

THE

PART 1

WISDOM

LIFE

30 DAYS OF GROWING IN GOD'S WISDOM

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The Wisdom Life (Part 1): 30 Days of Growing in God's Wisdom

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PREFACE

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

Wisdom is the application of knowledge and God’s wisdom is more rare than precious jewels in today’s culture. Everywhere we look we see the folly of mankind. As a society rejects God’s wisdom their minds are not left void, but rather they’re filled with evil and all kinds of unrighteousness. When people reject God’s wisdom in regards to when life begins, the sin of abortion is practiced. When people reject God’s wisdom in regards to sexuality, everything and anything that brings pleasure is practiced, no matter how wicked it is. When the wisdom of God is forsaken in government the people suffer. And when individuals reject God’s wisdom in regards to salvation, they will perish. There’s not one place in our lives where if we reject God’s wisdom we will not suffer.

All of life’s problems reduce down to “lack of wisdom.” You don’t have a marriage problem; you have a “wisdom problem” in regards to marriage. We don’t have money problems; we have a “wisdom problem” in regards to finances. Mankind cannot live on bread alone (just physical nourishment), rather humanity must live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). We must satisfy our hunger for knowledge at the table of God lest we become self-deceived. G.K. Chesterton said, “When men choose not to believe in God, they do not thereafter believe in nothing, they then become capable of believing in anything.” The same is true with God’s wisdom, when people stop practicing God’s wisdom, they become capable of every kind of folly.

Some foolishly say, “I don’t believe in God because I believe in science.” However, “science” (the study of the natural world) couldn’t even exist without God. Have you ever tried to study “nothing?” God is the reason why there is something rather than nothing. God is the reason humans can reason. God is the very foundation for the laws of logic and mathematics. Dr. John Lennox, the renowned Oxford professor of mathematics said, “The most incomprehensible thing about the universe is that it is comprehensible.”

We owe our entire existence to God. Our rational mind and conscience is a gift from God. Therefore, we should pursue the wisdom of God by asking the Father for it in Jesus’ name. We should set time apart in our lives everyday to study God’s Word and learn from Him. When we receive God’s

wisdom from His Word and feed our souls the Bread of Heaven, we will then know how to be led by the Holy Spirit in our lives to discover His wisdom in all that we do.

The cures to every disease are found in the wisdom of God. The success of every marriage is found in the wisdom of God. The joy of parenthood is found in the wisdom of God. The blueprints for peace on earth and good will towards men are found in the wisdom of God. Are you willing to humble yourself and learn from God His Wisdom and see it revealed in the person of Jesus Christ? Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:25, *“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom.”* In other words, God has more wisdom in His pinky finger, than the entire universe can hold. So let’s begin our journey into the depths of God’s wisdom found in the book of Proverbs. Come with an open mind and humble heart because this is just the beginning. Only God knows what He has in store for you, as you live according to His magnificent wisdom.

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

1. Read a lesson each day consistently for 30 days.
2. Prayerfully consider the reflection at the end of each lesson.
3. Put into practice the three actions listed each day.

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DAY 1: PROVERBS, BETTER THAN FORTUNE COOKIES

Proverbs 1:1-2, “1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: 2 for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight.”

It amazes me how silly people can be sometimes especially when it comes to superstition. Sad but true, some people religiously read their daily horoscope for guidance, others go to fortune tellers to receive insight into their love life and still others actually take the sayings of their fortune cookie serious (as if God was going to speak to them through a random cookie).

Once I was out with another pastor at a Chinese restaurant and when the fortune cookies came he said, “Everybody read the fortunes and at the end say, ‘in the bathroom.’” One person read out loud, “You will have great success today... in the bathroom!” We all laughed hysterically and I thought to myself these things actually serve a purpose now, to make us laugh!

King Solomon, the son of King David, wrote the book of Proverbs for the purpose of giving wisdom and discipline to the people of Israel. The Bible records that Solomon was the wisest and richest man in Israel’s history because God blessed him greatly with wisdom (1 Kings 3:12-13). Though others wrote some of the proverbs found in the book, he was the major author.

The word proverb means, “a simple saying that is popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity.” God gave Solomon great wisdom to rule Israel and make it a successful nation. Likewise, if we can learn from this wise king the wisdom God gave him, we can be successful in all we do.

In today’s passage found at the beginning of the book of Proverbs, God promised that He would give us wisdom (the application of knowledge), instruction (the steps needed to succeed) and insight into understanding words of insight (the ability to gain knowledge wherever it may be found). A wise man once said, “God doesn’t just give us wisdom, He is the very foundation of wisdom.” According to Paul, wisdom is not just an attribute of God, but God the Son, “*Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:24).

Spiritual change doesn't come by reading a fortune cookie, but if you read the book of Proverbs and apply the wisdom God gives, your life will change by the power of the Holy Spirit.

God promised that His Word would never return void and that it will accomplish the purpose it was sent for (Isaiah 55:11). Start today and ask God to fill you with His wisdom as you read the book of Proverbs; they're better than fortune cookies!

REFLECTION

Do you want God to give you wisdom, instruction and insight to understanding knowledge?

ACTION

1. Repent of all the superstitions you may practice. For example fortune cookies, horoscopes or psychic readings.
2. Commit to God in prayer that you will read and learn His wisdom from the book of Proverbs.
3. Daily apply God's wisdom to your life.

DAY 2: THE FEAR OF THE LORD

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

The fear of the Lord is one of the most misunderstood subjects in Christianity. On one hand, some think that the fear of the Lord is to fear that God is going to send you to hell unless you do enough good works. This misunderstanding is corrected by 1 John 4:18, *“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”* We are not saved by good works but rather by believing in the love that God manifested in Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection. All those who are saved can be free from the fear of death and punishment.

On the other hand, some Christians believe that only sinners should have a fear of the Lord because they think God will never judge them or hold them accountable for their actions as a Christian. This false belief is corrected by Paul in Philippians 2:12, *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”* The believer should fear the Lord because one day God will judge them and this should be a motivation to continue in their salvation and not to neglect it (Hebrews 2:3).

We shouldn’t be so full of fear that we neglect God’s great love for us or be so complacent to think God will not judge us. Paul Chappell said, “The fear of the Lord helps us recognize our accountability to God.” With this in mind let us learn the proper definition of the fear of the Lord.

The “fear of the Lord” means to, “honor and respect God as the Judge of all the earth, knowing that everyone will give an account of their life before Him.”

Imagine if your dad was a general in the U.S. Army, fighting against terrorists in the Middle East. When you are home with your dad he loves you and treats you kindly, even if you mess up, he still loves you and disciplines you with patience. However, what would happen if you joined the Islamic terrorists and became his enemy on the battlefield? He would have no choice but to fight against

you with the full power of the U.S. Army. Therefore, your dad would be a loving father at home, but a terror to the enemy on the battlefield. The choice would be yours as to how you would want him to treat you, as his child or as an enemy.

The same is true with understanding the fear of the Lord. As a Christian you are always to respect and honor God as your Father because he will judge you one day according to His commands. He wants you to know and love Him and dwell in His house forever. However, if you reject Jesus as your Lord and Savior, God will destroy you on Judgment Day. The choice is yours.

King Solomon is teaching in today's proverb that if we can understand the fear of the Lord, we are at the starting place of receiving all the rest of God's knowledge. When we have humility and the right understanding of our place with God, as His creation, everything else will come with ease. The fool despises God's wisdom and instruction because they want to do whatever they feel is right in their own eyes and in the end they will perish.

The bottom line is simple, fear God and grow wise or reject God and suffer as a fool.

REFLECTION

Do you have a proper fear of the Lord?

ACTION

1. Remove any false understandings of the fear of the Lord you may have.
2. Ask God in prayer to give you a healthy understanding of the fear of God.
3. Accept all of God's wisdom in humility by fearing the Lord.

DAY 3: DON'T FOLLOW SINNERS

Proverbs 1:10, *“My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them.”*

The first time I saw pornography, was because my friend brought it to my house. The first time I smoked a cigarette, was because a friend offered it to me. The first time I stole from a store, was because my friend dared me to do it. The first time I got drunk, was because my friends pressured me to keep drinking. The first time I really beat someone up, was because my friends were cheering me on to do it. The first time I did drugs, was because my best friend said it was fun. Do you see a pattern?

Take a moment to look at your past. How many sins did you first commit because someone tempted you? Now consider how many of your favorite sins involve other sinners; for example telling dirty jokes, getting into fights, spreading gossip, getting drunk or doing drugs, bullying other people, telling lies, breaking laws or acting in sexual perversion. Do you see a pattern?

Most people are tempted to sin from those closest to them. Sadly, our friends and family are the source the enemy uses to get us hooked on our favorite sins.

King Solomon in today's proverb is giving powerful wisdom. He is basically saying, “If you don't want to sin, stop hanging around sinners while they sin!” God will judge all your friends, coworkers, family and neighbors for their own choices. Don't let their sinful acts tempt you to sin. Decide today to say “no” to peer pressure and sin.

If your friends invite you to a club where you know drunkenness and perversion will be the norm, tell them no and invite them to your house for a Bible study. If your coworker asks you to be dishonest so you can make more money, correct them and let them know you don't have to lie and steal to be successful. Your hard work will pay off. If someone at church entices you to gossip and spread hurtful things about the leadership or someone who hurt them, correct them and let them know your ears aren't a trashcan. Also, in today's modern world we need to be careful not to be enticed to sin while using technology. If pornographic internet

ads entice you to sin, download Christian accountability software and get an accountability partner to encourage you to live holy.

