

**THE**

**PART 2**

**WISDOM**

**LIFE**

**30 DAYS OF GROWING IN GOD'S WISDOM**

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*The Wisdom Life (Part 2): 30 Days of Growing in God's Wisdom*

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# PREFACE

*Proverbs 19:8 (NASB), “He who gets wisdom loves his own soul;  
He who keeps understanding will find good.”*

Do you love your soul? The Bible is not referring to a self-centered love, but rather a God-centered love. God wants you to love yourself as He loves you. Jesus said in Mark 12:31, “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*” To love your neighbor as yourself, you must first love yourself. And the way you love yourself according to Proverbs is to get wisdom.

In other words, if you hate wisdom you really hate what God made you for. For example, in marriage Paul said in Ephesians 5:28, “*He who loves his wife loves himself.*” A wise husband will love his wife as himself, but a foolish husband will mistreat his wife because he hates his God-given purpose. Paul went on to write in Ephesians 5:29, “*After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church.*” However, in our culture don’t we see that many people hate their body; even to the point of suicide? Is Paul contradicting reality? No, he is actually explaining why people hate themselves.

The idea he is conveying is that no “rational or wise person” will intentionally mistreat their body because they have enough sense to know that if they want to remain on earth they must have a body. But if we don’t accept God’s purposes for our lives we become lovers of self without God, which is idolatry. Likewise, those who hate their souls are foolish and don’t care for the body as they should, and thus they mistreat their wives and themselves, because they are fools. Paul explained this in 1 Corinthians 6:18 when he described the results of sexual immorality; “*Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.*” In other words, we sin against our own bodies when we don’t love wisdom for our souls in regards to marriage and sexuality.

God loves sinners as John 3:16 teaches, but He hates their sinful actions. David said of God in Psalm 5:5 (ESV), “*You hate all evildoers.*” Once again, this kind of hatred does not override God’s mercy and love for the sinful. But if the sinful remain in their sin and rebellion they will perish under God’s righteous judgment. Jesus even said in Luke 14:26 that you must hate your sinful self if you want to be saved; “*If anyone comes to me*

*and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple.” To love your life without God is rebellion, but to love your life in Christ is wisdom.*

That is why King Solomon said that whoever gets wisdom, loves his own soul. When we love wisdom, we love our soul for the purpose God made it and not for our sinful desires. God doesn't want us to perish, but we must decide for ourselves, with our own free will, if we will pursue wisdom and understanding or sin and folly.

**Do the best thing for yourself, and love your soul by getting wisdom and understanding!**

That is why I wrote this book. I loved the book of Proverbs so much that I believed it was worth the time to make two 30-day books from it. I did this in hopes that people would truly love and pursue wisdom. God said in Proverbs 4:7 that the beginning of wisdom is this: “*Get wisdom!*” I pray that as you read this book, you will get wisdom. That you will take seriously the reflections and applications in prayer; and as you seek God's wisdom in both prayer and study, I believe you will receive all the wisdom you need to live out God's perfect will for your life (Romans 12:1-2).

## **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: PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION

Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Do you remember Pharaoh in the book of Exodus? He had watched God use Moses to send devastating plagues upon the land and people, yet he refused to obey God. It took God sending a death angel to kill all the first-born males of Egypt before he finally let the Israelites go. However, he quickly changed his mind and chased after them with his army.

When Pharaoh, along with Egypt’s army, caught up to the Israelites he saw God use Moses to split the Red Sea so the Israelites could cross on dry land. Yet, once again he acted in rebellion towards God and charged with his soldiers into the sea to capture the Jews. Immediately, God sent back the waters and then Pharaoh, along with his army, was destroyed. His pride and haughty spirit cost him everything, including his life and most importantly his eternal soul.

You might think that after he saw just one plague he would have repented, but he was not willing to because of his pride. Even after he lost his first-born son, he was still haughty. Pharaoh was so prideful and self-deceived that he actually thought he could chase down and kill the people whose God was powerful enough to split a sea in two!

Now before we stand on our high pedestal and look with our noses down on Pharaoh, I wonder how often we too have acted in pride and had a haughty spirit? How many times have you willfully disobeyed God and allowed yourself to be self-deceived? Sinners aren’t the only ones who can act proud and haughty, Christians can too if we don’t stay humble.

**We act in a haughty spirit (or attitude) when we think our ways are better than God’s ways. Our pride may look different than Pharaoh’s but if we’re not careful, we can share in his same destruction.**

Also, those who know about the Exodus might remember that God actually “hardened” Pharaoh’s heart because of his pride (Exodus 9:12). In other words, God “reinforced” his pride and “baked in” his decision to be

rebellious. God was done giving him chances to repent; it was time for judgment. Likewise, Paul said that God would do this again in the end times with people who would continually reject the truth of the gospel. God will send them a delusion and reinforce their rebellion against Him (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Certainly, God doesn't want us to fall or be destroyed, but the choice is ours. Blaise Pascal wrote, "Knowing God without knowing our own wretchedness makes for pride. Knowing our own wretchedness without knowing God makes for despair. Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because He shows us both God and our own wretchedness."

Therefore, let us choose to be humble and think properly about ourselves. Reject pride and walk humbly before the Lord in every area of your life. God has great plans for us, but He will not let us accomplish them our way. By grace, through faith, may we not fall but be lifted up, not destroyed but made secure in Christ's love.

## **REFLECTION**

Are you humble or prideful when it comes to obeying God?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to reveal any pride or wrong thinking you may have towards His Word.
2. If you have pride or a haughty spirit ask God to change your attitude (spirit) and make you humble.
3. Whenever you think about being prideful and rebellious towards God's commands, remember Pharaoh!



# DAY 2: AVOIDING QUARRELS

Proverbs 17:14, *“Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.”*

Have you ever noticed that there are some things in life not worth arguing about? Especially for those who are married, have you realized that sometimes it’s better to just drop the issue before a fight starts? I personally have learned this lesson the hard way. There has been many times in my marriage that I thought the matter was worth fighting over but in the end I learned that it wasn’t worth it.

**I wonder how often you’ve wasted your time and even hurt others because you couldn’t drop an unimportant issue. All of us have done it. But God is offering us a better way; a way of grace.**

On one hand, there are times when it’s good to work out our disagreements with people. In those times we need to share our point of view with biblical truth and with the love of God. Jesus described these kinds of issues in Matthew 18:15 when He said, *“If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.”* These issues need to be addressed because they involve sin and can have eternal consequences.

On the other hand, in today’s proverb, King Solomon is giving us the wisdom to not fight over every little annoyance or offense. For example, imagine if your wife wants to go grocery shopping on Saturday and have you watch the kids. However, you want to spend time with your friends watching the game. You let her know you were planning on watching the game and wish she would go another time. But she responds by saying that this is the best time for her and the kids. Now you have two choices; (A) You can start an argument with your wife and let her know how annoyed you are with her, or (B) You can drop the issue and let your friends know you’ll be coming over later.

Not every conflict will be with people we’re close to, so we might think that breaching the damn with others outside of our family and close

friends is not so bad. However, the same principle applies. Is everything that upsets you on your job, in traffic, on social media; worth your time and loss of peace? Don't let others take your peace and waste your time. Learn to let the little stuff go; you'll be better off when you do.

Likewise, King Solomon is not teaching us to be everyone's "doormat," but he is reminding us that when we start arguments over minor issues, they'll cause our lives to crack and waste our time. We need to learn that it's wise to "drop" the small matters in life that cause fruitless arguments, especially with our loved ones. It's better to have people in our lives that love us despite our differences than to try and make everyone think and act exactly like us.

Remember the ole' saying, "Major on the majors and minor on the minors." So the next time you're about ready to give someone a piece of your mind, ask yourself, "Is giving this person a piece of my mind worth breaching a damn?"

## **REFLECTION**

When was the last time you should've dropped a minor issue but you didn't and an argument broke out?

## **ACTION**

1. What are two of the most common, but unimportant issues in your life that tempt you to argue?
2. Pray and ask God to give you ways to avoid petty arguments.
3. Be gracious and gentle with others as God has been gracious and gentle with you (Philippians 4:5).

# DAY 3: FRIENDS & SIBLINGS

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

What is the real difference between a friend and a sibling? According to Solomon a friend is a spiritual relationship based on mutual choice, whereas a brotherly relationship (or sibling) is a physical relationship based on family obligation. In today’s proverb King Solomon gives us a great definition of a good friend. A friend is, “someone who loves at all times.” He also gives us a powerful definition for a good sibling; a sibling is, “someone born for adversity.”

Some Bible teachers have wrongly seen the two relationships of friend and sibling as antithetical or opposite. However, modern commentators like Allen P. Ross in the *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, see them rightly as being complimentary. He wrote, “The true friend is the same as a brotherly relation... [in that both can have] faithful love present at all times... [and be there] in times of adversity.” In other words, a friend can both love at all times and be there in times of adversity like a brother. Likewise, a good brother or sibling won’t only be there for the tough times but also can be a loving friend.

Let’s look at the proverb again but this time in a more modern translation that takes into account the positives of both relationships, “*Friends love through all kinds of weather, and families stick together in all kinds of trouble*” (The Message). Therefore, today God is giving us two great nuggets of wisdom concerning our friendships and siblings. First, when choosing our friends we should do so based on love that is mutually shared and stick with them through the good and bad times. No one likes a “fair weather friend.”

Second, if you have one or more siblings, fight along side of them in their battles and choose to be their close friend. Get to know them for who they really are and love them at all times. Don’t let others take advantage of them or lead them astray.

