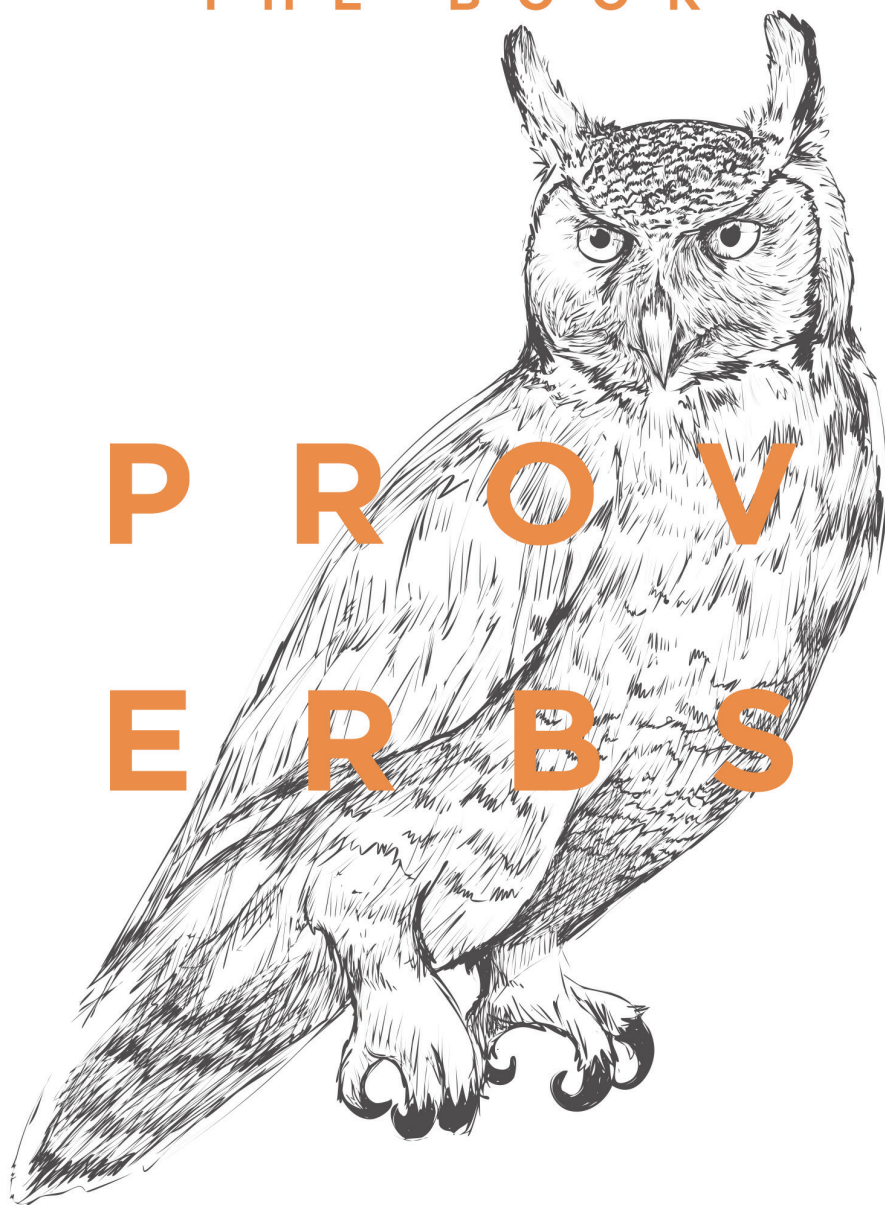


T H E B O O K



5 4 D A Y D E V O T I O N A L

VERSES ARE EITHER IN THE NIV OR ESV
TRANSLATIONS OF THE BIBLE

C **X** **M**

DAY 1

READ PROVERBS 1:1-7

There is a sense of confusion that may come when we hear that “the beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord.” Some fears are irrational, and some fears may be completely rational, but to associate fear of a good, loving and gracious God with knowledge is difficult to comprehend. Jesus is our friend, and our Savior, he is kind and the perfect embodiment of forgiveness. Jesus can relate to us because as he walked this Earth he was perfectly man, but we cannot forget that he was also perfectly God. Our God is approachable, he is Emanuel but our God is also all powerful, all present and all knowing. He is strong and mighty, our Lord and Master.

“And having been set free from sin, we have become slaves of righteousness.” – **ROMANS 6:18**

While Jesus has set us free from the bondage of sin and slavery to darkness, we have become slaves to righteousness and have found new Lordship under Christ. In the first few verses of Proverbs, Solomon presents us with the idea: to find wisdom is to find a proper understanding of our Lord and of his power and might. To grow in wisdom is to grow in reverence of God.

HOW do you view God?

WHAT does a life look like lived honoring and revering God?

DAY 2

READ PROVERBS 1:8-19

We live in an instant gratification type of world, where the “I want’s” of yesterday have become “I want it now’s,” of today. We go to amusement parks and spend money to avoid lines, mobile ordering has become the standard of our Starbucks routine, and for some the joy of Amazon Prime has become a costly addiction. There is no doubt that the temporal can bring pleasure, and yet that pleasure has the potential to hinder something even greater.

The paternal wisdom of Solomon warns us to avoid the enticement of sinners. The enticement is marked by “houses filled with plunder.” There is a temporal gain, because of the sinners’ enticement. As the gain is temporal though, there is guaranteed destruction that follows. To live in the temporal is to have temporal gain that will eventually end. To live in the eternal is to have eternal gain.

To avoid the enticement of sinners, is to embrace the path of the Godly. Psalm 1:2, encourages us to take delight in the law of the Lord, to meditate on it day and night. As we walk in the path of the Godly, the fruit of our lives may not come instantaneously but we are promised in the verse that follows that in season fruit will come, and our lives will not wither.

READ Psalm 1:1-3. What stands out to you about this passage?

WHAT can you tangibly do to find “delight in the law of the Lord?”

DAY 3

READ PROVERBS 1:20-33

“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” – **JOHN 16:33**

It is not that we gain wisdom, and we avoid trials. Wisdom isn't a “get out of jail free” card from the hardships that life will drop off at doorstep, rather it helps us to navigate trials with foreknowledge instead of managing life through the trials. In the midst of trials, wisdom allows us the chance to “take heart,” wisdom provides protection, and wisdom gives rest.

It's easier to find peace in the midst of a hurricane, when you are prepared. There are two different types of people who face a hurricane: those who have boarded up their house to protect from wind and debris and those who don't. While one can't predict the damage that may come from the storm for either person, the experience in the middle of the storm differentiates: one marked by peace, and one marked by uncertainty. Ultimately the experience in the middle of the storm is marked by how one responds to the warnings of the meteorologist.

It's not that troubles can be avoided, but the way you face troubles can be influenced by how you respond to “wisdom crying aloud in the streets.”

WHAT are major pieces of wisdom you have received as you've faced hardship?

DAY 4

READ PROVERBS 2:1-5

Matthew Henry has said, “Many wise things may be found in human compositions, but divine revelation, and true religion built upon it, are all wisdom.”