The ole' saying is true, "Show me your friends and I'll show you your future." Make a decision today to not give in to the enticement of sinners but rather stand your ground for God.

REFLECTION

Do you know how to say "no" when sinners entice you to sin?

ACTION

1. Think of the last three people that enticed you to sin. Pray for strength to say no if it happens again and for them to get saved.
2. Say out loud in prayer, "In Jesus name I will say 'no' to sin and 'yes' to God's commands!"
3. Next time sinners entice you to sin, just say, "no." Then use it as an opportunity to preach the gospel to them!

DAY 4: WISDOM WILL SAVE YOU

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

Have you ever thought about how wisdom saves you from harm in your every day life? When you apply wisdom to stop at a red light in your car, your life is spared from getting hit by oncoming traffic. When you use wisdom to eat edible foods and avoid eating poisonous things, your life is spared from sickness. When you use wisdom and don't touch a burning stove, gulp down hot coffee or run with scissors, your life is saved from danger and injury.

Now, have you ever thought about how God's wisdom saves you from the ways of the wicked? For example, when you use wisdom by not gossiping, you're saved from the judgment on those who cause division with their words. When you use wisdom to not curse or tell dirty jokes, you're spared from the judgment of those who do. When you use wisdom and don't follow false prophets, you're delivered from their punishment on Judgment Day. When you don't lie, steal, take the Lord's name in vain, commit adultery or break the law, you're saved from sin's penalties. Most importantly, when you follow Jesus' wisdom and are born again, you are saved from the devil's lies and eternal damnation.

When you use God's wisdom found in Scripture, your life is saved from the ways of wicked men whose words and ways are perverse. They are perverted because they pervert and distort the truth. Just like the devil, they love to tell lies. The book of Proverbs is full of examples of what happens to the ungodly and the foolish, but consider how much worse it is to be the follower of a fool. It's one thing to be foolish and wicked like Pharaoh and rush into the Red Sea; it's another kind of stupid to be the one following a fool like Pharaoh. No thank you!

In other words, everyone is following someone, who are you following? Some people build their lives and values on what rich and powerful people teach. Others base their lives off of what religious leaders teach, never thinking to compare their teachings to Scripture. Many people just believe whatever their family tells them, no matter what God's Word says. And some people even foolishly get their beliefs from what famous people teach, just because they're famous. Forest Gump said, “Stupid is, as stupid does!”

In the end, it doesn't matter what person you're following because if you're not following Jesus and God's wisdom you will perish.

Anyone that teaches something opposite of God's Word should be rejected. God's Word is the standard for all morality and spirituality. In the gospels we see that Jesus was the perfect example of God's wisdom in humanity. Jesus taught the path to destruction was wide and many are on it. However, the path of life is narrow and few travel on it (Matthew 7:13-14). The choice is yours, do you want to follow the multitudes on the path of destruction or follow Jesus and His disciples on the narrow path of eternal life?

Be like Jesus and follow God's wisdom in the Scriptures because it will save you from destruction and needless suffering. The way of the sinner may seem profitable and popular today but their end is death. Remember, God's ways are always the best ways and wisdom is better than folly.

REFLECTION

Do you want to follow the ways of God or man?

ACTION

1. Commit daily to reading your Bible and receiving God's wisdom.
2. Reject any advice or "so-called wisdom" that is against God's Word.
3. By God's grace, live a life that pleases God according to His commands!

DAY 5: TRUST IN THE LORD

Proverbs 3:5-6, “5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; 6 in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Today’s proverb is the first one I ever committed to memory. It has proven to be just as powerful today as the day I first learned it. I would like to take the next few paragraphs to break down each of its main parts to increase your understanding of this beautiful Scripture.

First, King Solomon commanded us to trust in the Lord with all of our heart. The word trust here means, “to put full confidence in God and His Words.” Second, we are told to not lean on our own understanding. That is because our own understanding is in opposition to God’s wisdom. Think of an object only being able to lean in one direction at a time. Our direction of leaning (dependence) should always be towards the Lord and His Word.

Third, we are commanded to submit to God in all our ways. This means we are to always place God’s Word as the filter for all our thoughts, actions and words. Our ways should become His ways. For example, when choosing whom to marry we should first submit to God and His plan to be sure we find the right one. Also, on our job we should consider how God wants us to do our tasks so that we can be successful and have a great testimony with our co-workers and customers.

Lastly, the proverb promises that if we have been faithful to do the previous steps (trust in the Lord, lean not on our own understanding and submit to Him in all our ways) God will make our paths straight. When God straightens our paths, it means we will have the best route to fulfill our God-given purpose. He literally leads us in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake (Psalm 23:3).

Sadly, many people today would rather trust themselves, lean towards popular opinions and resist God. However, the disciple must learn to avoid the trap of self-reliance and self-determination because that crooked path is a temporary illusion.

Soon enough, even the strongest and smartest of mankind will come to their end and see that their life was nothing but a vapor of smoke, here today and gone tomorrow.

Then in eternity, when it is too late, they will realize how God's ways were better because He was the very source of their life. The famous preacher Adrian Rogers once said, "I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven." Take some time today to reaffirm your trust for God. Avoid being dependent upon your own wisdom and be sure to submit to God in all you do. For when you do these things, God promises to make your paths straight!

REFLECTION

Do you trust God with all your heart and above all other influences?

ACTION

1. Examine your life to see if there are any ways you are not submitting to God. Repent if the Holy Spirit brings any to your heart.
2. Become mindful to submit to God in all that you do; especially at work, school and with your family.
3. Be thankful to God for the straight paths He has prepared for you to fulfill His purpose in your life.

DAY 6: DON'T BE STINGY

Proverbs 3:27, *“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.”*

Nobody likes a stingy self-centered person. Can you remember the last time you needed to borrow something and the person you asked said, “No,” even though you knew they had it? Didn’t that upset you? Nothing frustrates me more than people who are selfish and stingy. I remember when I first got into rock climbing, I took a church group to a place where we paid expensive fees to have people teach us and let us use their equipment.

After that first time, I was hooked on climbing high and enjoying God’s creation. I would go back to the same spot with a few friends to hike and have fun. One time we saw a small group of people climbing and I asked them if we could climb with them. Sadly, they said, “No,” with an attitude. I even offered to pay them but they still selfishly said, “No.” Their main reason for turning us down was because they just wanted to privately enjoy their time on the rock. However, to us it was like they were saying, “We don’t have time to let you peasants climb, we’re too busy being rock stars!”

Over time my friends and I bought our own equipment, learned to do everything safely and we started climbing all the time. I would joyfully wait for hikers to pass by and ask us for a quick climb and I would passionately say, “Come on, you’re next!” God used our generosity to not only help hikers have a memorable day, but it was also an open door to preach the gospel to them. There’s no better time to remind people of their mortality than when they’re hanging by a rope 75 feet in the air!

The meaning behind my short story is simple;

**We may not be able to help everyone in life, but we can help someone!
Learning to be inconvenienced for others is one of the best ways to experience the self-sacrificing love of Jesus.**

Henry Ward Beecher said, “No man is more cheated than the selfish man.” Determine in your life to be the answer to someone’s prayer for help. For example, maybe your neighbor will ask you if they can borrow your shovel because they don’t have one to clear the snow with. Not only should you let them borrow it, but also if you have an extra shovel, first help them clear their driveway and then let

them keep one! Christians aren't to be pushovers and enablers, but we should be able to really help and bless people with the things we have; in this way we can show the world Jesus.

Next time someone asks you for help, before you say, “No,” make sure you have really thought about it, considered their feelings and your actual resources. Then if it’s in your power to act, give them a big resounding, “Yes!”

REFLECTION

Do you like helping people when you have the power to act?

ACTION

1. Repent of any selfishness you may have had in the past.
2. Look for opportunities to help others with the things you have.
3. When someone asks you for help only say, “No,” if you really can’t do it; other than those times, say, “Yes!”

DAY 7: WISDOM IS SUPREME

Proverbs 4:7, *“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.”*

Did you know that God’s wisdom has an answer for every problem you face in life? By definition, “wisdom is the application of knowledge” and “understanding is the ability to comprehend truth.” Wisdom and understanding go hand in hand because they comprehend and apply truth. They are like two sides of the same “truth coin.” That is why King Solomon taught us to pay whatever price it costs to get them because they will solve all of our problems and give us great success.

There will never be a problem you face in life when God’s wisdom is not the answer.

James said, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you”* and *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”* (James 1:5,17). All wisdom (medical, spiritual, natural, etc.) comes from God and He is willing to give it freely to whoever humbly asks for it in Jesus’ name!

Consider all the problems you face in life as “wisdom opportunities.” Every time you face a problem, you are being given a chance to obtain wisdom to solve it. For example, if you face a problem in your marriage, God is giving you and your spouse the opportunity to grow in the wisdom of a healthy biblical marriage. When you have the mindset to see the problem as an opportunity to grow in wisdom by seeking God’s solution, He will give you the understanding and you will come through the situation with success.

