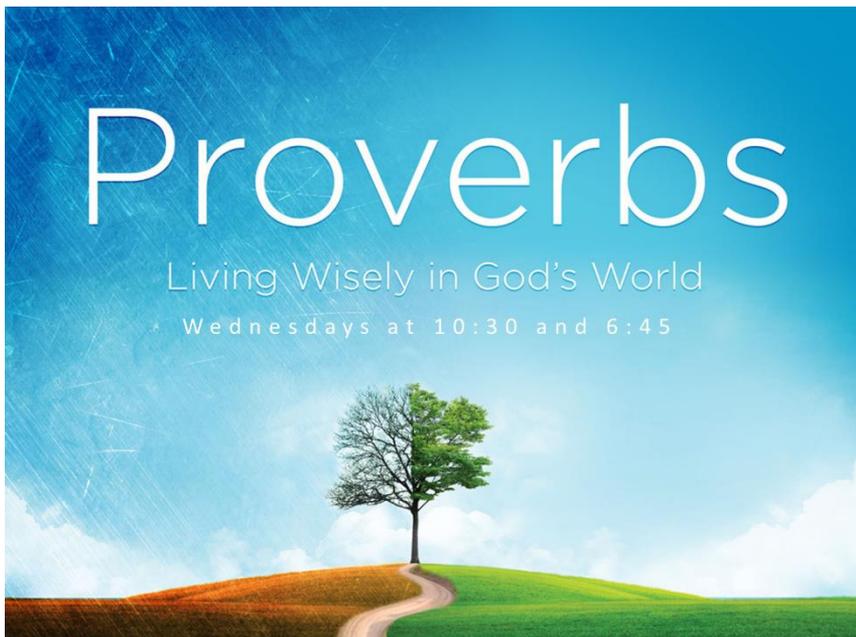


Proverbs

Living Wisely in God's World

* Wednesdays at 10:30 and 6:45



Burns Church of Christ
Wednesdays at 10:30 and 6:45

Introduction to Proverbs

July 17

Protection of the Vulnerable

Proverbs are a collection of wise sayings, general truths for living a successful life. Wisdom is not “head knowledge” per se, but rather skill for living a good and beautiful life. The book is unusual in scripture, as it lacks the storyline common to most books of the Bible. It is more like a collection of a grandfather’s favorite sayings preserved for the next generation. The words contained aren’t iron-clad guarantees, but generalities. The collection is filled with vivid imagery and poetic devices designed to embed these truths in our hearts and minds for years to come.

We begin our study of Proverbs by looking at the wise way to treat other people.

Key Texts: *15:25; 23:10–12*¹

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Why is God so interested in his people protecting the weak? Where else in scripture do you find this idea?

¹ The key texts are from Temper Longman’s appendix of Topical Studies of Proverbs in *Baker Commentary on the Old Testament: Proverbs* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006).

Anger, Emotion, and Conflict

July 24

We have all sorts of our own proverbs. Have you ever heard that “revenge is a dish best served cold”? But many of our proverbs are in contradiction with God’s Proverbs. What do we do when we get mad? How do we handle disagreements? What do we do with people that are just plain irritating? This week’s session is an introduction to Biblical Anger Management. Some people act like Christians don’t have emotions; that’s not true. Remember that Jesus turned the tables over! This week, seek God’s wisdom in channeling our feelings into safe and healthy decisions.

Key Texts:

Anger: (15:18; 16:14; 19:11, 12, 19; 21:19; 25:23; 27:3–4; 29:8, 22)

Appropriate Expression of Emotions (12:16; 14:29, 30; 16:32; 17:27; 19:11; 25:28; 29:11)

Fights and Conflicts (6:19; 10:12; 15:18; 16:28; 17:14, 19; 18:6, 19; 19:11; 20:3; 22:10; 23:29–30; 26:17, 20, 21; 28:25; 29:22)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Identify your conflict style. Are you conflict-averse or a high-conflict person? What do these proverbs have to say to each type of person?
3. Locate a story in scripture where someone fails to put these proverbs into action.
4. Locate a story in scripture where someone successfully employs these proverbs.
5. What one principle will you focus on in your conflicts?

