous behavior and actions means God is right beside you blessing you all the way.

**Proverbs 25: 21-22** says: *"If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head and the Lord will reward you."*

Proverbs tells us that generosity is the only way that you can convince an enemy that he no longer needs to be your enemy. Jesus took this very scripture about being generous to your enemy and in the Sermon on the Mount told us this was the attitude of a disciple of Christ, being a Generous person and it is the way to think and act towards enemies. **Matthew 5:43-48**

I would like to sum up the teaching of Proverbs on Becoming Generous vs. Becoming Greedy or Selfish with this proverb:

**Proverbs 28:27** *"Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses."*

The false pride of humanity is exceptional and many stingy, greedy people looking back on their life have said, "I WOULDN'T CHANGE A THING!" While many generous people looking back at their life have said, "I wish I could have done more." The generous will live a full life while the greedy will live a life that only seems good to them and sometimes not even good in their own eyes. It is amazing

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that Proverbs teaches us such a clear and simple truth that is not honored by a majority of our world: the generous live a more blessed and happy life than the greedy who have constant corrections from God.

I have three take-aways that I hope you remember about our comparison of the Generous Life and the Greedy Life as taught in Proverbs:

1. Generous people are doing what God wants and greedy people are misusing the wealth that God gave them.
2. Generous people will receive blessings and greedy people will receive curses.
3. Generous people have God on their side and Greedy people make God their enemy.

The one with the most toys at the time of death is not a winner, that is foolish or anti-bible thinking; the true winner is the one who has been generous all the times they could, they have truly laid up treasures for themselves in heaven. Be careful of the allure of worshipping money and material goods. Material goods and money get shuffled around often; but long to be a generous person who helps the poor and needy.

Our next study will be:

'Becoming Joyful and Refusing to Become Angry '

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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 3: Becoming Joyful and Refusing to Become Angry

We quickly recognized in our study of opposite characteristics, virtues and vices, in the Book of Proverbs that our God is a God of cause and effect. That is how He set up the world and unless He intervenes that is exactly what happens. God gave hundreds of commands and there are almost an equal number that begin: 'you shall' as begin 'you shall not'.

We need to see both sides of what God is teaching to get the whole story for our life. What does the virtue do for you and what does the vice destroy in you? Then we will see the reason God has virtues and vices combined in Proverbs.

Our study tonight takes a common virtuous trait in Proverbs, joy and contrasts it with a commonly referenced vice anger. Let me share some disclaimers as we begin:

1. **Joy and anger are not determined by our circumstances** as is commonly taught.

Events, occurrences, and even interactions with other people do not create the spirit of anger or joy. We choose to let joy or we choose to let anger controls our overall life. Very many anger-filled people have had no hardships and many joy-filled people have lived through the worst of circumstances and never let Satan steal their joy.

2. **Joy and Anger are not genetic;** we did not get anger or joyful spirits from our parents.

Sharon and I served as dorm parents the first year I were in Grad school. We had a dorm, Timothy Hall, of 96 young men who were all students at Lincoln Christian University. One day I had an honor resident—we had four who lived in dorm rooms and helped me keep control of the dorm—came over and told me he had had to break up a fight. He told me he was able to ascertain that one young man had started the fight, he had spoken to him and told him he would get me, stay in his room and the Dorm Dad would address what happened. When I got to the room, the other boys in the room had left and I asked the young man, "What started the fight and why did you escalate it to the point of throwing punches?" The first words out of his mouth floored me, He said, "I come from an Italian family in St. Louis and that is the way we handle things. We all have inherited bad tempers and when the temper is just too much, we have to start hitting someone." I thought this is quite a new wrinkle to the old line, "the devil made me do it." Now it was, I just can't help it that is how our family does it and I am just a product of my family. I scheduled the young man to begin some therapy in our Counseling Center because he was convinced that he had no control over his temper and anger and that was just who he was. Years later, I was in a Christian bookstore and saw his name on the cover of a book. I glanced at the cover,

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he was a Doctor now in ministry, he was teaching at a Bible College and he had written a book on counseling. I assure you that a life led by anger or a life led by joy are not genetic.

#### 3. **Joy and Anger are not controlled by our environment.**

This has become very popular in our day and is used to explain a lot of anti-social behavior and anti-authority behavior. But it is also not true. The Bible teaches that we all do have flash points that like the tip of a match, immediately make us angry and often these are related to some issue from our past, but they do not need to control us. **Ephesians 4:26** says, *"In your anger do not sin." Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.*" You may not be able to not react to the flashpoint, just like friction on the end of a matchstick, but you do not need to feed the fire with kindling or hold the matchstick upside down so it flames even more. In fact, the passage makes two points 1) get rid of the anger as soon as you can, before it becomes a sin or stumbling block in your life; and 2) you need to realize that when you leave unresolved anger in your life, you are giving Satan a place to hang-out and work on your mind and body.

Solomon explains the source of an anger-filled life and a joy-filled life.

**Proverbs 14:16-17** *"The wise fear the Lord and shun evil, but a fool is hot headed and yet feels secure. A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated."*

A truly joy-filled life can only come from one who follows what God teaches and does not allow revenge, hatred, temper tantrums, or animosity to enter the mind. On the other hand, an anger-filled life feeds a bad temper because they always believe they are right and they do many really stupid things that ruin lives and relationships and often devise plans and schemes that will harm the people they are angry with.

How can we have a joy-filled life? The person who has joy in their life and heart is very open to the wisdom of God and avoids the areas of life that would rob their joy. They turn their back on all types of evil. But the one who doesn't follow the wisdom of God but instead trusts in his/her ability to handle everything in life while reacting to every real or perceived problem will feel good about themselves even while they are destroying the joy in their life.

It is ironic that the person with a joy-filled life is humble and searching for God's direction in their life, while the person with an anger-filled-life does not feel they need to change a thing. So, they constantly do things on their own without seeking God and their actions and ideas become very self-serving and wrong.

- True joy comes from seeking God, finding His Wisdom or direction and letting that control your heart and actions.
- Anger comes from not seeking God and His Wisdom and solving all matters by doing what feels right.

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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### Comparing Joy and Anger

Joy and anger come from our relationship with God and the influence God's wisdom has on the heart. The contrasts between joy driven people and anger driven people is immense. I want to share 11 of those contrasts tonight.

1. **Joy controls the tongue and anger produces an out-of-control tongue.** *"The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked/angry gushes evil. **Proverbs 15:28.***

Do you ever wish you had given a better reply? This may have been a question, a correction, or even a personal complaint—the person controlled by joy will disarm by their answers; but anger always answers in kind—only more harshly and usually produces fury and strife. **Proverbs 15:1; 12:16, 15:23, and 17:27**

2. **Joy produces peace and anger divides.** *"Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." **Proverbs 17:9*** Anger always produces a spirit of righteous indignation and anger produces these false statements;
  - a) I must tell others about this.
  - b) I have to respond to that insult.
  - c) I don't care who it hurts, it's the truth
  - d) I have to tell my friend what they said about them.

See **Proverbs 17:14**

3. **Joy tries to solve; anger never tires to solve anything.** *"Casting a lot settles a dispute and keeps strong opponents apart. A brother wronged is more unyielding than a fortified city; disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel." **Proverbs 18:18-19***
4. **Joy waits for God to handle revenge; anger react immediately:** *"Do not say, 'I'll pay you back for this wrong! Wait for the Lord and He will avenge you.'" **Proverbs 20:22***
5. **Joy brings light; anger extinguishes its own light:** *"the light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked/angry is snuffed out." **Proverbs 13:9*** Joy will leave lasting memories for generations but anger produces a life that everyone tries to forget.
6. **Joy helps; anger hurts situations.** *"Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy." **Proverbs 12:20***
7. **Joy tries to find solutions; anger always has impure motives.** *"Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended. One who loves a pure heart and who speaks with grace will have the king for a friend." **Proverbs 22:10-11***

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8. **Joy dampens strife; anger stirs up conflict.** "Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end" **Proverbs 29:11 or Proverbs 28:8**
9. **Anger just feeds the flames; joy puts out the fire.** "*Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down. As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome person for kindling strife.*" **Proverbs 26:20-21**
10. **Joy brings life; anger brings envy.** "*A heart at peace (joy) gives life to the body—but envy rots the bones.*" **Proverbs 14:30**
11. **Joy comes from following God and applying his wisdom, the result is longer life; anger produces envy which destroys the body.** Let me just list the last three:
  - a) Joy produces cheer and anger produces heartache. **Proverbs 15:13**
  - b) Joy is like medicine, but anger leads to a destroyed spirit. **Proverbs 17:22**
  - c) Joy produces more joy, but anger produces nothing lasting. **Proverbs 10:28**

The contrast is so strong that it seems impossible for someone to choose the trait of anger over the trait of joy; but many do and often deliberately. When you ignore what God says, then joy seems to the world like an invitation to be a door mat, a person who doesn't accomplish much and a person who is ignored or mistreated. On the other hand, the world believes that an angry person often is stronger, in control of their situation, standing up for themselves; a BA person; a man's man and just more secure. So, they choose to feed that anger trait and it becomes more and more in control of their heart and life.

High School Class reunions are one of the most amazing events I have ever attended. It is very interesting to watch the evolution of the people you were close to age 14-18 and see where they are now. I was amazed at my 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion to see and hear—yes, we had a small enough class that everyone had a chance to share what had happened to them after high school, but to hear how many were following Christ and serving in their Church. More amazing was to take a close look at the ones who had walked away from any meaningful relationship with Christ. They had aged poorly; were either too thin or too fat; and just did not seem as happy.

Choosing anger or choosing joy is very illusive, because the effects of that choice often do not show up until years later and by that time it is almost impossible to reverse what has happened.

### Choosing Anger

Let's take a closer look at anger and see why Proverbs warns us about this vice.

Anger produces no good fruit according to the Book of Proverbs. The traits or fruit that anger produces are not admired in any society.

1. Angry people shirk responsibility. **Proverbs 19:19**

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2. Angry people become quarrelers. **Proverbs 20:3**
3. Angry people become revengeful. **Proverbs 24:28-29**
4. Angry people lose control. **Proverbs 29:22**
5. Angry people develop a habit of anger that happens over and over even though someone steps in and rescues them from the results of their anger. **Proverbs 19:19**

Worst of all, anger is contagious: *"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person., do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."* **Proverbs 22:24-25**

### Becoming Joyful

Joy produces no bad fruit according to the Book of Proverbs and makes you a person that blesses your world and your God. Joy makes a person:

1. Patient and peaceful. **Proverbs 14:29-30**
2. Possessing self-control **Proverbs 16:33**
3. Able to step over the trap of revenge. **Proverbs 19:14**
4. In control of your speech. **Proverbs 25:15**
5. Able to have the right words at the right time. **Proverbs 15:23**
6. Connected to God's wisdom. **Proverbs 29:3**
7. Cheerful and healthy. **Proverbs 15:30**

One of the last Proverbs tells us that living righteous produces great joy in your life.

**Proverbs 29:6b** ". . . But the righteous shout for joy and are glad."

There is a double blessing for being righteous. Literally, following what God teaches us:

1. It gives a person uncontrolled joy. There are no limits on the intense joy a right directed person can experience. It is literally, "A shouting situation."
2. They end up living "glad". Literally in the Bible it is the enjoyment of a fulfilled life—and it is produced by a joyful life.