The principle of wisdom applies to everything in life. All the problems in medical science are solved by God’s wisdom and understanding; whether the doctors acknowledge God or not. Every scientific fact, true statement and discovery has its source in God. With this grounding of reason and faith working together, Christians started such universities as Harvard, Princeton and Yale. The Christian worldview is even responsible for the scientific revolution. Christians believed they could discover the underlying laws of the universe because an Intelligent Designer and Lawgiver created it. Sir Isaac Newton wrote, “This most

beautiful system of the sun, planets and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being.”

Harvard’s founding motto was, “Truth for Christ and the Church.” Sadly, now it’s just, “Truth,” because they have rejected their godly foundation. Today’s culture needs to repent of its pride and naivety to think it can have wisdom divorced from God. As disciples of Christ, let’s not make the same mistake by putting God’s wisdom in a box marked, “spiritual truth” and give the world everything else. Make it your goal in life to gain as much of God’s wisdom and understanding as you can and remember, God is the source of all truth.

REFLECTION

Do you want God’s wisdom and understanding in your life?

ACTION

1. Think of three things in your life you wish to gain wisdom and understanding in.
2. Pray for God to grant you the wisdom you need in these areas.
3. Do whatever it takes in each area to gain wisdom and understanding, and then give God the credit.

DAY 8: GUARD YOUR HEART

Proverbs 4:23, *“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”*

I had the honor of growing up in a Christian home with godly parents. Both of my parents set a great example of love and faithfulness to the Lord. A saying from my Dad that has always impacted my life is, “Guard your heart and protect your testimony.” His fatherly advice is rooted in this precious proverb. Sadly, King Solomon watched his father David suffer because he didn’t guard his heart. The Bible records that when David was supposed to be at war, he decided to stay home and spend time gazing from his palace roof. On one occasion, King David saw a married woman bathing and lusted after her. He then had sex with her and she became pregnant.

David didn’t confess his sin immediately, but rather tried to conceal it by bringing her husband home from war so he could sleep with her. By doing this, King David hoped it would make everyone think it was the husband’s baby. However, the man refused to dishonor his troops by indulging in sex with his wife. David then had the man placed in the most dangerous part of a battle and then commanded his general to withdraw his troops so the man would be killed (2 Samuel 11). Tragic.

Since David didn't guard his heart he became a liar, an adulterer, a murderer, a self-centered king and a shame to his people. That is why the lesson from King Solomon in today’s proverb is so powerful. Nothing is more important than guarding your heart.

Your heart, where you inner emotions and desires reside, is the source of your life. As your physical heart is the source of blood to your body, likewise, your spiritual heart is the source of life to your soul (mind, will and emotions). Therefore, just like your rib cage guards your physical heart, you must let the Holy Spirit with God’s Word guard your spiritual heart.

Here are some practical ways to guard your heart, (1) Guard your eyes and what you look at because it can become lust, (2) Guard how you spend and acquire money because it can become greed, (3) Guard your temper because it can become sinful with outbursts of anger, (4) Guard your words for they can become perverted

and unwholesome and (5) Guard your thoughts because they can become doubtful and sinful.

A.W. Pink said, “An honest heart ceases fighting against God.” Since King David fought against God’s will for His life, he lacked protection against his sinful desires. The disciple must embrace the Holy Spirit’s protection and welcome Him as their guard because they treasure the new life they’ve been given. Now guard your heart and protect your testimony!

REFLECTION

What do you need to guard your heart from?

ACTION

1. Ask God to reveal any areas of your life that your heart has been invaded by sin. Repent for any sin God exposes.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to assist you to guard your heart everyday.
3. Guard your heart by the power of the Holy Spirit and obedience to God’s Word.

DAY 9: SEVEN THINGS THE LORD HATES

Proverbs 6:16-19, “*16 There are six things the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.*”

Did you know that there are actually things the Lord hates? In today’s passage King Solomon boldly lists seven things that are detestable to God. I would like to list and describe each one with New Testament Scriptures, so you and I will hate what God hates and love what He loves. I pray that we will first see if there are any of these things in our lives before we preach them to others.

(1) *God Hates Haughty Eyes*: God hates the look of pride in your eyes when you think more highly of yourself than you ought and have a bad attitude (1 John 2:16). (2) *God Hates a Lying Tongue*: God hates when you lie and don’t tell the all the truth, all the time (Colossians 3:9). (3) *God Hates Hands That Shed Innocent Blood*: God hates murder, abortion and unjust war (Romans 1:28-32).

(4) *God Hates a Heart that Devises Wicked Schemes*: God hates it when you plan to do sinful things and make excuses to cover it up (1 John 3:9). (5) *God Hates Feet That Rush to Do Evil*: God hates when you’re quick to sin and find sin enjoyable (Galatians 5:19-21). (6) *God Hates a False Witness*: God hates it when you are called on to tell the truth but you lie and are untrustworthy, (Revelation 21:8). (7) *God Hates Dissension Among Brothers*: God hates it when you gossip, slander and are easily offended in the church or within any community you associate with (Titus 3:10).

All of us need to examine our hearts in prayer to see if we are doing any of the things God hates. Our old man was nailed to the cross with Jesus and now by God’s grace we can live a new life, free from sin. Paul said in Romans 12:9, “*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*”

Our love for God should be our motivation to hate what He hates and love what He loves.

Declare with me what Charles Spurgeon once said, “This day, my God, I hate sin not because it damns me, but because it has done Thee wrong. To have grieved my God is the worst grief to me.”

REFLECTION

Do you hate what God hates?

ACTION

1. Examine your heart and repent, if needed, from any of the sins mentioned in today’s devotional.
2. Hate what God hates.
3. Love what God loves.

DAY 10: DO NOT LUST

Proverbs 6:25, *“Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes.”*

In the first nine chapters of Proverbs, King Solomon contrasts the call of wisdom to the temptation of the adulteress woman (Proverbs 2:16-22, 5:1-23, 6:23-35 & 7:1-27). Solomon mentions many of the devastating consequences of adultery. Here are just a few; (1) Adultery will cost a person much of their wealth (Proverbs 5:8-10), (2) The one who commits adultery will never have their shame forgotten in this life (Proverbs 6:33) and (3) Adultery arouses the anger and fury of the woman’s husband (Proverbs 6:34).

The primary way Solomon described adultery is that of a married man cheating on his wife with a married woman acting as a prostitute. However, Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28, *“27 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Lust means, “to desire someone sexually that you are not married to.”

According to Jesus, all lust is equal to the sin of adultery.

Paul also wrote in Ephesians 5:3, *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality.”* As a result, the above proverb can be understood for us in the New Covenant as a warning against all lust. God only ordained sex to be between a married man and woman (like Adam and Eve). Jesus also reinforced this concept of monogamous heterosexual marriage in Matthew 19:5.

Anything sexual outside of one man and one woman in marriage is considered sin (Galatians 5:19). Sex outside of marriage is literally a “perversion” of God’s original “version.” Lust is dangerous because it is addictive. Most people are not satisfied with doing it only once. They desire it more and more and yet they are never satisfied. For example, pornography can lead to masturbation, then to inappropriate touching in a dating relationship, then to oral sex and then to premarital sex. Those who are comfortable with premarital sex are only a short step away from cheating on their spouse once they’re married because they let lust control their sexuality.

Sexual perversion can also manifest in bi-sexuality, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, polygamy, polyandry and polyamory; which the Bible calls

sin (1 Corinthians 6:9). Sadly, innocent people can be hurt by the sexual sins of molestation, rape and incest. (*Special Note:* If you are currently or have ever experienced any of these sins against you, please talk to a trusted leader in the church for healing and safety if it's still happening).

D.A. Carson wrote, "Imagination is a God-given gift; but if it is fed dirt by the eye, it will be dirty. All sin, [especially] sexual sin, begins with the imagination. Therefore what feeds the imagination is of maximum importance in the pursuit of kingdom righteousness." Give your sexual desires to God and be the person Jesus made you to be. Don't let this culture or your sinful lusts control your life. Be led by the Holy Spirit in all you do, especially in your sexuality.

REFLECTION

When was the last time you lusted?

ACTION

1. Ask Jesus to purify your heart from all lust and perversion.
2. Be wise in your sexuality to guard yourself against temptation. For example, download accountability internet software, don't watch unclean TV shows or movies and guard what magazines, books and music you feed your soul.
3. Ask God to give you a spouse to fall in love with! If you're already married, ask God to give you eyes only for your spouse.

DAY 11: LAZY HANDS VS. DILIGENT HANDS

Proverbs 10:4, *“Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.”*

King Solomon in the above proverb is contrasting the difference between poverty and wealth. The poor person, in general, is said to be poor because he or she has “lazy hands” and the wealthy are rich, generally speaking, because they have “diligent hands.” What kind of hands do you have?

Are you the kind of person that works hard, even if others don’t? Or are you the kind of person that always looks for the least amount of work? According to King Solomon there are two basic mindsets people have when it comes to work; those who have lazy hands and those who have diligent hands.

Those with lazy hands will be lazy everywhere they go; in church, at home, on the job, etc. Likewise, those with diligent hands work hard everywhere they go because they can’t settle for anything less than giving their best.

Sadly, some people don’t mind living on food stamps or receiving government checks because they think it’s owed to them. I used to pastor in the inner city of New Orleans and saw this kind of mindset every day. I call this way of thinking a “poverty mindset.” Those with this mindset are comfortable in poverty and have no desire to change their situation because they like spending other people’s money. People with a poverty mindset would rather have a “handout” than a “hand up.”

