

## Proverbs 1

Both the benefit of **good counsel** (or advice) and the folly of bad advice or direction is described with persona - as she pleads for us to embrace her, to accept God's wisdom. Because her pleas are not well received and even mocked, God will turn his ears from them leaving them to their own folly.

The later Proverb that comes to mind is that "there are many plans in a person's heart, but it is the Lord's purpose that prevails." The personal application is that to know God and to receive him, we must "fear him" or **hold him in highest honor and trust him above any and all other things**. With such a response are we able to ask for wisdom, embrace it, and then receive it in portion.

## Proverbs 2

Wisdom continues to be the objective as it will "save you" from evil of all kinds and enable you to "follow the steps" of righteousness.

Thanks to the footnotes, some elaboration provides the understanding that **wisdom is obtained as a gift but also through our pursuit, our endeavor**. Not easy to obtain, wisdom will most certainly be obtained through my own errors, my own sin to include pride and lust – two areas that feed the "empty head" and the "empty heart". "Stay on the paths of the righteous" by seeking his will.

## Proverbs 3

Do not rely on your own wisdom but fear the Lord; honor the Lord with "the best of everything"; **hide his commands in your heart**; and never let kindness and loyalty leave you. To the child (children of God), understand that **discipline** and correction are done out of love. Seek his will in all that you do and he will direct your paths....and so much more.

Wisdom is described as "**the tree of life**" that will guide us down the paths of righteousness; therefore, let me become the best of environmentalist by **hugging a tree and never letting go**.



## Proverbs 4

From the footnotes, one of the greatest responsibilities of parents is to encourage their children to become wise, but at any age, wisdom must be sought with resolve and process that will most certainly involve difficulty. But which is best – the path of the wicked or the path of the righteous? The one is folly and the other brings wisdom.

**Be cautious of human behavior for it may mislead** – even friends can lead to folly and sin; instead, “look straight ahead; stick to the path of the righteous”.

## Proverbs 5

There is much wrong with sexual immorality as it brings destruction on many levels to include the loss of the ability to love and the degradation of human life. Be careful and vigilant to such temptation as it will lead to destruction – even preparing for such temptation or circumstances. Sex and such intimacy should be solely applied to your marriage, your wife.

**The Lord sees clearly what a man does, examining ever path he takes.**



## Proverbs 6

This chapter contains a lot; it addresses the debtor, the things the Lord hates and detests, and adultery (or sexual lust) – a continuing issue that deserves such attention I think.

The consequences and conditions of adultery are described: a man who commits adultery lacks good judgment (he is foolish) and the outcome will be mean fury from the husband and untold payment for the adulterous in many ways. I believe that adultery comes in forms other than sexual; that adultery can occur when the believer turns from God and worships idols of some form (“you adulterous nation...”); also true for the individual who seeks satisfaction in anything else to **include sexual gratification outside marriage – which I have done.**

## Proverbs 7

Adultery is again the subject – with the conditions that describe the fall and the consequences that end one’s life: **the temptation is present and always lurking** for our attention and participation; only by our Lord’s power and the realization of this temptation can my thought life and actions be pleasing to you. Pray that our children will be protected from this temptation as well.

## Proverbs 8

Wisdom is personified with clarity and distinction – more precious than all worldly things. “To fear the Lord is to hate evil” (v.13). From its origin in God, wisdom was the “craftsman at his side” who, until the savior returns, beckons man to listen, to learn, and to love the Lord.

## Proverbs 9

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (v.10). **Folly is also personified** as the counterpart of Wisdom – who beckons and entices the simple to her table...to death.

## Proverbs 10

Among the verses of the Proverb of Solomon, the two that interest me most is:

- “The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out.” (v.9)
- “He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.” (v.18)

**Help me to be a man of integrity through your presence and power;** to lay any hatred at the cross and embrace the love of eternity; that the tongue might be guarded and the words to be thoughtful and truthful.



## Proverbs 11

Pride is followed by disgrace; but humility allows wisdom. (v.2) “A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.” (v.12) Again, the **dangers of the tongue** are many when used carelessly and callously; guard my tongue that the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable unto you my Lord.

## Proverbs 12

To continue on the subject of the tongue, although other subjects are included, this chapter includes:

“**Truthful lips endure forever...**” (v.17); “Reckless words pierce like a sword...” (v.16) – words of truth and prudence that are sanctioned by you my Lord.

