

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

PROVERBS 1-4

Four theologians went on a camping trip. It was just about time to get to sleep, when one of the theologians said to the others, “Before you close your eyes tonight, look up at the sky, and tell me what you see?”

The first theologian spoke up, “I see billions of stars stretched over millions of galaxies. Yet, of all the planets, only Earth can sustain life.”

The next theologian offered his perspective, “I see the massive expanse of space as evidence that God is infinite, and we are finite. We find our significance in His concern for us.”

Not to be outdone, the third theologian jumped in, “I see a night like former nights when my life was tortured with trouble. God was with me in the darkness, and the stars remind me of His faithfulness.”

Finally, the three men turned to the fellow who started the discussion, and asked, “What do you see?” He replied, “*Someone stole our tent!*”

It’s good to think high and holy thoughts, but there’s also a practical side to life. The Bible does address heady, philosophical subjects like the meaning of life – but it also gets down to earth.

It applies to issues like money, kids, marriage, work, wine, words, beauty – everything from occupation, to temptation, to conversation.

And nowhere does the Bible get more practical than

Proverbs.

I don't think it's an accident that when the Bible was organized into chapters, Proverbs was arranged in 31 divisions. There's *one chapter for every day of the month*. If you took a chapter a day – and cycled through them 12 times a year – the benefits to your life would be incalculable.

Billy Graham makes a comparison. “The Psalms teach us how to get along with God - the Proverbs how to get along with our fellow man.”

That may be an oversimplification, but it emphasizes the practical nature of the proverbs. Take heed and you'll live a better life.

CHAPTER ONE begins, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel...” 1Kings 4:32 tells us Solomon penned 3000 proverbs. About 25% or 700 of those proverbs are recorded in this book.

We're missing a few, but the ones we have pack a wealth of wisdom.

The author identifies himself, and in the next few verses his purpose...

Here's the goal of the proverbs, “To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple (or naïve), to the young man knowledge and discretion - a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel...”

Once, a business executive was asked the key to his success.

He said, *“Two words - good decisions.”* The interviewer asked, *“Well, how does a person learn to make good decisions?”* He answered, *“One word, experience.”* The reporter asked again, *“But how does a person gain experience?”* The executive replied, *“Two words, bad decisions.”*

It’s true, *“Experience is the best teacher.”* But there are two types of experience - your own experiences, or the experiences of others.

The fool has to make his own mistakes. Wisdom is willing to learn from others. As we’re told in verse 5, *“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel...”*

I like to call the proverbs, *“short statements based on long experience.”*

Why attend classes in the school of hard knocks when you can learn from its graduates? Why learn the hard way? *Be wise, not otherwise!*

Solomon continues defining his purpose in verse 6, *“to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles.”* Some of the proverbs are *“enigmas or riddles.”* They’re tricky, or difficult to grasp.

This was true of many of Jesus’ parables. They were slippery enough to slide past the casual listener. It took seriousness, and a certain amount of discernment to grasp their real meaning. This is also true of the proverbs.

God makes the Gospel accessible to everyone. It's straightforward and simple. But not all the diamonds are just lying on the ground – more often than not you've got to dig for them. Wisdom is for those who will dig.

Verse 7, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...”

Here's the theme verse for Proverbs. It's somewhat repeated in 9:10, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Put them together - and the beginning of knowledge and wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

Often “the fear of the Lord” is defined as *a reverence* as opposed to *a terror*. The argument goes... Respect God, but don't be terrified of Him.

I don't agree... Yes, I believe God loves us, but He also loves justice, and righteousness – and your unbelief can force a loving God to judge your soul and throw it alive into the flames of hell forever.

God loved His only Son, but He still sentenced Jesus to an excruciating torture and a hideous death. Jesus was judged not for His own sin, but for the sins of the world – *yet God still judged Jesus*. And if a loving God is willing to judge His only Son why do you think He would have any qualms judging people who mock or reject Jesus?

I relish God's love. But I'm absolutely terrified of God as well. He means business. Jesus, who depicted God as a loving father running down the path at the first sight of his prodigal son returning home, also said in Matthew 10, “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather

fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”

Here’s how I define “**the fear of the Lord**” – it’s an assumption toward all of life that God knows better than I do, how I should live, and I have an obligation as His creation to seek His will and walk in His ways.