**Friends can love like siblings and siblings can be close like friends; but in both kinds of relationships; let God's love and faithfulness be the glue that keeps them together.**

Lastly, think of all your relationships like a book; some people you will share a page with, others a chapter and with a very select few you will share the book of your life. Allow people (even siblings) the space to move in and out of your life as the Lord leads. There was a time when Jesus had to remove Himself from His brothers because they mocked His calling (John 7:5). Jesus knows the right people you need in your life at the right times because He is both your friend and brother (Romans 8:29 & James 2:23)!

## **REFLECTION**

Are you a good friend and sibling?

## **ACTION**

1. List the closest people God has placed in your life.
2. Ask God to make you a great friend and sibling.
3. Pray for God to bless your friends and siblings.

# DAY 4: A CHEERFUL HEART = GOOD MEDICINE

Proverbs 17:22, “*A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones.*”

Did you know that God’s wisdom about a cheerful heart being “good medicine” has actually been proven true in the medical world? For example, “One recent study polled healthy first-year law students at the beginning of the school year to find out how optimistic they felt about the upcoming year. By the middle of the first semester, the students who had been confident that they would do well had more and better functioning immune cells than the worried students.

Some researchers think that pessimism may stress you out, too, boosting levels of destructive “stress hormones” in your bloodstream. Of course, it’s also possible that having a positive attitude toward life makes you more likely to take better care of yourself. And you’re more likely to attract people into your life (and keep them there) — which in and of itself may boost your health” (Jane Framingham, Ph.D.).

**Though we are not able to control how people treat us or choose what happens to us in life; we are able to decide whether we live with a cheerful heart or a crushed spirit. Even if our spirits do get crushed in life, Jesus said we don't have to let it stay that way, He will always heal our broken heart (Isaiah 61:1).**

God promised in Isaiah 61:3 that Jesus would, “*Provide for those who grieve in Zion... bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.*” Jesus came to turn your frown upside down. Your heart might have been broken, but Jesus came to heal all the broken pieces. You may not feel cheerful now, but God is growing the fruit of joy in you. He is going to make you a living testimony of His goodness. Even right now, if you’re in the midst of your biggest battle, Jesus, your Good Shepherd, has put a table before you in the presence of your enemies. He is overflowing your cup

with His blessings and He promises that His goodness and mercy will follow you all the days of your life.

Decide to have a cheerful heart and good attitude by finding your joy in God. Rejoice in the Lord and thank Him for all that He has done for you (Philippians 4:4). Don't tell God how big your problems are; tell your problems how big your God is. Repeat this out loud with me, "I have the joy of the Lord down deep in my soul and it's running over into every part of my life."

## **REFLECTION**

Do you have a cheerful heart?

## **ACTION**

1. If you have a crushed spirit ask God to give you the spirit of joy.
2. Guard your heart from the sorrows of this life.
3. In times of trouble find your joy in God and His love for you!

# DAY 5: AIRING OPINIONS

Proverbs 18:2, *“Fools find no pleasure in understanding but delight in airing their own opinions.”*

Have you ever been in a disagreement with someone and heard them say, “I don’t care what you think, I know I’m right” or, “I don’t need to listen to what you’re saying because I already know you’re wrong?” If you have, then you have met a fool who finds no pleasure in understanding. Foolish people (those lacking God’s wisdom) act without understanding and only want to give their own opinions.

A wise person does exactly the opposite. The wise humbly listen and learn from others because they love to gain new wisdom. A wise person once said, “I already know what I know, but I don’t know what you know.”

**The most successful people in the world know how to gain understanding from those with wisdom. Opinions, on the other hand, are like armpits, everyone has them and most of the time they stink!**

Jesus encountered people with their own opinions all the time, especially those from the Jewish leaders. They had their own opinions about God and they loved to put their man-made traditions above the law of God. In their pride they found no pleasure in listening and learning from Jesus to understand the truth about God’s kingdom. They took no delight in understanding the truth, but only in airing their own opinions. And because they had no delight in learning from Jesus they remained ignorant and in their sins (John 8:43).

Once a successful businessman was sitting at a table with fellow workers at an award ceremony. The other businessmen did all the talking and never really tried to understand what the other person knew or did. However, when the award ceremony started the one remaining silent was the only one to receive awards for his achievement. After receiving their rewards, they sat back down and the others asked, “Why haven’t you been sharing your ideas with us?” The person humbly replied, “No one asked me.”

God wants us to be humble and willing to learn new things in life. Those who are proud and act like “know-it-alls” are really acting like fools.

Stop yourself from airing opinions when you are in the presence of those with wisdom. And when you have wisdom be patient to only share it when people have an open mind to receive it. Otherwise, Jesus said you'll be casting your pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6).

## **REFLECTION**

Do you find pleasure in learning new things or just airing your opinions?

## **ACTION**

1. Make a decision to be a life-long learner.
2. Next time you're in a conversation ask yourself, "Am I hearing what the other person is saying?"
3. If a person you're talking to isn't willing to listen to you but only wants to air their own opinions, let them know you need to move on because your time is valuable.



# DAY 6: CLOSER THAN A BROTHER

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

Friends can either bring you down or lift you up. What kind of friends do you want? Do you want the kind of friends that are only looking out for themselves and when times get tough they are no where to be found or do you want a friend that sticks closer to you than a brother?

**The kind of friends you have will affect your life. Choose the wrong friends and they will let you down when you need them most. Choose the right friends and they will stick by you like family.**

Often times today’s proverb is only used as analogy for Jesus. And though it’s true that Jesus is our best friend (John 15:13), He is not the only friend in our life that can be loyal. King Solomon is specifically referring to earthly friends that can be so close to you they become like a brother or sister. On the other hand, there are other kinds of friends who are unfaithful and can cause you great harm. Sometimes our friends can even be closer to us than our family, if our family doesn’t serve Jesus.

Consider the following illustration called, “The Circles of Friendship.” Imagine a circle with four smaller circles on the inside. As each inner circle gets closer to the center it gets smaller. The first and biggest circle of friendship is called, “acquaintances.” These are the kind of friends you may meet on the job, your gym, social media or at church. You know them but you don’t have a relationship with them. Now imagine the next circle of friendship is called, “companions.” These are the kind of friends you occasionally share your life with but aren’t really close to.

The next smaller circle is, “close friends.” These are the friends you regularly spend time with and when you have a success or failure they are the first ones you call. Lastly, the smallest circle of friendship in the center is called, “intimate friends.” These are the friends that are like a brother or sister to you. You may only have one or two intimate friends at a time in your life. Most people will only have a few in their entire life because it

takes so long to develop this kind of friendship. Charles Kingsley said, “It is only the great hearted who can be true friends. The mean and cowardly, can never know what true friendship means.”

The powerful lesson from the circle of friends illustration, is to know who each friend is in your life and to make sure they’re in the right circle. If you have a “close friend” that is continually unreliable and untrustworthy the best thing to do is place them either in the “acquaintance” or “companion” circle because they will only let you down when you need them most.

Also, many of your friends will change circles because of the different seasons in your life. Some will get closer to your heart and others will move further away. The best thing you can do when you see a friendship lose its closeness is give them the “gift of goodbye.” Don’t try to keep people in your life when it’s their time to move on or force them to stay close to your heart. Also, be open to God bringing new people into your life with the “gift of hello” and moving others closer to your heart. Today’s intimate friend may become tomorrow’s acquaintance and today’s acquaintance may become tomorrow’s intimate friend.

Everyone needs good friends. Make sure you choose the right kind of friends and have them in the right place in your life.

## **REFLECTION**

Are you a reliable friend?

## **ACTION**

1. Do you have a friend in your life that is like a sibling or even closer?
2. Are you someone else’s intimate friend?
3. Pray that you can always be a reliable friend.

# DAY 7: THE LORD'S PURPOSE

Proverbs 19:21, *“Many are the plans in a person’s heart, but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”*

Have you ever wondered how God works with man’s free will choices and still remains in control of everything? In other words, if God knows our end from the beginning how does He actually allow us to make our own decisions and not make us His fatalistic robots? And if God ultimately already knows what we’re going to do, doesn’t that remove our ability to act freely?

Many great theologians have spent their entire scholarly lives trying to understand the relationship between God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. God’s sovereignty means, “God can do whatever pleases Him, whenever it pleases Him” (Psalm 115:3). On one hand, God sovereignly chose Jacob over Esau, Israel over Egypt and the Jews over the Gentiles as His special people, without anything to do with their choice (Romans 9-11).

On the other hand, God sovereignly chose for humanity to choose with our own free will whether we want His blessings or curses (Deuteronomy 28), have life or death (Deut. 30:19) and whether or not we would accept or reject Jesus’ free gift of salvation (James 4:8). Free will means, “to be able to choose ‘a’ or not ‘a’ without outside influence.”

This kind of “contra-causal choice” (choice that derives from the individual alone and not by the cause of another agent or force) is exactly what Joshua described at the end of his life. He said, *“But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”* (Joshua 24:15).

**God foreknows our choices and determines our steps and consequences. However, His foreknowledge doesn’t change our responsibility. We will rise or fall based on our own humility or pride.**

King Solomon in today's proverb gives the simple solution to understanding the supposed problem between God's sovereignty and man's free will. Simply said, "Man freely chooses his plans in his heart and God freely chooses what purpose He will accomplish with man and the choices he made." Man is free to make his own choices, but God determines the consequences, whether they are bad or good. William Lane Craig wrote, "We are not causally determined to make all the choices we make; rather many choices are up to us and are therefore free choices. We are held accountable for such choices because they are not the result of random brain events but are undertaken for reasons which we weigh and act upon."

