

Psalms/  
Proverbs  
Week 1

**Monday:** Psalm 136-144

**Tuesday:** Psalm 145-Proverbs 1

**Wednesday:** Proverbs 2-6

**Thursday:** Proverbs 6-10

**Friday:** Proverbs 11-14

## Introduction

This week we will be finishing up the Psalms and moving into Proverbs. Even though there is a day and a half of Psalms to read, we will be focusing entirely on the first 9 chapters of Proverbs in this week's devotional guide.

It seems that our culture is caught up in trying to find the edge or the secret to success and advancement in life. Some of the best selling books on the market are claiming to give you the keys to success and happiness. Wouldn't that be nice? Wouldn't it be great if we did have some easy-to-follow guidelines to a successful life? The book of Proverbs is just that kind of book. The majority of this book was written by King Solomon in the early days of his life. The purpose of the book was to instruct the young men in his court on how to live the "good life" and find success and happiness in everything they did. What was his secret formula for success? It can be found in the first chapter. Proverbs 1:7 says,"

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

In other words, "if you want to succeed in life; put God first, seek wisdom, and live a disciplined life." Proverbs is a book full of practical, how-to wisdom-nuggets that will serve as guideposts along our path of life. If we want to "succeed" in life, then we need to become students of this book.

The book of Proverbs can be divided into two major sections. In chapters 1-9, Solomon paints a portrait of two women who are calling out to the young men in the city. The one woman is Wisdom, the second woman is Folly. Wisdom is seen as a strong and beautiful woman who is the personification of all that is right and good and is according to the ways of God. Folly is seen as an adulteress, a prostitute, a temptress; enticing young men to come to her for a quick rush of fun, then leaving them to die. Each woman is calling out to the world, trying to convince everyone who walks by that her way is the best way. Each of us is like the young man to whom Proverbs is written. Each of us has the choice, every day, to listen to Wisdom or to chase after Folly. Chapters 1-9 spell out the benefits of Wisdom and the consequences of Folly. The second section is simply a collection of short sayings that have to do with practical, every day life issues. The individual proverbs contained within chapters 10-30 are not necessarily organized by theme or any particular order. They are simply common sense nuggets that are ours for the discovery. In chapter 31, we return to a theme based upon a woman. Proverbs 31 paints a picture of what a godly woman looks like. We'll get to that next week. This week we will focus on chapters 1-9 and examine the portrait of the two women that are competing for our allegiances. The illustration may help summarize this section.

\*\*\* A note to women!! The language of Proverbs is very masculine. Remember that the context was a father speaking to his sons. That does not mean that women are less important, nor does it mean that women are off the hook. The timeless truths regarding holy living in the book of Proverbs are universal. When it speaks to the young man, please read young woman as well. When it speaks of fidelity from a man to his wife, please read from a wife to her husband as well. I think you get the idea.

# Monday -- Proverbs 1:1-7

## The Purpose of Proverbs; the REAL Fear Factor.

Read Proverbs 1:1-7.

Remember that Hebrew poetry always comes in sets of two lines that are related to each other. Sometimes the second line reiterates and further clarifies the first line, other times it contrasts the first line and gives the opposite truth.

In reading vv. 2-6, make a list of all the reasons the book of Proverbs was written.

First of all, make sure that you understand the definition of each of these words.

Which of these things are you truly interested in acquiring and making a part of your life?

What steps are you taking to pursue them?

According to v. 7, what is the key to understanding and wisdom?

The word “fear” deserves to be properly defined. In our cultural English “fear” has a very negative connotation. We fear things that are grotesque and evil, or that threaten to harm us. This is not the correct understanding of the Hebrew word, *yiraw*, which is being translated “fear” in this verse. To fear the Lord means to have deep respect and awe for that which is far more important or powerful than we are. Too, often in our culture we tend to have a general lack of respect for all forms of authority. We become flippant with people who hold important government positions and find it an amusing pass-time to openly belittle them. Unfortunately this attitude has worked its way into the church and our attitude toward God. We forget that the God that showed up on the mountain is a cloud of smoke, fire, lightning, and thunder, is the same God today. A little healthy respect for God will clear our minds and get us poised to receive His lifegiving instruction.

How is your “fear factor” for God?

## Tuesday -- Proverbs 3:5-8

### Being Wise in Your Own Eyes.

Read vv. 5-6. What does it mean to trust in the Lord with all your heart?

Is it possible to trust in Him with only part of your heart?

We have defined our heart as the combination of our mind (intellect), Spirit (non-rational, spiritual self), and body (physical body and resources). Take a moment and evaluate how well you are trusting God with each of these aspects of your heart.

**Mind:** Are you thinking along the same lines as God thinks; letting the truth of His word be your standard for decision making and values?

**Spirit:** Do you trust that God is actually present in your life and at work in you and through you in every moment?

**Body:** Are you taking good care of your body and trusting that God created good food and nourishment for your health?

Are you using your resources (time, talent, finances) the way God wants you to use them, trusting that He will provide your needs?

Read v. 7. What does it mean to be wise in your own eyes? How often do you lean on your own understanding vs. trusting in God's plan and God's timing?

Commit vv. 5-6 to memory.

## Wednesday -- Proverbs 4.

### The Power of Parenting

Read Proverbs 4.

Who is speaking?

To whom is he speaking?

What is the attitude of the speaker's voice?

Is he giving some optional words, is he intense, is he detached?

List the reasons why the Father wants his son to follow wisdom.

Let's stop for a moment and take a snapshot.

In verses 1-4 we see 3 generations at play. Solomon is speaking to his son about how his father, David, sat him on his knee and spoke these words of wisdom to him. This is a very important lesson. We cannot underestimate the power and preeminence of the father and mother's role in the moral training of a child. The quality of our character and our behavior will be carried down through the subsequent generations, whether good or bad. What kind of legacy are you leaving your children or the children you know? Do your actions match your words?