At the same time, I’ve had the privilege of meeting some really successful businessmen and women, who’ve worked hard in life and have the wealth to prove it. One thing all these people had in common was their drive and passion to work hard. It didn’t matter the color of their skin, where they were born, how their parents treated them or even the schools they attended. What separated them from their peers was their work ethic. Some of them came from poverty, other countries, and even had broken the law in the past. However, at one point in their lives they all made a decision to work hard and never give up.

Certainly, King Solomon was aware of people in his day that fell on hard times and may have been poor for a season because of unforeseen circumstances. However, even when good hard working people face troubling times, they still have their work ethic. No matter what they face, they know the only way out of poverty and hard times is to have “diligent hands.” A wise man once said, “God’s blessing to the lazy is work and His blessing to the hard working is prosperity.” Join with other successful people and avoid laziness by working hard with your hands- eventually it will pay off!

REFLECTION

Do you have “diligent hands?”

ACTION

1. Repent of any laziness you may have.
2. Ask God to give you the strength to work hard in life.
3. Be diligent and never give up!

DAY 12: LOVE COVERS ALL

Proverbs 10:12, “*Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs.*”

If you had a choice to choose how people would always treat you, either with love or hate, which one would you pick? Love. Why? Everyone loves love. Even people who hate, like those in gangs or terrorist groups, still choose to love their own as family. No one really wants hate all the time, everyone down deep inside wants love.

Now consider this, Jesus said in Luke 6:31, “*Do to others as you would have them do to you.*” We are to treat people not like how they treat us but rather how we want to be treated. And how do we want to be treated? With love. As a result, we should love people even when they commit wrongs against us. Jesus on the cross is our best example of love covering all wrongs.

In today’s proverb, King Solomon is teaching a simple lesson; hatred causes dissension (more trouble) and love covers (forgives) all wrongs. Now someone might say, “But the person who hurt me doesn’t deserve to be forgiven because of what they did to me!” However, Jesus is not teaching that we should love and forgive people because they deserve it, but rather because it is the right thing to do. Just like the ole’ saying goes, “two wrongs don’t make a right.” Our wrong action of unforgiveness will not bring about any good.

We can be sure that in life people will sin against us and make us angry. In those times we have a choice to either hate them or love them. Hating them will cause more problems but loving them will please God and bring you healing. Remember, biblical forgiveness doesn’t mean accepting someone’s evil behavior as right. They still have to deal with their consequences and God’s judgment. For example, when the Roman soldiers crucified Jesus He said, “*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,*” (Luke 23:34). He wasn’t saying they were “okay” or “right” in what they did. No, as a matter of fact, if people who sin against us don’t personally ask God to forgive them, they will be punished in eternal fire for their sins. God said, “*Vengeance is mine, I will repay!*” (Romans 12:19 KJV).

You may not be able to choose how people will treat you, but you can choose how you will respond and treat them. When you’re wronged, the choice is yours, you can either love or hate. I pray you choose to love!

Corrie ten Boom was a Christian who lived during the Nazi Holocaust. Her family helped Jews escape the Germans by hiding them in their house. Eventually her family was caught and imprisoned. Both her dad and sister died in prison. Before her sister died she said, “There is no pit so deep that [God] is not deeper still.”

Corrie was eventually freed and led a powerful life of teaching the love of God. She once described the difficulty she had in forgiving the wicked German soldiers but she found the will to forgive because of God’s love. She then said, “Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart.” Decide today to let God’s love flow through you and cover the multitude of wrongs done to you.

REFLECTION

When you’re wronged do you act in love or hate?

ACTION

1. Ask God to forgive your sins as you forgive those who sin against you.
2. Next time you’re offended remember to choose love over hate.
3. Pray for those who have wronged you to repent and live for Jesus.

DAY 13: HOLD YOUR TONGUE

Proverbs 10:19 (NET), *“When words abound, transgression is inevitable, but the one who restrains his words is wise.”*

In a recent study, it was discovered that most people say around 16,000 words a day. Some on the low end say as little as 750 words, with others saying as much as 47,000 words in one day. Nonetheless, the average word count of 16,000 breaks down in a 16 hour day to 1,000 words an hour, 16 words a minute and about one word every four seconds.

With that in mind consider King Solomon’s warning, *“When words abound, transgression is inevitable.”* Be honest, on average how many of your words are sinful each day; 10% of the time, 1,600 words or just 1% of the time, 16 words? Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:29, *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”* The disciple of Christ is expected to only speak what is good and hold one’s tongue when wholesome things cannot be said. We shouldn’t let “any unwholesome talk” come out of our mouths.

Remember the ole’ saying, “If you don't have anything good to say, don't say it all?” Solomon taught the same idea in the book of Proverbs by saying, “Too much talk leads to sin, so be smart and keep your mouth shut!”

God teaches us this wisdom all throughout the Bible. James wrote, *“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”* (James 1:19) and *“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless,”* (James 1:26). As a result, we should be quick to listen, slow to speak and hold our tongue from speaking evil.

Sometimes people say sinful words and then retort, “I didn’t mean that, I don’t know where those words came from.” However, Jesus taught in Luke 6:45 exactly where everyone’s words come from, He said, *“A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.”* Whenever a person speaks, whether it’s good or evil, it is always from their heart.

So the next time someone says ungodly words and makes the excuse, “I don't know where that came from.” Say in love, “I know exactly where it came from, your heart!”

Guard your words and only speak what is wholesome and to the benefit of those who are listening. Restrain your words so you don't sin against God.

REFLECTION

What percentage of your words each day are ungodly?

ACTION

1. Ask Jesus to convict you when you speak unwholesome words.
2. Use your words to benefit those who listen to you.
3. Hold your tongue when you don't have anything good to say.

DAY 14: THE BLESSING OF WEALTH

Proverbs 10:22, *“The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil for it.”*

A wise man once said, “Being wealthy isn’t a sin because Abraham, David and Solomon would be sinners. However, the love of money is, so know the difference between having money and loving money.” Biblical wealth means, “to have enough to meet your needs, an inheritance for your children and extra to help others in need.” On one hand, we may not always have this kind of wealth. For many it will take a lifetime of hard work, financial planning and dedication. On the other hand, King Solomon reminds us to remember that it is the Lord’s blessing that brings us wealth. We should pray and expect to have wealth in this life; whether it comes easy or not. Though most will have to work hard for it, the Lord promises He will remove the “painful toil” that is found in stress, anxiety and worry.

You’re not the source of your talents and abilities; God is. Your worldview as a Christians should always be centered around the fact that everything exists because of God. Your wealth belongs and comes from God; and when you become wealthy His way, He promises you’ll be too blessed to be stressed.

The sinner may also have wealth, but because they are self-deceived and believe it’s by their own doing, they will be condemned in hell for the sin of greed and idolatry. The rich can no more create wealth than they can create the brain cells they use to think with. Nor can they even account for the matter and space-time that the entire universe exists within. The wicked’s wealth is temporary but ours is eternal. Funny but true, we get the wicked’s wealth too in the world to come- so either way they lose. Solomon confirmed this in Proverbs 13:22, *“A good person leaves an inheritance for their children’s children, but a sinner’s wealth is stored up for the righteous.”*

When Jesus taught his disciples about the number one competing “master” that opposes the one true Master, He didn’t mention Buddha, Krishna or Zeus. Jesus said the biggest competitor for man’s heart is “money.” In Matthew 6:24

Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”*

Someone might respond and say, “I don't love money. I work hard to provide for my family and I don't feel I owe God or anyone else anything. It's my money and I can use it however I want.” What this person doesn't understand is that their selfishness is rooted in their own pride because they feel they can make money without God. However, God is the one who actually gave them the ability to begin with. Plus, the help they give their family is selfish because their wealth is only for “their family.” They're only motivated to help people that they love and neglect God's command to help others (Matthew 5:46).

In the end the lesson is simple, God's blessing brings wealth without trouble, whereas the greed of the ungodly will destroy them. Choose to seek God and His blessing in all you do and you will have more than enough!

REFLECTION

Do you trust God with your finances?

ACTION

1. Examine your heart and repent of any greed or selfishness you may have.
2. Seek first God's kingdom and righteousness so that His blessings will bring you wealth without trouble (Matthew 6:33).
3. Obey God's commands, work hard, be a giver and have faith that one day you will achieve your financial goals.

DAY 15: INTEGRITY

Proverbs 11:3, *“The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.”*

Has someone ever told you, “I’ll call you this week” and they never did? Or have you had a friend say, “I’ll be at your house Saturday to help you move” and they never showed up? Unfaithful people are some of the hardest people to get along with in life because they have a problem with keeping their word. They lack humility, self-awareness and don’t understand the pain they cause people in their lives.

The word integrity means, “a firm and faithful dedication to a set of morals or beliefs.” King Solomon in today’s proverb is teaching us a simple, yet powerful, benefit of having integrity; guidance.

When you’re faithful to God’s Word you will be safely guided by those principles in your life. However, if you’re unfaithful to keep God’s Word, you’ll be destroyed.

As a result, the people who are faithful to God’s Word have integrity and are called “upright” because they are lifted up and made honorable by God. However, those who are unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity (double-mindedness). To be double-minded means, “to say one thing but do another.” Look at your life and what others say about you. What kind of person are you and what kind of reputation do you have? Are you a person of integrity or duplicity?

Take a few moments to answer the following questions honestly; (1) Do people know you as someone who always keeps their word? (2) Are you dependable? (3) Are you the same person in private that you are in public? (4) Do you have the same morals and beliefs no matter who you’re with or where you are? (5) Do you have a good track record in your church, family and job for being faithful?