For example, you may make plans to move to a new house on Grey Street, however, for God's purpose to come to pass, He may close the door and make available another house on Brown Street. Even though your plans were changed by God's sovereignty to fulfill His bigger purpose, you were still able to freely make your choice. You can follow the leading of the Lord or rebel and try to move into Grey Street anyways, either way it will be your choice. Ultimately, everything will work out for God's good plan, but not everything will work out for your good. For things to work out for your good, you have to willingly love and serve God (Romans 8:28).

Therefore, we as Christians shouldn't say, "There is no point in trying to do anything, because whatever God wants to come to pass will happen." Fatalistic thinking will lead to our destruction because it is rooted in disobedience. We cannot use God's foreknowledge and sovereignty as an excuse on Judgment Day. God has commanded us to be faithful and obedient. Take some to learn from Jesus' parables found in Matthew 25, about how He expects us to be faithful virgins, hardworking stewards and compassionate sheep.

The Christian can be confident that God has given us freedom of choice. We are not pre-programmed robots or animals that live by mindless instinct. At the same time, we should always be aware of God's bigger plans and purposes in our lives. We should make the right choices when God gives us the power to act and trust Him when He works out everything for His purpose.

## **REFLECTION**

Are you willing to make your plans but trust God's purpose?

## **ACTION**

1. Think of 2-3 plans you are making in this season of your life.
2. Commit your plans to the Lord in prayer.
3. If God changes your plans, trust Him that His purpose is for your good.



# DAY 8: ALCOHOL ABUSE

Proverbs 20:1, *“Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.”*

The saddest day of my life was when I lost my sister to drinking and driving. She hit a pole driving over 70mph, split the car in two and flew through the roof. The people at the bar said they tried to stop her from driving but she insisted and she paid the price with her life. Tragically, she left behind two children.

The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention writes, “There are approximately 80,000 deaths attributable to excessive alcohol use each year in the United States. This makes excessive alcohol use the 3<sup>rd</sup> leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation. Excessive alcohol use is responsible for 2.3 million years of potential life lost annually, or an average of about 30 years of potential life lost for each death. In 2006, there were more than 1.2 million emergency room visits and 2.7 million physician office visits due to excessive drinking. The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in 2006 were estimated at \$223.5 billion.”

Though it is acceptable for the law abiding disciple to drink alcohol in moderation (Deuteronomy 14:26, Psalm 104:15 & Romans 14:1-7), the cost of being a drunkard can cost people their lives, harm others and damn their souls for eternity (Galatians 5:21). King Solomon in today’s proverb gives us a very clear and stern warning concerning alcohol; don’t be led astray by it!

**Today, just like in the times of Solomon and Jesus, alcohol is common at weddings, special events, everyday meals and social gatherings. However, the disciple who chooses to use their freedom to enjoy it must do so with a realistic understanding of the dangers of alcohol. Solomon wrote that those who are “led astray” (or “abuse”) alcohol will mock God’s wisdom (“do stupid things”) and become a brawler (angry and violent).**

Therefore, here are some guidelines that can help insure your safety in regards to alcohol; (1) Never drink if its against the law (underage, while working, etc.), (2) Never drink if you are prone to alcoholism or binge

drinking, (3) Never drink if your doctor says it is negatively affecting your health, (4) Never drink if your conscience is grieved by the Holy Spirit, (5) Never drink if alcohol leads you to commit sins like sexual perversion, violence, etc., (6) Never drink and get drunk, and lastly, (7) If you do drink legally, do so in such a way that if Jesus was with you, like at the wedding in Cana, He would be pleased by your self-control (1 Corinthians 10:31).

## **REFLECTION**

What are your thoughts regarding alcohol?

## **ACTION**

1. Make a decision based on prayer whether you should drink alcohol in moderation or whether you should abstain from it.
2. Repent of any times you may have abused alcohol and ask God to give you a biblical understanding of the sin of drunkenness (Proverbs 23:29-35).
3. Whatever you do in eating or drinking, do it as unto the Lord in holiness!



# DAY 9: A FAITHFUL PERSON

Proverbs 20:6, “*Many claim to have unfailing love, but a faithful person who can find?*”

As a pastor with years of experience, I’ve had the privilege of meeting hundreds of people. Sadly, most have had issues with being faithful, not only in the church but also in their lives. Very few people I’ve served have been faithful to God. The Bible is full of examples of the vast size difference between the crowd and the committed. A.W. Pink wrote, “Faithful people have always been in a marked minority.”

Moses led over a million Israelites, but only a small portion was faithful. Jesus reached thousands in His earthly ministry but only 120 were faithful to pray in the upper room. Paul planted many churches but only a few actually followed what he taught. If the best leaders in the Bible dealt with unfaithful people, so will you. Jesus said in Luke 18:8, “*When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?*” Even still to this day Jesus is giving people time to decide what they will do with His teachings.

Faithless people can say all the right things, but their words are worthless when you’re looking for them a year later. It doesn’t matter what excuses they make, the bottom line is always the same; they broke their word to both God and man because they lack commitment.

**No one in life has an excuse to be unfaithful. From rich to poor, young to old, strong to weak and everyone in-between, anyone can be faithful. All one has to do is keep their word.**

King Solomon probably had large amounts of people proclaim their love and allegiance to him and then fail to keep their word. God led him to write this proverb ending in a question mark because I believe Solomon is asking, “Does anyone know where I can find a faithful person?” All organizations and relationship structures such as; governments, churches, families, businesses, etc., must be built and ran by faithful people to be successful.

Are you a faithful person or do you break your word? Here are some ways you can be found faithful; (1) Only say what you mean. Don't use flattering words if you don't mean them, (2) Be sure to only commit to things you can and will do, (3) Don't lie or break your word, (4) Let your actions speak louder than your words, and (5) Seek forgiveness any time you break your word and let people down. Don't make excuses. Say, "I am sorry and I will do better next time."

I challenge you to be the kind of person that when your job, family or church calls out, "Who is faithful?" You can respond, "I am" and then prove it with your actions.

## **REFLECTION**

Do the people around you consider you faithful?

## **ACTION**

1. Search your heart and repent of any times you were unfaithful.
2. Ask God to develop the spiritual fruit of "faithfulness" in you (Galatians 5:22).
3. Don't just proclaim your love and faithfulness- prove it!

# DAY 10: A BLAMELESS LIFE

Proverbs 20:7, *“The righteous lead blameless lives; blessed are their children after them.”*

I’d be a rich man by now, if I had a dollar for every time I told people that God expects them to live without sin and they gave me the excuse, “But nobody is perfect.” The Bible is absolutely clear from beginning to end that the children of God are to live blameless lives, “without sin.” This doesn’t mean that humanity is born perfect or is capable of making themselves perfect. However, by God’s grace (His active and enabling power) man can be born again and live without sin.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:48, *“Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”* Also, Peter reiterated in the New Testament what God said in Leviticus 11:44, *“Be holy, because I am holy”* (1 Peter 1:16). Do these passages teach us, “Stay messed up, because God is messed up” or “Be whatever you want to be because you’re in charge?” Certainly not. One might ask, “Well, what about my sinful nature?” Paul explained in Romans 6:6, that our sinful nature was crucified with Christ when we were born again, *“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.”*

Therefore what King Solomon, Moses, Paul, Peter and Jesus said concerning living a blameless life must be fully obeyed. Someone might now ask, “What happens if I do sin after being born again?” John the apostle gave the answer in 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*

**If we do sin after being born again we are to repent and be forgiven. Being blameless and without sin should always be the default position of the disciple.**

If we do not follow God’s command to be blameless, we will suffer. Jesus purchased our new identity, which is holy and blameless, and He sent the Holy Spirit to lead us not into temptation but deliver us from all evil.

God warned in Hebrews 10:26-27 to not “*deliberately keep on sinning*” because if we do, “*no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*” Also, God said in 1 John 3:8-9, “*8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. 9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*” Adam Clarke wrote, “All sin, whether in power, guilt, or defilement is the work of the devil; and he, Jesus, came to destroy the work of the devil; and as all unrighteousness is sin, so his blood cleanseth from all sin, because it cleanseth from all unrighteousness.”

By God’s grace we, as righteous people, should live blameless lives just as Solomon described. Being blameless before God will be a tremendous blessing to our children. Children shouldn’t grow up watching us live in sin and make excuses to be defeated by evil. Watching God’s transforming and empowering grace in our lives should inspire them to be who God called them to be. Here are five ways to be righteous and lead a blameless life; (1) Be born again, (2) Be baptized with the Holy Spirit, (3) Believe and confess you are who God said you are, (4) Immediately repent of sin whenever you commit it, and lastly, (5) By the power of the Holy Spirit keep all of God’s commands found in the Bible.

## **REFLECTION**

Do you lead a blameless life?

## **ACTION**

1. Believe and confess out loud that you can live without sin as the Bible teaches and lead a blameless life.
2. Keep all of God’s commands (including His command to repent) all the days of your life for your children’s sake.
3. Pray for your children to be born again and lead a blameless life.

# DAY 11: RASH BEHAVIOR

Proverbs 20:25, *“It is a trap to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider one’s vows.”*

America has a big rash problem... a “rash behavior problem” that is. From the White House to your house and from Wall Street to Main Street, people too often commit to things they don’t follow through with. Whether it’s in church, business, and relationships or in politics- too many people fall into the trap of dedicating to something rashly only later to change their mind.

The Old Testament way to make commitments was with vows (sworn promises) and covenants (contracts). The New Testament teaches that disciples should no longer make vows, because our “yes” and “no” should be enough without needing to swear by something else (Matthew 5:34). Today, our contracts might be made differently than in Bible times, but our need to keep them hasn’t. Take for example buying a house on contract, just like in Jesus’ time, people expect to get their money!