God makes known His will to me because He loves me. But He’s not to be played with, or trivialized, or taken for granted – thus, I fear Him.

Notice, the second half of verse 7, “**But fools despise wisdom and instruction.**” You’re a fool if you hear of God’s will - mull it over – then conclude you know better than an infinite God how you should live...

Did you hear of the guy who had a flat tire next to the insane asylum?

As he changed his tire a patient stood behind a chain-linked fence and watched. The guy took off the lug nuts and put them inside a hubcap.

But when he went to screw the lug nuts onto the spare he hit the hubcap, and the lug nuts rolled off and rolled down a sewer drain.

He didn’t know what to do. He stood there scratching his head, when suddenly the mental patient piped up, “**Just take one lug nut off each of your other wheels. You’ll have enough to secure your spare tire.**”

The guy was amazed. “*Wow, you’re pretty smart, what are doing in an insane asylum?*” The patient replied, “*I may be crazy, but I’m not stupid!*”

Here's the point, the person who refuses to fear God, and take heed to wisdom, is both crazy and stupid. The Proverbs calls him a fool.

Verse 8 **“My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck.”**

Wisdom is like bling! It's cool and hip. You shine and sparkle if you are a wise child who takes heed to his parents.

In the book of Proverbs King Solomon is passing down wisdom to his son. In fact, 23 times Solomon addresses his words to **“my son.”**

Solomon wants his son to learn some lessons the easy way...

Proverbs always reminds me of a reoccurring scene from the Beverly Hillbillies sitcom. Every time Jethro Bodine would pull a boneheaded stunt, Uncle Jed would scratch his head and mutter to himself, **“One of these days I've got to have a lllloooooonng talk with that boy.”**

In essence, Proverbs is Solomon's long talk with his Jethro.

Solomon warns his son not to forsake the biblical instruction his parents have ingrained in him – for there'll be people who'll try to lead him astray.

Verse 10, **“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent...”**

Peer pressure is nothing new. It's not enough for some folks to wreck their own lives. They want other people to follow in their foolishness. The guy who walks off the cliff finds comfort in the fact others will join him.

Through Proverbs Solomon wants to give his son the inner anchors to say “no” to sin’s enticement. He wants to build into his son a healthy independence where he can stand against the current of this world.

I read of a study done by a team of psychologists headed up by Dr. Ruth Berenda. Ten teenagers were shown three straight lines of varying lengths drawn on a board. They were asked to choose the longest line.

Unbeknownst to one of the teenagers, the other nine were told in advance to pick line two, even though it was not the longest.

In 75% of the cases the tenth teenager buckled under to the pressure, and ended up agreeing with the majority. Often the teen had a confused look on his face. He wasn’t stupid, but his desire to fit in overwhelmed his commitment to the truth - the teen feel victim to peer pressure.

Actually, we’re all prone to peer-pressure. We’re tempted to let popular opinion override what’s right. **“When sinners entice, do not consent...”**

“If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause...” These guys are predators.

“Let us swallow them alive like Sheol (or death), and whole, like those who go down to the Pit; we shall find all kinds of precious possessions, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse...” It sounds like Solomon’s kid is being recruited by a gang.

He says **“My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep**

your foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood.

“Surely, in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird...” A bird is too smart to fly into what he knows is a trap. When he sees a trap he flees.

Teach your kids to be birdbrains – to spot traps and avoid them.

Verse 18 “But they lie in wait for their own blood, they lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who is greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its owners. Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares.” Please son, heed wisdom!

It's said, “The man with horse sense won't trot with the crowd.”

Beginning in verse 20 Solomon personifies wisdom. Obviously, wisdom is a nonhuman entity, but Solomon speaks of it as if wisdom is a lady...

“She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: "How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge.” God offers wisdom to those who desire wisdom.

But Solomon bemoans the fact there are so few takers.

“Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one

regarded, because you disdained all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke."

Wisdom is not available forever. Grasp it while it can be found!

"Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and will be secure, without fear of evil."

Wisdom is preventative! Turn away from the truth – be a fool – and you're dead meat. Often people seek wisdom to get out of trouble.

But the point of wisdom is to prevent the damage in the first place. It's said, "What a fool does in the end the wise man does in the beginning."