The Word of God allows us the chance to know God. In Scripture we find God. How you approach Scripture can determine what you find in your time with Scripture. We are promised in Scripture that “the Word of God will not return void,” but when you go to Scripture are you prepared to receive what it may give you? In these few verses Solomon encourages us to seek wisdom like silver, cry out for insight, and treasure up commandments. The Word of God is of greater worth than anything that this world could offer: it gives us insight to who God is, who we are, and how to navigate eternity. We seek earthly treasure with great pursuit, the Word of God calls for greater. We are able to hear from God, but are we allowing ourselves to talk to him? Communication is two sided. The Word of God is not meant to be passed over, but is to be stored up. Our time with God should not be limited to just moments in the Word but should be a continual experience filled with communication and meditation on the truths we receive from Scripture.

HOW do you approach your time in Scripture? Is it more than just a “to-do?”

WHAT have you recently learned about God from your time in his Word?

DAY 5

READ PROVERBS 2:6-22

We can find ourselves in predicaments where we question God with “why is this happening.” As we recognized earlier, Jesus never promised an easy way out to the troubles life can throw our way but through wisdom God offers us a way to navigate life. Wisdom is not something that we earn, it isn't a prize to be gained rather it is a tool that is gifted by God, and like any good gift or tool it is meant to be used.

The gift that we find in wisdom never runs dry, it never comes up short. It is a shield for those who walk with integrity and a deliverance from evil. It keeps “the saints” under the protective watch of God, and allows those to understand righteousness, justice, equity and every good path. Wisdom is not a gift confined to selfishness, rather it is a gift that we have the chance to see lived out by others and follow in the same path that they have walked.

Wisdom is an invitation offered by a good God. The Message paraphrase, articulates verse 20, “join the company of good men and women, keep your feet on the tried and true path.” As we receive the invitation we are offered the promise of inhabiting the land of the life that God promises.

HOW do you view wisdom? Is it a gift or something to be gained?

WHAT are the markers or those who walk in wisdom?

DAY 6

READ PROVERBS 3:1-12

In this passage, Solomon is telling his son to remember and hold onto his teachings. These teachings are those of God's love and promises. Solomon is speaking this over him, to reiterate that God's promises will bring prosperity and put you in not only man's favor but God's favor. When you fully put your trust in God, he will walk with you and hold your hand so that you don't need to lean on your human ways. When you honor the Lord by giving him your best, he notices and will bless you and your strength in him. A walk with God is never promised easy, you will be tested and rewarded.

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it."

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. Do not resent the testing, it is not a punishment, it is an act of love.

WHAT promises of God do you hold onto in your life?

HOW are you seeing God within your season?

DAY 7

READ PROVERBS 3:13-35

This passage speaks on the promise wisdom brings and how wisdom can be applied in your walk with God. Solomon starts off by explaining that being blessed by God yields way more profit than any other possible earthly desire. The wisdom of God will never deceive you, but will keep you on the right path.

In the same way that God created the world by wisdom and heaven by understanding, God wants us to build the foundation of our lives upon these two things. As we grow in our faith, we grow in our understanding of the things of God, like love and righteousness. Through wisdom we learn to trust God. As we trust, God blesses, even though the blessing may not always look like what we think it should. You can see this ring true in Noah's life, he trusted in God and God blessed his house with life through the ark during the rains that wiped out the earth.

TAKE A MOMENT to be with God. Is your foundation placed on the values of God or the values of the world?

In **WHAT** ways can you make sure your foundation is solid and trustworthy?

DAY 8

READ PROVERBS 4

Solomon is speaking to his sons and recounting his own experiences of teachings from his father, King David. As he with David, he is warning them not to forsake his teaching, for it is from God. When you hold on to and fully embrace wisdom you will not only be rewarded with honor, but also protection.

Wisdom will put you on the right path so you will not stumble and as God's creation, full of wisdom and understanding, we must not place ourselves on the path of the world. Those who are stuck in their earthly sin, are blind, losing sight of what God intended for them. This causes them to get wrapped up in the mundane repetition of sin, as they fall deeper and deeper dragging others along with them, which they will continue to do until they see the light of God. Solomon continues in warning, urging to guard heart.

Our hearts are the puppeteers for our whole being what we do, say, and react to has a direct correlation to where our heart is and how protected it is. If the puppeteer is of the world, the puppet will act accordingly. However, if the puppeteer is safe and filled with God's gracious love, the puppet will mirror those actions. What is your life reflecting?

Everything you do flows from the heart. **HOW** are you actively protecting your heart?

DAY 9

READ PROVERBS 5:1-14

In this passage, Solomon is warning his son of the adulterous woman. Solomon starts off by reminding his son that he not only wants him to hear his message, but retain the knowledge. He then heeds warning of the adulterous woman, for she only speaks temptations that look sweet but are actually unsafe. The lure that adultery gives to the son is not limited to one gender or another. Solomon heeds warning not against flesh and blood but the enticement of sin.

An immoral persons words are not honey, but something else that is quite bitter. When you follow someone who is immoral, they will lead you down the wrong path and have no remorse for their actions. We must stick on the path of God, or else we will lose the honor we had gained from him. If we stay on the path of the adulterous, and without listening to Solomon's teachings, we will end our lives regretting that mistake.

HOW are you protecting yourself from being led on the wrong path?

TAKE A MOMENT and think about the areas in your life that aren't leading you on the right path. What action step can you take this week so limit the power of what is leading you on the wrong path.

DAY 10

READ PROVERBS 5:15-23

In this passage, Solomon speaks to his son about the responsibilities which arise with having a wife. He reminds him that God intended marriage as a faithful matrimony between two people; intimacy is to be exclusive for the beloved and his lover alone. To treasure a relationship is to honor the one who established and blessed its structure. Anything else can only lead to sin and broken hearts.

God sees all things, nothing you do, say, or think goes unheard or unseen. All sin is seen by God as the same, but it still grieves him. Marriage is a covenant, and when that covenant is broken it causes great pain and destruction. God calls us to be faithful in marriage not to cause us harm, but to protect us. Marriage is among Gods greatest gifts to us, we must respect and cherish that. Relationships were created to lead up to marriage, so it is important to stay faithful in every aspect.

HOW can you protect yourself in a current or future relationship?

WHAT action steps can you take to fully protect yourself?

DAY 11

READ PROVERBS 6:1-5

As Proverbs is leading us on toward wisdom, we consider this passage that is instructing us on the dangers of pledging to pay someone else's debt if they cannot, otherwise known as putting up security for someone else's loan. What we can construct from this section is that offering to back someone's loan or debt is not wrong, but it does put both parties in a bad position. Proverbs is seeking to offer what is best for us. By promising to pay a neighbor's debt you don't do what's best for them or yourself. That person is now set up for a lack of consequence if they default on their debt. This teaches them nothing about financial wisdom or stewardship, only setting them up for further financial ruin and lack of financial responsibility. Even further, the person that has to pay the debt is now being charged for something he had no control in. This doesn't set up that person for financial success or encourages financial generosity in the future. Often the hard truth to swallow when reading passages like this is that sometimes what we want to do for someone or what someone asks us to do for them isn't forming either party into a better image of Jesus. This passage is begging us to ask ourselves if what we do for other people is the best thing for that person.

HOW can this passage inform the way you love others?