When I entered High School, we had another small community that had 1-8 grades and they combined the two schools for high school. I met my two best high school friends when the schools combined. They were Jim and John Kirk, fraternal twins that had an immediate effect on me. They quickly invited me that year to go to revivals with them and I accepted and went. The two oldest boys were out of the house, so it was just the parents, an older sister, Jim, John and myself. But we went to Methodist revivals all over central Illinois and I learned more about the spirit of joy than I had ever learned before. Dad was a somewhat frustrated barber shop singer, so on the way and back

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home, he would get us started singing and soon all 6 of us were singing away. It was a few years later that I learned that the day, Orion Kirk had had a mental and emotional breakdown and had to be hospitalized for a time. When he came out of the counseling, he and his wife found that his mental state was the best when he was going to church all the time and that was why I was getting invited to revivals about every week. Jim and I both became pastors and the others in the family are all strong workers for the Lord, but the most vital thing to me was it was such a joyful start to my High School life. It was amazing how that took hold of my life and made me want more of the joy that I was finding.

True joy comes from God. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit that God can give to you. It is lived out when we take God at his word and follow His teaching. It should never end.

Paul writes in **Philippians 4:4** *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again, Rejoice!"* The message to the persecuted Thessalonians was: *"Rejoice always."* **1 Thessalonians 5:16**

Let's choose joy.

Our Next Study will be:

'Becoming a Voice of Praise and Not a Voice of Slander'



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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 4: Becoming a Voice of Praise and Not a Voice of Slander

The Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about what the mouth speaks. It is interesting that the primary word used for helpful speech is “wise” speech and we saw in our first study this means speech that is directed by the Word of God and the influence of God. It is secondly called ‘righteous speech’, meaning that it is speech that is “right as God says”. The base meaning for ‘righteous’ is doing what is right as spoken by God, but it is also called ‘praise speech’ and that is the word I want to use to contrast wise and foolish speech.

The primary word used for hurtful speech is foolish speech and we saw in our first study this means speech that is not directed by anything God says in His Word or comes from God. It is speech controlled by the thoughts and desires of the one speaking. Many times, in Proverbs this level of speech is also called ‘gossip’, but since we have used that term to mean all sorts of things people are saying about one another, wise or foolish, I have chosen to use a third choice from Proverbs— ‘Praise Speech’.

So, even though we are covering the use of the tongue in the book of Proverbs, we will focus on two phrases to describe it, ‘praise speech’ and ‘slandorous speech.’

What Proverbs says about these two areas of speech really needs our discernment. It is not as simple as people make it sound. In fact, a lot of slanderous speech starts with people saying, “Well, that is just gossip and we all know that gossip is a sin.” If a person is self-serving and that is exactly what Proverbs will teach us is the motive for slanderous speech, then anything that makes the slanderous speaker look bad in their own eyes will be labeled with a negative and dismissive label. For instance, to say to one with slanderous speech, “I question that you should be the one commenting on their failed marriage because you have had a failed marriage.” Only to hear this retaliation, “Why are you gossiping about me and putting me down, I’m not the one with the problem.” Tells you the slander-speaker is not hearing praise speech that will bring light or understanding, because slanderous speakers always try to put someone else down and elevate themselves. Let’s see how this works in Proverbs.

**Proverbs 26: 4-5** speaks to the dilemma of speaking to one who has foolish or slanderous speech. It says:

1. *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him”*
2. *“Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.”*

So, we see that in two consecutive verses of Proverbs, we are told both to answer the one with slanderous speech and not to answer the one with slanderous speech. Some have interpreted this as speaking of two separate occasions, but the Bible is not that duplicitous and confusing. That leaves  
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one real explanation, the praise speaker or wisdom speaker has to discern the right answer for the right time. When you do that, you reconcile these two verses with all the Book of Proverbs.

Let's take verse four. It is clear in Proverbs that Solomon has taught his children that if you answer a slanderer in a slanderous way, you just compound the slander. So, to answer with sarcasm, abrasion, insinuations, and half-truths, then you are also using slanderous or foolish speech.

Verse 5 tells us that the one with praise/wise speech is not to remain silent. The praise speaker may be very slow to speak and speak only little, but he/she does not answer the slanderer the same way the slanderer speaks. No, a praise speaker does not answer with slanderous speech but he/she does respond to the slanderer. First, naming the lies that the slanderer speaks and second, naming the harm that the words cause. The praise speaker does not silently accept and tolerate the slanderer and thereby allow the slanderer to think the listener agrees.

Let me sum that teaching up: Despite the danger of speaking with a slanderer at all, the praise speaker, "must expose the distortions to show how self-serving they really are."

#### Praise Speaker

The praise-speaker in Proverbs is marked by two characteristics:

1. humble restraint and
2. life-giving speech.

This means that the praise speaker does not try to commend and agree with the speech of the slanderer speaker, because even if the facts are correct, the slander speaker is using only the motive of hurting and destroying. Instead, the praise speaker is restrained in the sense that the goal is no longer to look good in the eyes of the slander speaker.

The praise speaker is also doing this without trying to compel the slanderer to admit that the things he said are misleading and harmful. So, the praise speaker speaks the truth knowing that the Lord can bless and change and keep the hurtful statements from hitting their target.

**Proverbs 26:2** *"Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an undeserved curse/insult does not come to rest."*

The Lord will support and bless and establish praise speech:

**Proverbs 10:31**, *"From the mouth of the righteous, praise speakers come the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced."*

**Proverbs 11:30**, *"The fruit of the righteous/praise speakers is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives."*

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The praise speaker speaks only about the false accusations and statements and not about the personal character and moral values of the slanderer; because they only spark a new round of finger-pointing and criticism.

Let me tell you how this recently worked for me. We live across the arroyo from a home with a big open back yard and a woman who often drinks too much and then becomes verbally cruel and abusive with her family. One night I was out doing some late watering after dark and she was in her prime. The profanity laced insults and horrible verbal darts were flying all over their back yard and certainly loud enough for me to hear. So, unable to not respond any longer after one of her profanity laced epitaphs, I yelled back, "So are you." That did not stop her, here came another and I yelled back, "So are you". This happened three times and then the most remarkable thing happened, in a half-broken voice and sounding like a little girl, she said, "Stop It." I yelled back, "You stop it", and I heard the door close and evidently, she went into the house. Love to say that it changed her, no, we have heard it again too many times, but it did at least stop it that day. I merely wanted her to own for herself what she was dishing out for everyone else. Do not answer in kind, but name the things that are false and how they hurt, and place a mirror right in front of the slander speaker.

What should I do if I find myself speaking 'slandrous speech' or I'm in regular contact with someone who does speak 'slandrous speech'?

Address yourself first: Do I follow these simple guidelines in the Book of Proverbs? Do I speak with words that bring favor in all the right ways?

**Proverbs 10:32** *"The lips of the righteous know what finds favor, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse?"*

1. Do I sort through what is being said, and am I able to deliver others from the perverse gossip and slanderous talk about them?

**Proverbs 11:9** *"With their mouths the slanders destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the praise speakers deliver others."*

2. Do I consider my answers and the direction of my speech or am I very quick and compulsive to answer?

**Proverbs 15:28**, *"The heart of the praise speaker weighs its answers, but the mouth of the slander speaker gushes evil."*

Learning the habit of becoming a 'praise speaker' is primarily allowing God to direct you and your speech and then using care, restraint and thinking when you speak. Especially when you speak to a 'slander speaker.'

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#### Slander Speaker

Now let's address the fact that we are with and around others who speak 'slander talk' and how can I handle that in a helpful way.

1. Realize that those who choose 'praise talk' are willing to disadvantage themselves to advance the other person.
2. Those who choose 'slander talk' are willing to disadvantage the other person to advantage themselves. The bottom line is the 'slander speaker' chooses self over all others. They constantly refuse to listen to instruction, rebuke or advice.
3. They are wise in their own eyes, and 'slander speakers' have to be right. They do not discuss rationally.

**Proverbs 29:9** says, *"If a wise/praise speaking person goes to court with a fool/slander speaking person, the slander speaking person rages and scoffs, and there is no peace."*

4. The 'slander speaker' has these traits:
  - a. Constant speaking, **Proverbs 15:2, 18**
  - b. Answers before they listen, **Proverbs 18:13**
  - c. They explode, **Proverbs 12:16, 29:11**
  - d. Can't keep secrets, **Proverbs 11:13**
  - e. Attack the people they do not like, **Proverbs 11:12**
  - f. Speak rashly, **Proverbs 12:18**

We need to stop and realize that this foolish or 'slander speech' will be judged:

**Proverbs 10:8** *"The wise in heart/praise speakers accept commands, but a chattering fool/slander speaker comes to ruin."*

**Proverbs 12:19** *"Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment."*

**Proverbs 19:5** *"A false witness will not go unpunished, and whoever pours out lies will not go free."*

God will handle the fruits of a 'slander speaker' and the role that Proverbs says for us to do is not do all the changing by our efforts and think that somehow if we think up the right words, the 'slander speaker' will suddenly change to be a 'praise speaker'.

I want us to draw together some of these thoughts and talk about the use of 'praise speech' and 'slander speech' in our lives. Now, Proverbs is really speaking about the person who turns their back on God and accepts nothing that God says when it speaks of 'foolish or slanderous speech'; but we have seen those even in our Christian circles and other close areas where people can act in wicked and slanderous ways with what they say. It can even apply to us; we do need to check.

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I remember a time when I was speaking to part of my family and going through my little list of bad things people had done or said to me and was suddenly taken back when one of them looked at me and said, "I think you are part of the problem," My first reaction was to defend myself, but thankfully I stopped and said, "How am I contributing to the problem?" They told me. You're going over the list on a regular basis, with all those where you thought it was safe and protected, was really just reinforcing the problem in your mind and magnifying it. I thought about what they said and realized just how logical that really was. So, I thanked them for their insight and worked hard at not being a 'slander speaker'. I would love to tell you that it immediately changed all those who were speaking bad about me or doing very hurtful things to me and Sharon but that would not be true. However, it did free me in two areas

1. I did not have to solve this on my own. It was unfair but I am not going to be able to make everything in my life FAIR!!
2. I could just close this chapter of my life and not let it dominate what I was doing.

Let me share some other personal thoughts with you about dealing with 'slander speaking people'.

Why does the 'Slander speaker' always have to be right. Why are they always arguing, always putting others in the wrong and justifying themselves? Because they do not relish the new position of grace that God has given to them. When we as Christians forsake our own righteousness as what is going to save us, **Phil 3:9** and accept the new position of being righteous in Jesus Christ, it is hard for some to accept the results. Let me share those Scriptures:

***Philippians 3:7-10**, the Bible says, "But whatever were gains for me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8) What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9) And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law; but that which is through faith in Jesus Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10) I want to know Christ-yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like Him in his death."*

In my experience, some Christians are really touched by a profound sense of wrongness of the world and even the church, but do not have a corresponding sweet sense of God's grace for sinful people. Their strategy for dealing with the pain of this wrongness is to offload it on others. I have known Christians whose 'ministry' was pointing out others' faults, being suspicious of false teaching in others, criticizing and scrutinizing other Christians, and so on. A Christian can rebuke and exhort in a larger context of grace, but the person I am talking about does not do this, it is a ministry of condemnation and never reconciliation.

Instead of changing someone by their answer of praise or joy, they want to smash-mouth the offender into submission. How can you tell who fits into this "super-critical' absence of grace state?

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1. They are gossips. Instead of speaking directly to other Christians, they criticize others behind their backs.
2. They spin things in their favor---impartiality and honesty are not the top priorities.
3. They will tend not to work toward reconciliation. They will not lay out conditions, after a meeting to resolve the situation about what could be done to resolve the situation, which they would be happy to reconcile. There is always another problem or worry or suspicion.
4. There is not grace and forgiveness in their speech. They do not receive and welcome other Christians as Christ has received them,

**Romans 15:7** *"Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God."*

I have found it very difficult to reason with this type of Christian. They measure their world and leave out grace. I am sure that is true for you also, but we have to realize that Proverbs consistently insists that God intervenes to uproot and destroy foolish/slander speaking speech and to judge those who speak in this way. So, wise/praise speaking people instead of arguing and justifying themselves, wait for God to intervene among his people as King, to establish his kingdom, to purge is people. And when praise speaking people do that, they do nothing more than mimic Jesus, who went as a sheep to the slaughter silent, who trusted God to vindicate him when unjustly condemned. This is how God gives victories for His kingdom over slander speakers.