If you answered “no” to any of the previous questions, stop right now and ask God to change you into a person of integrity. If you continue in your double-minded ways you will suffer harm. But by God’s grace if you live an upright life with integrity, you’ll be guided on the path of life and given success. Yes, it’s true things change, people let you down and times get hard, but don’t change your

morals based on what others do or don't do. David Jeremiah said, "Integrity is keeping a commitment even after circumstances have changed."

It's important to remember to be a person of integrity in all you do, not just in the "big things." Go to work on time everyday, don't take what doesn't belong to you (no matter how small it is), always tell the truth (even if it hurts), keep your word to return calls and show up when you say you will. People are watching you, so be a great example of what a person with integrity looks like. For most people, you're the only representation of Jesus they'll see today!

REFLECTION

Are you a person of integrity?

ACTION

1. Repent of any unfaithfulness in your life.
2. Ask God to make you faithful.
3. Live your life with integrity because people are watching you!

DAY 16: HOW A NATION STANDS AND FALLS

Proverbs 11:14, *“For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.”*

John Dickinson in 1768 wrote a powerful song during the American Revolution called, *The Liberty Song*. One of the most inspiring verses is, “Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all, By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall; In so righteous a cause let us hope to succeed, For heaven approves of each generous deed.”

Dickinson’s song made popular the saying in the U.S., “United we stand, divided we fall.” The phrase reminded everyone that we are better off together, than we are separated. Take for example how easy it is to tear one piece of paper by itself, however when you put hundreds of pieces of paper together in a large book, it’s almost impossible to tear them apart. The same is true with today’s lesson from King Solomon. For a nation to succeed, it needs guidance from many wise advisors. If a nation doesn’t listen to wise council they will fall.

A nation stands or falls based on its ability to gather wise people and listen to them.

The United States of America has three branches of government, (1) Executive (The President’s Office and His Cabinet), (2) Judicial (The Supreme Court and Lower Courts) and (3) Legislative (The Congress; Senate and House of Representatives). Imagine if all these positions were filled with godly leaders who possessed the wisdom of God. That would be a collective council of over 500 people working together for the common good of the citizens. What do you think would happen in our land? I believe God would bless us as He did in days past with safety, prosperity and godly influence upon the world.

Likewise, if a nation needs wise council to be successful, so do people like you and me. Consider if mothers received advice from other experienced mothers, there’d be better wives and mothers today caring for their families and raising their children in the ways of God. If fathers took advice from other successful fathers, we’d have amazing husbands and fathers today exemplifying the character of God the Father. If pastors, businessmen and people from every walk of life would

humble themselves before God and man to receive wise council- heaven would come to earth. Start by receiving wisdom from God and then be faithful to share it with others, you have an important part to play in the success of your nation!

REFLECTION

Do you know how to receive and give wise council?

ACTION

1. When was the last time you received good advice?
2. When was the last time you gave good advice?
3. Pray and study God's Word so that you can always be ready to give and receive good advice.

DAY 17: GOLD IN A PIG'S SNOUT

Proverbs 11:22, *“Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.”*

In today’s proverb King Solomon gives a stern rebuke to beautiful women who have no discretion. Women who act with indiscretion are considered to be wasting their beauty; just like a gold ring is wasted on a dirty pig. The word indiscretion means, “lacking good judgment or morals.” Sadly, many beautiful women in our culture are trading their heavenly beauty for the mud of this world. And to be clear, I believe God considers all women to be beautiful!

The illustration of a gold ring in a pig’s snout is meant to show the ridiculous nature of something beautiful on something disgusting. The picture the reader is to have is of defilement, waste and disgust.

When women lack good judgment in their sexual behavior it is disgusting and their beauty is wasted. Yet, women don’t act alone in their perversion, the men who join with them share in sin’s shame. Thankfully, God is able to cleanse and wash away all the perversion in the hearts of men and women.

God is not giving Christians permission to be rude and vulgar to women who lack judgment and call them “pigs, sluts or whores.” Remember, the Bible teaches us that we are to lovingly treat others in the same way we want to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Jesus didn’t hurl insults at the woman caught in adultery but rather graciously forgave her by saying, *“Then neither do I condemn you, - ‘Go now and leave your life of sin’”* (John 8:11). At the same time, God is teaching both males and females, that we need to act with discretion (sound judgment). Therefore, if a man lacks good judgment, his behavior is just as disgusting as the foolish woman.

Sometimes God offends our minds to open our hearts to the reality of our sins. Peter wrote in the New Testament that the Christian who goes back to their sins is like a dog eating their vomit and like a pig returning to the mud (2 Peter 2:22). Both are gross images, but that is the point! God wants us to see sin like He does, so we will hate it the way He hates it.

Everyone reading today's proverb should be encouraged to use good judgment in his or her sexuality. If a woman lacks good judgment and begins doing any of the following; having sex before marriage, wearing revealing clothing and talking dirty, then she is wasting her beauty because she's acting in a disgusting manner. The same is true with a man who does the exact same things. They are both acting like a pig with a gold ring in its snout.

John Wesley wrote, "[Disciples] ought continually to regard each other in God, and closely to examine themselves, whether all their thoughts are pure, and all their words directed with Christian discretion." We are to act with purity in all we do and not let our evil desires defile us. Let's all join together and live a life of holiness that's pleasing to God!

REFLECTION

Do you use discretion with your sexuality?

ACTION

1. Ask God to show you if you've lacked discretion in your sexuality. Repent of any impurity you may have had.
2. Ask God to give you discretion in your sexuality.
3. Live a life of good judgment in all that you do, being led by the Holy Spirit.

DAY 18: RICHES WILL FALL

Proverbs 11:28, *“Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.”*

Do you want to thrive or take a dive in life? I believe most sane people would honestly answer, “thrive.” However, if most people would rather thrive than fall, why are more people pursuing and trusting in their riches rather than righteousness? There should be millions of more people reading their Bible, than playing the lottery. The masses should be lining up for church, like how they line up to go to work to make a paycheck. Sunday morning should be the busiest day on the roads!

Sadly, in our culture the emphasis for a good life is on having riches rather than righteousness. Yet, without God, our riches will lead us to fall into eternal destruction. Surely, God wants us to thrive in life like a fruitful vine but He wants us to do it His way. God’s ways not only lead to temporary benefits, but eternal rewards.

Our culture promotes exalting people to the top who have the most money, but they hardly ever promote those who are righteous. Think about it, when was the last time you saw in business, media, politics or entertainment the applauding of “righteous people,” i.e., “those who live according to God’s word?” Consider this example, would you rather be married to a millionaire who cheats on you and neglects your family or a righteous manager at McDonald’s who loves you and your children? If you would choose the righteous manager then why doesn’t the rest of the world promote righteousness? Riches have deceived our culture.

Certainly, Christians can be both successful and righteous, but we should root our lives in the Word of God to truly thrive and avoid idolatry and greed. Billy Graham said “There is nothing wrong with men possessing riches. The wrong comes when riches possess men.” King Solomon is giving us a stern warning, “don’t trust in riches, but trust in the righteousness of God.” Paul taught that we became righteous in Jesus. He wrote, *“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Therefore, if you’re not living a righteous life by God’s standard and are trusting in your money to give you a good life, you are going to fall. Your fall may

be in your marriage, with your kids or with your inner peace, but no matter what, you will fall in this life. Plus, one day you will fall from God's judgment throne into the pits of hell. Jesus said you cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24). Nothing you can achieve in this life can compare to the treasures of heaven and the pains of hell, so choose heaven.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:33 that when we seek first God's Kingdom and His righteousness, we'll have everything we need in this life. David also said in Psalm 1, that the godly will flourish like a tree planted by the waters, bear fruit in season and our leaves won't wither. Put God and His righteousness first in all you do and you will thrive everyday you're alive!

REFLECTION

Do you trust God more than riches?

ACTION

1. Remove any trust you may have in riches.
2. Place all your trust in God and seek His righteousness. "In God We Trust."
3. Live your life thriving with God!

DAY 19: DON'T BE STUPID

Proverbs 12:1, *“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.”*

There is no way according to the Bible to be a true disciple of Christ, without being disciplined and corrected by God. If we are not receiving God’s discipline and correction it’s because we are not truly His children. The Bible states in Hebrews 12:5-8, *“5 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says, ‘My son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.’ 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? 8 If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.”*

The word discipline (from the Latin word for “disciple”) means, “corrective instruction.” In the New Testament a Christian cannot be considered Jesus’ disciple without accepting His discipline. Jesus wants His disciples to receive God’s discipline, correction and rebuke because they go hand in hand with following Him. If you love Jesus, you’ll love His corrective instruction, if you don’t, according to King Solomon you’re stupid.

In the biblical context both God and man for the purpose of spiritual growth give discipline. Sadly, some Christians think that when they get corrected or disciplined in the church the leadership is on a power trip. However, every good organization must have discipline and the church is no different; even more so because the leadership is responsible for the people’s souls. The author of Hebrews wrote, *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you,”* (Hebrews 13:17).

At the same, the church shouldn’t be rude, legalistic, petty, meddling or micro-managing. The right balance of encouragement and discipline is given by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2, *“Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful*

instruction.” The church should consider its preaching and teaching to be 1/3 correction, 1/3 rebuking and 1/3 encouraging for the purpose of giving “careful instruction.” Many Christians think the church should give them 1/3 encouragement, 1/3 fun and 1/3 suggestions! However, God didn’t give us “10 Suggestions” or “10 Encouragements,” rather He gave us, “10 Commandments.”