Here are some reasons I believe people dedicate to things without thinking them through properly; (1) They follow the lust of their eyes and don’t consider if they really “need it,” (2) People tend to lack patience and forget that the right thing at the wrong time is still wrong, and (3) We forgot to pray and consult with God in all our decisions because we sometimes think that God is only useful for “spiritual decisions.”

**As disciples of Christ we should make every commitment based on God’s wisdom and guidance. If we take the wheel from Jesus, we’ll soon find out how fast our life can end up in a ditch.**

Consider these ways to avoid rash behavior, (1) Learn to pray and consult God with all your decisions, (2) Always follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, (3) Remember, timing is important so be diligent to not move too fast or too slow, (4) Be sensitive to the peace of God in your heart, never commit to what you don’t have peace about, (5) Seek good advice before important decisions, and (6) Once you have committed to something try to keep your word even if it hurts (Psalm 15:4).

Avoid getting a rash by thoughtfully committing to things that are God’s best. Thomas Fuller said, “Rashness is the faithful but unhappy parent

of misfortune.” You will avoid much misfortune if you just slow down enough to let God help you to make the right decision. Just like being rash leads to problems, wisdom and patient planning leads to success!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you have a rash behavior problem?

## **ACTION**

1. Repent for any of the times you may have acted rashly.
2. Ask God to help you slow down and make the right commitments in life.
3. Only dedicate to things you can actually do in excellence.

# DAY 12: ALL OUR WAYS SEEM RIGHT

Proverbs 21:2, *“A person may think their own ways are right, but the Lord weighs the heart.”*

Have you ever thought you were right about something, but later found out you were wrong? Maybe you were sure that a person you were dating was going to be your spouse, but it turned out they were not the right person for you. Or you might have thought you were going to work a job for many years but you wanted to quit after only a few months and do something else.

All of us in life have thought we were right about something (relationships, jobs, friends or expenditures) and realized afterward we were wrong. The same is true in our walk with God. We too often try to guide our own lives and think we’re doing good until the Lord weighs our heart. It’s like being lost in a car (without your phone) and not wanting to stop and ask someone for directions. The longer you take to try to figure it out on your own, the more likely you are to waste time.

**The Lord weighs our heart like a precious metals dealer and tests all our ways. He determines the purity (whether our actions are righteous or not), the weight (the consequences of our actions) and the value (how our actions will effect others). Therefore, we should always seek God in all that we do.**

God always knows what is best for us according to His purpose; we don’t. Often times our worst enemy is the one we see in the mirror. Stubbornness and pride will make us think we can “take the wheel” from Jesus and drive our own lives to success. Yet, we will find out in the end, the only thing we’re good at without God is getting lost. Sometimes people say, “I’m a self-made person, I don’t need anyone’s help.” However, without God they are really just a self-made mess, heading towards destruction. It takes love and trust to ask God to weigh our hearts, but He is always willing to guide us on the paths of righteousness for His namesake.

Jonathon Edwards wrote, “The surest way to know our gold is to look upon it and examine it in God's furnace, where he tries it that we may see

what it is. If we have a mind to know whether a building stands strong or not, we must look upon it when the wind blows. If we would know whether a staff be strong, or a rotten, broken reed, we must observe it when it is leaned on and weight is borne upon it. If we would weigh ourselves justly we must weigh ourselves in God's scales that he makes use of to weigh us.”

Take time today to let God test your heart and find the purity, weight and value of all your ways.

## **REFLECTION**

Do you let God weigh your heart?

## **ACTION**

1. Pray for God to reveal any ways you may have taken in life that are not pleasing to Him.
2. Daily seek God’s wisdom for the ways you are to take in life.
3. If you ever take the wrong ways in life, quickly ask God for His directions back to the paths of righteousness.



# DAY 13: DON'T LOVE EARTHLY PLEASURES

Proverbs 21:17, *“Whoever loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich.”*

Is King Solomon teaching us that pleasure is bad? No, if he were then he would be contradicting the parts of the Bible that encourage us to enjoy life (Psalm 104:14-15). For example, Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 9:7, *“Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.”* The idea he is conveying in today’s proverb is that if you’re “obsessed” with the pleasures of wine (getting drunk) and olive oil (eating too much fatty foods) you will never be rich; and if you are rich now, living like this will cost you your wealth.

**Pleasures by themselves are not inherently bad, but if they consume your life they will cost you all your riches.**

When I read this proverb a person like Dennis Rodman comes to mind. He was a famous basketball player for the Chicago Bulls, who won five NBA championships and was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. He made tens of millions of dollars, however, he went broke because of his love for pleasure (mainly alcohol). He was known to be a “party-animal,” spending his money on the temporary pleasures of this world. Rodman went from being worth over 30 million dollars to being one million dollars in debt.

Though Rodman is an extreme example, I see the same kind of thing happen with ordinary people all the time. Some people will work hard and earn \$50,000 a year, however, because they love the pleasures of designer clothes, expensive cars, extravagant vacations and five star restaurants, they spend \$70,000 a year. As a result, they can never become rich (have more than enough) because they are \$20,000 in debt. Sadly, then they’ll wonder why they can never get ahead financially.

Augustine wrote, “Where your pleasure is, there is your treasure; Where your treasure is, there is your heart; Where your heart is, there is your happiness.” In other words, when we prioritize our pleasures by the desire to

please God, we will find our greatest pleasures come from heaven. Earthly pleasures left unfiltered by heavenly wisdom will lead to harmful results, but they can be beneficial when submitted to God. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, “*So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.*”

If you want to be rich in life and have more than enough you must learn to say no to uncontrolled pleasures. Don't let your desire for earthly pleasures control your life, but rather control your desires with godly principles. Principles that help you know when to work hard, celebrate and how to moderate your desires. Gain the life experience of being guided by the wisdom of God and not your flesh. Then you will truly experience the greatest pleasures that come God (Psalm 16:11).

## **REFLECTION**

Are you guided by God's principles or earthly pleasures?

## **ACTION**

1. Think about three earthly pleasures you enjoy.
2. Pray that God will help you control your desire for pleasure.
3. Live according to godly principles and not earthly pleasures. For example, don't “love wine” by only drinking 2-3 servings in one sitting. And don't “love olive oil” by eating so much food that you gain weight and become unhealthy.

# DAY 14: DRIVE OUT THE MOCKER

Proverbs 22:10, *“Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.”*

Throughout the book of Proverbs the fool is contrasted with the wise person. A certain kind of fool that is often highlighted is the “mocker.” A mocker is “someone who ridicules others or purposely misrepresents something for the sake of offensive humor.” The Bible warns against being a mocker and being around mockers.

We all know people who are mockers. In school they were called the “class clowns.” They would ask silly questions, make stupid faces and bring disruption to the class. On the job they’re known as the “troublemakers.” They always need to be told 2-3x what to do and when no one is looking they scorn the company and ridicule their bosses.

Mockers can enter into your life at anytime. And sometimes we can have the tendency to behave like one. For example, if a wife confronts her husband about not taking out the garbage, and his response is to mimic her and call her a nag, he is acting like a mocker. Also, if a church member goes behind the pastor’s back and puts down the pastor to others, that person is a mocker.

**The solution that God gives us for dealing with mockers is simple, “drive them out.” Don’t keep them around or be afraid of what they will say or do. Quickly remove them from your life.**

If you have a mocker on the job that has been warned but is persistent in their mockery- fire them. If you’re not the boss, report them and stop spending time with them. If they are your boss, find a new job or seek for a transfer. When there is a mocker in the church that has repeatedly rejected instruction- disfellowship them (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). Don’t feel sorry for them, but rather rebuke them for their divisive and rebellious attitude. Paul said in Titus 3:10-11, *“10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. 11 You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.”*

If you're married to a mocker and it turns into verbal abuse, separate from them until they treat you with respect. You don't have to live with someone that disrespects you and your values. You and your children deserve better. According to God, the best thing you can do for mockers who refuse to repent is give them the "gift of goodbye." Mockers love attention and seek others to hear their folly. God wants us to separate from them in hope that they'll humble themselves to receive God's wisdom. Ernest Yeboah wrote, "Your mockers will only have your attention... if you give them your attention."

The Bible promises that when you drive out the mocker, the quarrels and insults will end. So if you're undecided about separating yourself from a mocker, just ask yourself the question, "How many more quarrels and insults do I want to have?"

## **REFLECTION**

Are there mockers in your life?

## **ACTION**

1. Prayerfully identify any mockers you may have in your life.
2. Seek God for the wisdom to help them and if they don't change to drive them out.
3. Guard your heart from acting like a mocker.

# DAY 15: HOT-TEMPERED

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

Everyone at times struggles to keep his or her anger under control. For some all it takes to sin in their anger is a bad day in traffic. For others, they can give into sin when they encounter bad customer service and still for some, a long line at the grocery store can cause them to hurl insults. No matter what pushes our buttons, God expects us to keep our anger in check. God said in James 1:20, “*Human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.*” If we want to live righteous, we can’t do it with human anger!

We need to know the difference between “godly anger” and “human anger.” Godly anger is being angry about the things God is angry about. Human anger is being angry about what the flesh gets mad about. Godly anger is based in the loving and holy nature of God. Human anger is rooted in man’s selfishness and impatience.

**Anger, like all good human emotions, came from God when we were first created in His image. We shouldn’t think that all anger is bad. God Himself gets angry and there are good times for us to be angry. However, we must learn to be angry and sin not (Ephesians 4:26).**

For example, God became angry with Moses in Exodus 4:14, when he kept doubting what God was commanding him to do. This was justified on God’s part because unbelief and rebellion is sin. God didn’t want Moses to reject His commands and leave the Israelites in their suffering. At the same time, when Moses became angry with the Israelites and struck the rock out of impatience, God rightly punished him (Numbers 20:11-12).