**Proverbs 16:13** says: *"Righteous lips are pleasing to kings; the one speaking uprightly, he loves."*

If this was true of human Israelite kings, how much more is it true of that greater descendent of King David? —King Jesus Christ. How much more is he delighted when we, His children trust his righteousness enough to stay quiet when condemned? And how much more attentive will our Divine King be when one of his servants is attacked and when that servant still speaks well.

I want to close this study with four of my favorite traits of a 'praise speaking person:

1. Their speech delivers destruction. **Proverbs 11:9**
2. They do not repeat. **Proverbs 17:9**
3. They give Godly grace even to slander speakers. **Proverbs 12:23**
4. Their speech rates God's highest praise: **Proverbs 10:20, 20:15, and 25:11.**

**Proverbs 20:15** *"Gold there is and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel."*

Our Next Study will be:

'Choosing Good Companions and Not Choosing Bad Companions'

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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 5: Choosing Good Companions and Not Choosing Bad Companions

In this session, we will look insightfully at what Proverbs teaches about the effect companions have on us. I know that most of us think this is only a problem for youth, but the lessons of Proverbs are universal and the good choices that we make help us create the life that God truly wants us to have.

We cannot totally avoid the influence of peer pressure as youth, and that has led families to make many choices.

1. They have sent their children to religious or spiritual schools so the influence of a worldly lifestyle will be less.
2. They have closely monitored the friends and companions of their children and asked to always meet friends before they let their child go somewhere with them.
3. They have given very strict time curfews to their children so the children are not out late at night with others whose parents allow them to be out late at night.
4. They try, where possible, to have a say in the children that their children run around with.

The list is practically endless and I am sure that many of you can add several items to that list that your parents applied. My father's plan seemed to be kept his children at work so late that they were exhausted and did not want to go anywhere with anyone. We just stay home and rest because chores always started at 5:30 am at the farm house where I grew up.

Two things stand out to me as I look at this list:

1. Parents have tried in many ways to make sure that their children do not run around with bad companions. That is the key to solving peer pressure.
2. This was often only something done for the family on an age basis. Whether it was age 5- "until you are out of our home"; or 12-21—"I don't want you to do something crazy as a teenager"; or Junior High and Senior High; it usually did not extend past the point that their children left their home. You say, "Well, what's wrong with that? I think those are the most crucial years for peer pressure.

I think there are two other life events that are just as much of a crisis and yet hardly anyone is in a group or has a mentor guiding them through these stages of their life.

1. The First one is the first job and the steps you take in starting your career. I think the pressure to be a success at your job and career and the desire to always make a great impression leaves you open to many areas of peer pressure that can be very hard to manage.

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2. The Second one is when you are alone again and in your senior years. That person is vulnerable to all sorts of false friends who are out to take their money, take their possessions and even take their dignity and honor.

I still remember a sweet lady at one of the Elderly housing facilities that I often visited. She, for years, had always answered me each time I asked how she was doing with a very spiritual and insightful comment. One day I came to visit her and asked, "how are you doing?" She said, "I'm DOING everyone I can!" I was quite surprised at what she told me and muttered some reply, "oh, really that surprises me." But the next time I visited her and asked that question, she said, "Everyone I can and the easy ones twice."

Sounded fairly funny out of this normally sweet little old lady, but it wasn't. Some friend, I later found out, the person who lived next door to her in the retirement facility spoke like that all the time, and over time she decided it was a cute way to speak and it got a lot more attention than just saying how she really was doing.

Some peer pressure we just cannot avoid. We seldom choose our neighbors; we often live where we can afford to live the best; we cannot always choose the people we work with; we often work with the others that the company or owner has hired; but we can always choose. We choose the neighbors that we are close to and that we let come into our range of friends. We choose which of the people we work with that we want to share the most intimate thoughts and plans.

### Choosing Is Important

Proverbs never gets peer pressure confused with good or bad companionship. The Bible stresses how important it is to choose good companions because they will impact your life in tremendous ways. We are hard-wired to act and think like the peers that are our friends and not hard-wired to measure the influence of peer pressure. In fact, the Book of Proverbs does not really talk about the influence of peer pressure but always talks about the influence of companions. The amazing part is our companions; we usually call them friends today, have a great influence over us whether they are present or not. What they have said to us or about us will often be a part of our life because they become one of those strong inner voices that we use to define ourselves. We shape our identity by the people we put into our inner friend circle. They influence you even when they are not with you.

**Proverbs 13:20** outlines the foundation of what happens when you make the right choice, choosing good companions or the wrong choice, choosing bad companions.

### Choose Good Companions:

**Proverbs 13:20** says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."



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If this is the bedrock statement on choosing good companions, what is Solomon asking his children to do? He says to seek someone who is truly wise; someone who is good, upright, spiritual, and who seems to have wisdom that is just right for each situation. This is more than a distant admiration for someone who is wise. This is getting as involved in their life as they let you become. It means keeping company with them, making friends with them and watching and learning their habits so that those habits can become a part of your life.

It is not that the wise or good companions are always advising, warning, and teaching those who are their friends. They do not neglect this when it is right or the right thing to do; but it is not the way they lead others—no, the force of their example is how they lead. They teach more by deed than by word. Mind acts on mind and character influences character.

We see how a good person acts under various circumstances and we learn much from what we see. We see how they handle prosperity; we see how they handle trouble. We hear how they speak, when they are provoked. We are aware of how they retaliate when they are mistreated. Being often in their company, we not only see what they do but learn often why they do it. Their motives, as well as their actions, are clear to their friends.

You see, we cannot be in the presence of someone like that without them having an influence on us. When we have the very same circumstances, then we think how they would handle this. When we are mistreated or spoken against, then we remember how they used to act and handle the offenses. So, their example makes us wise. It has great influence on everything that we do. We can recall even many words they spoke and how they were full of sound advice, but most of all their Christian conduct is lived out in the life of those who choose them as their good companions. Almost without knowing it, the companions of a good person are made better because of that person.

Let's use this foundation and see more truths that Proverbs tells us about choosing good companions.

**Proverbs 2:12** says: *"Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse."*

Good companions improve what we say and how we say it. It is the best guard to refrain from lying and to be sure that you always tell the truth. It is the way that allows us to speak to various groups of people and still help them with what we say. It is not speech that is shaped to get their money or wrongly take their business. It is not wicked in anyway, but uplifting, encouraging and always honest and legal.

Another truth about choosing good companions is:

**Proverbs 12:26**, *"The righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray."*

Being diligent to choose good companions brings order to the life of the person searching. They evaluate and make sure that their friends are people who will keep their confidences and make sure that they will always tell them the truth. But those who choose bad companions will have the

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opposite effect in their lives. They will be led down paths they never wanted to go and do things they promised themselves that they would never do.

Another truth about choosing good companions:

**Proverbs 17:17**, *"A friend loves at all time, and a brother is born for a time of adversity."*

Good companions will stick with you and befriend you in the worst of times. It may even be something that you have done that is causing your grief and suffering, but a good companion stays and loves and God will raise out of your good companions someone who will help you through your toughest times.

Another truth about choosing good companions:

**Proverbs 18:24**, *"One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

Whether through bad habits we pick up or other influences bad friends have taught, a person with bad companions will see the collapse of their moral values, the one with bad friends will fail.

On the other hand, the one who chooses good friends, and none are better than Jesus Christ, will find that they have attached themselves to the best friend ever. Better than a loyal brother or sister, Jesus will remain with those who friend Him, FOREVER.

A final truth about choosing good companions:

**Proverbs 27:17**, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."*

A good companion is the only way that you can become the greatest human being possible. You cannot reach your full potential without a good companion that sharpens you along the way.

**Proverbs 13:20**, *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffer harm."*

#### Choosing Bad Companions:

This Proverb outlines the foundation of what happens when you make the wrong choices and choose bad companions. The bad choice of companions is equally true. Bad companions will suffer harm and ultimately be broken, the bible word is *'destroyed'*, but we would interpret that *'broken'* today. These are not people without talent or sense. On the contrary, the very people that Proverbs warns about may be clever, interesting, and even well educated. But they are unwise in a spiritual sense. With all their gifts of mind and all their pleasant qualities, they have no true spirituality; they are ungodly in thoughts.

This is not companionship where fate has put us together, as a neighbor or a work colleague, but it is someone we chose as a companion and make them our friend when we could choose otherwise. Those are the companions that will cause a person to be broken/ or suffer harm.

How can we be broken or suffer harm? Two ways:

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1. We may be gradually changed and corrupted and our character grow worse, our habits become like those of our bad companions, lose a sense of right and wrong. Bad companions are like water wearing down stones, it is not visible at first but later almost impossible to change.
2. We may actually develop a life through the influence of bad companions that causes us to move away from Christ; give up the principles that we know are right; and even come to ruin. The prodigal son is a Bible example of someone who knew better but through a sense of rebellion and a desire to buy the friends he wanted. He ended up in a situation that shocked him. How could he, a good Jewish boy from a wealthy home, be living in a pigsty wanting to eat pig food just to stay alive.? He was broken and almost dead.

The course of the influence of bad companions is a downward course. There is no standing still on that road, it always goes from bad to worse, unless someone reaches for the grace of God and leaves the bad companions.

When the times get rough for the one with bad companions, sick and in the hospital or out of food and impoverished, they often find the bad companions are not around. They are still at the bar, or the club, the gold course, or still working late and have no time.

One friend who loves Jesus is worth more than all companions who live in sin or outside the teachings of God. Let's use this foundation and see other truths that Proverbs is telling us about choosing bad companions:

**Proverbs 1:10-19**, speaks about the one of the worst evils of Solomon's day. It was bandits or thieves who used the hills, mountains, and terrain for a hiding place to rob, kill and destroy those who traveled on the road. They had no conscience about what they were doing but saw it as a way to fill their houses with the plunder that they wanted. In our day it would be the greedy, the drug dealer, the unjust financial person, or even those who prey on the elderly. More scams are applied to the elderly than any other group and more frightening is that more elderly are taken in scams than any other age group in our nation. Those bad companions who live this way will always draw their other companions into the same schemes. Verses 1:17-19 tell us that they become so blatant that they do not hide their traps but are often caught in them.

Another truth about choosing bad companions:

**Proverbs 2:12b-15**, *"The ways of wicked men leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, they delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil. Their paths are crooked and they are devious in their ways."*

These are people who feel that they need to change the ways that are legal and forthright and make them devious and conniving. They spend time in thinking up ways to subvert the laws and rules, tax laws, speeding laws, contract laws, and they appeal to their constitutional right of freedom to avoid following the rest of the rules of our land.

Another truth about choosing bad companions:

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**Proverbs 14:7**, "Stay away from a fool, for you will not find knowledge on their lips."

Bad companions are much more enticed by an evil plan that works than about real knowledge that factors into account; the effect on people, the environment, and society. They usually see the dollar as bigger than God and worship it. Their knowledge is usually only what will get what they want.

A final truth about choosing bad companions:

**Proverbs 22:24-25**, "Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."

It was Paul who wrote in **I Corinthians 15:33**, "Bad company corrupts good character." Bad companions are like that proverbial one rotten apple that will spoil the entire barrel of apples.