DAY 12

READ PROVERBS 6:6-11

The ant has a commitment to hard work is not directed by that of a master or king, but an insect directed by its own internal diligence. When looking at the laboriousness of the ant we must ask ourselves the nature of our own ethic, not just in our jobs or our school work, but the work we must do in our hearts. As daily discipleship takes discipline and consistent effort, we must have the same ethic of ant when it comes to what God is asking us to be a part of. The ant gets up every day and works out the task required of it, with little time for lax or lux living. The ant is more concerned about the job getting done than his or her own comfort. Would you say the same about your discipleship to Jesus? The ant is meticulous, precise, and determined of the work being done. If the same descriptions were given to our walk with God, we would ensure that the space God needs to gently demonstrate how he plans to use us in his Kingdom would be his to use day in and day out. When our hearts are as eager and hard working to do and see what God wants for each of us as the ant is, we participate in the divine providence of our maker who calls us into a co-laboring relationship with himself.

WHAT stood out in this passage?

ARE YOU diligent in your relationship to Jesus?

DAY 13

READ PROVERBS 6:12-15

Let's be frank this passage is tough. At least for me, when I ponder on God's good grace, I don't like the idea that I can ever possibly be "broken beyond healing" (v15), as the ESV puts it. Even though our hearts may be fearful of that idea, within this passage is instruction for right living with God and with others. Truthfully, the passage may be tough, but it is clear. As a kingdom-people; as students of Jesus Christ, we are called to be people that are clear and truthful. Deception plays no role in the life of a disciple of Jesus. If we must trick and cheat to get what we want or where we think we think we need, we are not living in congruence with what God wants of us. In God's kingdom there seems to be no place for the person that is crooked in speech and is deceptive because the nature of the Kingdom of God is selfless love. The "worthless person" (v12) as described in this passage is worthless because they don't benefit anyone but themselves. As someone only looking out for their own interests, they cause havoc and calamity for the needs and interests of those surrounding them. Jesus, being holistically others-centered, has no use for the person only looking out for themselves. Jesus' offer to us is that he will perfectly look out for us, so we can look after the broken, afflicted, voiceless, and oppressed.

HOW can you become more "others-centered"?

DAY 14

READ PROVERBS 6:16-35

When we read sentences like “the LORD hates” we often get uneasy. How is our God of love and grace even capable of hate? When we come across passages such as these, we must remind ourselves that Proverbs is giving us a look into the nature of God. The word “abomination” is used throughout the Old Testament to describe things ritually or ethically impure. That there are things that by nature separate us from participation with God in purity, God would detest those things that separate. God is desperate to be in communion with us. It is why he created us. Naturally, God hates what keeps us from him. As disciples of God, we are called to hate things that separate us from him just the same. “Hate” is a strong word, but Solomon doesn’t use it lightly. Solomon is telling us that Wisdom is detesting what is inherently dangerous to us and for us, so we may participate in community with God.

DO you think of God as eager to connect with you?

DO any of the things in this passage demonstrate a way in which you may have been separating yourself from God that you weren’t aware of before?

DAY 15

READ PROVERBS 7

Paul was a man deeply rooted in joy, as we've seen throughout this letter. Because of his great joy he had in Christ, he had no problem repeatedly encouraging the Philippians to rejoice along with him. While Paul had penned several letters throughout his ministry, and many were written to correct and rebuke believers who were going astray from the Gospel, Philippians was written more as a letter of encouragement than rebuke. Writing his letter to the church in Philippi wasn't a burden to Paul. He seemed to enjoy writing this letter and reminding the Philippians to rejoice.

Rejoicing continually can be hard. Sometimes it just doesn't seem practical. If you just suffered a loss, how can you find joy? If you struggle with depression, what can you possibly rejoice in? Paul doesn't put any qualifiers on rejoicing. He encourages the reader to rejoice, period. No matter what is happening, rejoice.

HOW can you turn from the idols in your life?

HOW will turn from those idols?

DAY 16

READ PROVERBS 8:1-11

In Proverbs 8 we find wisdom being proclaimed with great zeal. On mountaintops, on streets, and at the gates of towns and cities, wisdom is calling out. Wisdom is characterized as inclusive and welcoming. Wisdom is not for the religious elite or the extra-spiritual, but wisdom is for the ordinary; anyone walking by; anyone willing to listen. Wisdom isn't confined to a classroom or put behind a paywall. Instead, wisdom comes to you, presenting itself loudly and boldly. Wisdom cries out into the streets out of genuine love and a message of hope for those in danger. There is undeniable hope in the invitation of wisdom. There is great comfort knowing that wisdom comes to meets us in the streets; that nothing is required of us but to listen and obey. But even if wisdom comes right to us; even if we find the wisdom to unlock the true nature in which God calls us not just to live, but to truly live, we can often grow weary at our attempts toward applying it. What this passage is trying to inform us about is that wisdom is ready and available. Wisdom requires only open ears and willing hearts. The willingness of our heart must go beyond mere listening but move to believing obedience. Wisdom must not be left shouting for our attention; we must become people that hear and then do.

WHAT stands out in this passage?

HOW can you better apply wisdom you find throughout proverbs?

DAY 17

READ PROVERBS 8:12-21

True, life-giving, God-honoring wisdom that we find here in Proverbs is undeniably passionate. It calls us to joyful humbleness and out of prideful wrong doing. When wisdom is put in its proper place, as the ruler of our actions, we are invited into abundant blessing. Wisdom is a conduit that God uses to bless us. The God who spoke life, the God who embodies Wisdom is the one reaching out to bring us into the full life that is available to us through wisdom. Often the word wisdom carries with it the idea that wisdom is just a strategy to live life. Wisdom may be helpful but not necessary. Proverbs is telling us that true life, the life and life to the full that Jesus spoke of, is a life of wisdom. True life with God is characterized by what this passage tells us. Ruling and reigning, justice, riches, honor, blessing, and abundant treasure is the life that God designed for us. Wisdom, being part of the very image and nature of God, is the way we can step back towards that. Jesus calls us into wisdom not just for wisdom's sake, but for a life working side-by-side with him for the reign and renewal of the Earth.

WHAT do you think of when you think of wisdom?

WHAT blessing has wisdom brought to your life?

DAY 18

READ PROVERBS 8:22-36

When God was speaking life into the world, when the heavens and the earth were being formed, wisdom was there. This passage is painting the picture of a time before the creation of the world. Before the content of Genesis 1 came to fruition we find God and wisdom working alongside each other. Wisdom is personified here, as it is throughout proverbs, and is inexplicably joyful in the work God is doing. Almost boasting, Wisdom tells of her perspective of creation. This incredible piece of scripture lets us see the joy of seeing God create and work first hand. Wisdom rejoiced at what God made and what God was doing. The blessing promised by being people of wisdom is to bear witness and to be “master workman” (v30) in what God is doing. We are beckoned to play a part in the renewal of people just like Wisdom participated in the creation of the world. Wisdom is again telling us that this is the true life. That whoever comes humbly to God’s throne in seeking of wisdom “finds life and obtains favor” (v35). Wisdom is pleading with us, as Christ followers, to not miss this. Don’t miss what God is pleading for you to be a part of by neglecting our call to wisdom.