## Proverbs 13

“He who guards his lips guards his soul, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.” (v.3)

“**A poor man’s field may produce abundant food, but injustice sweeps it away.**” (v.23) Continuing from earlier chapters, the tongue continues to hold my attention, my conscience; also, the notion that even the poor, and perhaps especially the poor, are vulnerable to injustice...but what is injustice?



## Proverbs 14

There is so much in this chapter but to whittle it down to a single verse: “There is a way that seems right to man, but in the end it leads to death.” (v.12) In what way(s) and to what end is the Proverb? Is it referring to the way to salvation, to happiness, to prosperity or to what? **What is true** is that man, in his limited thinking and world view, does not possess the wisdom of God – which in the end leads to life.

## Proverbs 15

Again, two verses stand out:

“**A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension**, but a patient man calms a quarrel.” (v.18)

“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but a foolish man despises his mother. “ (v.22)

To repeat what I have heard, and should learn; anger is not wrong but uncontrolled anger is wrong. Lord help me to give such anger, even as an impulse, to you – that control and containment may be possible in you and you alone. Well, planning needs advice and where does advice come from? First, counsel is from and by my Lord and, through his spirit, those sources whom he leads or places before me.

## Proverbs 16

A set of verses that have universal application: “Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and your plans will succeed. The Lord works out everything for his own ends – even the wicked for a day of disaster (v.4-5).

This scripture is encouraging because it reaffirms that **God is in control** and that he has purpose and a plan in all that is done. Though the wicked may succeed for a season, **yet all must face the judgment of God.**

## Proverbs 17

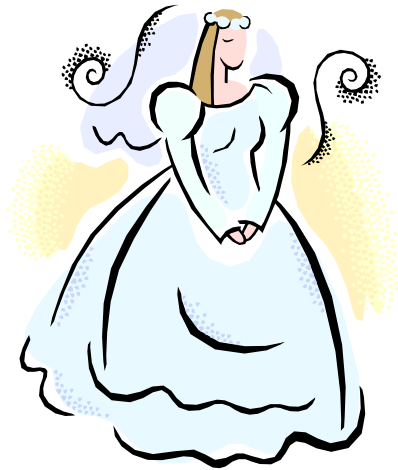
Among the verses of the chapter that may have some application to my life: “To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool.”

To understand this verse begins with some definition of folly – the practice of a fool. Folly is conduct without wisdom and understanding; the scriptures tell us **that fools despise wisdom and understanding.** For the believer, wisdom comes from God – since God is the source of all wisdom. When a person embraces God as Lord, they acquire wisdom through his word and the Holy Spirit. This wisdom or understanding is not necessarily gained by experience but at the source, God.

## Proverbs 18

As with Proverbs in general, a chapter is replete with good advice and instruction; thus, choosing among the many verses is difficult simply because there are so many good, useful verses. In the chapter, my choice (though not easy) is: “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.”

Ephesians of one of several books that offers instructions on living in marriage and family. With the understanding that **God compares marriage** to the relationship of Jesus and the church, we can take accept these instructions with the knowledge and certainty that each and all are authentic and valuable. Yes, a wife is good – as the church is good – but only when Jesus is at the head or leadership. When Jesus is removed or discounted from such a holy communion, human nature goes to work – which means that love (in the true sense of what it means) erodes along with Christ’s role in marriage.



The success of many marriages is not inclusive of Christ; that is, marriages occur outside of the Christian faith and last through a lifetime. This success on non-Christian marriages casts doubt on my words in the previous paragraph – especially since Christian marriages do fail or end in divorce. What I must make clear in the words of the last paragraph is that by faith in my understanding of the Christian faith, Christ must be worshiped and honored for both the believer and the couple bound in marriage. As far as non-Christian marriages, I do not have any words as such beyond my understanding and experience.

Having a wife is good and having a Christ-centered marriage is essential for the believer. Christ is our model as both a leader and a servant – for each of us as singles and in marriage.

## Proverbs 19

Always torn on which verse to select, but choosing among so many, “Many are the plans in a man’s heart; but it is the Lord’s purpose that prevails.”

Select scripture offers the understanding **that the Lord has a purpose** for all his creation: for the non-believer, his desire or purpose is that know Christ as Lord; for the believer is that they serve Christ as Lord and grow in fellowship.

More details of this purpose are offered to the believer by discipline and revelation: discipline occurs more frequently than revelation and includes the Lords working in the life of the believer to prepare him for purpose; revelation is the revealing of the word of God in the life of believer. Both discipline and revelation occur by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, we make plans for our lives and proceed in carrying-out those plans; yet, the Lord’s purpose does prevail.