As a result, godly anger is not based on man’s desires, but rather God’s desires. We should love what God loves and hate what He hates. Paul said in Romans 12:9, “*Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good.*” Human anger lacks self-control but godly anger is always under control. Godly anger never produces sin, whereas, human anger always leads to sin. Human anger is man-centered, godly anger is God-centered. Godly

anger reminds us of Jesus in the Jewish temple fighting for justice, but human anger reminds us of the devil fighting for revenge.

A hot-tempered person is someone that cannot control their anger and causes harm to others; whether it is physical, emotional or spiritual. We are told to avoid hot-tempered people because their evil ways can negatively influence us. For example, a child that grows up in a home with hot-tempered parents will likely be rash with their children.

So if you are a hot-tempered person, stop acting in the flesh and act like how Jesus made you to be. And if you know hot-tempered people, avoid close relationships with them until they change because they can poison your life. Billy Graham said, “Hot heads and cold hearts never solved anything.”

## **REFLECTION**

Are you a hot-tempered person?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to show you the times you were hot-tempered. Confess your sins, if you haven't already.
2. Pray for the Holy Spirit to guide your emotions whenever you feel angry.
3. Avoid close friendship with people who are hot-tempered.

# DAY 16: DON'T WEAR YOURSELF OUT

Proverbs 23:4, *“Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness.”*

According to recent studies, the American worker is the most overworked employee of all the developed nations. Americans on average work longer hours, have less vacation time, less days off and retire at an older age compared to workers in Japan, Canada, England, Germany, France, etc. Also, the U.S. doesn't even require its employers to give extended time off with paid maternity leave for parents who have new babies.

In 1960 only 20% of mothers worked outside of the home, today over 70% of children live in homes where both parents work. In the U.S. 85% of males and 66% of females work more than 40 hours per week. For perspective, Americans work 137 more hours a year than Japanese workers, 260 more hours a year than British workers and almost 500 more hours a year than French workers; that's almost 10 more hours a week!

What is the price Americans have to pay for being overworked? Stress. The result of being overworked is being overstressed. Doctors in every field agree that stress plays a major factor in our health. Stress affects the heart, the mind, the immune system, the muscles and even our sexuality.

**King Solomon taught that we must take care of ourselves when achieving our goals because if we don't, we won't be able to enjoy the fruit of our hard labor due to being worn out.**

Shockingly, it's believed that stress is the leading cause for 75% of doctor visits. Whether it's a cold or a backache, most sick days are caused because of lack of rest and proper diet, which are common symptoms for stress. King Solomon in the above proverb gives a simple, yet powerful piece of wisdom to all people- especially the American worker; “Don't wear yourself out trying to get rich, because you're not that smart!” No matter who you are, if you get stressed out, no amount of money or success will be able to de-stress you; that's something only God's wisdom can give you. A

great pastor once told me, “God’s best is for you to work from a place of rest!”

We may think we’re clever enough to work all these hours and not pay a price for it, but that’s foolish thinking. Humble yourself and take a day off. Learn from God’s command to the Jews and rest one day a week. Take time to honor the Lord, be with friends and family and rest your mind. Remember, you’re not invincible; you have a breaking point. Don’t wait until you wear yourself out to learn this valuable lesson. Learn the lesson of balance now. You will be better off in working less because you will be in better shape both mentally and physically.

## **REFLECTION**

Are you stressed in life?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to give you wisdom to find time to rest and restore your mind, body and spirit.
2. Identify any stress symptoms in your life- like smoking, cursing, over eating, lack of good sleep and reverse the curse. Start exercising, going to bed early and try to follow better eating habits.
3. Ask God everyday to guard you from falling into the trap of “wearing yourself out.”



# DAY 17: DON'T ENVY SINNERS

Proverbs 23:17, *“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord.”*

The definition of envy is, “a feeling of discontentment that leads to resentment aroused by the desire to have the possessions or qualities of another person.” A similar concept to envy is what John called, “the lust of the eyes” (1 John 2:16). If we don’t guard our heart, our need to have things in life can turn into greed; to have what we don’t need. John Chrysostom wrote, “As a moth gnaws a garment, so doth envy consume a man.”

**Envy affects everyone, from young to old and from male to female. If we don’t control our wants and desires, we can become full of bitter envy that makes us an addict to our own greedy impulses and we will not be able to celebrate what others have and do.**

One of the key elements advertisers use to get people to buy their products is envy. Fashion magazines want the young girl to feel discontent with her body and strongly desire the body of the unrealistic super model, so she will buy the clothes featured in the magazine. The beer commercial wants the average guy to feel like an unpopular outcast if he doesn’t drink their beer. The one-minute commercial promises him a fantasy world of scantily clothed women, fun parties and attractive friends. Sadly, this kind of “marketing envy” starts with children and affects all stages of life and all aspects. We can’t only blame the marketing companies, because they are successful as a result of people being envious in their heart.

King Solomon gives a direct command to not envy sinners because often times the disciple of Christ can be tempted to think they have it better. After all, sinners get to think, say and do whatever they want, whenever they feel like it. However, the disciple shouldn’t fall for this trap of sinful envy because the sinner’s temporary pleasures will end in eternal destruction. The Christian should be zealous for the fear of the Lord because the fear of the Lord gives life and everlasting pleasures; even joy in this life.

I remember one time when I faced the temptation of envying sinners as a young inner city pastor in New Orleans. I took a much needed break from doing intense ministry to visit Pensacola Beach in Florida. As I began to see how much “fun” all the people my age were having in their sin, I was tempted to envy them. But at that moment my heart was convicted and I heard the Lord say to me, “Am I not enough?”

I am thankful that God reminded me that He is always more than enough to meet all my emotional, spiritual and physical needs. He then showed me that even my worst day as a Christian, was better than my best day as a sinner. Paul said in Philippians 3:7-8, *“Because of Christ. Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I’ve dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him”* (The Message).

Serving God may cost us some temporary pleasures that sin provides. However, those temporary pleasures don’t compare to the happiness of knowing Jesus; both in this life and the life to come. Therefore, don’t let your heart envy sinners in their sin; stay passionate for serving God because He is always more than enough!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you envy the lifestyle of sinners?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to show you if you’re envious of sinners.
2. Repent of any envy you may have in your heart towards sinful things. For example pornography, greed, selfish ambition, pride and the like.
3. Pray for God to guard your heart and to always remind you to be zealous (passionate) for the fear of the Lord (Psalm 73).

# DAY 18: UNFAITHFUL PEOPLE

Proverbs 25:19, *“Like a broken tooth or a lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in a time of trouble.”*

Have you ever had a broken tooth or an injured foot? Do you remember how much pain you had each time you tried to use it? Or have you been injured in another part of your body where you couldn't do what you normally were able to do? As a former skateboarder, snowboarder and wakeboarder; I can relate to all kinds of injuries that caused me severe pain!

My worst injury happened while I was snowboarding and I tried to catch “big air.” I was heading down the hill around 20mph and hit the jump wrong. I went about 10 feet in the air and landed with all of my weight directly on my shoulder. The pain was instant and intense. I'd never felt pain like that before. Thankfully, I was able to get up and drive myself home. But I couldn't move my arm with out feeling excruciating pain for the next month.

My wife was upset that I, as a father of two children at that time, had put myself in that kind of situation. For weeks, every time I tried to lift my arm, pain would shoot through my whole body. After I went in for an MRI, I was happy to learn I'd only had minor tears that could heal on their own without any surgery. Still, it seemed like it took forever to get my full strength back.

The lesson I learned from the injury (besides not trying to catch big air) was how to use one arm to do all my everyday functions; like putting on my pants, playing with my kids and driving a car. At certain times, out of habit, I would forget my arm was injured and I would try to use it for a simple task and instantly the pain would come back to remind me not to use that arm. My injured shoulder made my life painful.

The same is true with people who are unfaithful; they will make your life painful. Instead of them being there when you need them, they actually make things worse.

**Unfaithful people hurt people that depend on them.**

Maybe you lost a loved one and expected a relative to help you with the arrangements; however, because they were unfaithful they let you down by not doing what they said they'd do. Unfaithful people are often times worse than being alone. A wise man once said, "If people are unfaithful to you it is because they are unfaithful to God. The most faithful people you'll meet in life are those who are most faithful to God."

When you're alone, you know you're alone and understand everything rises and falls on you. However, when someone says they are going to help and then they don't, it makes your life harder because you have to make last minute arrangements to do the work you were counting on them to do. I tell people all the time as a pastor, "Don't make a commitment that you can't keep. I'd rather do it myself than to expect you to be there and for you not to show up."

On one hand, we should be patient with people when they are trying to help us the best way they know how. On the other hand, we should avoid asking unfaithful people for help because they really don't care. Moving forward we should make sure we are not unfaithful to others and avoid relying upon unfaithful people in our times of need.

The solution to unfaithful people is faithfulness. It is a fruit of the Spirit that God will develop in all those who are born again when they ask for it. Therefore, if Jesus ("The Faithful One") is on the inside of you, you can be a faithful person to those in your life!

## **REFLECTION**

What kind of person are you; faithful or unfaithful?

## **ACTION**

1. Pray and ask God if you need to repent for any unfaithfulness you might have had in the past.
2. Take note of any unfaithful people in your life that are causing you pain.
3. By the grace of God, strive to be a faithful person and avoid relying on unfaithful people in your life.