WHAT is the most interesting part of this passage to you?

WOULD you say you are experiencing the favor and life that this passage promises?

DAY 19

READ PROVERBS 9:1-12

Wisdom, personified as a woman due to the grammatical gender of the Hebrew word, steps forward in partnership with God as she prepares for a meal of abundance in a venue comparable to that of the wealthy. In the former chapter, she was present in the world's creation, and is now, an essential participant in its redemption. She sends a call to the simple, paralleling that of the great banquet depicted in Luke 14:12-24. In the parable, many deny the invitation by means of muttered excuses, provoking the host and his servant to "go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame."

Wisdom's invitation extends to all but will be received only by those whose simple nature reveals an innate longing for life beyond self-provision. The meal Wisdom serves lays out a path of insight in place of former simplicity but requires active pursuit of those who embark. The wise man, cultivating his capacity for discernment, embraces correction, reproach, and instruction by those wiser than he for he never forgets the manner in which he first approached Wisdom. The call is answered by the simple, by those with the humility to recognize the reality of the content of their hearts, and by those who never view themselves as a finished product.

WHAT does a life sustained by wisdom and approached in humility look like?

DAY 20

READ PROVERBS 9:13-18

The woman, Folly, depicted in this passage directly opposes Wisdom described in the previous portion of Proverbs 9. Whereas Wisdom personally prepares a table and meal before inviting the simple to the fullness of wisdom, Folly also calls the simple, but from a physical posture seated below those she calls. She directly seeks none, rather she utilizes noise and temptation to distract those “who are going straight on their way” persuading them to detour from the road set before them.

The one who eats with Folly observes the immediate pleasure which her meal offers, unaware that the companions seated around her table are destined for the grave. The illusion of nourishment causes man to eat that which will never fulfill a heart longing for more. Wisdom offers the substantial meal of meat and wine while Folly presents bread and water, yet Deuteronomy 8:2 assures that “man does not live by bread alone.” Jesus himself quotes this verse in Matthew 4:4 in response to Satan’s temptation in the wilderness. Those who pursue discipleship must daily deny Folly’s enticement, instead following the model which Jesus’ life establishes. Each time we hear Folly’s invitation yet continue along our paths, refusing to eat from her table, we resemble Jesus’ character a little more.

IS there anything you’re pouring time and energy into which never satisfies?

HOW can you distinguish that which Wisdom and Folly offer in your own life?

DAY 21

READ PROVERBS 10

There are only two ways in life: with God and without him. The heart's posture directed either toward or away from God and the wisdom he offers determines the resulting quality of life. Anything that cultivates within our hearts cannot remain there, even if we desire its stagnancy, because "what comes from the mouth proceeds from the heart" (Matthew 15:18). We produce from the overflow, good and bad alike. Through attitudes, work habits, and words we allow others a glimpse of the inward manifestations of our innermost self, even the aspects we hardly recognize or reflect upon.

Proverbs 10 particularly emphasizes the words spoken by those walking on two different paths in that "the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence." Words hold power to either build up and encourage or tear down the passions and thoughts of another. Our manner of speech allows others to not only observe the beauty or foolishness produced by our lives but feel the impact as well.

ARE you prone to speaking about the positives or negatives in both situations and people?

WHAT type of life do your speech patterns reflect?

DAY 22

READ PROVERBS 11

Oftentimes, our ability to determine between right and wrong in circumstances and people in the world gets distorted by perception and proximity. In such cases, “a false balance is an abomination to the LORD, but a just weight is his delight” (v1). Declaring something right or wrong by our personal standards alone reverts us to a fallen tendency to play God, choosing the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil rather than the Tree of Life.

Righteousness and wickedness are two qualities which often cannot be immediately perceived by the individual who exhibits them. A person rarely acts in a manner which they intend for wickedness; every action is righteous for the person who compares it to no other standard. Righteousness and wickedness are descriptions of the actions and words of a person rather than an end product in and of themselves. During the gradual development of character, we need others contributing their input to the state of our hearts at a given moment to recognize the blind spots we could never otherwise notice. In general, “where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety” (v14). To allow others a glimpse of the innerworkings of our hearts requires vulnerability and courage. Without such external perspectives, we will struggle to determine the trajectory of our lives toward either life or death; the stakes are too high.

WHO are you asking to speak into your life?

DAY 23

READ PROVERBS 12:1-12

A sense of fleeting consequences accompanies the wicked for “no one is established by wickedness, but the root of the righteous will never be moved.” The life that a Christian is called to is not one that comes and goes but one that is established, and in the righteous establishment one is able to find the true life that is offered through right understanding and relationship with God. Ephesians 4:14, “So that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.” To be established is to find life, and find the ability to grow.

The temporary nature of the wicked person’s life and actions offers relief to those who bear the weight of such consequences. Evil continually alters and changes form hoping to gain some ground but can never establish more permanence than within the heart of one who permits it.

God’s righteousness, on the other hand, roots itself deep in the hearts of those who seek it. Jesus’ death on the cross overthrew any potential for such permanence of evil, further establishing the foundation of the “house of righteousness” and enabling fruition of this goodness. His is the one and only victory even when evil appears to gain the upper hand.

HOW does your perspective change when you realize that Jesus’ death gives you victory over any circumstance?

DAY 24

READ PROVERBS 12:13-28

A person's words, whether true or false, tell a significant amount about one's state of heart. To walk in righteousness, we have to set aside deceit toward ourselves and others. Statements rooted in anything but the truth direct us on a path opposite God. False statements convince a person of a reality which does not and will never exist. From such a reality arises anxieties, pride, and self-seeking desires. When truth fills our minds, both about ourselves and the surrounding world, we can recognize God's presence more abundantly because he is truth and manifests as such.

When our minds are occupied with statements of truth, anxious thoughts and pressing chaos lose their capacity for influence over our minds. Abundance of such truths also overflow to those closest to a person as they naturally comprise any and every statement. A person wise with his or her words realizes that "in the path of righteousness is life, and in its pathway, there is no death."

WHAT truths do you need to remember?

WHAT types of thoughts occupy your mind most often?

DAY 25

READ PROVERBS 13:1-12

Jesus tells us who he is by his footsteps. In seeking after him, we follow along the path of discipleship, resembling Jesus a little more with each step. As we walk, aspects characterizing our old life must be set aside to increase room within our lives to grasp all that a life with Jesus has to offer. Even still, we often find ourselves longing for the end product of a life resembling Jesus but are unwilling to endure the effort required to obtain a life reflecting his face. Solomon considers how “the soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied” (v4). As Scott Peck believes, “many people are either unwilling or unable to suffer the pain of giving up the outgrown which needs to be forsaken.” If we are instead able to seek Jesus with intention and tenacity, he provides more than we ever could have hoped for without him.

In pursuing his face, we cannot help but notice the light which radiates from it. As Moses returning from Mount Sinai, consistency and nearness to the Lord results in a life which illuminates God’s glory rather than our own self-promotion or provision. In every aspect of our lives, “the light of the righteous rejoices, but the lamp of the wicked will be put out” (v9).

ARE you seeking God’s face or what he can offer you?