## Proverbs 20

Light is used throughout the Bible to represent Holiness, or God. Physical light is created by God and maintained by the Sun. Spiritual light is emitted by Christ who is “the light of the world”; and this “light in man” is life – from John, chapter 1.

In verse 27 of this chapter, “The lamp of the Lord searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being.” We know that physical light is essential to see and to live – without which, we would be reduced to eventual nothingness. As the Sun is necessary for physical life – and for sustaining each of our lives – spiritual light is necessary for spiritual life.

Physical light reveals the apparent things – the things we so often take for granted and assume to be real; **but spiritual light (a.k.a. The Holy Spirit) reveals the deeper and unapparent things** – the things discernable by the Spirit. Going far beyond what is assumed, the Spirit reveals all things before God – who judges and will judge the thoughts and attitudes of our hearts.

## Proverbs 21

As often a dilemma, the choice of verses is very difficult – as each verse offers a story and lesson. A verse already highlighted in my Bible, “Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife.”

Proverbs is well-represented by lessons of this type: warnings of the ills that can strike a family and can entice a man – young or old – into the delusional trust and distraction of a woman. **Such verses are not aimed at dissuading marriage and relationships – or condemning the female – but are to caution each of us of the simple truth that no person can be trusted...not even ourselves!** Add this human condition to relationships and marriage, and what you get is the same condition with the false belief that the relationship alone can bring happiness, can bring heaven and satisfaction.

On the road of wisdom, the young person should understand – or gain understanding – **that happiness and contentment cannot be found in another person or relationship;** but on contrary, can lead to disgust if the relationship be exalted to such a place. Placing such expectations as trustworthiness on another person – even your wife (or husband) – is both unrealistic and unfair. They will fail you – and will even resent such an expectation over time – as they simply cannot deliver or maintain this lofty and precarious position.

**Where does your hope reside?** Correctly answered, hope resides in the Lord who is worthy, able, and willing to supply your needs.

## Proverbs 22

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” What could easily qualify as the mantra in the *plight of parenting*, this verse is used again and again as both an instruction and a challenge.

To refer to the footnote on this verse, “...the way he should go”, is a road to wisdom; and with such “a way” defined or interpreted, comes the question, **“How?” do we show our children** (and perhaps other children on occasion). Well, as any child advisor will indicate, we show them by example – by our lifestyle from the most magnanimous to the smallest of actions. **Words are important – but the children’s most effective learning comes through observation and discernment of our lifestyle.**

## Proverbs 23

To continue on the subject of parenting and children, the verse among many is “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with a rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”

The immediate thought or impulse might be that such instructions are harsh and relatively Byzantine to our so-called modern, Western culture. After all, a “rod” is brutal – it suggests torture or actions not acceptable or approving for parents or other authority.

To dispense with the term “rod” – or the rod altogether – other versions of the Bible describe this action as a spanking or paddling. Ok, the choice of words being arguably important, the Proverb is clearly sanctioning corporal discipline for children – perhaps as a last, but not commonly used method of training and discipline.

Did I use the word “training”? **Yes, “training” and discipline go hand-in-hand.** How can training result from discipline or the alternative use of a spanking? In the most elementary example, a spanking reinforces instruction and delivers a poignant and momentarily painful effect of a cause that the parent deems important – even essential for their child?

A child darts out in traffic when they’ve been told and instructed to be cautious – to *stop, look, and listen*. The parents’ primary instinct is to protect the child (children) – even if not necessarily the parent – and so disregard or dereliction of such hazards is not acceptable. What must or should the parent do to reinforce this instruction – to protect the child from physical danger? As a first measure, avoid the possibilities or exposure to such places; but, of course, ensure that the child understands to the point that curiosity and daring behavior do not win over obedience.

Excessive or exhaustive discipline can deflate the ability of parents (or other authority) and the attitude of the child – which adversely affects the relationship. **Discipline should be given in love and the genuine interest and care of the child;** not in cruelty or some form of demented pleasure or entertainment. Interwoven in the expression of love, discipline produces restraint and responsibility – for parent and child alike.

Books and volumes have been written on these verses – and the broader issues and practices of parenting. The relative extension of my commentary to this chapter, and more specifically these verses, is because of the controversy and conflict that pervades or modern society. On the broader subject of parenting, the traditional family is under a full-scale attack – to the level at which this long-standing institution is crumbling at its foundations. Spanking and corporal discipline are small issue to this modern malady of marriage and family.