CHAPTER TWO, "My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the

LORD, and find the knowledge of God.” Hey, you don’t just bump into wisdom.

To know wisdom you have to search for it like buried treasure. You have to desire it with all your heart. I love the quote from the French philosopher Blaise Pascal, “**Man's wisdom must be understood to be loved. But God's wisdom must be loved to be understood.**”

To get God’s wisdom “**incline your ear**” and “**apply your heart.**”

Verse 6 “**For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding...**” God doesn’t hoard wisdom. He gives wisdom.

James 1:5 tells us, “**If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.**”

“**He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints.**” Notice, the Lord is a body guard... Whenever you see the President he’s surrounded with black-suited Secret Service agents.

If we could see you spiritually we’d see you surrounded. The Holy Spirit guards you... angels are camped around you... wisdom guards you...

“**Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way**

of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths...”

Wisdom is our bodyguard, and Solomon foresees two dangerous enemies, out to destroy us, from which we need to be protected.

One is a man – the other is a woman. Verse 12 identifies, “the man who speaks perverse things...” Verse 16 gives us a description of the woman...

“To deliver you from the immoral woman...” Here are the young man’s enemies - the *perverse man* and the *immoral woman*. The early chapters of Proverbs are a drama. Three characters vie for the son’s allegiance – the *perverse man*, the *immoral woman*, and *Lady Wisdom*.

Solomon hopes his son embraces wisdom. It alone will save him “from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.” Men, there’s a loose lady on the loose. She’s in a boring marriage. She’s tired of her husband.

She’s a spoiled brat - use to having it all - and just to spice up her life, and reinforce her vanity, she’s out looking for a sexual conquest.

She doesn’t care if she ruins lives, and destroys a family. She doesn’t even care if her husband finds out. She’s bitter toward him anyway. She’s on the prowl. She could care less about her commitments to God or man.

You'll find her by the water cooler at work – or she might attend church. She's always willing to stay late. She pretends to be your friend.

She flatters you with lies, and strokes your ego. She says the things your wife uses to say. In subtle ways she lets you know the possibility is there if you want it. Slowly, but deliberately, she sucks you in.

This woman has probably brought down other men, and now her sights are set on you... This is why you desperately need wisdom!

Verse 18 should strike fear in your heart! **“For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life...”** Take the bait and succumb, it will ruin your life.

Don't say, **"Aw, who'll find out, one time won't hurt!"** Don't be gullible!

Go to bed with her and something inside of you dies – *self-respect and integrity*. Something dies in your marriage - *trust is broken*. Perhaps with lots of time and hard work it can be repaired, but it's tarnished forever.

Listen to this letter sent to “Dear Ann.” Hear one woman's pain...

Dear Ann Landers: My husband and I have been married for 30 years. I was a virgin bride and have been a faithful wife. A young woman (our daughter's age) came on to him and he took her to bed. He was so guilt-ridden and miserable that he told me about it the next day.

I forgave him, did not mention it to a soul and he never saw her again.

He believes no harm was done. She thinks no harm was done, but she destroyed me. I am unable to grow old gracefully. I hate every wrinkle and every gray hair. I feel that I will never be able to be as sexually satisfying...

We still have an active sex life, but I always feel that he is comparing me with her, and my 54 year-old body is coming in a very poor second.

I cry for hours when I am alone. No one suspects a thing. We now go out with friends and often get told what a super marriage we have. I feel like a fraud. These women should not be allowed to think they're hurting no one. The damage that trollop did in one night was irreparable."

And of course, it's not just the immoral woman that's a danger. There are also many immoral men that you ladies need to guard against.

He comes on so tender and conscientious – *if only your husband was as sensitive...* His goal is to exploit your hurt, and get you to bed. And once you're a notch on his belt he lacks time for you anymore.

Few people wake up and say, "*I'm going to commit adultery today...*" but it happens. It even happens to many Christians. Be on guard...

Margaret Hess gives this advice, "Draw boundaries in relationships with the opposite sex. A psychologist says he avoids scheduling a woman for his last appointment. A minister keeps a counselee on the other side of a desk and

the drapes open. A doctor calls a nurse into the room when he must examine a woman patient. A boss and secretary can avoid going to dinner as a twosome or working evenings alone. A homemaker can avoid tempting situations with neighbors when her husband is out of town.”