Words, words, words

July 31

The Bible is not terribly encouraging about our wise use of words. “No human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison!” (James 3:8)

This week’s set of proverbs has a difficult task. Teaching us how to tame the untamable tongue. There are so many ways we can go wrong. We can swear and blaspheme, we can gossip and malign, we can lie and deceive, and we can be silent when we should stand up. Let’s see how scripture can coach us to use our words more skillfully.

Key Texts:

Appropriate Use of Words (10:14; 11:12, 13; 12:18; 13:3, 16; 15:28; 17:27, 28; 19:1; 20:18, 25; 26:4)

Rumors/Gossip/Slander/Insult (6:19; 9:7; 10:18; 11:13; 16:28; 18:3, 8; 20:19; 25:8–10, 23; 26:20, 22; 30:10)

Messengers (10:26; 13:17; 25:13, 25; 26:6)

Lies (6:16–19; 10:18; 12:17, 19, 22; 14:5, 25; 17:4; 19:5, 9, 28; 21:6, 28; 24:28–29; 25:8, 18; 30:7–9)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. What misuse of the tongue is most common in your life? What can you do to curtail it?
3. Based on the Proverbs you’ve read, create your own proverbs that addresses the use of words in the social media era.
4. Find a New Testament passage that gives encouragement about speaking wisely.

Ethics in the Workplace

August 7

Enron was famous for hiring the smartest guys in the room. The recession is proof that smarts \neq wisdom. We're used to thinking about the Bible as providing moral instruction. This week, let's particularly pay attention to ethics in our financial and business transactions. Your temptation as you read will be to only think of the way other people violate these principles. It's not hard to think of the big bad examples. Challenge yourself to see the little ways that you cut corners and recommit towards walking a path of wisdom.

Key Texts:

Bribes/Gifts (15:27; 17:8, 23; 18:16; 19:6; 21:14; 25:14; 28:21)

Business Ethics (6:1–5; 10:2; 11:1, 15, 18, 24–26; 13:11; 14:23; 15:27; 16:8, 11, 13, 26; 17:18; 20:10, 14, 16, 23; 21:5; 22:7, 26–27; 26:10; 27:13, 18; 28:8, 16)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. What are some modern examples of “false balances” in our culture?
3. Locate a Bible story where a character acts foolishly by ignoring this type of wisdom.

Family Matters

August 14

As if business ethics, our words, and our emotions didn't hit close enough to home, now Proverbs speaks to how we marry and raise our kids. Be mindful of cultural distance we cross from Solomon's day to ours. In an era when women were viewed as property by most, Proverbs is downright progressive. Be careful not to dismiss the scriptures as ancient, but be intentional about hearing them in their ancient context as we apply them to our lives today.

Key Texts:

Family Relationships (6:16–19; 10:1; 15:20; 17:2, 6, 17, 21; 19:13, 18, 26; 20:7, 20; 22:6; 23:13–14, 22–25; 27:8; 28:7, 24; 29:3, 15, 17; 30:11, 17, 21–23)

Physical Discipline (3:11–12; 10:13; 13:24; 17:10; 19:18, 25; 20:30; 22:15; 23:13–14; 26:3; 29:15, 17, 19)

Women/Wife (5:1–23; 6:20–35; 7:1–27; 11:22; 12:4; 14:1; 18:22; 19:13, 14; 21:9, 19; 22:14; 25:24; 27:15–16; 30:18–19, 20; 31:1–9, 10–31)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Many of the Proverbs discuss wives. Take two or three and make a stereotypically husband-centered version.
3. How do these Proverbs speak to the single or the widow?
4. Locate a Bible story where a character acts foolishly by ignoring this type of wisdom.