## Proverbs 24

As I've written about certain verses in each chapter, the choice (of verses) in probably influenced by the circumstance of day; but I pray that the choice is what God desires – is what God is desiring me to know or particularly accept from him. With this pray, the verses: “Do not fret because of evil men, or be envious of the wicked, for the evil man has no future hope, and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.”

What is evil; how do you recognize the wicked? Each of these terms – and any similar terms – seems very extreme; but then, what is life without God?

The Bible contains many stories of characters (and actions) that were evil or wicked: Satan is the master of evil or the source of all that is wicked; worst yet, he is the great deceiver. Recall that Satan deceived Eve as the cardinal sin – and since that time – has deceived many – even some of the saints or believers. Satan is a master of the art of Godless living and, through deceptions, imputes this vile living in all of mankind.

Yes, that's right – “in all of mankind” – which means me and you, of course. **The human heart (or the soul) of mankind is naturally evil or wicked** – and left without the restraints of society (or basically fear) – it will contrive and endless and unimaginable degree of evil and wicked behavior. The soul is naturally wicked – devoid of God, maker of all that is good.

**“All that is good” is embellished in love** – not evil; thus, God instills in mankind –through the Holy Spirit – the greatest good, love. With love comes good things; but without love, there is nothing good.

Evil and wicked living is evident in our society; and as person once said: *ain't none of us clean*. **How do we get clean?** By receiving Christ into our lives and living for him.

What about fear – or the fear of evil or wicked living? Well, with Christ our lives – or God on our side – **who can truly be against us?** We are called or instructed by God to fear nothing of man – but only to fear or revere God. It is God who gives us strength and courage against evil or wicked living – not because we understand or can comprehend such – but because God is in control. Yes, in control of even the source of all evil and wicked living, Satan.

## Proverbs 25

The verses of choice actually have some association to the New Testament. “If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

The association – as I see it – is when Christ tells us **to love our enemy and pray for those who persecute us**. You may remember that before this instruction, Jesus repeated the “old law” that instructed God’s followers to love their neighbor. Christ supersedes that instruction with the all-encompassing command to love those who are potentially an enemy – someone who may even be trying to hurt or destroy us.

Of course, the basic question – in response to this instruction – is “how?” **How do love such people?** Only with God, can we love these people...only with Christ as Lord of our lives.

**Among the *Fruits of the Holy Spirit* is love**; yes, love is among the fruits offered through the Holy Spirit – that enables us to pray for our enemies. Without Christ – or by our natural beings – we cannot love our enemy, we cannot feed them or we cannot give them something to drink.



## Proverbs 26

The choice of verses is seemingly odd: **“As a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.”**

Alright, what does this mean? First, a dog actually does return to eat his vomit; this odd behavior is a natural instinct – for reasons that I am not sure. But to understand the meaning of this initial verse, let me turn to some New Testament scripture in 2 Peter. Using the same analogy, this scripture (provided below) gives some explanation:

If they’ve escaped from the slum of sin by experiencing our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ, **and then slid back into that same old life again**, they’re worse than if they had never left. Better not to have started out on the straight road to God than to start out and then turn back, repudiating the experience and the holy command. They prove the point of the proverbs, “A dog goes back to its own vomit,” and, “A scrubbed-up pig heads for the mud.”

When a person chooses Christ as Lord – and then falls away from his Lordship – than he is like *a dog returning to its vomit*...and is a fool. A dog returns to vomit – regardless of training – because of its natural instincts; but a person who chooses Christ as Lord begins to lose (or die to) their own natural instincts. Only when they fall away from God do they return to these natural instincts and *return* to their old ways – or ways that are not glorifying to God.

A fool is someone who – given the opportunity to choose God – either **rejects the invitation or, after initial invitation, falls away from God**...and does not turn back. As the related scripture above indicates, the choice to follow and then fall away is worse than not having chosen in the first place.

## Proverbs 27

The choice of verses is all too clear in the chapter: **“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”** There were other verses that I initially considered, but I could forgo this one – it so means so much to me!

Quite a few years ago, I was introduced to this verse at a Promise Keeper’s conference: At my first of two conferences (in Jacksonville, Florida), this was the key verse or theme. What does the verse mean?

Iron is sharpened through work – but begins as a crude ore, is formed into a hard solid and eventually, a usable-functional object. The combination of heat, pressure (from hammering or mauling), and grinding lead to this developing and eventual tool. Ironically, the tools used to “work” this iron are (you guessed it) made from iron.