DAY 26

READ PROVERBS 13:13-25

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 depict characteristics which are counter-cultural and against typical human instinct. Even still, those who embody such qualities are among those abiding in closest proximity to Jesus. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by speaking a blessing over “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Wholehearted longing for righteousness produces hearts which break along with the Lord’s when looking at a broken and hurting world. We begin to perceive the world through his eyes, loving every part of its fallen nature with his heart.

The mere fact that the blessed hunger and thirst reveals that complete righteousness is still to come. Until the Kingdom of Heaven is present on earth, we rest in Jesus’ promises for redemption and renewal in a world of injustice and suffering. In the midst of enduring patience, “the righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want” (v25). That which resides as the deepest longing of our hearts determines the course of our lives because it reveals what we believe to be the most important. Until our longings align with Jesus’, reflected in our actions, we will never reach a posture of satisfaction.

WHAT does your heart long for?

In **WHAT** was is your life reflecting and promote righteousness?

DAY 27

READ PROVERBS 14:1-19

Though you bear God's image, you were born into a fallen world. Because of this, foolishness and deception prevail rather than wisdom and understanding. Becoming wise will not come naturally nor easily, it must be actively pursued.

We favor safe and comfortable, over what's risky, hard, or messy. The passage speaks of a clean, empty manger that looks nice from the outside but produces nothing. Verse 4 explains that value comes from the strength of the ox living in the manger, not the manger itself. A life devoted to maintaining appearances is an empty life. A life lived for God is a fruitful life, always risky and messy.

Trust requires truth. Verse 12 warns us there is "a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." What feels right is not always. Your choices have consequences. Jesus is the right path, the way leading to life. Your trust is well-placed in him.

In your fallen nature, it's more natural to tear down rather than build up, to be proud rather than humble, and show anger rather than love. All have sinned because all were born into a sinful world. This feels unfair, what hope do we have? We have the cross. There, your sinful nature was taken on by Jesus — and his sinless nature given to you. This is grace.

HOW have the opinions of others influenced your priorities?

DAY 28

READ PROVERBS 14:20-35

It's human nature to be drawn to people who have something you want. But have you ever been repelled by those who need something from you and/or have nothing to offer you? Our fallen, selfish nature seeks only to gain and leads to sin.

When referring to “the poor,” Proverbs is not merely describing people who lack wealth. A person can be “poor” in many areas such as health, self-worth, wisdom, opportunity, and relationships. We need to be purposeful in the way we engage with people — sharing God's love rather than serving self.

Verse 23 compares labor (action, doing) to mere talk (inaction, not doing). Beliefs compel action. If you truly believe something, you will act accordingly. If you don't, you won't. Verses 26 and 27 describe the fruit of a surrendered life, one lived according to God's plan. Trusting in God and living a life that honors him results in many benefits, some even flow to your future children.

The negative consequences of choosing a life apart from God can impact your children too. **WHAT** will your legacy be?

WHAT does it mean to be gracious to the poor? How does this honor God?

WHAT are some of the benefits of living a God-honoring life? What are the consequences of living for self?

DAY 29

READ PROVERBS 15:1-25

Words can build up or destroy. They can speak the truth or deception. Words have the power to comfort or condemn. Proverbs 15:8 says your words can bring joy to God, he delights in them. They can also grieve him. The Bible is called the “word of God” because it contains his words, his message of love and redemption for the world, and for you personally. His words convey love, bringing comfort and assurance — they also bring guidance and reproof. Wisdom and understanding are found there. Your words are the fruit of your heart. God sees your heart. Nothing is hidden from him. He knew you before he created you. You exist because he wants you as his child, to love you. God’s words convey his heart for you. And your words express your heart for him. Your heart is the master of your words. A heart filled with love, wisdom, joy, and peace will bless and build up those around you.

HOW would those around you describe your heart, based only on your words?

Laziness takes many forms. It’s possible to be disciplined in some areas while lazy in others. Some people are disciplined about health and fitness, for example, but lazy in relationships. Others may be disciplined about their career but lazy in their moral life. Sadly, many are disciplined about the temporal but lazy about the eternal.

In **WHICH** areas of life are you disciplined? In **WHICH** areas are you lazy?

DAY 30

READ 15:26-33

God is good, there is no evil in him. God's enemy hates God, and all that is good. He hates what God loves. This means God's enemy is your enemy. His lies are everywhere, designed to deceive and tempt. Lies are the enemy's weapon. He can't make you sin, but his lies are expertly crafted and convincing. They are customized just for you. Sin results from believing the enemy's lies over God's truth.

WHICH of the enemy's lies have you believed about God? About yourself?

HAS sin created distance between you and God?

This passage from Proverbs speaks about discipline and willingness to receive correction. While these are essential ingredients for wisdom, alone they are not enough. Without humility, there can be no repentance, no correction, and no understanding. Without God, there can be no wisdom, no love, and no life. Wisdom requires humility. It flows from God to you. Only when you submit your will to his are you able to receive his wisdom.

HAVE you surrendered your will to his? If not, **WHAT** specifically is holding you back?

DAY 31

READ PROVERBS 16:1-19

When making plans for your life, start with God. The world says to follow your heart, but the Bible says your heart deceives and can't be trusted (see Jeremiah 17:9). To live the life God created you for requires your plans to align with his. Build your life around God's will. Shape your plans around his plans.

You are the special creation of God, unique in your circumstances and your gifting. Where do your passions intersect God's will? Start there to discover what he made you to do, and the person he made you to be.

Pursuing God's will requires humility. Pride separates you from God. If you think your plan is better, superior to his, you will miss out on the life you were created for. When your will is aligned with God's, you can have confidence in your plans and your future. But this starts with humility. Subjecting your will to God's is the first step.

WHO do you consult when making plans?

This passage describes God's expectations for kings but applies to you too as a person of influence. As a child of God, you are a child of the King, part of his royal line.

WHAT does your lifestyle communicate about your relationship with God?

DAY 32

READ PROVERBS 16:20-33

Proverbs describes wisdom as the intersection of understanding and self-control. Likewise, understanding comes from knowing the truth. Knowledge without truth can't produce understanding. Truth without self-control can't produce wisdom. Self-control is more than merely behaving appropriately; it's how you manage your thoughts, how you "take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

HOW have you exercised self-control to govern behavior? **HOW** have you managed your thoughts?

Choose your words carefully, they can be used to minister but also as weapons. Wisdom and understanding, combined with thoughtful speech, are persuasive, comforting, and trustworthy. Proverbs describes "understanding" as "a fountain of life to one who has it." Wisdom and understanding combined with self-control result in God-honoring, persuasive, and loving speech. When you communicate in this way, people will hear you.

It's our nature to pursue what seems right in our own mind without consulting God. This manifests first in our thoughts, then our speech. Verse 32 says self-control is more important than the world's idea of strength, fame, and fortune. Not surprisingly, self-control is often lacking in those the world considers successful.

HOW can you adopt a verse 32 mindset?

DAY 33

READ PROVERBS 17

You are more valuable than gold and silver. God personally works on your heart. Only the humble can repent and correct course. Proverbs says the legacy of fools brings harm to themselves, those around them, and even their offspring. God refines and redeems your heart when you choose to surrender your will to his. Surrender is required because your fallen nature continually battles against God for control of your life.