Certainly, God loves to encourage us, but His encouragement will not come at the expense of His holiness. God is both altogether loving and holy. A wise man once said, “God disciplines us because He loves us. The corrections and rebukes of God serve as guard rails on the paths of righteousness so we don’t drive off the cliff.”

Today’s proverb teaches us that whoever loves discipline, loves knowledge but whoever hates correction is stupid. Answer the following questions to see if you love discipline or act in stupidity when it comes to correction; (1) When corrected by a good leader, do you accept it or make excuses? (2) After being shown you’re wrong, do you repent or try to bring out the wrongs of the one who is correcting you to even the score (i.e., “correcting the corrector”)? (3) Do you have godly leaders in your life who can discipline you with God’s Word or do you just have people that tell you what you want to hear?

REFLECTION

Do you love discipline?

ACTION

1. Repent of any stupidity you might have from hating correction.
2. Ask God to make you humble and teachable; a lover of discipline.
3. Find a good church with great leaders who can disciple you and train you to disciple others!

DAY 20: OVERLOOKING INSULTS

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

“I’m so mad at you right now I could scream!” “Shut up, who do you think you are to talk to me that way?” “How dare you say that to me, you better stop before I snap and lose my temper!” Have you ever reacted to an insult like this before? I know I have many times.

King Solomon in today’s proverb is teaching us that we are to handle our problems with prudence instead of acting in annoyance. The word “prudence” means, “the ability to control one’s self.” According to God, when a fool is insulted they quickly lose their temper, but when a prudent person is insulted they use self-control. How have you been acting when insulted, like a fool or a prudent person?

Consider the most prudent person in all-human history; Jesus. His brothers mocked Him, His religion rejected Him, His disciples forsook Him and His government crucified Him. Yet, on the cross He said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing”* (Luke 23:34). If Jesus, God in the flesh, could overlook the insults of His own creation, you and I can humble ourselves to our fellow man and give them grace.

At the same time, overlooking an insult doesn’t mean becoming a doormat for everybody in life. There were times when Jesus did respond to people’s insults. For example, Jesus whipped the moneychangers and drove them out of the temple because they were insulting the Father’s house (Matthew 21:12). The insults of the Jewish people reached the point of God’s righteous judgment. However, Jesus always knew how to control His emotions and not sin in His anger. Being angry is not a sin, but sinning in your anger is. And just like with forgiveness, overlooking someone’s insult is not excusing it or pretending it didn’t happen. But rather, you are leaving the judgment to God by choosing your peace over the conflict.

James wrote, *“19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, 20 because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires”* (James 1:19-20)

20). Certainly, there will be times for conflict and confrontation. King Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:8 that there is, “*a time for war and a time for peace.*” Therefore, let’s use prudence to know what our right response should be in life’s trials. Charles Swindoll said, “Life is 10% what happens to you and 90% how you react.” Learn to avoid reacting to insults based on your emotions. Instead, respond to insults with God’s prudence.

REFLECTION

Do you display God’s prudence when people insult you?

ACTION

1. Ask Jesus to forgive you of the times when you lacked prudence.
2. Ask God to give you the fruit of self-control (i.e., “prudence”).
3. Next time you’re offended take a few moments before you respond and act with prudence.

DAY 21: PROTECTED

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

King Solomon in the book of Proverbs frequently used the literary technique called, “antithetical parallelism,” which means, “the second line contrasts with the first.” For example, “The sinner goes to hell, but the righteous go to heaven.” In today’s proverb the antithetical parallel is between the “righteousness” of the person with integrity and the “wickedness” of the sinner.

Righteousness “guards” the man of integrity, but wickedness “overthrows” the sinner. You as the reader are left with a simple choice, “Do I want to be ‘guarded’ or ‘overthrown?’” Based on your desired outcome, you should then choose the kind of person you want to be. I don’t know about you, but I don’t care what anyone else chooses, I am choosing to be guarded by God’s righteousness. Sadly, many people want to be guarded from hell but still act in wickedness- that’s hypocrisy. David Wells said, “Worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age and righteousness seem odd.”

If living for Jesus makes me look strange to the world, I’ll choose being rejected by them to be accepted by Him. I’d rather be a friend of God and an enemy of the world, than be a friend of the world and an enemy of God.

Another way to look at the proverb is from your personal point of view. Are you a righteous person of integrity or a wicked sinner? If you’re wicked, your sins will throw your life into hell, however, if you’re a person of integrity, righteousness will guard you from being overthrown by the devil’s lies. Therefore, choose today to be a person of integrity!

As we learned from Proverbs 11:3, integrity means, “a firm and faithful dedication to a set of morals or beliefs.” Integrity is important to Solomon because it represents a key attribute of the wise. God is firm and faithful to His character and He desires for Jesus’ disciples to be like Him. We are to be, “perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 6:48) and be “holy” because God is “holy,” (1 Peter 1:16). Without God it is impossible for sinners to be wise people of integrity but because of Jesus, His character is now imparted to us. We are a copy of Jesus. John wrote, *“In this world we are like Jesus,”* (1 John 4:17).

Here are some ways to live out this proverb; (1) Accept Jesus' righteousness by having faith in His saving work on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21), (2) Repent for the times you were wicked and broke God's laws (Acts 3:19), (3) Daily hunger and thirst to be filled with God's righteousness (Matthew 5:6) and (4) Seek first God's righteousness, according to His Word, in all that you do (Matthew 6:33).

REFLECTION

Are you righteous or wicked?

ACTION

1. Seek God's righteousness (i.e., "His right way of doing things") in your life.
2. Avoid wickedness.
3. Ask God to guard your life from sin, temptation and evil.

DAY 22: WHY WE STRIVE

Proverbs 13:10, *“Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”*

In today’s proverb King Solomon gives the root cause of strife, pride. Think about it, pride has been the source of all strife since the beginning of time. From Satan’s fall from heaven, to the Jewish leaders who had bitter disagreements with Jesus; pride has always been the “root” of the “fruit” of striving.

Strife means, “bitter conflict and angry disputing.” Though there are times to be angry and fight for a righteous cause (ex., “just war” or “self-defense”), strife against God and His Word is harmful because people who strive are in rebellion. Often times when people strive against God, they strive against those who speak God’s wisdom. For example, those who reject the Bible strive with us when we give them biblical wisdom regarding their sins. The reason they strive is because they are in pride and rebellion against God (John 15:18-23).

Christians strive with each other when one or both people involved are operating in pride instead of choosing love and humility. That is why we always should be teachable and willing to growing in our faith. Solomon called these kind of beneficial friendships, “iron sharpening iron” in Proverbs 27:17. As disciple’s of Christ we should be led by the Holy Spirit and not our emotions. In all our interactions with people we should reject pride and walk in humility.

Sadly, one of the biggest problems with pride is that it’s always easier to see it in others than it is to see in you. Richard Bach said, “The worst lies are the lies we tell ourselves. We live in denial of what we do, even what we think. We do this because we’re afraid.” That is why most of the times you’re in pride, you cannot recognize it because of the very nature of pride itself, you’re lying to yourself. Pride by definition means, “to be un-teachable, above correction and to hold false views about one’s self.” Pride deceives us to believe that we’re not in pride. God have mercy on us!

Some might be discouraged now and ask, “How then can I know if I’m in pride, since pride is self-deceiving?” Don’t fret or fear, King Solomon’s wisdom is here! The answer is given in the parallel statement, *“wisdom is found in those who take advice.”* The way to know if you’re in pride is to see if you’re willing to

receive godly advice. Certainly not all the advice you'll receive in life is to be received. The Holy Spirit will guide you into all wisdom and give you discernment. God will often times use others to teach us things with their voice because we've been ignoring His voice.

So next time you're in an argument, ask God in meditative prayer (to yourself), "Who is not receiving the advice, me or the other person?" If it's you, quickly repent and be willing to listen and receive the advice. And if you truly believe it's the other person, humbly try to give them the wisdom of God. Don't feel pressured to make people listen to your advice, but in gentleness and love, instruct them.

REFLECTION

Do you readily and humbly accept good advice?

ACTION

1. When was the last time you had strife because of your pride? Ask God to teach you to not let it happen again.
2. Seek God to expose any areas in your life you may have pride in and pray for Him to give you humility.
3. Learn to accept good advice and try to avoid arguments with people who have pride and are unwilling to accept advice (Matthew 7:6).

DAY 23: WALKING WITH THE WISE

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

I grew up in the suburbs of Fort Wayne, Indiana. It's a city with about 300,000 people. My parents were from the Chicagoland area but chose to move to a smaller city for a better place to work and raise their family. They literally gave me every good thing a child could ever want. I always had new clothes; tasty home cooked meals and was raised in church. On top of all the essentials, my parents chose to live in a neighborhood where the clubhouse had three outdoor swimming pools, indoor racket ball courts and pool tables. The neighborhood had it's own golf course, tennis courts and basketball courts. Sidewalks ran for miles safely behind our home so I could ride my bike to my friend's house, to the basket court, to the pools and then relax in the clubhouse without even crossing one street!