This ironic combination of iron-on-iron in metal forming is the analogy that the Proverb uses to describe how **one person can be used to help another person** become close to Christ. One man can lead another to the saving knowledge and decision of Christ; one man can encourage and pray with another man; one man can teach and guide another man.



## Proverbs 28

Sometimes my choice of verses (within the offering of a full chapter) is influenced by my circumstances...and preferably by the Holy Spirit. From this chapter, “Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the Lord understand it fully.”

As a beginning, what is justice? Justice is defined as “the use of authority to uphold what is just...” Ok, what is meant by “just”? Choosing purposely among several definitions, “just” means that which is true or correct.

To do that which is just is to do that which is correct or true; therefore, justice is the use of authority to uphold what is true and correct. To uphold what is true or correct is to first identify or search for that which is true and correct; if such effort is not carried-out to desire and seek that which is true or correct, than can justice be rendered?

“Evil men” do not understand justice because they do not desire or seek that which is true or correct. Recall that Satan is the “father of lies” or the Great Deceiver; conversely, Christ is the bearer of truth and righteousness. One lives for lies while the other bears the truth; the one does not understand justice, while the other is the deliverer of justice (from God); the one aims to destroy while the other is purposed to save (God’s creation).

“Those who seek the Lord” seek truth and justice – they rely on God to understand and live by the truth, in fairness and justice. Those who do not seek God (or regress toward evil) do not seek truth and justice – but rely on themselves and their own warped sense of what is fairness and justice.

## Proverbs 29

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”

Fear is a word or topic that is found throughout the Bible; as a leading statement or instruction, the phrase “Fear not...” or “Do not be afraid” is used more often than other single phrase. In the commonly read account of Jesus’ birth, this phrase or instruction is used repeatedly in announcing John the Baptist’s birth and Jesus’ birth. With such frequent use of the phrase, the Bible must be a source from which we can take comfort (rather than concern) and be at peace (rather than anxious or nervous) in our lives before God. Jesus tells us that he came to bring peace...he says that we should be at peace...and he offers peace through his Holy Spirit. If we are in the peace of Christ, than we should be fearful of man – of what man can do or does do to hurt us or those whom we love and care.

**When we are fearful, we are not trusting in Christ** – we are not resting in his promises and experience his supernatural peace. Being safe is not necessarily sensed by are feeling or emotions; but is sensed through God’s promises and the power of prayer. We may find ourselves in places for which the fear of man (or people) is a natural reaction or condition; yet, we are called to have no fear of such things, **but to trust in the Lord...**

## Proverbs 30

“Two things I ask of you O Lord; do not refuse me before I die; keep falsehood and lies far from me; given me neither poverty nor riches, **but give me only my daily bread**. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, “Who is the Lord? Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.”

In the next-to-last chapter of Proverbs, the writer is making some earnest requests or appeals to God.

First, he asks for honest and open relationship whereby he will not lie or give falsehoods whether toward God or toward others. Of course, God will know if the writer – or anyone – is lying – since God knows and is the truth of all things. From the Ten Commandments, lying is a sin and thus should not be the intent or practice of the believer so to pray for an honest behavior is certainly right before God.

Second, **he asks for God’s provision:** not an over amount or and under amount – but only what is needed from God’s view point. Too much, and the writer may develop his own falsehood that he does not need God; too little, and he may be inclined or persuaded to steal or commit other crimes for necessity. What a wonderful prayer! He is asking for the right thing with the right heart; he only wants God’s provision – which God’s has promised to provide to each and all us.



Contrast God’s perspective or understanding versus man’s...

God is truth and man – in God’s light – seeks the truth...that he may be free... God promises to provide and, though man naturally wants more, God is committed to his promise to provide while man may or may not recognize and gives thanks...

## Proverbs 31

“Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting”; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

The saying, “save the best for last”, could easily apply to Proverbs 31 because the content is so often applied to the character of a Godly woman; hence, the scripture finds much application to the this high calling – and should be read and reread for this reason.

Described as “**the wife of a noble character**”, the woman (or women) is well-respected in the community but, most of all, by their husband. With all her attributes – to include attention to the needy – she finds ample time for her family. Wisdom and sound advice is offered to her sons and, most likely, her daughters in equal measure.

In the closing verses of the chapter – as I have chosen from above – distinction is made between the inner (or inward) attributes and the outer (or outward) attributes. **The inner attributes** – and most of all the woman who fear or reveres the Lord – is of highest value and purpose.