WHAT area(s) of your life still need to be surrendered to God?

Listening to lies and wickedness is a choice. You don't choose what catches your attention, but you **DECIDE** where your focus remains.

WHEN have you attempted to justify doing something God says is wrong?

The Bible frequently speaks about the poor. This includes those without resources and also the "poor in spirit" (those who don't know God). Verse 5 describes the mockery of those God created as a mockery of God. He planned and created each person. Each is equally valuable to him and equally loved by him.

DO YOU see some people as more "worthy" of love and grace than others? Why?

DAY 34

READ PROVERBS 18

Chapter 18 is full of principles that will help us live a more God-centered life, more of God and less of us. Proverbs 18:10, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous man runs into it and is safe.” The picture Imagine being in a boat during a storm and that tower is a lighthouse with a bright light shining at me. The goal is to steer my boat to that tower, not away from it! In times of trouble and stress we seem to want to fight the battle ourselves, we try everything but God when in reality, God is where we need to go first.

Verse 24, “A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” My dad use to tell me, “When it comes to friends, four quarters are better than a hundred pennies.” It’s better to have four close friends you can count on who will be true friends than it is to have one hundred friends who will never be there for you.

In times of trouble do you seek out God, **DO YOU** worship in the storm or worry in the storm? **WHAT** can you do that will remind you that God wants to be in your battles with you?

WHEN the storm hits, are those you consider close friends by your side or nowhere to be found? How can you make those relationships even closer?

DAY 35

READ PROVERBS 19:1-11

It's better to be poor and honest than to be a rich person that no one can trust. There are two other verses in this section of chapter 19 that deal with honesty and integrity. Verse 5 and verse 9 tell us that a false witness will not go unpunished and the person who tells lies gets caught, the person who spreads rumors is ruined. Lies and rumor wreck relationships. They tear down trust. Covering up a small lie leads to bigger lies. My mom had a saying, "a lie is a lie and painting it white don't make it any less a lie." There is really no such thing as "a little white lie." Trust is easy to gain, but difficult to rebuild. When someone starts to spread rumors and gossip to me about someone else, it makes me wonder what they say about me behind my back. I also won't trust them about issues in my life that I need to talk to someone about because I doubt their ability to keep confidentiality about what I'm telling them. That's not a true friend! God wants us to have true friends around us, God wants us to be people of integrity. When you have no integrity in your words, it's easy to lose integrity in other areas of your life.

ARE YOU someone that people would consider to be honest and trustworthy?

HOW do you deal with gossip when it comes your way?

DAY 36

READ 19:12-29

There are a lot of people in and around your life who are in need and not just financially in need. God has given us so many gifts and he wants us to use those gifts to help others. Who in your life is lonely? Who in your life has suffered a loss? Sometimes just being with a person is giving them exactly what they need; to know someone cares. And the awesome part about this verse is that God loaned us gifts and talents in life, and when we use those gifts to help others, God repays us. Woah!! Think about that, we're loaning out His gifts, His money, His talents and then when we do that he repays us with even more than he gave us in the first place. With God two plus two often equals a lot more than four!

Mission trips are great and God wants us to spread our wealth and love and His word to others around the globe, but remember that you probably have people in need close by. Find your talent and your purpose from God and use that to help others in your life. It's not just the worship team that received talents from God. We all have, you just have to find yours.

HAVE you discovered and found a way to grow the talents God has given you?

ARE you giving back with those gifts and talents? If not, what's holding you back?

DAY 37

READ PROVERBS 20:1-7

Proverbs 20:3, “It’s a mark of good quality to avoid quarrels, but a fool loves to pick fights.” We live in a world now where it’s harder to get along with people who don’t think or believe like we do. Political parties no longer have a “we agree to disagree” attitude. My side is correct, your view is not so we get reduced to name calling and finding ways to ridicule others who think differently than us. But what if we found a way to find the thing that bring us together and don’t highlight the things that tear us apart? Conflict has always been a part of society. We need to find ways to work through the conflict. It’s when we stop finding ways to work with each other or finding ways to get through the conflict that the conflict takes on a life of it’s own. If we just fight and argue over who’s right and who’s wrong we miss the point of living and loving like Jesus. Acceptance does not mean approval. I might not agree with something a person is doing or how they are living their life, but I still accept the person. Besides, how can I show someone what the Bible says about how to live if I lose communication with them?

IS THERE a conflict in your life that needs resolution?

WHAT do you need to do to resolve?

DAY 38

READ PROVERBS 20:8-30

How many road rage incidents could be avoided if when someone gets cut off on the freeway, instead of racing up alongside that person to cut them off or at the least give them a few choice words, we just give it up to God? The last time that happened to me I wished my car had a flame thrower option so I could just light their tires on fire. At that moment it made me wonder, are they late for work? Or what if they just got a phone call that was bad news and they are in a hurry to get to loved one in trouble. Sounds crazy but at that moment I just said a quick prayer for them. "God, I don't know what's going on in that person's life today but You do." It's hard to stay mad when you're in the middle of a quick prayer. I went from wanting to light them on fire to praying that everything was okay with them. How much worse could I have made their life in that moment if I sped up and cut them off or used select digits on my hand to wave to them? How we deal with conflict in the moment and after the incident is over matters. Solomon tells us giving these moments to God is the answer, not striking back.

ARE YOU quick to anger?

WHAT attitude changes can you make to slow your anger and your need for revenge?

DAY 39

READ PROVERBS 21:1-15

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 depict characteristics which are counter-cultural and against typical human instinct. Even still, those who embody such qualities are among those abiding in closest proximity to Jesus. In Matthew 5:6, Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount by speaking a blessing over “those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Wholehearted longing for righteousness produces hearts which break along with the Lord’s when looking at a broken and hurting world. We begin to perceive the world through his eyes, loving every part of its fallen nature with his heart.

The mere fact that the blessed hunger and thirst reveals that complete righteousness is still to come. Until the Kingdom of Heaven is present on earth, we rest in Jesus’ promises for redemption and renewal in a world of injustice and suffering. In the midst of enduring patience, “the righteous has enough to satisfy his appetite, but the belly of the wicked suffers want” (v25). That which resides as the deepest longing of our hearts determines the course of our lives because it reveals what we believe to be the most important. Until our longings align with Jesus’, reflected in our actions, we will never reach a posture of satisfaction.

WHAT does your heart long for?

In **WHAT** was is your life reflecting and promote righteousness?

DAY 40

READ PROVERBS 21:16-31

Let's look at Proverbs 21:21 today. I love how The Message version of the Bible translates this verse, "Whoever goes hunting for what is right and kind finds life itself - glorious life!" The key is what you pursue in life. Peace and a stress free life is not found in "stuff". Solomon is telling us that to find life you need to give it away. Living right has to do with our relationship with God and with others. I was living for what I thought was making me happy. It did... for a while. And then depression came back and I was miserable again. Just miserable with a nice car. (And a not so nice payment, by the way!) Once I started living for God, giving back to others and being more concerned about what others needed and not what I needed, everything changed. My life is "rich" not because of material things, but because of my relationship with God and the people God has placed in my life. Most of my life was not a "glorious life" as Solomon tells us God wants for us. I wish I would have discovered this when I was in my 20's not my 40's. I want you to have a glorious life. Not gonna lie, it does require sacrifice but the reward will far outweigh the sacrifice.