You'd think with all the things my godly parents provided for me, I would've been guaranteed to succeed. However, there was one thing that they couldn't provide, my friends. Though they tried to keep me away from the troublemakers, I still found a way to become a companion of fools. By the time I was in 5th grade, I'd chosen the wrong friends and suffered greatly for the next seven years. By 18 years old I'd been kicked out of school 5x, I was a high school drop out, drug dealer, arrested 8x and had served 3 months in juvenile jail.

I remember reading today's proverb when I first got saved at 18 years old and being deeply impacted by God's wisdom. It was like a huge spotlight turned on inside my heart and I could see everything clearly. I look back now and wish I would've listened to Solomon. If only I had chosen my friends wisely. What would my life have been like if I walked with the wise in high school, instead of being a fool among fools? Matthew Henry wrote, “Those that disobey the commandments of God do so foolishly for themselves. Sin is folly, and sinners are the greatest fools.”

I suffered emotional hardship and spiritual pain. Some of the physical scars are with me today to remind me of those miserable times. Thankfully, the story doesn't end there. Today because of those life lessons, I've been able to share my testimony with many teenagers and help them make different choices. I also share my story with adults so they don't let fools corrupt their marriage, children or

career. The one good thing that came from my days of living among the fools is that I can testify to the truth of God's word; the companion of fools will suffer harm.

I can also testify about the wisdom I've received over the years of walking with the wise. First, I started listening to my godly parents' wisdom. Their shared experience of walking with the Lord for many years has been monumental in life. Second, I joined a good church and learned many profound truths from the preaching, Bible studies and Christian friendships. Third, I went to Bible College and was graced to meet some of the wisest people who have lived in our time. Their years of experience helped build my life, family and ministry. Lastly, I now pastor a church where fools are able to switch friends and begin walking with the wise.

It's a great honor to be a new disciple's first "wise friend" and see them become wise like us. God keeps the "wisdom cycle" going one wise person at a time. Reach one, to teach one, to reach one.

REFLECTION

Are your friends wise or foolish?

ACTION

1. Ask God to show you the kind of friend you are and the kind of friends you have.
2. Remove any foolish friends you may have that are influencing your life. You may still stay friends with them for the sake of preaching to them, but don't follow their ways.
3. Be a wise person so that when people hang out with you, they will grow wise.

DAY 24: DISCIPLINING CHILDREN

Proverbs 13:24, *“Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.”*

Today as parents we have a choice to either obey what God said in His eternal unchanging Word or follow the ever-changing trends of our godless culture. In the past, corporal punishment (spanking) children was a norm. It’s how children from biblical times to colonial times were disciplined and taught respect. And before we move on, let’s just think about how well it worked. Chances are your grandparents were spanked, so do you think your grandparents were better behaved than today’s non-spanked children or worse? They were better behaved. The question itself is almost laughable.

Our current generation, especially in the U.S., has the highest level of obesity, crime, rebellion, lack of respect, violence, perversion and laziness known to the planet! So why do parents keep following the world’s advice over the Bible? Sadly, many parents have been convinced that spanking their children is the same as child abuse. They believe the lie of our “politically correct culture” that teaches punishment shouldn’t hurt.

This kind of thinking has even lead to the removal of the death penalty for murderers and rapists in many states. Our courts and prison systems are a joke to most criminals. The reason criminals have no fear or respect for the law is because it has no sense of real pain or finality. There’s always a way for savvy criminals to avoid justice and punishment.

Someone might ask, “What about the parents that have abused their kids?” Well, the answer is simple; punish the abusive parents. King Solomon is clear, those who truly love their children will spank them, but those who hate them will not discipline them. We don’t get to change God’s commands because people do it wrong (abuse) or don’t do it all (disuse).

Just because someone misuses spanking with his or her children and abuses them doesn’t mean we should reject God’s command to use it. Abuse and misuse shouldn’t lead to disuse, but rather proper use.

Here are eight helpful advices on spanking your child in love; (1) Never spank out of anger, (2) Only spank 2-3x to give the sense of light pain, (3) Don't injure or cause bruising to any part of your child's body, (3) Only spank on their butt or on the hand, (4) Don't spank more than 2-3x in a day, (5) Never spank with your full strength, (6) Always give a teaching before and after the spanking so your child can understand why they are getting spanked, (7) After the spanking, comfort your child to let them know you still love them and (8) Remember, spanking is less successful after 10-11 years old. Be sensitive to when to discontinue the practice.

If you cannot follow the guidelines, then please don't spank your child. Know your limits because you may injure your child if you're not careful. At the same time, I believe by the power of the Holy Spirit, God can lead you to discipline your children in a healthy way that will show your love for them by reminding them of the consequences of sin. A wise person once said, "We discipline our children for their own sake. But we do it in such a way that when they are older they will thank us for it."

Special Note: Please report any signs of child abuse to a trusted leader in your community; police, pastors, etc. If you have ever abused your children seek professional help immediately.

REFLECTION

Do you believe it's biblical to spank children?

ACTION

1. Repent of any wrong thinking you may have had about spanking; whether to not do it at all or to do it in an abusive way.
2. Ask God to teach you the best way to discipline your child.
3. Next time you discipline your child, remember your heavenly Father is watching and one day He will judge you on how you raised your children.

DAY 25: EXALTING A NATION

Proverbs 14:34, *“Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people.”*

Solomon was the third King of Israel after his father David died. King Solomon had learned first hand the disgrace that came to Israel because of his father’s sin (2 Samuel 12:11). Sadly, this didn’t stop him from making some of the same mistakes David made. Even though Solomon was the richest and wisest man on earth, he was led astray by women to worship idols and likewise brought shame to the nation of Israel. The Bible records in 1 Kings 11:4, *“As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”*

It seems that Solomon was even worse than David because there is no mention of his repentance. Even after David’s many sins, including murder and adultery, he truly repented in Psalm 51. However, there is no such record of Solomon’s repentance. In other words, King Solomon, the one who God used to write the book of Proverbs and give us today’s wisdom, could be in hell. No king or nation, despite it’s size or power can withstand the judgment of God.

Likewise, after Solomon sinned and brought disgrace to Israel, most of the following kings grew progressively worse. When God’s patience turned to judgment, He punished both the kings and the entire nation Israel by allowing them to be captured and brought into captivity on two different occasions.

In America’s brief two hundred year history it can be seen that when we as a nation had special times of prayer, honored the Ten Commandments in our courts and sought God’s will in major decisions; God exalted and blessed us. However, in the last 50 years as we have taken the Bible and prayer out of school, pulled down the Ten Commandments in our courts and placed wickedness above God and His Word in our culture; we’ve suffered more disgrace than our founding fathers could have ever imagined.

Therefore, reader, be warned, no matter who you are or where you live; if you and your nation sin you will be disgraced and brought low. However, if you and your nation live righteously before God, He will exalt you and your people. Patrick Henry said, *“Righteousness alone can exalt [America] as a*

nation...Whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others.”

REFLECTION

Do you live a righteous life?

ACTION

1. Repent of any unrighteousness you may have.
2. Repent for all the wickedness you see in your nation.
3. Pray for God to raise up more righteous people in your nation.

DAY 26: GENTLE WORDS

Proverbs 15:1, “*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*”

Often times King Solomon teaches us God’s wisdom in generalities. He is describing what will happen in most cases. He is not writing specifically to every situation. For example, in Proverbs 6:20 he writes, “*My son, keep your father’s command and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.*” Here he is referring to the general framework of children having godly parents. He is not specifically talking to every child in every situation. He is not encouraging children in false religions to practice their parent’s idolatry because their dad “commanded” it and their mother “taught” it. The parent’s commands would contradict the commands of the Bible. So the way he assumed you’d understand the proverb is, “keep your parents righteous commands and teachings.”

The same is true with today’s lesson; “gentleness turns away wrath.” This is not a truth that can be applied to everyone at all times, because Jesus was the most gentle person in history and people kept getting more and more angry with Him until their angry turned to wrath (extreme anger) and they conspired to have Him murdered. At the same time, there are people who talk harshly to each other all the time and they don’t become angrier because they have a tolerance for harsh words. However, the context of Solomon’s wisdom is within godly relationships. Like a Christian parent with their children or married couples working through a problem.

Solomon’s wisdom can apply outside of Christian circles too. However, the world doesn’t have the Holy Spirit as their guide, there is nothing stopping them (like the Jews and Romans of Jesus’ day) from getting angrier no matter how gentle you are. Now with a better understanding of the nature of the book of Proverbs, let’s bring today’s lesson to heart.

How do you talk when you’re in a disagreement? Are you always under control and able to answer someone with gentleness or do you, like me, sometimes say the wrong thing? The Bible says in James 3:9-10, “*9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be.*” Therefore, we shouldn’t be content to allow both good and evil to come from our mouths. We have been saved and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, God has promised us a way of escape from every temptation in every

situation and we have been given the mind of Christ to control our emotions. There is no excuse to not talk like Jesus.

I've learned that making excuses for harsh words only prolongs the guilt. But every time I repent, Jesus forgives me and the Holy Spirit is faithful to guide me in gentle speech.

A gentle answer is not always telling people what they want to hear, but it is telling the truth in love. It is talking to people the way you want to be talked to. Our patience and gentleness will be tested, but remember what Paul said in Philippians 4:5, "*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.*" The Lord is coming to judge the world; including Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 12:36, "*But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.*" As a Christian, you may still go to heaven while be reproved by Jesus for the way you spoke to people.