So, when you are often thrown in with the ungodly and the careless, be kind and friendly to all, but do not make these people your best friends, your chosen companions. Beware! Many have been broken through bad companions. "Let anyone who thinks he stands, take heed, lest he fall."

One final encouragement: if the influence of companions is so great for good or for evil, then let us seek that our influence will be good and ask God for the grace to make us gracious and the rightness to make us righteous. Let us be good salt, light, and leaven.

Our Next Study will be:

'Choosing to Be Content and Refusing to Become Embittered'

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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 6: Choosing to Be Content and Refusing to Become Embittered

In this lesson, we will take an opposite pair of Proverb traits and compile what God is saying about 'Contentment' and 'Embitterment' in the Book of Proverbs. I encourage you to study these passages and see what God is telling you that will make your life productive and blessed.

My encouragement for you as you listen to this study is to find at least one new thought that you had never considered before and claim that as the spiritual food God wants you to get from this study. I am afraid if we view all Bible teaching as just a review of what we already know and every teaching is just a reminder, we will never be open to the Spirit of God to direct us to more helpful and exciting thinking.

#### What is Contentment?

Let's look first at what it isn't. 'Contentment' is not the resting of the body, folding of hands and saying; "well, everything is just fine with me" or "I do not have to do anything else; I am content." It is not the idea of achieving all that you want to achieve, finishing your bucket list or marking off all the boxes in your 'to do list.

It is literally in the Hebrew and the Greek a word that means: I have become self-sufficient in the Lord and this relationship has made me content. As a result, the person is satisfied and apart from the Lord independent in all ways. It is used by Paul in the book of **Philippians 4:11-13** to tell how he feels about having enough or not enough food and supplies while he is in prison to really quench his appetite and meet his needs. After he has declared that he is content regardless of the amount of food and provisions he has; he says, "*I have learned to be content with little or with much*" vs 11-12 because, "*I can do all things through him who gives me strength*" vs 13, meaning Jesus Christ. It has to do with spiritual satisfaction and letting the Lord direct our life and meet our needs.

In the Book of Proverbs, it is primarily one of the traits of the "wise person," which is someone who listens to God and absorbs the Word of God as the guide that directs their life. That is the only way that we will ever be content, to actually believe and live out the truth that our God will take care of us and give us all that we really need.

#### What is Embitterment?

It is what Paul calls '*obstinate*' in **Romans 10:21** when he is speaking about how the people of God responded to the great blessings of God, and first became disobedient and then obstinate. In the Book of Proverbs, it is a spirit of contraction, self-sufficiency and unwilling to listen to anyone else.

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That person then is incapable of receiving rebuke, reproof, or correction. It shows up in a person as anger and arrogance and the word that Proverbs uses most frequently to describe this vice is to call that person a 'mocker'. They literally mock the relationship they should have with God, letting Him lead their life while they follow with contentment, but instead demand that they be in charge and run everything. They end up embittered about almost everything in their life. People are unfair, they have had the worst bosses, they have had the most demanding mates, the unruliest children and God has been no help, He was always AWOL.

The embittered have no standard of conduct except their own ideas and notions. The content will seek better guidance than their own thoughts because they are not so ridiculously sure of their infallibility. No, this type of embitterment is more offensive to others than that of those with pert self-conceit; because the embittered knows so little but thinks he knows everything. As one commentator said: "they are as untamable as a fly." Their true mark of embitterment is the self-opinions that run their life. They are:

"People who have themselves for a teacher, have a fool for a student."

The test of wisdom that leads to contentment is the willingness to be taught and to bring a humble spirit to God, (the source of all wisdom), seek His knowledge, and ask the counsel of God. But the self-sufficiency of the embittered is the real essence of sin. It is that spirit of taking no direction and therefore being totally ignorant of their guilt, their sin, and their need for a Savior.

The embittered or mocker as Proverbs calls them are like the 3-year-old child that continually says, "No, I will do it myself." If you want to guarantee tragedy and even death for your 3-year-old, just let them make all of their life decisions. You know what, we do not do that much better when we are older. If we continually make all the decisions and do it ourselves, we will also end up outside of the protection and covering of God and endanger both our physical life and our eternal spirit.

I want to share some quotes that show just how foolish this embittered mocker becomes, on an individual level and on a national level: those who feel they need no advice and should just proceed as they want.

1. "I contend that for a nation to try and tax itself into prosperity is like a man standing in a bucket and trying to lift himself up by the handle." Winston Churchill
2. "A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul." George Bernard Shaw.
3. "The ultimate result of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools." Herbert Spencer
4. "A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have." Thomas Jefferson

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#### Contrast Contentment to Embitterment

Let's take a familiar Proverb that highlights contentment in contrast to embitterment.

**Proverbs 10:3** "The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked."

Three things I want to note about **Proverbs 10:3** :

1. The righteous do not go hungry. If we are to fulfill the desires of our Father God, we are to encourage those who need food to also find the Lord. God will then provide for them in an even greater way. Year after year we heard the testimonies of the men from Teen Challenge, speak of their need before finding Jesus and their sufficiency after they found Jesus.
2. Since contentment is really becoming totally sufficient upon the Lord, the greatest thing we can do to provide for us and our family is to continually praise God for what He provides and thank Him for all He does. Godly Contentment cannot be totally genuine unless it also has an element of thankfulness to God for what He gives you.

In one of my ministries, I had a very godly woman who had been a long-time follower of God. She lived and lived fine on only the slightest of incomes. But I was floored one day when she took me aside and asked if I really thought that she gave enough. She listed her tithe, her missionary gifts, her gifts to her Sunday School class, Women's Ministry gifts; and then all the birthdays and anniversaries of her family and how she gave a memorial gift in their name on each special date. I could not believe that she thought she should give more. I felt I was listening to the testimony of the widow who gave her two pennies (all she had) to the Temple and Jesus then commended her to His disciples. I said, "I do not see how you could give more, and I commend you on being so generous and selfless." She rode away from the church in the older car from her family and I was amazed at how God's gifts to her were so special to her that she wanted to make sure that she gave the right amount back.

3. Sometimes God uses our basic needs as a way to get our attention. The Prodigal Son became aware of what he should do when he was so hungry that he thought he might get sick and die. It was then he said, "*How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son, make me like one of your hired servants.'* So, he got up and went to his father." **Luke 15: 17-20a**

When we feel we are being deprived of our very basic necessities, it is good to stop and ask; "Is God trying to get my attention and tell me something." That is true in our world also, when the embittered cannot figure a way out of the dilemmas, that is the time they are most open to the love of God in their lives. Sometimes you have to go through a lot of their

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anger to see that they are really searching for something else. They just do not know how to find it without their comfortable 'embittered approach.'

#### Contentment is a Great Blessing

Let's look at how contentment is such a great blessing and such a good virtue for us.

**Proverbs 22:4** says, *"Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life."*

When our attitude toward God is one where we learn and accept His guidance, we are living in humility. This is a time when we hold God in great reverence and awe, we fear and have great awe for God and what He does in our life. God sits on the throne of our life in two ways:

1. He sits on the throne of our life when He is allowed to lead our life.
2. We totally place Him and His power to direct our life right at the head of all our decisions.

It is worth noting that when we get God in the right position in our life then He gives us the very things that we need and desire.

What a line-up: the wages of fearing God; the riches of fearing God, honor in our life and an extended and full life for us. In other words, what most people strive their entire life to secure; are just the residual gifts God gives to those who live in Godly contentment by being humble towards the Lord and holding God in great reverence and awe.

#### What an Embittered Person Can Expect

Let's contrast that with what an embittered person can expect in their life where they have become a mocker and literally mock the idea that God is to lead and have direction in their life and declare, "I am my own man—my own woman and I will do what I want, when I want and where I want!"

**Proverbs 21:24** says, *"A proud and arrogant person— "Mocker" is his name; behaves with insolent fury."*

The embittered become so infuriated that their great ideas are not bringing them the blessings that they want that they literally explode at people. They are loud, rude, and insulting and all their problems are always the fault of someone else. They are not beyond redemption, but they are unable at that point to see anything except how everyone else has ruined their lives. They do not leave a heritage and Proverbs says that these embittered people will lose power and influence. Just look at the contrast between the contented and the embittered in Proverbs:

**Proverbs 12:7** *"The wicked are overthrown and are no more; but the house of the righteous stands firm."*

**Proverbs 21:7** *"The violence of the wicked will drag them away; for they refuse to do what is right."*



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**Proverbs 21:29** *"The wicked put up a bold front, but the upright give thought to their ways."*

This next Proverb is a very powerful visual to show the difference:

**Proverbs 24:15-16** *"Do not lurk like a thief near the house of the righteous, do not plunder their dwelling place; for though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes."*

#### Value of Contentment

The Book of Proverbs begins with a variety of Proverbs that speak about the value of wisdom; knowing and doing what God's will is for you in your life. It is this contentment we are speaking about. I want you to just pick out some of the great blessings that will come to you if you have Godly contentment and are willing to let God lead:

**Proverbs 2:6-10** *"For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for He guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones. Then you will understand what is right and just and fair, every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."*

Who would have thought that Godly contentment is the real key to every good thing you have ever wanted? It is a virtue that never stops giving you great blessings in your life.

**Proverbs 3:5-6** speaks of that wonderful spot of Godly contentment, when they say, *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight."*

I want to focus once more on a comparison of what contentment and embitterment have to offer. We see that:

**Proverbs 21:11-12** *"When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; but paying attention to the wise they get knowledge. The Righteous One takes note of the house of the wicked and brings the wicked to ruin."*

The Godly contented continue to be sheltered, protected, and guided by God; but the embittered only serve as 'an example of what not to become' and that the one who sets themselves against God will lose.

**Proverbs 11:2** *"But when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom"*

The embittered spend their life drained of energy and hope because their hope is in themselves and their energy is invested in doing what they want to do. But those who are humble and therefore willing to live under the umbrella of 'Godly Contentment', insight and direction never stop coming. They just flow right towards that person.

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**Proverbs 10:24** *"What the wicked dread will overtake them, what the righteous desire will be granted."*

The embittered dread calamity, distress and disaster so they think the shield they put around themselves will keep all those from happening; but their embitteredness serves like a magnet and draws the very worst things they dread right to them. However, the very desires of the heart of the 'Godly Contented' will be given to them and in such a great way that they will know that they are gifts from God. He is giving them the best of lives.

#### The Embittered Often Suffer Alone

The last Proverb I want to study is:

**Proverbs 9:12** *"If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer."*

The Godly content seem to have blessings that fall on all others and they have the right word for the right time as well as just what is needed for all to hear and learn. But the embittered often suffer alone, because very few seek or take their advice. Their choices often poison and ruin their life. They cause their own miserableness and yet try to blame it on others.

I would like us to think about Judas Iscariot, the disciple who betrayed Jesus. Many people have worked very hard trying to say Judas did nothing wrong, that he was an instrument of God and that someone had to betray Jesus for the plan of salvation to work. But we miss something if that is where we land in our belief, because Judas may have been God's man, someone who had the right traits to betray Jesus, but he was not a man of God. He was not righteous. He was no different than Pharaoh who resisted Moses until his land was in shambles after the plague of the death of the firstborn and only then did he allow the children of Israel to leave. He was God's man but not a man of God. God can and will utilize embittered people to accomplish what needs to be done; but we should never think they were forced to do anything they did not want to do or that they were not doing everything entirely of their own free will.

A look at Judas reveals:

1. A man who loved money and money was what he got for betraying Jesus.
2. A man who was not generous and may have followed Jesus thinking it would lead to the kingship of Jesus and a palace life for himself.
3. A man who tried to repent to the Chief Priests and made them his personal villains in the story.
4. A man who never at any time turned to God for forgiveness.
5. A man who when his plans did not work, saw only one option, to kill himself.