DO YOU have a "rich, glorious life" as Solomon describes?

DAY 41

READ PROVERBS 22:1-16

David was a man that was chosen by God to be King, and yet when his anointing for Kingship came he was in the field taking care of his sheep. Before David was ever King, he was a shepherd who worked. It is easy to look at the outward appearance of mankind: of wealth and status, to judge whether one is blessed or one is struggling, if one can be used by God or not, yet God sees differently. In Matthew 5, Jesus began his Sermon on the Mount with a group of statements we recognize as the beatitudes. These statements highlight who is blessed, yet they are in stark contradiction to what the world defines as blessed. What if, Scripture is trying to help us understand, that while the world may define “richness and blessedness” in one way, God definition may be different?

The blessings that are given by God, no one can earn, and no one can take. They are treated as gifts, to be enjoyed and to be used to full capacity. It has been said, “the most humble is the most triumphant Christian. He may be depressed, but he is highly exalted. He has the wealth of grace and glory. Nobody can deprive him of these.”

HOW do you define “being blessed?”

HOW do you relate to the idea of work? **DO YOU** enjoy the work you’ve been asked to do?

DAY 42

READ PROVERBS 22:17-21

We live in a world that is so connected to one another, and yet struggles to communicate with one another. Vernacular slang has become its own language (#bae), social media usage is on the continual steady rise where people portray what they want, and hide from face to face conversations behind a computer screen. We've seem to have lost intention behind our communication, and the ability to trust what is spoken to us face to face, constantly feeling the urge to ask "is this what they really mean?"

Solomon uses these few verses to set up "thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge," that will come over the next few chapters. We will find wisdom statements that are both practical and encouraging, but before Solomon dives in he stops to help us understand that everything that we are about to read is purposed "that our trust may be in the Lord." Solomon cleared the air and instead of was wondering why, he clearly told us. Knowing what is to come he encourages readers to really hear what is going to be said, to apply their hearts to what is said, and then to have the words ready to be shared with others. When we come to Scripture, we are commanded to approach the words differently than just another passing comment, as it is clear the purpose behind the words.

HOW do you view God's Word?

HOW has Scripture encouraged your faith and trust in God?

DAY 43

READ 22:22-23:11

Within these verses, are ten of the thirty sayings of the wise, which many scholars believe Solomon begins with focusing on the idea of wealth. While the conversation of money has become almost “taboo” in our modern church culture, we can’t fail to recognize the instructions that Solomon has allowed us within these verses. Solomon dives into the conversation of monetary wealth but our wealth: monetary, relational, physical, whatever it may be has the ability to be used by God or what we were meant to rule over (wealth), could begin to rule us.

Pastor A.W. Tozer wrote, “things have become necessary to us, a development never originally intended. God’s gift now takes the place of God, and the whole course of nature is upset by the monstrous substitution.” God wants to play a role in our wealth, he wants it to be used to help others and bring glory to Him and his Kingdom, he doesn’t want to be replace by our wealth or our pursuit of it.

WOULD you consider yourself wealthy? **WHY?**

HOW can what you have be used to help others and glorify God?

DAY 44

READ PROVERBS 23:12-35

In the first line of Purpose Driven Life, Pastor Rick writes “It’s not about you.” While the statement may seem simple, it may be one of the most profound truths one could ever hear, receive, and apply to their life. While we may live a life, where we are the protagonist, our individual lives are a part of a bigger story and are designed not just for the sake of Earth, but we have a chance to make our lives count for eternity.

Solomon continues in the thirty sayings of the wise with the challenge to “apply your heart to instruction.” He continues in the sayings, encouraging joy to be found in discipline and to “continue in the fear of the Lord all the day.” We are told “to do” however Solomon includes a bit of hope, positioned right in the middle of this passage in verse 18, “surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.” Solomon instructs us, gives us hope, and also an invitation. While our lives are lived for something greater, we are not alone. Those that came before us, the ones wiser than us, lived lives that we are invited to learn from. It is our choice to learn from and to join those in living for something greater than ourselves.

HOW do you view discipline?

WHOSE wisdom are you learning from?

DAY 45

READ PROVERBS 24:1-22

After spending months ministering in Chicago, Pastor John Harper along with his six-year old daughter, Nana boarded a new ship, named the Titanic, to return to Britain to continue his ministry. At 11:40 PM on the night of April 14, 1912 as the Titanic was sinking, Harper a widower, wrapped his daughter in a blanket, told her that he would one day see her again and passed her to a crewmember and watched her safely on to a lifeboat. Harper ran the ship, urging people to come to know Christ as their Savior. As the ship met water, Harper began swimming from driftwood to driftwood continuing to urge people to turn to Christ. Even in his death, Harper's desire was that the lost would come to know Jesus. He held nothing back so that even one person who was so close to death would find life.

When we understand that we live not just in the temporary but the eternal, our view of the lives around us, may just change. As a saying of the wise Solomon wrote, "rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter." What if we began to see the world a little more like Pastor John Harper, and follow the wisdom of Solomon?

WHO is someone that you might be able to tell about Jesus?

HOW would understanding eternity, change the way you live?

DAY 46

READ PROVERBS 24:23-34

God is just, justice is a part of his very character. For us to pursue justice is to pursue the very character of God. To walk justly is to reflect our God, and in living as he would live we get the chance to understand more of who he is. It's as if Proverbs is offering us less a suggestion of what to do, rather an invite to know God better. It is interesting that next to the idea of pursuing justice, we find the idea of working hard. As we discover more the character of God through the pursuit of justice, so we discover more of his character through work. Even in the Garden of Eden, work was designed as a part of God's plan for man. Work is not a result of the fall, rather as humans made in the image of God, it is a part of who we were intended to be. For us to find work, sustained and steadfast labor, is for us to find a piece of wisdom that only comes from exerted effort in imitating God as we were designed to do.

While we are asked to die to ourselves in the pursuit of justice, and hard work, we find that our loss of self is gain of something so much greater, fear of God.

WHAT would it look like to pursue justice in your life?

HOW do you view work?

DAY 47

READ PROVERBS 25

It takes faith to live a humble life, yet in living humble we have the chance to live like Jesus. Philippians 2:8, “and being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” The Cross was humiliating, however through the Cross came salvation, what the world had and continues to long for. The world’s greatest need was met in humility. It takes faith to live a humble life, because humility is in opposition to what the world is prone to. While self-promotion allows instant self-gratification, humility provides a sense of the eternal glory to come, in a shared experience.

Relationships can be difficult because people are imperfect. Mankind’s imperfections, produce difficulties as we navigate relating to one another and doing life with one another because we don’t always get things right. In Proverbs 25, Solomon offers us the overarching suggestion as we navigate the curves that relationships bring, to navigate with humility. C.S. Lewis said, “humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less.” For us to live humbly, requires us to right-size what Christ did on the Cross for us, right-size ourselves, and right-size others.

HOW would you describe what Christ did on the Cross?