# DAY 19: FEED YOUR ENEMY

Proverbs 25:21, *“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink.”*

Some people have the impression that God was “mean” in the Old Testament and “nice” in the New Testament. However, Hebrews 13:8 states, *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

**The same Jesus that said, “love your enemy” in Matthew 5:44, is the same one who inspired King Solomon in the Old Testament to write, “if your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat.” From generation to generation, God’s command to love has been expressed to humanity.**

God has always been kind to sinners who are His enemies. He gives them air to breathe, food to eat and a freewill to choose or reject Him. When people reject God, He takes no pleasure in their death and destruction. God said in Ezekiel 33:11, *“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their ways and live. Turn! Turn from your evil ways! Why will you die, people of Israel?”* From beginning to end the Bible teaches us that God has shown His enemies kindness and mercy.

Likewise, out of God’s great love He judges the world. God loves justice and truth, which is why He hates evil and injustice. All that God does in judgment is just and fair (Revelation 15:3-4). Love is shown by what we hate. If you love your children, you hate anything that would harm them. The same is true with God’s judgment, because He loves us, He hates our sin. And if we choose sin, out of love He will judge us and give us exactly what we want; an eternity without Him.

As Christ’s followers we shouldn’t treat people the way they treat us, but rather we should treat all people the way we want to be treated. The same is true with our enemies. If we see them suffering, we should offer them our help because it is not right to delight in their suffering. For example, imagine if one of your co-workers who dislikes you forgets their wallet at home. You should buy them lunch and say it’s a gift that they don’t

have to repay. By treating your enemy like this you are showing yourself to be a child of God because God sends rain to both the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

Obviously, there are times in which God judges the wicked and commands us to protect the innocent from evildoers (Psalms 2 & Romans 13:1-5). But the kind of enemies we can love and reach out to, are the ones we share life with and are able to affect for the good. Therefore, make a decision today to be kind to your enemies as God in times past has been kind to you!

## **REFLECTION**

Would you give your enemy something to eat if they were hungry?

## **ACTION**

1. Think of some people in your life that don't like you. Now decide to love them and treat them kindly.
2. Make it a general rule to go out of your way to do things for people, even if they don't like you.
3. Pray and ask God to use your kindness to bring change in people's lives. Chip Ingram wrote, "Nothing breaks down barriers and preconceived ideas about 'Christians and Christianity' more than when we treat people the way Jesus treated His enemies."

# DAY 20: SELF-CONTROL

Proverbs 25:28, *“Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.”*

I’ll never forget the first time I really understood this proverb. I was talking to a friend who was giving me counsel, after I had been in an argument with another pastor. In my hurt and frustration I asked him, “Why is it I feel drained and overwhelmed with emotion?” He responded back with this proverb and explained to me that when I lacked self-control by losing my temper in my disagreement with the other pastor, I became an easy target for the enemy.

**If we don’t control our emotions, they’ll control us; and uncontrolled emotions make us vulnerable to the enemy’s attacks.**

My biggest temptation is to lose control of my temper. For others it’s hard for them to control their sex drive. Some find it difficult to control their eating and spending habits; and some people cannot control their thoughts and words. No matter what it is, if we don’t practice self-control over the things in our life, we will suffer.

Often times in Christianity, we think that because God’s grace saved us, it’s up to us to obey God’s commands in our own efforts. However, without God’s grace, we cannot please God and obey any of His commands. The answer for those who lack self-control isn’t to have more self-discipline; the answer for those who lack self-control is to yield their control to God.

In other words, we need to learn how to be led by the Holy Spirit, like a sheep is led by its shepherd. Jesus commanded us to “deny ourselves” in Luke 9:23 because when we do, He can take the wheel and drive our lives. Also, Paul said to count the old sinful self as “crucified with Christ” in Galatians 2:20 because self-help will not work if our self is still sinful. The only way we can have true self-control is to yield our self to the control of the Holy Spirit.

When we are full of God’s Spirit and led by God’s Word, we will always be able to keep our self in control. God promised us in 2 Timothy 1:7 that the Holy Spirit would give us all we need to avoid being out of control; *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love*

*and self-discipline.*” The Bible also teaches that self-control is one of the manifestations of the Holy Spirit’s fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:23). When we give the control of ourselves to God, He gives us a new nature and the ability to control our emotions in the face of temptations.

Max Lucado wrote, “I am a spiritual being... After this body is dead, my spirit will soar. I refuse to let what will rot rule the eternal. I choose self-control. I will be drunk only by joy. I will be impassioned only by my faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught only by Christ.” Let God have control of your emotions and filter them by the Holy Spirit through His Word. We have the power to resist emotional invasion from the enemy because God guards the walls of our heart with the fruit of self-control!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you walk in self-control being led by the Holy Spirit?

## **ACTION**

1. Repent for any times you lacked self-control.
2. Ask God to develop the fruit of self-control in you.
3. If you ever notice your emotional walls coming down; deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus!



# DAY 21: TWO KINDS OF FOOLS

Proverbs 26:4-5, “*4 Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself will be just like him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.*”

Did you catch the supposed contradiction in the two proverbs for today’s lesson? If you didn’t, please slowly read them again. Now do you see it? Did King Solomon make a mistake or did the translators make a mistake?

Some critics of the Bible read these two proverbs and say, “Aha, the Bible contradicts itself! In one proverb it says, ‘do not answer a fool according to his folly’ and in the other it says, ‘answer a fool according to his folly;’ so what do we do, answer or don’t answer a fool in his folly?” The answer is, “both.”

**God gave us the wisdom to know how to both ignore and answer a fool.**

First, both verses are God’s Word and should be obeyed. Neither King Solomon nor the translators made a mistake and the Holy Spirit wasn’t away when these two proverbs were written. God said in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, “*16 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*” Therefore, these two proverbs are both inspired and are useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training us in righteousness (“right living”).

Second, and more to the point, there is no contradiction between these two verses, just two different applications. The best question to ask isn’t, “How should I answer a fool?” But rather, “What kind of fool am I talking to?” In other words, King Solomon is giving two different approaches to answering a fool because there are two different kinds of fools in life.

In verse four, Solomon is referring to the kind of fool that is not willing to listen and will only mock and ridicule whatever you say. Jesus referred to these kinds of people as “dogs and pigs” in Matthew 7:6; He said, “*Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you*

*do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.”* Likewise, when dealing with a “mocking-kind-of-fool” don’t waste your time answering them because they will never listen. George Bernard Shaw said, “I learned long ago, never to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it.”

However, in verse five Solomon is referring to the kind of fool that needs a rebuke, so others will be warned of their folly. When you are dealing with a “make an example out of them-kind-of-fool” then give them a response in wisdom to reveal their folly in hopes they, along with others acting like them, will listen and repent. Jesus made an example of the Jewish leaders by calling out their folly for all to hear.

Jesus’ most intense rebuke is found in Matthew 23:13-39 where he gives them seven “Woes,” and calls them hypocrites, children of the devil, blind guides, blind fools, whitewashed tombs, snakes and vipers. Jesus rebuked them like this because He didn’t want them or their followers to think their way of living was righteous. Jesus ended the correction with saying, “*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing*” (Matthew 23:37). As a result, even when Jesus rebuked people, He did it because He loved them.

The main lesson from these two complimentary proverbs is to ask the Lord when dealing with people in their foolishness, “What kind of fool are they?” Then based on what the Holy Spirit reveals, answer them or do not answer them in their folly.

## **REFLECTION**

Do you see different kinds of foolish people in your life?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to always keep you from folly.
2. Identify the kind of foolish people you encounter in life.
3. Be led by the Holy Spirit to respond in wisdom to people in their folly.

# DAY 22: THE FOOL AND THEIR VOMIT

Proverbs 26:11, *“As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.”*

Have you ever watched a dog eat its own vomit? I have and it's disgusting. The dog ate it up and didn't mind that it was its own puke, nasty. King Solomon in today's proverb is making the comparison between a fool that repeats their folly and a dog that eats its own vomit. We all need to be reminded of what God has saved us from.

**Sin to God is like vomit to us, disgusting. We should never desire sin or continue doing it.**

The fool's folly is comparable to vomit because it is vile to God. God does not see sin, even in the Christian's life, as something “cute” or “harmless.” All sin, starting with Adam and Eve's disobedience, is abominable to God. And as the dog returns to eat its own vomit is disgusting in our eyes, God wants us to see the fool repeating their sin just as disgusting. The ole' time preachers used to say, “When we see sin like Jesus sees it, we will hate it like how He hates it.”

Sadly, just as the dog in its animal nature doesn't feel shame or disgust for eating their vomit, the fool doesn't have any remorse either. Instead, they defend and celebrate their sin. Today in the U.S., what once was commonly viewed as sinful is now celebrated and held in high esteem. Consider how homosexuality, lesbianism, abortion, transgenderism, sex before marriage and drug use are not only considered “acceptable” in our culture, but if you take a stand against them with the Word of God you're called, “a hate-monger, a bigot and stupid.” Jesus said in Luke 16:15 (ESV), *“For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.”*

Today's lesson from King Solomon is simple, “don't be like a fool who keeps repeating their folly.” Yes, it's true that God will forgive all your sin and be patient with you, however, do not use the grace of God as a license to continue in sin. Whenever you sin, be quick to repent and strive to never do it again. True repentance that brings forgiveness comes with the

willingness to change. Otherwise, you become like a dog that continues to eat its own vomit and never feels any shame or guilt.

God said in 1 John 3:9, “*No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.*” Therefore, make a decision today to not continue in any sin or folly. Don’t be like the dog that likes to eat its own vomit. Humbly ask God to deliver you from all temptation and evil. Believe that you can live righteous because when you were born again you were made righteous (2 Corinthians 5:21)!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you enjoy living in continual sin?