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The vice of embitterment is a lonely way to live and die. The virtue of Godly contentment is a guarantee that God will provide all that you truly need.

Our Next Study will be:

'Choosing to Become Humble and Refusing to Become Proud'

# HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY - SUMMER 2021

## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 7: Choosing to Become Humble and Refusing to Become Proud

Our study will look at two opposite traits in Proverbs— 'Humility' and 'Pride'. The book of Proverbs barely begins before it addresses the subjects of humility and pride.

The only way anyone cannot get knowledge from the Lord is that their pride keeps them from being open to the direction of God.

*Proverbs 1:7* says it bluntly and clearly: *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*

So, if I need knowledge but refuse to ask God, the source of all true wisdom and knowledge, then I am a fool. The proud person, believing that they can do anything and everything they think is only a fool. They have omitted the greatest source of information for their life.

Since the book is addressed to the children of Solomon, the next verse explains that this pride problem could have begun as early as our childhood, but if it does not change, it will haunt a person for their entire life.

*Proverbs 1:8* says, *"Listen, my son, to your father's instructions and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

What begins as a fairly typical response to directions from Dad: 'I don't need my dad to tell me how to live and the teachings from mom; I really don't understand why Mom thinks she needs to run my life,' if not changed, this could easily set a course of personal frustration and even being lost for eternity.

Pride can be an issue almost from birth, but humility is always grown and developed. No child is born humble, every child is born with a God-given attention and fascination on self. So, no child is born humble as the Bible defines it, but must cultivate that trait in their life by following the Godly instruction of their parents, grandparents and most of all God.

Let's look at how the Bible defines both traits. No Proverb defines the two better than:

*Proverbs 11:2*, *"When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but with humility comes wisdom."*

### Pride

It is a common word in the Bible and it is used to describe: ordinary people *Deuteronomy 17:12-13*; Kings *Nehemiah 9:10*; Israel *Nehemiah 9:16, 29*; false prophets *Deuteronomy 18:20* and murderers *Exodus 21:14*. Pride's root meaning is: "a tamed or domesticated wild animal."

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"To boil, or to run over and is used to indicate an overwhelmingly arrogant attitude or behavior."

It is almost always used in the Old Testament in a negative way speaking about those who have let arrogance direct their speech and their life and the self-conceit that causes them to assume a haughty and judgmental spirit.

Interesting enough, in the New Testament pride is spoken of in this negative way but it is also something that Paul in **Galatians 6:4**; James in **James 1:9** and Paul in **II Corinthians 7:4**, all use to speak of the new position that Christians have in Jesus and how these great Bible Apostles were proud of how people lived out their new life in Christ. Solomon uses the word pride throughout Proverbs to warn the readers of how easy it is to change and ruin a life with false pride.

### Humble/Humility

It is not a common word in the Bible because it was not a common word in the conversations of the people. But it is a word that was used often to speak about believers.

**Micah 6:8** says, "He has shown you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

Even the New Testament often exalts the goodness of being humble,

**James 3:13** "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. "

In fact, we could easily make and prove the point that the entire Sermon on the Mount, **Matthew 5-7** given by Jesus is a sermon to live a life of humility before the Lord and reject a life of pride before people.

Humble in the Bible speaks of someone with a teachable spirit especially when it comes from the Lord. It is a very admirable trait and one that Proverbs often encourages the readers to implement into their lives.

We have developed many words that go with each of these traits in our culture. Pride is often linked in the same sentence with: boastful, loud, accomplished, in your face and is linked to groups wanting recognition on their terms, even if it creates conflict and crisis: Gay Pride Marches; the Proud Boys; etc.

Humble has also had several words develop around it: quiet, meek, non-obtrusive, and no trouble. But these words are not very representative of the Bible definition of humble. Jesus in the Beatitudes says,

**Matthew 5:5** "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the world."

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The word '*meek*' means:

It was the opposite of out of control. It is not weakness, impotence, or powerlessness but speaks of supreme self-control empowered by the Spirit, ***Galatians 5:23***. Humility is a sister word that does not speak of weakness, impotence, or powerlessness but speaks of supreme empowerment because of an open spirit which allows the humble to gain great wisdom from God.

We see that an abundance of the trait pride will bring destruction and a true humbling of the proud person. It is not something that makes the person feel good but instead it traps them in the consequences of their pride.

The abundance of the trait humble has the opposite effect: Since the humble seek the wisdom of God, they actually end up with honor. The one who demands honor is destroyed and the one who is open to no honor is given honor because of the wise things they say and do.

Previously, I shared some quotes with you about what happens when the embittered control and the 'Godly Contented' are pushed outside of the circle of authority. Let me share some more this week as we see what happens when the proud rule and the humble do not, especially in our national politics and national direction:

- "Giving money and power to government is like giving whiskey and car keys to teenage boys." P. J. O'Rourke
- "If you think health care is expensive now, wait until you see what it costs when it's free. P. J. O'Rourke
- "Democracy must be something more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner." James Bovaird

Without a doubt our nation today admires the proud more than the humble and this is not good but instead is a sign of collapse from the inside of our nation, not a sign of great accomplishments.

I have had the blessing to have over 40 young men and women go into the ministry in the churches where I have served. It has been a blessing to see how those with a spirit of humility accomplish so much more for the Lord than those who go around informing everyone what they are sacrificing for the Lord by going into ministry. It is also amazing to see how it affects everyone around them.

I had one young man in the Church where I preached in Southern Indiana that I was really quite surprised when he told me that he wanted to go into the ministry. I encouraged him to attend a Bible College in Kentucky where I thought he would find the right cultural match. He did and encouraged his girlfriend to attend also and when she graduated one year later, she joined him at the University. It was no surprise to any of us that they announced their engagement the next year and said when they graduated, they were going to be missionaries in Zaire, now the Republic of the Congo. We were thrilled at the Church and held a great reception for them when they came back at semester break.

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The next day, I got a call from the girl's father asking if we could talk. I said sure and he came into my office. He and his wife had two girls and this was really heavy on his heart. He said, "I am all for missionaries and I know that we need them, but why does that young man need to take my daughter to Zaire? I am so upset about it, but can't really say anything about it." I also had two daughters and so we talked about our girls and what we might want them to do. We prayed and he left, still broken-hearted about his daughter living in Africa. They came and spoke one time at the Church I founded in Indianapolis, and we helped them raise money for their return to Zaire. I had not heard from them again until 2003, when Sharon and I went back to "The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Creek", the Church we had founded in Indianapolis, I was excited and thrilled to see that this couple had come back from their 20-years of service as missionaries and were on staff at the Church I had founded. It was great to speak to them and see how their humble spirit had directed them through their years in Zaire and had led them back to serve at "The Creek".

When you see ministries that last and bless many people, you will see someone high in leadership who has a humble spirit and has developed an ear to listen to God.

#### Importance of Humility

I want us to look at some Proverbs that tell us just how important and helpful 'humility' really is:

##### **Proverbs 3:34**

*"He mocks proud mockers; but shows favor to the humble and oppressed."*

This verse is so important to our growth as a Christian that it is quoted by two New Testament writers: **James 4:6** says, "But he gives us more grace. That is why the Scripture says: God opposes the proud, but shows favor to the humble." **1 Peter 5:5** says, "In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.'"

The key James and Paul both say for a Church to stay united and do the work of the Lord is for all to be humble and accepting of each other. There are natural orders or strata in the Church but each one has to have a level of humility to work right. Proverbs is stating what happens every time—God is so opposed to those who try to usurp his place of direction for their life—pride—that He is actually in opposition to them. He will not add His heavenly blessings and Divine blessings to what they -are doing. But to those who are humble—open to His leadership and to those who are oppressed by the "Proud"—God will give His favor and greatest blessings.

##### **Proverbs 16:18-19**

*"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."*

*"Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud."*

These verses paint a strong contrast in the results of pride and humility.

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

If you want to see someone who will descend from the position of power and authority, just look for someone filled with pride and it's offspring, a haughty spirit. They are primed and ready to be lowered into places they thought they would never descend. But the humble, here, lowly in spirit, who refuse to play the same games the proud play and will not divide the spoils the proud get from the people they fleece and rob, they will be blessed by God.

As you get older you have the opportunity to reflect on all that has happened in your life. The decision I made in my freshman year of High School, to become a medical missionary, and then my desire to tell everyone about my decision were the greatest protection I could have ever had in High School. It was true, I felt a strong obligation to live up to what I said I was going to do and become. It was strong in my life. I did not need the pep talk from Mom or Dad; a warning from my teacher, preacher, or youth leader; and I didn't even need someone catching me at a secret sin and blackmailing me to quit doing it. I had made a commitment to God and I stood by the life that I would need to live to keep that commitment. Humility allows you to seek and maintain great wisdom from God.

#### **Proverbs 22:4**

*"Humility is the fear of the Lord; its wages are riches and honor and life."*

Once again, Proverbs links being humble with standing in awe or fear of the Lord. When we hold God in such reverence that we love Him and desire Him to guide us, He awards His loyal servants. How, the same way anyone would award a faithful employee, wages of riches, honor and a full life. God is well aware of all that we do and the motive that causes us to do it. Jesus told many parables where God was the center of the parable and showed us that God was always aware and rewarding those who had done what He asked them to do.

### **Danger of Pride**

Let me list some of the Proverbs about pride and show how dangerous pride is to our life, our destiny, and even our happiness.

#### **Proverbs 8:13**

*"To fear the Lord is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech."*

You have no trouble knowing which side God is pulling for and which side He will guarantee victory. Long before the first pitch is thrown, the opening tip, the opening kickoff or any other way to start a contest, most of us know who we want to win. God is no exception. He knows who will win, He lines up on the side of the humble, and God will secure the victory. Wisdom, or God and Godly advice are very clear in this Proverb. God says that He hates pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech. I cannot imagine having a more daunting foe against you than God.



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God will make sure that the prideful will never gain eternal rewards. That alone should cause us all to stop and ask ourselves- "How humble am I?" Do I really seek the direction of God in all that I do and follow His advice without arguing?

#### **Proverbs 13:10**

*"Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice."*

The Bible makes a clear line to show the difference between the proud and the humble. The proud take no advice from anyone, they also take no guff, no back-talk, no argument, no discussion and they get no spiritual rewards. All the proud get is continual strife in their life. People that have a constant quarrel going with others, who are not known as quarrelers have a "pride issue." But those who are humble and who follow the direction and advice of God seek advice all the time and become even wiser.

What an irony, the 'proud' who do not take any advice, end up dumber and the 'humble' who are willing to take advice from anyone God sends to them end up wiser.

#### **Proverbs 16:18**

*"Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall."*

This famous Proverb has been the guide for many Christian Mothers and Fathers to instruct their children how to live. It simply points out what Solomon continues to say about pride, it has only one possible ending and it is not a pretty sight! So, avoid pride like you would avoid the plague and make sure it's offspring, a haughty spirit, has not attached itself to your life.

When I was in High School our main basketball rival was a two-town school just south. They were usually good and so were we. The Homecoming games were always against this main rival. One of their team stars graduated the same year I did and I played college ball against him one game at Millikin University in Decatur, Illinois. We talked a little but not much. I ran into him again when I stopped at Effingham, IL. on my way to my parent's home and he was in the restaurant where we stopped to eat. He was very talkative then, telling me how great his life was and how everything was going so good for him. I had the chance to discuss him with some good friends who had graduated at the same time. The man was a School Superintendent and had graduated from the rival school and his wife was a School Principal and had graduated from my home school. I asked them about the guy and said I had run into him at the restaurant. They said, "Of course?" He can't hold a job, has no money, and goes to the restaurant every day to talk about his good old days as a basketball player and see if someone will buy him food or a drink. 'Pride' had reduced the man to a glorified pan-handler sitting at a restaurant off of I-70 in the middle of Illinois. There is nothing glorious or helpful about pride and a haughty spirit, they will both leave you without!