HOW can you live humbly in the way you relate to others?

DAY 48

READ PROVERBS 26

Ricky Bobby famously said, “if you ain’t first, you’re last.” We laugh at the presentation of this thought, but if we were to actually take a second to pause, and meditate on this competitive moto for life, we could easily draw the conclusion that for many of us, we live following this philosophy. Our world encourages us to “look out for number one.” In some sort of way, with what the world hands us and the difficulties that circumstances can often bring, we can all honestly form an excuse that we are “just do our best with what we are given.” When we see ourselves just trying to get by, when we are looking out to “guard ourselves,” and just wanting to be number one, we live in survival mode. As Christians we are called not just to a survival life but a life to the full.

We find life in living differently from the world, where the world encourages foolishness, search for wisdom, where the world presents opportunities for laziness, commit to work, where the world says to hide in shame and bitterness, God allows us an opportunity to find freedom in the full life he offers. While the world says “if you ain’t first, you’re last,” Jesus said, “the greatest among you shall be your servant.”

ARE YOU surviving or living life to the fullest?

WHAT has God called you to, that is different than what the world encourages of you?

DAY 49

PROVERBS 27

In school we were taught to keep our eyes on our own paper. Times would come where our eyes would drift to the paper next to us to see how the other person is doing. Are they going faster than me? Did they study as hard as I did? In many ways that lesson still applies to us today. When we are stuck feeling like we have less than we need we turn to others to see what they do or do not have. When those around us have less than we do, it can be easy to boast about our own success, gifts, and possessions. However, when our eyes drift and we see others that seem to have more than we do, how do we respond? Most times we end up jealous of the other person. When in reality, we do not need what they have. God equips us with what we need. So if we aren't focused on what we have, where is our focus? When we focus on what we are given and work diligently to do the best with what we have, there is less room for jealousy and pride.

ARE YOUR eyes focused on what others have instead of what you were given?

WHAT are you doing with the things God has given you?

TAKE TIME to reflect on what God has given you. Think of how you respond and to what you have. Do you let your eyes drift?

DAY 50

READ PROVERBS 28

“Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked” **PSALM 37:16**

When you think of wealth what do you think of? My mind automatically turns to money. A worldly view of wealth could easily be different than the wealth we are gifted by God. This chapter states over and over again how those who walk in wisdom will be safe. Those that walk-in wealth over wisdom are blinded. Solomon goes on to emphasize the downfall of the wicked. In other words, those who seek themselves. Those that are rich in the Lord come out victorious over those who are rich in their own eyes. When we are faithful to God and follow His ways, we are promised blessings.

We can open Instagram and see everyone has air pods, the newest shoes, and nice cars. That idea of wealth does not match what we, as followers of Christ, are promised. Someone who is wealthy in the eyes of society cannot be compared to someone rich in blessings from God. Even if you feel like you do not have as much as the people around you, remind yourself of what you have been blessed with. Do not use money or tangible items as a measurement of wealth.

DO YOU compare your wealth with the wealth of those around you?

TAKE TIME to reflect on your idea of wealth. Does your idea of wealth match scripture?

DAY 51

PROVERBS 29

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

JAMES 1:5

Have you ever thought about the difference between joy and happiness? Happiness is only a temporary emotion. However, joy comes from the Lord and lasts forever. Those who seek the Lord are filled with joy. In this chapter it is shown how the ones that have sought fulfillment from themselves do not lead lives of righteousness. When we align our hearts with God's heart for us, our thoughts and actions reflect God. Seeking wisdom from God leads to righteousness. Peace comes with wisdom. Conflict, flattery, and sin no longer have a hold on those who walk in wisdom. A life filled with wisdom is one that is also filled with joy. God creates a path for us and invites us to follow Him. He reveals His promises of granting wisdom to those who ask.

AM I following the path God created for me or my own? **WHAT** do I need to ask God for?

TAKE TIME to reflect on the desires of your heart. Ask God to align your heart with His.

DAY 52

READ PROVERBS 30

The manner in which Agur, author of this Proverb, approaches God is that of a tired man who recognizes his lack of wisdom yet seeks it all the more. Agur approaches God in vulnerability, asking him to empty his heart of anything which may remain otherwise covered. He also requests “neither poverty nor riches,” rather, just enough material necessities to provide for the present moment. Too much and he wouldn’t need God; too little and he would become a beggar. Unlike the unsatisfied nature of those he proceeds to describe, Agur locates peace, awe, and wonder in that which God offers even if he cannot fully understand the nature of God.

Agur, in his exhausted honesty, reveals the intended posture of a person reading Proverbs. The Word of God has only as much power in our lives as we permit. If we approach Scripture with hesitancy, we reduce it to a story confined between two covers. We neglect its power as God’s word, alive and active in our own lives. Dallas Willard conveys that “God usually addresses individually those who walk with him in a mature, personal relationship using this inner voice, proclaiming and showing forth the reality of the kingdom of God as they go.” Without this connection to God through his word, approached with the spirit of Agur, we will be unable to experience awe of the world’s wonders or intolerable anger over injustices and know God as he reveals himself.

HOW do you approach God?

DAY 53

READ PROVERBS 31:1-9

King Lemuel's mother speaks to her son with his best interest at the forefront of her mind. As a king, Lemuel is held to higher societal standards than the general public. His mother's words signify his status as a leader and inspire him to cultivate a lifestyle which others may look to as a model. She warns against women and strong wine for both distract and alter judgement. She instead encourages Lemuel to use his societal position to promote the needs and rights of the overlooked. Lemuel is a king by birthright, but this mere title lacks in comparison to his actions while filling this position. The state of his character determines his sphere of influence.

As we step into respective roles of daughters and sons of God, we step further into the Kingdom of Heaven. We begin to realize that we "are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession," (2 Peter 2:9). Just as King Lemuel, we begin to grasp that certain things in life are "not for kings." That which limits life to the full in our own lives also limits the extent to which we may utilize our influence to benefit those around us.

WHERE is your sphere of influence?

HOW can you cultivate a heart posture which promotes the well-being of others?

DAY 54

READ PROVERBS 31:10-31

The valiant woman depicted in Proverbs 31 is “far more precious than rubies” before she accomplishes anything; her worth does not lie in her capabilities. With such confidence, the content of her heart spills over into actions which are performed with abundant willingness. “Clothed in strength and dignity,” she works in a manner which conveys not only competence, but compassion, kindness, and empathy as well. The inward beauty of her character outwardly extends as her actions direct back to the Lord and offers blessings to those in close proximity.

The woman presented can be mistakenly perceived as a daunting epitome of what we should be, both women and men. We oftentimes reach verse 31 in awe of this woman and quiet shame over the quality of our own lives, but inadequacy was never the intention. This passage in Jewish culture was spoken over women, not as an example of who they were not, but as a celebration of who they already were.

To embrace the life modeled by the virtuous woman is to embody Jesus’ character a little more because he more closely resembles the woman depicted in Proverbs 31 than any other human to walk the earth. A heart resting in a posture of reverent fear toward the Lord and a mind rooted in Scriptural truths reap a livelihood which cannot help but result in blessings and radiance.

HOW can you see Jesus reflected in the Proverbs 31 woman?





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