Friendship & Neighbors

August 21

Jesus taught us to love God and love neighbor. Proverb offers specific instructions on how we treat our friends and neighbors. Did you know that there is basically only one word for both friend and neighbor in the Hebrew Bible? Friendship might not feel like an incredibly deep biblical topic, but these close relationships are incredibly powerful and useful.

Key Texts:

Friendship/Neighbors (3:27–31; 6:1–5; 11:9, 12; 14:20; 16:29; 17:9, 17, 18; 18:17, 24; 19:4, 6, 7; 20:6; 21:10; 22:11; 23:10–11; 24:28–29; 25:8, 9–10, 17, 18; 26:18–19; 27:9–10, 14, 17)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Make a list of great sets of friends in the Bible. What made them so special?
3. Identify 3 big lessons about friendship from the Proverbs you read this week:

Planning for the Future

August 28

Niels Bohr said, “It is very hard to predict, especially the future.” That’s why wisdom is so important. Since I don’t know what will happen tomorrow with any certainty, what choices can I make today that are the best? God’s people live both with the understanding that the details of tomorrow are unknown (life is a vapor, after all), but the God of tomorrow is certain. This week’s Proverbs help us live skillfully in our daily unknowns.

Key Texts:

Guidance/Planning/Looking to the Future (1:5; 6:18; 11:14; 12:5, 20; 14:22; 15:22, 26; 16:1, 2, 3, 9, 33; 19:21; 20:18, 24; 21:5; 24:6, 27; 27:1; 29:18; 31:25, 27)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. When was a time that planning and preparing made a big difference for your life?
3. What is the difference between wise planning and foolish planning?

Illness, Health, and the Psyche September 4

“Proverbs shows an uncanny sensitivity to the working of the human heart and in particular to how one’s emotions affect one’s mental, spiritual, and even bodily existence” according to Hebrew scholar Tremper Longman. It makes sense that the Bible “gets us.” It was written by the one who “made us.” These proverbs will cause us to think about how our minds, bodies, and spirits respond to what happens to them.

Key Texts:

Illness and Health (3:7–8; 12:4; 13:12; 14:30; 15:30; 16:24; 17:22; 18:14)

Psychological Insight (12:25; 13:12; 14:10, 13, 30; 15:4, 13, 30; 17:22; 25:20; 27:19; 28:17)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Which part of your health are you most used to hearing scripture speak to: spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational?
3. Which area is the most neglected?
4. From the Proverbs, select one key lesson for each area of our lives:

Kings and Authority

September 11

You noticed today's date and today's topic. Where were you when the world stopped turning that September day?

The Bible calls us to pray for our government and participate in specific ways (service, taxes, etc.) It's true that the Bible doesn't belong to the Democrats or the Republicans, and throughout history politicians have tried to use the Bible to convince voters of their piety, the Bible certainly still has plenty of political things to say.

Key Texts:

Kings/Authority (8:15–16; 14:28, 35; 16:10, 12, 13, 14, 15; 17:7; 19:12; 20:2, 8, 26, 28; 21:1; 22:11; 23:1–3; 24:21–22; 25:2–3, 4–5, 6–7; 27:18; 28:2, 15, 16; 29:4, 12, 14, 26; 30:21–23; 31:1–9)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. A president isn't exactly the same thing as a king. Are there any of the proverbs that you would apply slightly differently to a king, a congressman, or a mayor?
3. Which Proverbs are most consistently neglected in our political arena?
4. How can you and I contribute towards making our political world less corrupt and the discourse less divisive?

Workin' 9 to 5

September 18

Have you ever heard the term “Protestant Work Ethic?” God’s people work both hard and smart. Jesus washed feet, so none of Mike Rowe’s Dirty Jobs are below us. This week we talk about hard work and wealth.