#### **Proverbs 29:23**

*"Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor."*

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Jesus used the thought of this Proverb as an important teaching for our life when He said, *"For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*

I want us to contrast the first two Kings of Israel. One was a giant of a man, Saul, who stood head and shoulders above his fellow countrymen. But he was only tall in height. His pride and uncontrolled moodiness made him a walking disaster. He threw a spear at the harp player who was trying to calm him; he killed several on a whim, he took the Ark of the covenant into battle as a good luck charm and lost it. His pride was notorious and insidious. The man who followed him as King, fled from Saul for years because Saul continually tried to kill him. Saul had given him his daughter as a wife but then took her away from him, and Saul spent most of his last years obsessed with killing this man. His name was David and although he had some moral lapses, he was a man after God's own heart. Literally, he tossed pride aside and took up a humble spirit under the direction of the Lord. He was Israel's greatest King and only King Jesus in the Millennium Kingdom will surpass him in greatness. It was not a battle of two kings, it was a battle of God's humble man winning over a proud man of the land.

God is always on the side of the humble.

Our Next Study will be:

'Choosing to Take Instruction and Unwilling to Be Rebellious'

## HOPE LOOKS UP BIBLE STUDY - SUMMER 2021

### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

#### WEEK 8: Choosing to Take Instruction and Unwilling to Be Rebellious

May you gain a great blessing and find insight into your personal life and the lives of those you contact as we continue our study in Proverbs.

I want to look at two traits that really speak to the age in which we live: 'Instructable' and 'Rebellious.' They are key to much of our success in life and in our career but are often treated like very incidental traits.

Solomon takes one entire chapter of the *Proverbs, Chapter 10*, and truly defines each trait and the consequences that come with each. He is using Wisdom and Foolish, traits here that explain what happens to someone who is open to the instruction of the Lord or not. He calls that trait 'Wisdom,' those who are willing and open to the instruction of the Lord and contrasts that to the 'Foolish' those who refuse to seek advice, direction or correction from God but advance at their own will. In other words, they do what they want!!! They are truly rebellious and foolish.

I remember having a few skirmishes my freshman year in High School with older students who needed to find a freshman to pick on. One approached me before school in the school gym; I remember asking the guy who challenged me to a fight, "Why, what good will it do for either of us to beat-up the other person?" His reply was classic, he said, "That's what we are supposed to do to freshmen, that's what they did to me!" So, dumb. I worked on the farm every day and carried two full five-gallon buckets of water to water the animals about 30 times a day, after I had hand-pumped the water; and I also milked three cows by hand each day, my share after the other chores were done. This guy sat on his fat tush and watched TV all the time, he was not in school and yes, he was a town kid. So, I grabbed his two hands, that he had stuck out in front of him in a boxer pose, and bent them back over his head and down his back until he begged me to stop, our big fight was over.

That was what I call a way above average case of 'foolishness'. I have heard that anytime you hear, "Hey, Bubba, watch this", at the start of a sentence you can expect something pretty foolish. It would be one thing if learning some life-lessons was all that was involved in foolish actions and choices; but often it has consequences for a family, a marriage, a job, a career, a friendship, a retirement fund and the list goes on and on.

Most of us have had at least one of our foolish choices or decisions back-fire in our face and have had to suffer the consequences. It is very important that we see and recognize the traits that are a part of the life of someone who is instructable and see if they are true about us. Just count how many of these traits speak about you. If at least 17-18 apply to you, then you do not have to worry that your choices and decisions will probably be wise and not foolish. These are the traits from *Proverbs 10* that speak about the wise.

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

#### Instructable People (Wise People)

Instructable people (Wise People) according to *Proverbs 10* are:

1. Wise people who bring joy to their parents
2. Wise people who live right
3. Wise people who live under the provision of God—He takes care of them and blesses them.
4. Wise people who work hard and accumulate a good retirement.
5. Wise people who are blessed, respected, loved, and an example.
6. Other people think of wise people and remember them fondly.
7. Wise people who welcome advice and instruction into their life.
8. Wise people who walk a straight line and life of integrity.
9. Wise people who are bold in rebuke and promote peace.
10. Wise people who choose their words wisely
11. Wise people who love at all times.
12. Wise people long for more knowledge and never reject it.
13. Wise people who earn wages that improve their life.
14. Wise people who accept correction and try to implement it
15. Wise people who always conduct themselves properly
16. Wise people who find their hopes come true.
17. Wise people who will live longer than they would have had if they were foolish.
18. Wise people who are happy.
19. Wise people who are protected by God.
20. Wise people who live in peace.
21. Wise people who speak only helpful words.

There were 21 characteristics or traits that identify someone as instructable; how many did you say spoke about you?

#### Rebellious People (Foolish People)

But in *Chapter 10 of Proverbs*, Solomon also lists 22 traits of the rebellious. I would ask you once again as I list them to see how many speak about you and make sure you are not being guided by foolish decisions, because God will always bring discipline where there is foolishness.

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

Rebellious people (Foolish People) according to *Proverbs 10* are:

1. Foolish people bring sorrow and grief to their mother.
2. Foolish people are people who steal, cheat, scheme, and lie.
3. Foolish people desire and crave the wrong things.
4. Foolish people are lazy.
5. Foolish people pass up the good opportunities
6. Foolish people hide and disguise their harmful intentions.
7. Foolish people are not remembered at all—no lasting impression.
8. Foolish people are babbling fools who fall flat and do not succeed.
9. Foolish people are those who follow deceitful, crooked paths.
10. Foolish people are those who 'wink at wrong'.
11. Foolish people are people who hate at least some others.
12. Foolish people instigate quarrels.
13. Foolish people have a record and have been punished by the law.
14. Foolish people invite trouble and glory at living on the edge.
15. Foolish people take home the final wage of 'sin and death'.
16. Foolish people squander their money on sinful things.
17. Foolish people ignore and fight correction.
18. Foolish people lead others into wrong and sinful practices.
19. Foolish people hide hatred but it is still present.
20. Foolish people are slanderers and talk incessantly about others.
21. Foolish people speak way too much.
22. Foolish people have a worthless heart.

Out of that list of 22 rebellious characteristics or traits; how many did you say spoke about you? It is clear that the more of the 21 instructable traits you have and the fewer of the 22 rebellious traits you have the wiser you are and the more blessed you are in your life.

#### Taking Instruction

Let's take a look at some of the many verses that Proverbs says about taking instruction or being instructable. It is a very desired trait that Solomon wanted his children to learn and implement in their lives.

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

**Proverbs 9:9** says, *"Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning."*

One of the great themes of Proverbs is that the good traits you put into your life will multiply and produce an increase and eventually an abundance of that trait. That is true here as well. One who listens to instruction and puts it into practice in their life will only find that they get more and more Godly instruction. Is it possible that many are so turned off by Godly instruction today because they are striving to just be able to do everything on their own? In reality, that person may never have been instructable, but just took enough instruction to get started in an area and then has always done it the way they want. Just because I learn a skill or establish a career or marry does not mean I am instructable. It could just mean that I have always wanted to do everything my own way, and that is how I am working my skill, working at my career, coasting through my marriage. I especially think that applies to our spiritual life. Since we continue to evolve in our personality and goals, we must have new and fresh instruction from the Lord. Seldom does God have the same goals for us at age 20 that He has for us at age 60. So, He carefully and openly gives us the instruction that we need at age 20 and He will also give us the instruction that we need at age 60. It is truly a matter of how willing we are to accept and implement instruction in our life.

**Proverbs 9:9** It is so clear in this verse, *"Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still."*

Each one of us has had God make a plan for us to have the best of all lives, and the more instruction and wisdom we receive from God, the more of that plan is actually lived out.

Think of that, we will come back to this thought again tonight. When I seek understanding from God and I am open to the instruction that He wants to give me, I gain more of the absolutely perfect life that He had mapped for me. The key is not God or our situations or even our luck, the key is how open are we to the instruction of the Lord.

### Rebellion

The contrasting trait, rebellion is correctly labeled in Proverbs as a host of items. The lazy are rebellious, so are the wicked, so are the foolish, so are chattering fools, so are the malicious, so are the ones with hidden motives and our list could go on until we duplicate the 22 traits of the rebellious that we have already named.

The word 'rebellion' in the Hebrew had to do with being bitter and unpleasant. This could have been the definition because the nation of Israel had several laws where those who were rebellious were punished or received discipline.

But in Greek, the language of the New Testament, the base of the word rebellion meant contention and contradiction. And in a media based Christian Company, 'What Christians want to Know', they publish a list of 5 sins of rebellion that destroy your life:

- 1) Bad Temper, 2) Anger, 3) Slanderous mouth, 4) Addictions, and 5) Hatred of people.

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

We quickly see that rebellion has no good results, even though it is a glorified trait today. Those who rebel against their teachers do not make better grades or graduate with more degrees, just the opposite. Those who rebel against their boss do not get more raises and better working conditions, just the opposite, they usually lose their jobs. Those who rebel against the nation, the police, the Tax authorities, the Church, the Medical System, and this list could be quite lengthy, do not end up with a better life, just the opposite, they often end up with a series of tragedies in their life.

*Proverbs 16:9* says, "In their hearts humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their steps."

The clear teaching that Solomon makes to his children about rebellion is that it ends up being against God and what God will allow to happen. It makes little difference all the plans that we make, if they are not within the will of God, then God will not permit them to happen. He is the one who puts all the steps into our lives and allows us to live the life that He planned for us.

I think the most enlightening part of rebellion in the Book of Proverbs is how many separate ways rebellion shows itself. Did we ever consider being lazy as a product of rebellion? Did we ever consider the fact that mindless chatterers are in a state of rebellion? Did we stop to realize that someone who passes up the opportunities that come their way in life are in a state of rebellion? Rebellion has spawned dozens of other traits and really none of them are for our good. It is almost always something that will disappoint us. On the other hand:

#### Our Willingness to Take Instruction Is the Gateway to A Successful Life

Solomon literally gives an appeal to his children to follow instructions that are Godly and good because it will give them the best of lives.

*Proverbs 4:11-13*, "I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go, guard it well, for it is your life."

Is it easy to follow God? That is a question that many people have asked and Proverbs says it depends. It depends on you. Following God is a learned behavior and it often means we must change how we were trained to operate. It consists of four elements:

1. **Slowing down** and letting God get in front of your plans, so that He can lead them. This requires that you have enough respect of God, the Bible calls it 'awe of God', that you will allow Him to actually lead your life.
2. **Accepting and believing** that you do not have to analyze every step that you are taking or that you took. You can think too much and not give enough freedom to God for Him to do your thinking. Albert Einstein said,  
"The same mind that created the problem is seldom the mind that resolves it".

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Just be open to the instruction of the Lord and realize that like any good student, your work will need to be graded, marked, and corrected for you to get the total instruction that you need.

3. **Let God lead you;** we know from Psalms that He is a light unto our feet and a lamp unto our path. He is the light that lights the way immediately in front of us and He is also the light that lights the way over the next few years as we move forward in our life. If you cannot see the next move clearly, don't make it. God will illuminate the path and show you the way that you are to go.
4. **Let God give you peace** and relax you. Jesus said that peace was one of the greatest gifts that He came to give to people. He made it clear that His peace was not like the peace of the world, it was not an absence of problems, but it was a solution for the problems.

*John 14: 27* says, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."