I have female acquaintances that I like and respect, but I have only one friend who’s a female – that’s my wife. Don’t set yourself up for trouble.

Verse 20 “...So you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it.”

If you don’t want to be “cut off” or “uprooted” apply wisdom. Solomon will have more to say about the loose lady in chapters 5-7.

CHAPTER THREE begins, “My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands; for length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.” Apply wisdom and you’ll live better and longer.

“Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem in the sight of God and man.” Some folks overlook truth to show mercy. Others ignore mercy in pursuit of truth. The person who manages to give proper honor to both mercy and truth is the person we look up to and esteem.

Verse 5, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not

on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” Here’s a favorite verse for many people.

If we surveyed the prayers of most Christians, their top rated request would probably be to know God’s will. *“Lord, direct my steps.”*

Here God promises to answer that prayer if we meet three conditions...

Step up and trust God with all your heart. **Step back** and question the accuracy of your own perspective. Even a Christian won’t always be right. Then **step out** and acknowledge or apply God’s Word to your life.

Step up... step back... step out... and He’ll direct your paths.

Verse 5-6 deal with **direction**, but the enemy of direction is **deception**.

That’s what he addresses in verse 7, **“Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and depart from evil.”** It reminds me of the woman who married **Mr. Right**, but she didn’t check his first name. It was **“Always.”**

I don’t care who you are – you’re not always right. None of us are mistake-proof. Fear God, admit our fallibility, and avoid deception.

“It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones. Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.” Desire God’s **direction**. Avoid self-**deception**.

And there'll be a genuine, tangible **dedication**. You'll give to God...

In fact, the first sign of self-deception is a person holding out financially. Don't say you belong to God if you can't cut a check and give a tithe.

“**Tithe**” means “**tenth**.” God told Abraham, the father of our faith, to honor Him with the firstfruits – or first 10% of the spoils. This was long before the Law. Abraham was father of our faith, and if we want to be people of faith we need to follow in His footsteps and tithe to God.

And here Solomon promises his son, tithe to God and you're barns will be full and vats overflowing. It's simple, give to God and He'll give to you.

J Vernon McGee cut to the chase. He wrote, “**Genuine spirituality is not the length of the prayer you pray; it is the amount on the check you write.**”

Wisdom seeks **direction**, avoids **deception**, expresses **dedication**, and embraces **discipline**. Verse 11, “**My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor detest His correction; for whom the LORD loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.**”

I don't spank your kids, and you better not spank mine. Only a parent has the right to spank their kids. *And this is good news and bad news...*

Here's what you don't want to hear... if you're bucking and bailing and not really dealing with the issues, God will take you to the woodshed. He'll find ways to apply some pain until you see the danger you're ignoring.

But here's a silver lining... If God spans you it means He considers you His kid. Don't despise His discipline. He's not through with you.

Verses 13-18 list the **dividends** of wisdom. "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold.

She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her." Wisdom yields valuable dividends. You'll do better by seeking wisdom than investing in the stock market.

"Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her."

Once again Solomon personifies wisdom. Some scholars see Jesus in these next verses - Jesus is the repository of all wisdom and knowledge.

"The LORD by wisdom founded the earth (Jesus was involved in the original creation); by understanding He established the heavens; by His knowledge the depths were broken up, and clouds drop down the dew.

My son, let them not depart from your eyes - keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck.

"Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.

When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the LORD will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.” Here “sudden terrors” are Solomon’s concern for his son. Be wise when calamity strikes.

Wisdom brings deliverance. In a crisis, trust in God’s wisdom.

The chapter closes with a collection of don’ts...

“Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so.” Inaction - when you had the power to do someone good, and didn’t do it - is as much a sin as inflicting harm.

“Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when you have it with you.” If you’ve got it, go ahead and give it.

That doesn’t mean give it if you’ve got a bill in the mail that needs to be paid. But if you’ve got extra - and God says share it - then just do it!

“Do not devise evil against your neighbor, for he dwells by you for safety's sake.” You might need your neighbor one day.

“Do not strive with a man without cause, if he has done you no harm.” Don’t pick a fight. “Do not envy the oppressor, and choose none of his ways; for the perverse person is an abomination to the LORD, but His secret counsel is with the upright. The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.

Surely He scorns the scornful, but gives grace to the

humble. The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the legacy of fools.”