Key Texts:

Laziness and Hard Work (6:6–11; 10:4, 5, 26; 12:11, 24, 27; 13:4; 14:23; 15:19; 18:9; 19:15, 24; 20:4, 13; 21:25; 22:13, 29; 24:30–34; 26:13–16; 27:23–27; 28:19; 31:27)

Wealth and Poverty (3:9–10; 6:1–5; 8:18–19; 10:2, 3, 4, 15, 16; 11:4, 7, 15, 24, 28; 12:9; 13:7, 8, 11, 22, 23, 25; 14:20, 21, 24, 31; 15:15, 16, 17; 16:8, 19; 17:1, 5, 18; 18:11, 23; 19:4, 7, 10, 14, 17, 22; 20:17, 21; 21:6, 17, 20; 22:2, 4, 7, 9, 13, 16, 22–23; 23:4–5; 24:3–4; 27:13, 23–27; 28:3, 6, 8, 11, 16, 20, 25, 27; 29:3, 7, 13, 14; 30:7–9)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. Select one proverb that stood out to you. Why did you choose that proverb this week?
3. What stereotypes do people have about the poor that aren’t necessarily true?
4. What stereotypes do people have about the wealthy that aren’t necessarily true?

Pride and Humility

September 25

This week's list of scriptures isn't terribly long, but they land terribly close to our hearts. Everyone knows the lines about pride and the fall. The real question is—will we learn from them?

Key Texts:

Pride/Humility (3:5, 7; 6:17; 11:2; 15:25, 33; 16:5, 18, 19; 18:12; 21:4, 24; 22:4; 25:6–7, 27; 26:12; 29:23; 30:1–4, 13)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. How do you learn to combat pride in your life?
3. Where do you find these sentiments echoed in the New Testament?
4. Who is someone you know that exemplifies humility? How can you become more like him or her?

Hearing is the first step in obeying God. Too often we have been in the presence of God's word, but we haven't really heard him. We haven't really listened. Every teacher has experienced this phenomenon. Students in the room are discussing a topic. One has an idea or a question, something he wants to share, so he raises his hand. As soon as that thought enters his mind, he doesn't hear anything else except what he wants to share. Sometimes, he even says the exact same thing someone says—but he wasn't listening. It's awfully easy for us to close our ears. This week, let's take a challenge to really listen.

Key Texts:

Openness to Listening to Advice (3:11–12; 9:7–9; 12:1, 15; 13:1, 10, 13–14, 18; 15:5, 10, 12, 31, 32, 33; 17:10; 18:2, 15; 19:25, 27; 21:11; 23:9; 24:5–6; 25:12; 26:11; 27:5–6, 22; 28:13, 23; 29:1, 9)

Speaking and Listening (6:16–19; 8:6–9, 12–14; 10:6, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31, 32; 11:11, 12, 13; 12:6, 13, 14, 25; 13:2, 5, 16; 14:3, 5, 25; 15:1, 2, 4, 7, 23, 28; 16:10, 13, 24; 17:4, 7, 20, 27, 28; 18:4, 6, 7, 8, 13, 20, 21; 19:5, 9; 20:19; 21:23; 22:11; 23:15–16; 24:7–9, 26; 25:10–11, 14, 24; 26:28; 27:14; 29:5, 20; 30:5–6, 10, 14; 31:26)

Positive Influence of the Righteous/Negative of the Wicked (11:11; 14:34; 16:29; 20:7; 25:4–5; 28:10, 12, 28; 29:2, 8, 16)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. When do you “check out” and quit listening?
3. Who is someone in scripture that didn't really listen? Who was someone who did?

Shame

October 9

Shame, and its cousin, embarrassment, may be our least favorite human emotion. People who are grieving are more afraid of perceived shame than they are of dealing with the grief they are fighting. Sometimes shame is earned. Shameful deeds should create shame, but like guilt trips, the enemy can weaponize shame to hurt us and hold us back.

Key Texts:

Shame (3:35; 6:32–33; 9:7; 11:2; 12:8; 13:18; 14:35; 18:3; 22:10; 25:8; 28:7; 29:15)

1. Rewrite one of these proverbs in your own words using a modern scenario.
2. What exactly is shame? How would you define it?
3. Who was ashamed in scripture?
4. Locate a New Testament passage that discusses the removal of shame.