*John 16:33* Again, Jesus said, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

Does our anxiety take over and force us to make hasty and poor decisions because we have the wrong definition of the peace that Jesus offers to us? Are we looking for an absence of problems; excellent and perpetual good health until we die in our sleep at age 110; a family that never fights or gets upset and gives us praise at every meal and before they go to bed each night; a pantry full of our favorite foods, snacks and beverages; appliances and cars that never need repair and a house that never costs a penny in upkeep? You say, "Pastor I don't think that is what I mean by peace" really, then when your AC breaks down in 118-degree temperature. Why are you fussing at God about letting this happen? Why do you lament over a dead refrigerator like it was a close cousin? Why are you saying to God, "why do I have to go back to the Doctor again, I should be healed by now?"

It is not sentimental, or romantic, or lacking common sense to allow God to lead your life and give you the instructions that you need. It is simply learning to listen and follow the Lord. It is the way that you will get the greatest advice you have ever gotten and it will be the way that God will put His plan for your life into action.

Let me close with

*Proverbs 14:2* "Whoever fears the Lord walks uprightly, but those who despise him and his instruction are devious in their ways."

Be blessed as you implement and utilize the Lord's instruction.

Our next study will be:

*'Choosing Forgiveness and Not Revenge'*



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## 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

### WEEK 9: Choosing Forgiveness and Not Revenge

Forgiveness is one of those Bible words that is a lot like patience. Many people, including Christians truly believe that you have the gift or you don't have it. A simple study of the Bible proves that is not true.

1. Jesus commanded us to forgive and to have patience and you cannot command people to have spiritual gifts.
2. Galatians calls patience a fruit in Chapter 5 as Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit; something that is naturally produced because the Holy Spirit is in you and not a gift that comes as a special blessing through the Holy Spirit to selected people.
3. Solomon takes time in Proverbs to point out that his children need to develop both the fruit of patience and the fruit of forgiveness.

Let me spend some time tonight on some of the reasons that people want to put patience and forgiveness in a special category.

You might want to do a little check-list on yourself and see if you have ever used any of these as an excuse not to forgive or justifying the fact you are impatient.

#### Excuses Not to Forgive:

1. Many people have trouble with a short temper and they just want God to realize that is their problem and make an exception for them to be able to keep that short temper.

**Proverbs 12: 16** says, *"Fools show their annoyance at once, but the prudent overlook an insult."*

I would encourage you to never use that excuse anymore. Never believe that you were born to blow your top! If God says He has given you the ability to control yourself, you can take hold of that truth and practice it in your life. I would encourage you to start now.

You might say, but what if I don't control my temper and learn how to overlook an insult? Then Proverbs says you are a person that takes no direction from what God's word teaches and you have made that part of your life, a fool's life. What a good thing we do for ourselves when we take God at His Word and do all He says we can! Ask the Holy Spirit for His strength and resolve. Perhaps He will lead you to write out things that trigger your temper and when you are done with your list you can lift it up with holy hands to heaven and give it to God. I know you will feel much lighter, more at peace and much more

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prepared to forgive. You might want to do this exercise each time you watch yourself blow your top. We need to realize that God never stops teaching or forgiving us. Repent as often as you need, each time you violate this Proverb. Repentance is something God gives us for our entire life and not just for our salvation. Jesus died for all our sins and does not want us to carry the residue of sins later in our life. He has created a way for us to recognize our sins, repent of them, and often minimize their consequences. He has only good thoughts for you and wants you to have the greatest of lives.

2. Many people believe that they have a limit to what they can learn from God and when that is full, they really can't learn anymore. They close their eyes to self-improvement and literally say, "Well, this is just who I am, you will have to love me just like this."

*Proverbs 2:1-8* says, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones."

Just in those 8 verses Proverbs lays out several reasons to drop impatient and revenge:

- a. If you search for understanding and mine for it as you would hidden treasure, like the ore in the earth, then you will reap two things: a true awe or fear of God—you will know God as He wants you to know Him and you will grow in the knowledge of what God wants you to do all of your life.
- b. God alone is the source of absolute wisdom and faultless knowledge and He is willing to give those to everyone who searches.
- c. When we learn and follow the wisdom and knowledge of the Lord, He gives us success and protection.
- d. He sends that Guardian Angel to hover over us and direct our way and fights all of our battles.

Getting the wisdom of God is a process and Proverbs tells us how we can gain it: listen to Godly wisdom; treasure it like gold; listen and apply wisdom; allow the Holy Spirit to help you interpret and apply

God's wisdom to your life; ask God for insight and understanding when it does not seem sensible to you; and be on a constant search to add to the wisdom of God that you already have.

I think this means that we must approach our study of the Bible in a way that gains us wisdom. Please don't make the mistake of rushing through the Bible for the sake of

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completing it as a reading project. It is true that God can force a crumb of knowledge through our clenched teeth as we promise to finish reading II Chronicles tonight before we allow ourselves to go to bed; but honestly, He can nourish and feed us properly if we approach our Bible Study time with an open mind, an active brain, and a willing heart. If you are too tired to read and study the Bible, do yourself a favor, go to sleep and promise God you will resume study when you can actually comprehend and understand what you are reading.

The bible is alive and has the voice of God on every page and we must take the time and alertness to understand it. God gives us His Spirit to understand the Bible and God will take your faithful reading of the bible and apply it to everyday life. It will either be in your own life or in the life of someone God puts into your path. Each time you read a passage; God will reveal yet another perspective on it that applies to what you need at that very moment. It is impossible to completely search out every gem in the Scripture but if you don't read and study you will honestly get very few personal teaching gems for your life. It is the way to gain understanding and knowledge.

3. The last excuse I hear about not being a person who forgives is people who say, "I don't need to forgive, they do not deserve my forgiveness."

Once again **Proverbs 1:7-8** says, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching."*

Let's take verse 8 first. How does a child get wise? They listen and take to heart the teachings of their parents. What happens if they neglect the teaching of their parents, they get 'stupid'. The teaching of verse 7 is clear; if we want to get wise, we must conform our thoughts to the thoughts of God and quit excusing the sins we want to keep and if we do not do that, we are 'fools' or 'stupid people' who will literally have to have discipline from God. It is hard to recognize this discipline but to those with spiritual eyes it is very clear. People who never learn to forgive have difficult times with their adult children. They have a very unpleasant career. They have a line of friends that have disappointed them. They often are not as successful as they could have been. If their heart is really hard and they will transfer the blame for every one of those unhappy situations to others; but if their heart is open, even slightly, God will create a spirit of forgiveness in them that allows joy to return to their life and relationships restored.

#### Why Forgive:

God is the master of forgiveness. He forgave each of us by allowing His son to become our perfect sacrifice. The one who had no sins would be the substitutionary sacrifice for each of us who had sin in our life. It will always be the greatest act of forgiveness that the world will ever see. God dying to

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save people who are dead in their sins. Of course, He wants us to learn to forgive; to become like Jesus in the way we interact with others; and to live a life marked by a forgiving spirit.

**Proverbs 11:27** says, *"Whoever seeks good finds favor, but evil comes to one who searches for it."*

One good reason to become a forgiving person is that it drastically changes the perspective we have about every situation. The one looking to forgive approaches every situation with a spirit of reconciliation and a heart full of forgiveness. That is a winning combination for each of us. It may not impress those we are willing to forgive but it will impress your physical body. It will lessen the tension on your blood vessels, allow the heart to beat without any additional stress, permit the organs to function at their best not at their worst, and most of all it will allow you to have a productive and helpful encounter instead of another tension-filled stand-off.

**Proverbs 14:16** says, *"The wise fear the Lord and shun evil, but a fool is hotheaded and yet feels secure."*

The person who learns to have a forgiving spirit will automatically put their trust in the Lord. They realize and have accepted the fact that God is their defender and He will protect them from things that could destroy them for eternity. They will stay away from what would endanger their soul. But the revenge seeker, the one unwilling to forgive or even think the other person is worthy of forgiveness, will never be able to have real security. It will be a false security built on the idea that the person is invincible. Have you ever met a person who thinks they are invincible that they may not die? As Hebrews says, *"It is appointed once to man to die and then comes the judgment."* No one, regardless of the false security they feel they have in their life will be able to escape the sickle of death angel. False security will quickly vanish when we are in the presence of God Almighty and see Him as He really is.

#### Revenge is Not Our Job:

**Proverbs 20:22** says, *"Do not say, 'I will pay you back for a wrong!' Wait for the Lord, and he will take revenge."*

One of the things that God has promised His children all through the Bible is that He will handle revenge for those who mistreat His children.

**Proverbs 24:12-29** is full of great lines that tell us God will guard and protect His own.

- ✓ **Verse 12** says, *"will he not repay everyone according to what they have done?"*; verse 16 says, *"For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes"*;
- ✓ **Verse 17** says: *"Do not gloat when your enemy falls; when they stumble, do not let your heart rejoice, or the Lord will see and disapprove and turn his wrath away from them,"*;

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- ✓ **Verse 19** says, "Do not fret because of evildoers or be envious of the wicked, for the evildoer has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out."; and
- ✓ **Verse 29** says, "Do not say, 'I'll do to them as they have done to me, I'll pay them back for what they did.'"

It is a theme of Bible; **Deuteronomy 32:35; Psalm 94:1 Psalms 27:14; Psalms 37:34** and that great passage of Paul in **Romans 12**:

**Romans 12: 17-21** which says, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him something to drink; In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

This passage includes two Old Testament references, **Leviticus 19:18** and **Psalms 25:21-22**. The will of God is that He is allowed to take revenge on all the enemies of His people and our job is to forgive and allow God to do His work.

We might ask why; why would God restrain us from taking revenge and want to handle it all Himself? Because revenge changes a person. When you are wrapped up in seeking and giving revenge to a person you are no longer able to see them as a prospect for salvation; it is almost impossible to love them as God commanded; and it fills you with all the wrong motives for doing what you really should do. So, forgiveness restores the relationship with God and allows God to be your protector and avenger. He has claimed that role and when we let Him handle that role—He does it in a way that can never be matched by people. Our revenge efforts are like tiny fireworks popping off in the middle of a skirmish while the revenge efforts of God are nuclear weapons that change the situation forever.

I feel some respond to this teaching by saying, "I have never been good at forgiving and it seems like a 'ball and chain' hanging around my neck that I have to focus on forgiving when I should be able to treat people just like they treat me. But striving to live like God instructed us is never a hardship or a heavy burden to drag around.

**Proverbs 13:5** says, "The righteous hate what is false, but the wicked make themselves a stench and bring shame on themselves."

### Godliness, the Foundation of Life:

Godliness helps us all through life. It is foundational to life and becomes our second-nature. In other words, don't try to memorize God's Word like a list of rules and regulations, but rather, let it be running deep below your footsteps. Remember when you were learning to drive a car? There was so much to remember! But it became easier and then pretty soon, you were talking with passengers

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and adjusting the volume on the radio while driving on the freeway. God's Word is like that. Knowing it incorporates deeply the tools you need for everyday living. The Holy spirit brings what you learn to mind when you need it. You stay far away from trouble, from bad influences, from laziness, almost by second nature. Funny, we can learn the rules of the road and not challenge them too much. Physical consequences are immediate! In ignoring God's rules for living, it sometimes takes years to hang ourselves! Excuses are broad and creative, but the results are the same. Excuses not to do it God's way shorten our lives and freeze our nerve to not repent and turn back! But it is never too late, every day is new and we can always come back and follow all that God teaches us to do. Becoming a forgiving person is a learned trait and God smiles when we finally learn how to do it!!

In our next study will take two umbrella traits:

"Choosing to be Full of Integrity and Refusing to Use Falsehood"

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### WEEK 10: Choosing to Be Full of Integrity and Refusing to Use Falsehood

This study looks at two umbrella traits of Proverbs and to see how God wants us to be full of integrity and avoid falsehood. I pray you are blessed as we study the two opposite traits and take the Perplexity Out of Proverbs.