Chapter 3 teaches us that wisdom provides **direction**, avoids **deception**, expresses **dedication**, embraces **discipline**, enjoys **dividends**, brings **deliverance**, and emphasizes certain **don'ts**. Wisdom is “**D-bomb!**”

Walking in God's wisdom enriches our lives.

Once again CHAPTER FOUR begins with the heart of a father to his son, “**Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law.**”

When I was my father's son, tender and the only one in the **sight of my mother...**” Solomon was a mamma's boy. He was the second son of King David and Bathsheba, after their first son died as judgment for their sin.

Apparently, Bathsheba kept little Solomon close by for a long time.

Eventually he needed special encouragement from his father...

Verse 4 “**He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding!**”

Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Do not forsake her (meaning wisdom), and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.”

And Solomon took David's advice to heart. In 1Kings 3, God comes to Solomon with a blank check. Make a request and God will grant it.

Solomon answered wisely. He made wisdom **“the principal thing.”**

In return God answered him, **“Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies...I have also given you what you have not asked; both riches and honor...”** Solomon got wisdom, but he also got everything else he could've asked for, but didn't.

Here's the moral of the story for you and me, **“in all your getting, get understanding.”** Always remember **“wisdom is the principal thing.”**

“Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory she will deliver to you.” Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, and the years of your life will be many. I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, and when you run, you will not stumble. Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life.

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.” I hope you know we live in a big, bad world.

Solomon warns his son not to be naïve. There are evil folks who refuse to call it day until they sin and cause someone else to sin! They're not content to sin themselves - they target other people to drag down.

“For they eat the bread of wickedness, and drink the wine of violence.

But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.” It's bad enough to have problems, but the worse dilemma is to be ignorant to the cause of your own downfall.

“My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.”

Pay attention to verse 23. It's one of the key verses in Proverbs. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”

In Scripture **the heart is the seat of the desires**. And wisdom chooses its desires carefully. Desire often determines destiny. We worship our wants.

Desire money - and money will master you... Desire sex – and you'll be a slave to sex... Desire fame – and your life will go on an ego trip...

The issues of my life flow out of what I choose to harbor in my heart.

Obviously, there's nothing wrong with desiring what's good

and godly.

There's a place for desiring money, and sex, and influence – but it's all about managing what's in my heart. Solomon says, **“Keep your heart with all diligence”** - so the secondary desires don't become uppermost.

Our utmost passion should always be the pursuit of God.

Here's what Solomon makes clear in the Proverbs - the heart is the headwaters of my life. Therefore, if there's a problem downstream in my conversation, or relationships, or parenting, or finances, etc – you can trace it back to the heart. The stream is poisoned at the source.

My root problem isn't my circumstances it's what's in my heart.

Here's how God sees us... we're squeeze bottles.

Your heart is the inside of the bottle. So when the bottle gets squeezed it's not the squeeze that colors the contents. The squeeze only reveals what was put in the bottle earlier, and what's being held in the bottle.

Society blames sin on the squeeze. We're victims of the squeeze. We sin because we're under too much pressure - we're too stressed. That's not what Jesus said. Matthew 15:19, **“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness...”**

Proverbs agrees. We're not victims of external forces. The issues of life spring from the heart. Ultimately, what *comes out* is what we *put in*.

Verse 24, **“Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put**

perverse lips far from you.” And how?... **by monitoring the content of my heart.**

Jesus said in Matthew 12:34, “**Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**” The heart is like a well. The mouth is like a bucket. Pour out the bucket, and you’ll see what’s been sitting in the well.

Verse 25 “**Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you.**” Watch what you’re doing. Keep your eyes on the road of life.

“**Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; remove your foot from evil.**” It’s the slight deviation, the little compromise that sets us up for a major failure.

In 1983, when the Korean Airlines Flight 007 left Anchorage for Seoul, Korea no one noticed the navigational system had a 1½ degree error.

Even 100 miles outside of Anchorage the flaw was still not discernable.

But as the 747 past the Aleutians it started to stray off course. Before long it had penetrated Soviet air space. Russian Migs were scrambled, and the plane was shot down killing hundreds of innocent people.

This happens spiritually. A slight deviation in doctrine proves deadly. A compromise in conduct ends up fatal. Pay attention to the path. Refuse to turn to the right or left. Wisdom stays in the center of God’s will.