## **ACTION**

1. Identify any sins that you are tempted to do and ask God to lead you not into temptation, but to deliver you from all evil (Matthew 6:13).
2. Believe that every time you face a temptation to sin, God will give you a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).
3. If you do sin, but quick to repent and ask Jesus to cleanse you from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

# DAY 23: OPEN REBUKE

Proverbs 27:5, *“Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”*

Today in the American culture “moral relativism” is the new trend. Moral relativism is a philosophy that believes, “All moral truths are relative to each person’s beliefs. No one is more right or wrong than another. Everyone should be tolerant and accepting of all moral beliefs.” The famous quote from moral relativists is, “What’s true for you, may not be true for me.”

As a result, this kind of thinking has led to people exalting tolerance and acceptance as the highest moral virtue. However, if you disagree with moral relativism then you are wrong and “closed minded.” Your belief of “absolute moral truth” should not be accepted or tolerated. The moral relativist has tolerance for every person’s belief, except the person that believes moral relativism is wrong.

Likewise, moral relativism is self-contradicting because when relativists make the statement, “there are no moral absolutes,” they have just made a moral absolute statement. The relativist believes their perspective is absolute, yet by definition they believe all truth is relative and there are no absolutes.

**If someone says to you, “I don’t believe in absolute moral truth,” ask them, “Do you believe that statement is absolutely true?”**

In reality, no one lives as a moral relativist (besides a few criminally insane people). Why? Because there are no rational people that believe it is okay for a mother to eat her child if she believes it will give her “good luck.” Every relativist draws their own lines and makes objective statements like, “It’s never okay for a mother to eat her child.” Moral relativists tend to make a box (or system) of moral standards to live by that are culturally normative and then inside that box they will allow each person to do what’s right in their own eyes. For example, the relativist will not allow people to rape and molest children according to their beliefs but they will be tolerant of those who believe in same sex marriage, sex changes and the like. Even for the moral relativist, not all beliefs are treated equally.

In contrast, as King Solomon points out in the book of Proverbs, God is not a moral relativist; rather, He is a divine Lawgiver. Therefore,

according to King Solomon it is better to rebuke people openly when they break the laws of God than to support them in their sins in the name of “tolerance.” Hidden love is a false love that would rather affirm someone’s destructive behavior than help save their soul. No one would respect a parent that didn’t correct his or her child. Nor would anyone value a friendship where the friend didn’t warn them of impending danger. Therefore, hidden love is morally useless and extremely dangerous.

John Hagee said, “The vital Christian arouses opposition because he is a standing rebuke to the selfishness and sin of those around him.” True disciples of Christ should be willing to rebuke and correct others in love when they see people breaking God’s commands because true love demands that we share God’s moral correction. Anything less would actually be considered hatred because we care more about their opinion of us than their eternal soul. True love wants the best for people, both in this life and in the one to come!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you love people enough to let them know when they are wrong?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to reveal any times in your life when you acted with “hidden love,” i.e., you didn’t share God’s moral standard.
2. Make a decision to preach God’s Word to people around you.
3. Pray that those you lovingly rebuke will listen and follow God’s commands.

# DAY 24: TRUSTED WOUNDS

Proverbs 27:6, “*Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*”

If you were in sin and headed towards trouble, would you want a godly friend to tell you? What if the only way God could open your eyes, would be to use a friend to hurt your feelings, would you trust those wounds? I pray your answer to both questions was, “yes.”

Often times people believe that God values our “feelings” above His Word. We can think that our feelings are the most important thing to God, however, that’s not true. There are many things that God values over our feelings. For example, God values the gospel of Jesus Christ over our feelings. He would rather that the gospel be preached and for us to feel embarrassed, harassed and mocked than for us to remain silent and feel “respected” by the world. Just read the book of Acts or study the life of Paul, to see how the first disciples suffered emotionally (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).

God holds righteousness in a higher place than our feelings. The Bible teaches us that God is like a Father, who would rather discipline us through emotional trials, so we can achieve our purpose, than to allow us to “feel good” about sin. God said in Hebrews 12:6, “*The Lord disciplines the one he loves, and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son.*” Both words, “discipline and chasten,” by their very nature, infer discomfort and temporary displeasure.

God even said in Hebrews 12:8, “*If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all.*” Discipline and correction in God’s kingdom, actually equals love! Certainly, God is not an abusive, moral monster; rather, He is a loving Father that only uses discomfort and temporary emotional pain as a “last resort” to save us from far worse consequences.

On the other hand, kisses, warm fuzzies and good feelings, can be deceptive. Take for example Judas; he didn’t kiss Jesus out of love. The kiss was a signal to the Roman soldiers to identify Jesus for His arrest. Judas gave Jesus the kiss of a friend, but He was really His enemy.

William Gurnall wrote, “God’s wounds cure, sin’s kisses kill.” Remember when Jesus openly rebuked Peter and called him, “Satan,” in Matthew 16:23? Jesus loved Peter enough to temporarily embarrass him, so

that he wouldn't perish. Peter could have written a bestselling book called, *He Loved Me Enough to Call Me Satan*. Therefore, in your friendships aim to be the kind of friend that speaks the truth in love, even if it hurts other's feelings. And be open to corrections from your godly friends, even if your feelings get hurt.

**Your real enemy is the one that doesn't care about your soul. They may be your best friend now and support all your bad decisions. However, in the end, you will wish you would've had real friends that actually told you truth, even if it hurt your feelings.**

It is far better to have your feelings hurt and be right with God than to be kissed and "feel good," headed for eternal destruction.

## **REFLECTION**

Do you believe trusted wounds from a friend are better than kisses from an enemy?

## **ACTION**

1. Repent for the times you may have been corrected by a godly person but were offended because your feelings were hurt.
2. Ask God to give you good friends who care enough about your well being to tell you the truth even if it emotionally hurts.
3. Be the kind of friend who shares the truth in love.



# DAY 25: IRON SHARPENS IRON

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

King Solomon lived in a time when iron swords were commonplace. For those swords to stay sharp and effective, they needed to be sharpened regularly with iron. The same is true with the benefit that is gained when disciples get together and challenge each other to grow in the things of God. Christians, who sharpen each other in friendship, keep their spiritual lives effective and powerful.

The author of Hebrews wrote, *“24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). The idea of “spurring” is the same as “sharpening.” We should always want to encourage our friends to love God and do good deeds. That is why we should never neglect church or consistent fellowship with other disciples.

**You were never meant to live out Christianity alone because a sword cannot sharpen itself. As iron needs iron to stay sharp, you need godly people in your life to grow!**

We all have dull spots in our lives, areas we have overlooked or become complacent in and the only way we can notice it, is when God uses someone to sharpen us. When a good brother or sister challenges our weaknesses and sharpens them with their wisdom, the benefits are tremendous.

When iron sharpens iron there may be sparks. But this is just part of the process and is natural to healthy dialogue. When our lives are being sharpened, sparks are harmless as long as everyone remains in love. Certainly, we should all be mindful not to be argumentative, prideful or offensive in our approach, but I’d rather have “wild fire” than “no fire!” Paul said in Galatians 4:18, *“It is fine to be zealous, provided the purpose is*

*good.*” A wise man once said, “We’re not really friends until I’ve told you you’re wrong and you still love me.”

Here are some ways to get your iron sharpened; (1) Have theological discussions with Christians who believe differently than you, (2) Regularly meet with an accountability partner that gives you constructive criticism and (3) Be a teacher of the Word of God that is teachable. In other words, be a life long disciple that makes disciples (Matthew 28:20).

## **REFLECTION**

Do you have people in your life to sharpen your iron?

## **ACTION**

1. Pray for the people in your life that sharpen your iron.
2. Be willing to sharpen others as you are being sharpened.
3. Stay humble and teachable, remember, you don’t know it all!

# DAY 26: HYPOCRITES & DISCIPLES

Proverbs 28:13, *“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”*

What’s the difference between a hypocrite and a disciple of Christ? The difference is the act of confession and renouncing of sin, “repentance.” Both the hypocrite and the disciple may sin, however, what makes the hypocrite double-minded, is that they would rather conceal and hide their sin, rather than confess and renounce it.

**When hypocrites sin, they try to hide it from God and people by pretending to be something they are not. When disciples sin, they confess it to God to receive mercy because they believe they are righteous, holy and blameless in Christ.**

In today’s proverb, King Solomon gives two choices for dealing with sin. On one hand, you can be like the hypocrite and try to conceal your sin and never prosper. On the other hand, you can renounce your sin and receive mercy and forgiveness. The choice is yours. I would rather be an obedient disciple of Christ that humbly confesses and renounces my sins and prospers, than be a hypocrite that suffers.

King Solomon also wrote in Proverbs 24:16, *“For though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.”* Therefore, the righteous will always rise again and prosper (have success) because they are willing to let God change their behavior by renewing their mind. The wicked may stumble on the same sin as the disciple, but the difference is their attitude of pride. The wicked person’s pride will cause their calamity, not necessarily the sin. All sin can be forgiven, but the sin of rebellion keeps people from humbling themselves to be forgiven. Therefore, to be forgiven of sin, we must be willing to first humble ourselves before God and confess our great need for His mercy.

Thomas a Kempis wrote, “Happy is the man who renounces everything which may bring a stain or burden upon his conscience.” That is why the worst thing you can do when you sin, is try to hide it and pretend it

didn't happen. When you sin, be quick to confess it to God and those around you. Renounce your sin by truly allowing God to give you the desire to never to do it again. In Romans 12:1-2 Paul describes how we can live free from sin; *“1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*

First, offer your body to God in obedience and worship. Second, don't think and act the way the world does. Third, let God's Word give you new thoughts and attitudes. Lastly, make it your goal to live out God's perfect will for your life. I challenge you from this day forward, that whenever you sin, to never be a hypocrite but be a righteous disciple with a prosperous life.

## **REFLECTION**

When you sin, do you act like a disciple or a hypocrite?