**Proverbs 11:3** outlines the great benefit of being a person of integrity and not a person of duplicity, falsehood, or dishonesty. It says: *"The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity."*

The most important result of being a person of integrity is that you will always be able to make the "very best decision." You will not be swayed to the left of the right by your desire to exploit the situation or the people that you are with, but you will simply do what is right. However, those who are liars, dishonest and duplicitous will get trapped in their schemes, lies, and misleading ways. They will not have a clear path of where to go and certainly will not have any reasonable way of making the "very best decision". The result is that they are ruined by their plots and schemes. Jesus spoke to this very issue in **Luke 20** when the priests and scribes sent spies to listen to Jesus and try to trap him with ambiguous questions. The one they asked him was, *"Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"* I am struck by three things as I read this:

1. They did not try anymore to trap Jesus with spiritual questions. He had shredded their feeble attempts to defeat him with doctrinal or biblical questions.
2. They played off of the adverse feelings of the people. The representative of Caesar, Pilate was in town for the upcoming Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Jewish leaders maintained that the image of Caesar on their coins was really a graven image and the use of that coin was false and unlawful worship. Talk about playing into the emotions of the listeners:
  - a) They hated the Romans, occupiers of their land, Israel.
  - b) They hated Caesar & Pilate, never friends of the Jews.
  - c) They hated paying taxes.

So, the question had little to do with what Jesus really thought. It was just a great chance to catch him at something that either violated the law of the Romans, don't pay the tax, or offended the popular attitude of the people, pay the taxes. But Jesus doesn't play duplicitous games, so He just asked for a denarius coin and when it was given to him, He asked, *"Whose image and inscription are on it."* The crowd responded, *"Caesar's"*. Jesus said then give back to Caesar what is Caesar's and give to God what is God's. Jesus gave

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the answer of integrity, it was both honest and non-controversial. Taxes went to Caesar and offerings and tithes went to God.

3. The third thing is that when an answer of integrity is given, those who want to use lies, dishonesty and duplicity have nothing to say. The passage ends with these words in **Luke 20:26** *"They were unable to trap him in what he had said there in public. And astonished by his answer, they became silent."*

The way to take someone who is a liar, uses falsehoods, or is duplicitous in their motives out of the control of the conversation is to speak only truths and maintain total integrity in your conversation.

### Integrity

Why is God so interested in our integrity and why does He want each of us to be filled with integrity? Solomon lays out the answer in **Proverbs 15:15-23**, he spells out the great blessings that come to a person who is full of integrity and who practices it in their life. Please listen to these 22 reasons he lists and see why God wants us to have integrity, it allows us to already be on the 'blessing path' of God. It does not get better. The passage says:

**Proverbs 15:1-23** *"All the days of the oppressed are wretched, but the cheerful heart has a continual feast. Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil. Better a small serving of vegetables with love than a fattened calf with hatred. A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel, the way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway. A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother. Folly brings joy to one who has no sense, but whoever has the understanding keeps a straight course. Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed. A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!"*

The check I want us to look at tonight is to honestly listen to these benefits of living a life of integrity and ask yourself; "Am I having these blessings in my life?" If the answer is no, please check and make sure you are using integrity in that part of your life.

The blessings that come with a life of integrity, to **"A Person Who"**:

1. Has a happy heart, an overall sense of joy, contentment and feeling blessed.
2. Has a great outlook on life; depression and despondency have been replaced by optimism and hope.
3. Has a willingness to be content and live with the economic position that God has given to you.
4. Tries to stop quarrels and break up disputes especially between believers.
5. Has an easily discernable path in life.
6. Is sensible and makes good decisions.



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7. Has right words to say at just the right time.
8. Has a Gentle spirit in all they say.
9. Teaches with wisdom.
10. Learns from correction.
11. Has treasure in his house, more than just economic treasure, the person of integrity has relationships, environments, and an atmosphere of treasure in their home.
12. Gives good advice.
13. Prays
14. Tries to improve on being Godly
15. Is avoided by the foolish gossipers and others who do not trust in God.
16. Has a glad heart and has let their face know it; they have a happy face.
17. Is hungry for more truth.
18. Respects and fears God's power and creative abilities.
19. Is cool-tempered and level-headed.
20. Stays on the right path and does not deviate from it.
21. Brings joy to their parents or if they are deceased, brings joy to their entire family.
22. Takes and welcomes counsel from many.

How did you do? Were you able to say many of those spoke about who I really am or were there several where you just had to say, "I'm just not there yet on that one!" If the last answer was your response, then I would encourage you to pray and ask God to help you to always use integrity in your speech and your actions in those questionable areas.

### Falsehood

For those who live a life with falsehoods, lies, and duplicity, the list is ominous. They are "**A Person Who**"

1. Is always unhappy.
2. Wealth brings turmoil not happiness.
3. Lives a high life style with low life happiness.
4. Is in constant disputes.
5. Takes two steps forward and three back—often.

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6. Disappoints their family, especially the emotional rock of most families, mom.
7. Lives a life out of control.
8. Is unwilling to take counsel from others.

I really believe that this list does not totally apply to any of our listeners; but if you find any area that speaks to your heart, I would encourage you to look at that area and make sure that it is a part of your life where you apply total integrity.

Living a life of integrity sounds like just the right thing to do, but Proverbs makes it clear that sometimes it is very difficult. For instance, how do I handle it when some lie begins among my peers and even friends and I'm the target of the lie?

**Proverbs 12:19** says, *"Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment."*

So, the advice from God and Proverbs is 'wait it out.' God will expose the lie. Truth stands the test of time. How does that work?

**Proverbs 12:20** tells us, *"Deceit is in the hearts of those who plot evil, but those who promote peace have joy."*

Proverbs says that liars bear rotten fruit and those with integrity bear peace and all will see which is real.

Another difficult one is how do I keep my tongue in submission to the will of the Holy Spirit? Why is that so important?

**Proverbs 13:3** says, *"Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin."*

This area of our life is so important to God that He rewards those who do it with long life. Now, that is not a certain number of years because in some families the average life-span is hardly more than 50 years while in others the average may be 85 or greater. But God knows all of that and He lengthens the life span of the one who speaks with integrity. God cares tremendously how we treat one another and He especially hates sibling rivalry in our lives so He has given us the power in our lives to correct that or even to keep it from happening

### Integrity Brings Blessings

Literally, if I trust Him, He will empower me and I will receive the rewards. Isn't that interesting. If I surrender my life to God, He will direct my life and reward me for doing what He directed me to do. Rebellion against God and what He has taught us is the easiest way to guarantee a terrible life.

You might ask, then why doesn't every Christian just live a life of integrity and get all the blessings that come from that life?

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**Proverbs 1:23-25** spells out this rebellion against the teaching of God, when it says, *"Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings. But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke"* and then lists the consequences.

That is why integrity is so key to our life and our overall happiness. When we are in crisis, this is the time to reach out to God, read His Word and ask God for guidance. The big thing we need to do is SLOW DOWN; Panic decisions happen and even panic happens. We must have a life built on integrity so that we never make a life-altering decision when we are in panic mode. It is much better to wait till the circumstances that caused the panic are gone. Trust God and He will guide you through a brand-new door that you did not even see when you were in panic mode.

#### Lies, Chief Tool of Satan

One of the things I would encourage you to remember is that lies are the chief tool of Satan. He is a murderer from the beginning and never tells the truth, Jesus told a crowd of listeners. This passage in John 8 gives us the true tools of Satan. It is lies, duplicity, and falsehoods heaped into one great pile of deceit and destruction. Solomon warns his children to avoid falsehood of any type in over 25 of the **Proverbs: 6:12-15, 17-19; 10:2, 6,11, 22; 11:1, 3, 18; 17:8, 20, 23; 19:5, 9, 22; 20:10, 17, 21, 23; 20:23; 21:6, 22:5; and 27:5-6.**

Some of these warnings are so clear that they could be the modern ethics books for companies and corporations.

**Proverbs 21:6** says, *"A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare."*

It not only quickly vanishes, but it also is a trap for others to think that they could make such great money in the same devious way. Large fortunes looking for unknown heirs did not start with some unknown prince in Nigeria who died and left a fortune to almost all of us. It was started in the United States by an unsuccessful Iowa farmer in the 1800's who concocted a story about Sir Walter Raleigh dying and leaving a fortune. It gleaned millions in the 1800's, again millions in the 1900's, and it still has people sending in inquiries and money to the United States government to claim the inheritance. This in spite of the fact that the United States has published hundreds of times it is a fake.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Proverbs has these gems:

**Proverbs 20:10** *"Differing weights and differing measures, the Lord detests them both."*

**Proverbs 20:17** *"Food gained by fraud tastes sweet, but one ends up with a mouth full of gravel."*

**Proverbs 20:21** *"An inheritance claimed too soon will not be blessed at the end."*

**Proverbs 20:23** *"The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him."*

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### 'Taking the Perplexity out of Proverbs'

It is crystal clear that we cannot use the main tools of Satan and expect to do anything that God can bless. God is not about to be hoodwinked by deceit and half-truths. These are tools of the Devil and all who use them will receive the same reward as the Devil for that part of their life. It will not gain any long-term success, but will always crumble and end up destroyed.

On the other hand, all the things that we do with integrity as the base; in other words, doing exactly what God teaches us to do will be blessed and blessed extravagantly.

#### Blessings of God

I want to close this study with several Proverbs that speak of the blessing of God on those things done in a manner that uses integrity.

**Proverbs 10:8** *"The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin."*

The one who listens to God and then acts is blessed but the one who keeps chattering searching for an answer instead of just speaking the truth will fail.

**Proverbs 13:6** *"Righteousness guards the person of integrity, but wickedness overthrows the sinner."*

God can put His righteous protection on all acts of integrity but if it is built on lies, falsehoods, and duplicity it will collapse.

**Proverbs 25:26** *"Like a muddied spring or a polluted well are the righteous who give way to the wicked."*

When those who walked in integrity start using the methods of the liars, false speakers, and schemers, then their life will show the effects of this pollution. Just like the best of water sources can be fouled and muddied by careless people, so lives can be fouled and muddied by adopting the methods of the world.

**Proverbs 28:18** *"The one whose walk is blameless I kept safe, but the one whose ways are perverse will fall into the pit."*

The contrast is to the one whose life is marked by integrity is kept safe and the one who uses lies, falsehoods, and duplicity to get their way come to ruin.

**Proverbs 29:1** *"The bloodthirsty hate a person of integrity and seek to kill the upright."*

Those who delight in doing what is wrong and illegal cannot stand those who want to do everything in the right manner and live with integrity. Those who thrive on evil ways are so offended by those who don't that they will often try to do them harm, destroy them.

I think that we can get the game plan all mixed up if we are not careful. People think their mission is to convince those who use lies, falsehoods, and duplicity to quit that and out argue them about the consequences. They truly believe that the truth will be so clear that wicked people will drop what

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they have been doing. Proverbs is very clear that we do not argue with the wicked (liars, falsehood tellers, duplicity schemers) clearly Proverbs tells us not to argue with them, it fuels them. This type of arguing actually causes more harm than good. We are to listen to the Proverbs and realize that the Lord is worth trusting and fearing even when His way of wisdom does not appear to be the most attractive or profitable way to live one's life. Because it is God who judges both the wicked and the speech of the wicked. We need to focus our efforts on those who are open to hearing about God and let God discipline those who live a life of falsehoods and lies until they become ready to hear the Word of God.

This concludes our Summer Study: Taking the Perplexity Out of Proverbs.