

PROVERBS THE PRACTICAL

Once four theologians went on a camping trip together. It was just about time to get some sleep, when one of the men said to the other three, "Guys, 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 piped in, "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." The third theologian concluded, "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 theologians turned to the guy who brought up the subject, and insisted, "Tell us what *you* see?" He answered, "*Someone stole our tent!*"

It's good to think high and holy thoughts,

but we also need to be practical. The Bible addresses heady, philosophical subjects like the meaning of life – but it also gets down to earth. It applies to everyday 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 in the book of Proverbs.

When the Bible was organized into chapters it's interesting to me that Proverbs was arranged in 31 divisions – *one chapter for every day of the month*. If you took a chapter every day and applied it to your life the benefits would be tremendous.

Billy Graham makes a comparison. He says, "The Psalms teach us how to get along with God. The Proverbs how to get along with our fellow man."

WHY WISDOM?

It's amazing the accumulation of knowledge we're experiencing today. Listen to these statistics... "Every 60 seconds 2000 typewritten pages are added to man's knowledge. The material produced every 24 hours would take one person 5 years to read." The modern world overflows with information. Data, data, data...

We're growing smarter by the second, *but are we growing wiser?*

Max Born was a friend of Albert Einstein, and himself a noted nuclear physicist. Just before he died he told German television, "I'd be happier if we had scientists with less brains and more wisdom." Wisdom is not just a vast memory. It's not a mastery of the facts and concepts. It's the discretion needed to use what I know beneficially. "Wisdom has to do with knowing what to do with what you know!"

Oh, how we need wisdom! In a December issue of it's magazine, *USA Weekend* asked a number of celebrities what they wanted for Christmas. Bill Moyers wished "for a sudden epidemic of common sense to break out among

the politicians, pundits, and talk show hosts who shape the national debate..."

This would happen if we applied ourselves to the wisdom of Proverbs.

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

He responded, "*Two words, good decisions*." The interviewer then asked, "How do I learn to make good decisions?" He answered, "*One word, experience*." "But how do I gain experience?" The executive said, "*Two words, bad decisions*."

Guys, there are 2 ways to learn in life. From your own experiences, or from the experiences of other people. The fool has to always make his own mistakes. The wise man learns from others. Why learn the hard way? *Be wise, not otherwise!*

It's been said, "A proverb is a short statement based on long experience." Why enroll in the school of hard knocks when you can learn from it's graduates?

JED AND JETHRO

In Proverbs Solomon wants to pass on wisdom to his son – 23 times he addresses his words to "*My son*".

According to 1 Kings 4:32, Solomon penned 3000 proverbs. Only 700, or about 25%, are recorded in this book. The ones we have are packed with a wealth of wisdom.

Proverbs reminds me of a scene from the Beverly Hillbillies. Every time Jethro Bodine pulled a boneheaded stunt, Uncle Jed would scratch his head and say to himself, "One of these days, I've got to have a llllooonnnng talk with that boy." In essence, Proverbs is King Solomon's long talk with his Jethro.

Bible Scan - Proverbs 1-12

A FEAR AND A FEAR NOT

The book begins with Solomon stating the purpose behind his proverbs. He wants to communicate wise counsel and discretion to the youth. Verse 7 states his thesis, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge..."

God wants us to fear Him... In Scripture when a person is confronted with God, initially they were terrified. Some people like to water this down. They'll say that to fear God is to respect Him or reverence Him. And that's a big part of fearing God! But when a person meets the awesome God they're literally shaking like a leaf!

Does "the fear of the LORD" mean a literal "fear"?... You bet it does! "Fear" means "fear". But God always counters that initial reaction with a message... "Fear not." Here's how I define "the fear of the LORD"... *"it's a fear with a fear not."*

The fear of God is like the respect a football player has for

his coach. When I played ball, I was literally afraid of my coach. He had the power to make my life miserable. He could run me - bench me. He decided if, when, and where I played. My football destiny was in his hands. Did I fear upsetting him? *You bet I did!*

But there was also a "Fear not", for I knew my coach wanted me to succeed. He had my best interests at heart. I feared him, but he was also my best friend. When it came to my coach's instructions, I took them seriously for two reasons: 1) I didn't want to risk making him mad, and 2) I knew they would help me get better.

My attitude toward my coach was a mixture of love and fear - and that's the attitude we need toward God. I follow the Lord because I *fear Him*, and I follow the Lord because He greets me with a "fear not".

It's a fear and a fear not.

Devotion Box - Peer Pressure

The rest of chapter 1 sounds the warning in verse 10, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent..." Bad stuff happens when you allow yourself to be influenced by the wrong people. The old saying is true, "Bad company corrupts good morals."

Here's another, "A person with horse sense doesn't trot with the pack."