## **ACTION**

1. Repent for any of the times you may have concealed your sin.
2. Always be quick to confess and renounce your sin.
3. When tempted to sin remember to offer your body to God as a living sacrifice, reject stinking thinking, renew your mind and obey God's perfect will for your life.

# DAY 27: ALWAYS TREMBLE

Proverbs 28:14, *“Blessed is the one who always trembles before God, but whoever hardens their heart falls into trouble.”*

Some Christians believe that since God is our loving Father, there is no need to fear Him. This false idea is rooted in their misunderstandings of such verses like Romans 8:15, where the believer is told to call God “Abba” and not be a slave to fear, and in 1 John 4:18, where we’re told that God’s perfect love drives out all our fear.

It’s true we now can approach God as our “Heavenly Father or Abba” and not have any fear of punishment in regards to our sins. At the same time, King Solomon reminds us in today’s proverb, that we should always tremble before God. No matter how much we love God, we shouldn’t lose our deep respect for who He is and how great His power is. A wise man once said, “I never tremble in the presence of evil, but I tremble every time I consider the greatness of God.”

On one hand, I don’t believe Christians should be walking around shaking like a leaf because they think God will strike them down. On the other hand, we shouldn’t be hardhearted and immature to think that God is our pet lion and that He only roars when we let Him. We should have confidence in God’s love and tremble before His great power.

If we forget God’s love for us, we will live under guilt and condemnation; and if we lose our respect for Him, our hearts will grow hard and we will fall into trouble. Therefore, balance is the key to understanding how the believer should both be madly in love with God and always tremble before Him. We should have the balance to understand, in regards to adoption and salvation, that God has covenanted with His people to always love and protect us. And we should also have the balance to understand, that those who turn away from God, will be eternally damned.

**Trembling should always be our response to God’s power; comfort will always be His loving response to our trembling heart.**

People in the Bible would always tremble when God appeared to them in power, yet God was always faithful to comfort them. John experienced this in Revelation 1:17, *“When I saw him [Jesus], I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’”*

Let us always tremble before God and not let our hearts become hard because of the deceitfulness of pride and sin. God said in Hebrews 3:13, *“But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called ‘Today,’ so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.”*

## **REFLECTION**

Do you still tremble before God?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to reveal any pride or misunderstandings you may have concerning God’s greatness.
2. Allow your heart to tremble in God’s presence when He reveals His great power to you (Jeremiah 5:22).
3. Always love and revere God.

# DAY 28: DON'T TRUST YOURSELF

Proverbs 28:26, *“Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.”*

How many times have you trusted yourself and regretted it? If you were to be honest, I'm sure you can recall dozens of bad decisions you've made in life. I know I can. Whether it was a time you trusted your feelings and got hurt in a relationship, or a time when you made a bad financial decision; we've all been our own worst enemy.

**Trust God more than you trust yourself because you've been wrong before and He is always right.**

Albert Einstein defined insanity as, “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” Therefore, we shouldn't keep trusting ourselves if we have the potential to be wrong and cause our own destruction. We need to humble ourselves and walk in God's wisdom. God's wisdom is multifaceted and is good for every area of our life. We should walk in God's wisdom as it pertains to our family, job, finances, spirituality, friendships and government.

However, if we choose to trust in ourselves, we will suffer in the end. Specifically, if we trust ourselves for salvation, we'll be cast into the lake of fire. And if as Christians we don't follow Jesus on the path of wisdom in every area of our life, we will suffer the loss of our rewards in the age to come (1 Corinthians 3:12-15).

Everyone from time to time may find short-term success in his or her own wisdom, but this is just an illusion. God allows us for seasons of testing to get what we want without His blessing; however, those “blessings” soon turn to “curses” when we experience God's judgment. Imagine if you were rock climbing and found gold in a cave. As you start to fill your pockets, the guide warns you to leave it there because the ropes cannot hold the extra weight. However, you refuse to listen to him because you trust your own judgment. On your descent, the rope breaks because of the weight and you

die. Sure for a time you were rich because you trusted yourself but eventually you and your riches perished.

The same is true in your relationship with God. If you keep refusing to listen to God's wisdom, because you trust yourself, in the end you will be destroyed. God said in Proverbs 29:1, "*Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.*" As a result, we should be humble and submit our lives to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Certainly, God wants us to trust ourselves, after we've learned to trust Him, that's why He gave us a mind. However, we should never fall for the trap of the devil and try to be our own "god" by living "self-reliant" lives. Our will should be submitted to God's will and our mind should be set on the Mind of Christ (Colossians 3:2).

## **REFLECTION**

Do you trust God more than yourself?

## **ACTION**

1. Repent of the sin of "self-reliance."
2. Ask God to lead you in His wisdom.
3. Be open to receive and give God's wisdom to others.



# DAY 29: STIFF-NECKED

Proverbs 29:1, *“Whoever remains stiff-necked after many rebukes will suddenly be destroyed—without remedy.”*

The Lord will rebuke everyone in life from time to time. The word rebuke means, “sharp disapproval of one’s behavior.” God will either rebuke you personally or through people. When God rebukes you personally it will generally happen through prayer and study of the Scriptures. However, sometimes like with Peter, it can happen in a vision or dream (Acts 10:15). And on rare occasions God might send an angel to speak on His behalf like He did with the prophets.

When God uses people to rebuke you, it can come through the preaching of His Word, church leaders, godly friends or even a spouse or parent. Most of the time it will be through someone you know and trust. Rarely will God send a stranger into your life to rebuke you and even in those times, we are told to make sure it is from God by “testing the spirit” (1 John 4:1). The Bible is full of examples of God using people to rebuke others on His behalf (most of the prophetic books in the Old Testament are rebukes to various people; see Isaiah and Jeremiah). In the New Testament, Paul rebuked Peter face to face in Antioch because Peter was favoring Jewish customs over the gospel of grace in Galatians 2:11 and Peter rebuked a man trying to “buy the Holy Spirit” in Acts 8:20.

**If you cannot remember a time that the Lord rebuked you, it is because you haven’t been listening! God rebukes and disciplines those He loves.**

The question is not, “Will you be rebuked?” because everyone will be rebuked, but rather the real question is, “How will you respond when you’re rebuked?” If you’re stiff-necked (unteachable), you will eventually be broken beyond repair. However, if you’re flexible and willing to change, you will prosper. Watchman Nee wrote, “Sometimes Satan provokes us to harden our spirit. It can become stiff, unyielding, narrow and selfish. Such a spirit cannot work with God nor can it do His will.” Resist the temptation to be prideful by being humble instead; because God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

What's terrifying about today's proverb is that God said the stiff-necked, "*will suddenly be destroyed without remedy.*" In other words, the destruction will not come when they expect it and no one will be able to stop it. This kind of judgment can be seen with the people of Israel. God had continually sent them warnings but they did not listen (Jeremiah 6:19). Then suddenly God punished them by allowing their enemies to conquer them and there was nothing anyone could do to stop the destruction (2 Kings 24). The same is true in the end times when God hands over the unbelievers to delusion and allows them to be destroyed because they refused to listen to the truth and be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12).

As a result, this proverb is best understood in the context of God's judgment because even if we do sin, God will be patient, desiring that we confess and renounce it. However, if we refuse to listen to God's warnings about our sin, our destruction is sure. God said in Hebrews 10:26-27, "*26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.*" Make a decision today to listen to what God is saying to you through His rebukes.

## **REFLECTION**

Do you humbly receive the Lord's rebukes?

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to remove any pride you may have in your life in regards to being rebuked.
2. Be quick to listen and repent whenever the Lord rebukes you; either from Him personally or from others.
3. Don't live in continual sin.

# DAY 30: A PROVERBS 31 WOMAN

Proverbs 31:10, *“A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.”*

Proverbs 31 is a famous passage of Scripture that beautifully describes the qualities of a godly woman. The standard is set high, but by God’s grace it can be achieved (Philippians 4:13). The reward for the Proverbs 31 woman is found in Proverbs 31:28, *“Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”* Therefore, what she does in verses 10-27 makes her great. D.L. Moody once said, “I wish we had a few more women like the woman of Samaria, willing to confess what the Lord Jesus Christ had done for their souls.”

**The gift of being a woman, wife and mother come from God and should be celebrated and taken seriously. God made women in His image to reflect His caring and creative nature.**

Listed below are the attributes for the Proverbs 31 woman to study and live by. And for all godly men to encourage the women in their lives to be all God called them to be!

1. Trusted (vs. 11-12): She is trusted by her husband and brings him good all the days of her life.
2. Hard Working (vs. 13-15): She gets up early and works with her hands to provide food and clothes for everyone in her house.
3. Successful (vs.16-19): She works hard and sees profit in all she does.
4. Compassionate (v. 20): She loves to help those in need.
5. Fearless (v. 21): She takes on the challenges of life with confidence in God.

6. Supportive: (vs. 22-23): She stands behind her husband and helps him achieve great things.
7. Diligent & Wise (vs. 25-27): She is focused in her work and speaks with wisdom.
8. Honored (vs. 28-31) As a result of her faith in God and hard work; she has true beauty and is blessed by her family.

*Special Note to Women:* All the attributes in Proverbs 31 may seem impossible to achieve, but remember with God's grace all things are possible. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:10, "*By the grace of God I am what I am.*" Rely upon the Holy Spirit to strengthen you and if you should stumble, repent, get back up and keep going; God made you to be a testimony of His amazing grace!

## **REFLECTION**

Do you believe it's possible in our culture for women to be a "Proverbs 31-Kind-of-Woman?"

## **ACTION**

1. Ask God to make all the women in your life Proverbs 31 women.
2. Women, ask God for strength to be all that He called you to be.
3. Men, encourage the godly women in your life by telling them how thankful you are for them and all that they do!

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