Watchman Nee said, "The moment we notice our voice has turned harsh, we must stop instantly. If we are reluctant to say to our brethren, 'I am wrong,' then our spirit remains engulfed in its sin.'" Let us talk like Jesus and be quick to repent when we don't.

REFLECTION

Do you talk to people with gentleness?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have not spoken to people with gentleness.
2. Ask God to guide your words.
3. Next time you're upset with someone, remember to not speak with harsh words, but answer in gentleness.

DAY 27: SUCCESS WITH ADVISORS

Proverbs 15:22, *“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*

One of the hardest failures that I faced as a pastor was moving into a large facility and having to break our lease because of the lack of finances. Words cannot describe how defeated and discouraged I felt. I had worked hard to not owe people anything, to pay my bills on time and to be an excellent tenant. However, because of a bad decision in the midst of an economic recession, I had to close the church and claim personal bankruptcy.

We were in a five-year lease and things went south within the first year. The following year, I earnestly tried many times to negotiate the lease. However, because the building owners were in over their head with the bank and there was nothing they could do for us, our church was on the line for close to half a million dollars. In the fall of 2012, our church had to break the lease and move back to our old building.

After this failure, I started to seek advice from Christian lawyers, pastors, accountants and local businessmen. They all could relate to the kind of situation I had faced. Each of them had advice to give me moving forward. Their advice could be summed up as the following; (1) Don't look to move into a new building without a minimum of 3-6 months operational savings, (2) When looking for a new building raise all the monies first so you can know what you can afford and (3) Never sign your personal name as a financial guarantor to something you cannot afford to cover.

After learning these lessons the hard way I thought to myself, “If only I had this wisdom before I signed the lease for the building!” Then I realized, all these people were available before my mistake; all I had to do was get their advice beforehand and I could have saved myself all this hardship.

Thankfully, the leadership of the church forgave me and allowed me to re-start the church with the lessons I had learned. Moving forward I was quick to set up a stronger financial committee and we made safety measures to make sure we never got into that situation again. As of now, almost five years later, we have a

church that is growing in ways we have never experienced, with strong leaders and a balanced budget that includes a growing savings account.

Concerning people trying to solve their own problems by themselves, Abraham Lincoln said, “He who represents himself, has a fool for a client.” What things in life today do you need to seek counsel for from many advisors? Whether it’s buying a new home, strengthening your family, overcoming sin or saving for the future; be sure to make your plans with a godly counsel. Otherwise, you may have to learn the lesson through failure. Trust me, there are some lessons you’d rather learn through victory!

REFLECTION

Do you have godly people in your life that can act as counsel for your big decisions?

ACTION

1. Seek out three Christian advisors to have in your life.
2. Before you make a big decision seek their counsel.
3. Ask God to make you an advisor for people in their times of decision.

DAY 28: LIFE-GIVING CORRECTIONS

Proverbs 15:31, *“Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise.”*

My Mom is Italian and my Dad is Polish. Both of their grandparents came from the mother country. My parents were the first generation to marry outside of their nationality. Up until that time, their parents married within their own culture. So I grew up half Italian and half Polish.

The Italian side from my Mom would come out through her cooking, passion for life and loud way of talking. My friends said they could hear my Mom “talking” to me all the way down the street. So if you weren’t used to people being loud when they talked and you came into my house you might think we were always yelling.

My Dad’s Polish culture was less obvious but it would also come out if you knew what to look for. Polish people love to talk, but they have a habit of repeating things over and over again. My Polish Grandma would tell her same stories over and over again, not just because she was old and a grandma, but because that’s what my Polish family would do at events. They’d tell the same stories over and over again.

Sometimes my Dad would repeat something and then say, “Now let me tell you in Polish.” This was his way of saying he was going to say it again, but in a different way. With these cultural backgrounds in mind, if you came to my house and heard us talking, you might think we all needed hearing aids and lessons on comprehension! But that was what we called, “normal,” we felt at home in that environment.

King Solomon in today’s proverb gives the test to whether or not you will feel at home among the wise; the willingness to accept life-giving correction. Solomon used the image of people in a house sharing wisdom with each other and when one is corrected they accept it willingly because they see wisdom’s benefit. Correction doesn’t always feel good in the moment, but who wants to believe a lie just because it “feels good?” Not wise people!

Life-giving correction relates to things that are important in our lives. We shouldn't take them lightly. God gives them to us through people to be more than just suggestions; they are His will for our lives.

If Peter hadn't received Jesus' life-giving correction about his views on the crucifixion, Peter would have been lost (Matthew 16:33). If a person in my church is dating a non-Christian, I want them to hear what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:14 and receive God's instruction. If they listen, God will either save the person they're dating when then let them know they need to breakup or He'll bring someone else into their life who's following Jesus. But no matter what, they will be spared from the disaster of joining themselves to an unbeliever. James Aughey wrote, "God's correction is our instruction."

I am thankful for the many times people have given me life-giving correction. God's wisdom given through them prevented me from heading towards certain destruction. I am thankful that God placed them in my life because if they'd never been in my life I wouldn't have had the chance to receive God's wisdom through them. Sometimes being that open with people is humbling, but it's so worth it. Don't run away from the wise people in your life. Embrace their friendships and be open to their correction. The next time you're being corrected by a godly person in your life, make sure to listen; God is giving you life!

REFLECTION

Do you feel at home receiving life-giving correction?

ACTION

1. Repent of any pride you've had towards receiving biblical correction.
2. Listen to and apply the wise instruction God gives you through other people.
3. Pray that God will give you wise friends to share and receive life-giving corrections.

DAY 29: HUMILITY BEFORE HONOR

Proverbs 15:33 (ESV), *“The fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.”*

Solomon gives two important principles in today’s proverb with their positive outcomes. First, he mentions that, *“the fear of the Lord is instruction in wisdom.”* The “fear of the Lord” means to, “honor and respect God as the Judge of all the earth, knowing that everyone will give an account of their life before Him.” When a person truly fears God they will have the instruction of wisdom in all that they do. Wisdom is, “the application of knowledge.” As a result, when we fear the Lord, God promises that we’ll have all the wisdom we need to be successful.

Second, Solomon writes, *“humility comes before honor.”* Humility means, “to be respectful and aware of one’s position in life.” In other words, when a person understands their place with God is as a child with a Father and respectfully follows God’s ways, he or she will be honored in life. Honor is what other people give you when they see something in your life worthy of respect. God desires you to be respected and looked up to by people in your life not because you’re rich and famous, but because you’re humble before God and man.

Humility is crucial in your walk with God. Without humility you cannot fear the Lord because pride will not let you. And without the fear of the Lord you cannot operate in God’s wisdom. If a disciple doesn’t have humility their pride will cause them to fall from the grace of God just like Satan and Adam did. Yet, when we humble ourselves under God’s mighty hand there is no devil that can cast us down.

Peter said, *“God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.’ Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time”* (1 Peter 5:5-6). As Christ’s disciples, we must ask God to remove any pride from our lives so that we can humbly be led by the Holy Spirit.

Augustine wrote, “Humility is the foundation of all the other virtues hence, in the soul in which this virtue does not exist there cannot be any other virtue except in mere appearance.” Therefore, the choice is yours; if you desire to be given wisdom and honor from God, then humbly walk in the fear of the Lord.

REFLECTION

Do you fear the Lord and walk in humility?

ACTION

1. Ask God to reveal any pride that may be in your life.
2. Walk humbly before the Lord as a child with his or her father.
3. When God honors you before people, never forget how you got there.

DAY 30: COMMIT TO THE LORD

Proverbs 16:3, *“Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.”*

Have you ever tried to take a toy away from a small child that didn't want to give it to you? They might have cried, screamed or become angry. Why? They didn't want to give you what they felt belonged to them. Sadly, I feel the same is true many times with God and us; and sadly, we're the ones acting like selfish children. God the Father says, "Place your plans in my hands" and we respond, "No God, they're my plans and I don't want to give them to you."

Examine your life and think about how many times you have taken your life and put it in your own hands. You did what you wanted to do, when you wanted to do it and felt you didn't need to answer to anyone. Now remember how those things in your life worked out. Why did they fall apart? You tried to do life without God and your ways weren't established. Someone might respond, "I've done good without God in my life, I'm a self-made man." However, when you look at their spiritual condition, they're a "self-made mess!"

Just because someone can succeed at building a business, a family or a big bank account without being a disciple doesn't mean they're a success in God's eyes. The Bible says that people like that are actually fools because all their riches and success will disappear like a vapor of smoke when they die (James 4:14). True lasting success comes only from God.

King Solomon is teaching us in today's proverb to always commit our ways to the Lord to have our plans succeed. The first major plan we need to commit to the Lord is our plan "life after death." Then we should give to God our plans for marriage and family. Lastly, everything else in our lives, our jobs, finances, hobbies, etc.; should all go into His hands so they might be established and counted as our rewards in eternity.

Michael Youssef wrote, "When God gives us a plan, He will only give us the best plans that lead to the greatest glory for Him." Though sometimes giving God the things that are most dear to us is not easy, but releasing them to Him will teach us faith and grow our love for Jesus. I pray that we will humble ourselves

like a child before God so that we can joyfully be obedient when we hear Him say, “Place your plans in my hand.”

REFLECTION

Are you willing to commit all your plans to the Lord?

ACTION

1. Think of three things in your life you should commit to the Lord.
2. In prayer surrender and commit those things to God.
3. Ask God to give you plans that lead to success in each of the three areas.

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