Read v. 23. What does it mean to "guard your heart?" Why is it important to guard your heart?

If your behavior is the overflow, or the wellspring, of your heart, then what would an objective observer of your lifestyle deduce is in your heart today?

## Thursday -- Proverbs 5:1-6:27

### Don't be a Loaf of Bread!!

Read Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-29.

What attitude should a man have toward lusting after or being sexually involved with anyone other than his wife? Why?

In 5:15, what does “drink water from your own cistern” mean?

In 6:25-26, what does lusting or participating with a prostitute or an adulteress do to you? What does this analogy mean?

## Food for thought.

We need to be very clear here. The definition of adultery or prostitution in this chapter, and in the entire Bible is this: any kind of sexual activity, whether mental or physical, that takes place outside of the covenant of marriage. Contrary to public opinion, two consenting adults that really “love each other” does not make it OK. In God’s eyes it is still adultery. Why? Because marriage and sex is about covenant, not about recreational pleasure. God instituted marriage and physical intimacy to be a picture of the ultimate union of mind, body, and soul between two individuals who have covenanted their lives to one another, the same way God has covenanted His life to us. When we give ourselves away to anyone without a bond of covenant, then we become like the Israelites who ran after the foreign gods and got themselves taken away as slaves.

How well are you doing at drinking from your own cistern?

## Friday -- Proverbs 8. The Call to Wisdom.

Read Proverbs 8:1-21.

How does Wisdom describe herself?

What does she claim to offer to those who seek her?

Read vv. 22-31.

What role did Wisdom play in creation?

Read John 1:1-5.

Are there any correlations between Proverbs 8:22-31 and John 1:1-5? If so, what implications could this have?

Read Proverbs 8:32-36.

What is the result of following wisdom?

What is the result of turning away from wisdom?

Which direction are you heading?

## For a Little Deeper Look

### What is Wisdom?

In our culture, wisdom can tend to be thought of as extreme knowledge. A “wise person” is often depicted as an old man or woman with grey hair that sits on the top of a mountain and contains all the knowledge and understanding of the universe. That is not at all the Old Testament understanding of the term wisdom.

In order to grasp the Old Testament meaning of “wisdom” we must first discuss a major difference between the Hebrew worldview and the Greek worldview. The Greeks believed in something called dualism. They understood that there was a fundamental separation between what is physical and what is spiritual. Within this separation there was also a distinction in value; the spiritual was good, the physical was bad. For the Greek thinker, wisdom, and the path to enlightenment, was a completely mental endeavor. If a person wanted to attain spiritual perfection, one needed only to study and discipline the mind to be able to grasp the complexities of the universe. For the Hebrew mind -- the mind originally formed through the instruction of Yahweh -- the perspective was much different. The Hebrew mind was monistic. In other words, the Hebrew mind did not separate the physical from the spiritual. It was all spiritual. How you washed your hands, went to the bathroom, ate your food, prayed to God, studied the scripture, planted your field, and loved your spouse; these were all equally spiritual activities.

The reason we struggle with this definition is because, as Americans, we are descendents of the Greek mind.

“Western Civilization” has been the recipient of and the propagator of a dualistic worldview for thousands of years. Unfortunately, much of the Greek dualism snuck its way into the early church and really confused a great deal of doctrine, leading people to believe that the kingdom of God was purely spiritual and that the physical world and physical activities were “evil.” Holiness was perceived as a purely mental game. We would do well to reevaluate that concept and get back in touch with the Hebrew perspective of unity and integration between the mind, the body, and the spirit.

This brings us to the real meaning of wisdom. Wisdom is not superior knowledge. In other places in the Old Testament, the exact word for wisdom is used to describe the skill that the craftsmen possessed who built the furniture in the tabernacle. Wisdom is not abstract knowledge, it is knowledge put into action. Wisdom is the knowledge of God put into action in the everyday activities of life. A good working definition of Biblical wisdom would be:

*the skill of living everyday life  
according to the will of God.*

We must be careful not to place people with extreme intellect or a large knowledge base on a pedestal. Just because a person knows a lot about the Bible it does not mean that he or she is wise. They may talk the talk, but if you want to know if a person is wise you must observe, over time, whether they walk the walk.

Hopefully you can see how this concept has impacted some of our basic philosophy at Hart Haus. One of our key verses is Proverbs 4:23, “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” The heart,

in the Hebrew mind, was the unity of the intellect, the spirit, and the physical body in contact with the physical world. The Hebrews understood the foolishness of believing that you could think something to be true and call it "belief" without it impacting your daily activities. You don't truly "believe" something until it has transformed your behavior. For example, if you smoke, you can say you believe that smoking is wrong and can kill you, but if you really "believed" it, in the biblical sense, you would stop. Up to that point you simply aspire to the notion and think it is a worthwhile proposition.

A wise person doesn't just fill up his or her head with knowledge without having the knowledge transform their spiritual contact with God and their physical interaction in the world. In fact, a person who did that would be considered a fool in the Hebrew perspective. Perhaps that is what the Apostle Paul meant in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 when he said that God's wisdom is foolishness to the wisdom of the world, but that God has made man's wisdom foolishness. As followers of Jesus, we want to continually move toward the integration of our mind, spirit, and body into the full love of God. We want to fill our minds with the knowledge of who God is and what He expects from us; we want to know God experientially through unity with our spirit, and we want the behaviors of our body -- our play, love, community, work, finances, resources, dress, eating habits, relationships, etc. -- to all be the overflow of our knowledge of God. If this is true of us, then we will be wise. If we simply pay lip service to it, then we are fools.