A study was done by a team of psychologists headed by Dr. Ruth Berenda. Ten teenagers were shown 3 straight lines of varying lengths drawn on a board. They were asked to choose the longest line. Unbeknownst to one of the teens, the other 9 were told 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 teenager had a confused look on his face. He wasn't stupid, but his desire to fit in was stronger than his commitment to the truth.

We're all prone to peer pressure. We're tempted to let the popular opinion override what we know is right. Hey, "when sinners entice, do not consent."

Devotion Box - Little Compromises

An important passage is found in 4:25-27, "Let your eyes look straight ahead, and your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left..." It's the slight deviations, the little compromises, that often set us up for major failure.

In 1983 when Korean Airlines Flight 007 left Anchorage, Alaska for Seoul, Korea no one noticed that the navigational system contained a one-and-a-half degree error. Even 100 miles out the flaw was still not discernable.

But as the 747 continued past the Aleutians and over the Pacific Ocean it began to stray off course, and before long had penetrated Soviet air space. Russian MIGs were scrambled, and the plane was shot down killing hundreds of people.

The same can happen spiritually. A deviation in doctrine can prove deadly - a compromise in conduct can end up fatal. That's why we need to ponder our path, and not turn to the right or the left. Let's stay right in the center of God's will.

Devotion Box - Ants

Proverbs 6:6 teaches an important lesson, "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest." Be like an ant, not a slug. An ant is industrious, self-motivated, hard-working.

If you ate with us after church last week you noticed the ants were out in full force. They were storing hamburger crumbs for the winter, when they know we move our fellowships inside. I've been told ants are actually fond of orange drink!

Hey, the wise man is like an ant. He works while he can, so he'll have a surplus later. A wise man works hard, and stores for a rainy day. He plans for the future.

Devotion Box - The Stuff God Hates

Proverbs 6:16 tells us, "These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren." God is love, but there are seven things that love hates...

It hates a haughty strut. A man walking around with his nose in the air, like he's better than everyone else. You've seen this strut! God *hates* the *gait*, that says, "I'm great!" And sadly, some of the proudest looks I've seen were in church. God hates a deceptive tongue... hands splattered with innocent blood (*That includes the abortionist, and the abusive husband or parent*)... a conniving heart (*not those who stumble, but the plotters of evil*), feet that are attracted to trouble (*who go looking for it*), abusive lips (*you can abuse with your hands or your lips*)...

And worst of all, the sin God calls an "abomination"... Think of the sin God hates above all others. The most sinister of sins. Here it is in verse 19, "one who sows discord among brethren". I'm thinking a mass murderer, or a serial rapist. But in God's mind it's a church member who stirs up friction in the fellowship... The most diabolical sinner in the house is the person who always points out problems, nurses wounds, and aligns brother against brother, and sister against sister. God hates the person who rocks the boat, then blames it on the storm.

A LOOSE LADY ON THE LOOSE

In Proverbs 2:16 one of the benefits of wisdom is “To deliver you from the immoral woman...” And it’s a good thing, for there is a loose lady out there. She might even go to church. She’s in a boring marriage - tired of her husband. She’s a spoiled brat, used to having it all... and to spice up her life, and reinforce her vanity, she’s looking for a sexual conquest. She doesn’t care if she ruins your life, and destroys your family.

She’s on the prowl. This woman has brought down other men, and now her sights are set on you... Hey, this is why you desperately need wisdom! Solomon spends 3 chapters (5-7) protecting us from this loose lady...

Solomon warns in 5:3-4, “For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.” The word translated “wormwood” means “bitterness”. It referred to a poisonous herb the Jews used to keep moths out of their clothes. Solomon says kissing an immoral woman is like cuddling up to a box of mothballs.

Please understand the deception involved with illicit sex. There is an initial promise of pleasure... but in the end there’s deep, severe bitterness.

I read an article once from “New Woman” magazine. A lady made a heart-wrenching confession, “I am 35 years old and have only recently come to terms with the fact that my free attitude about sex has been destructive. After many lovers, three serious affairs with married men, two marriages, one abortion, and herpes, I wish someone had suggested that my casual attitude was wrong.”

The wise man learns from other people’s mistakes. The fool learns by trial and error. We’re told in verse 5, “Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell.” Beware, the wrong girl can lead you from *Hooters* to *hell* in no time.

Verse 8 is strategic, “Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house...” Always remember, *time plus opportunity equals trouble*. I don’t care if you’re Christians, and love the Lord. Get two young people alone in a dark room with time on their hands, and they’re headed for failure. Guys, *we can’t trust ourselves!* What’s made of clay can always crumble.

Hey, if you’re a young man dating a girl, I advocate kissing her as much as you like... *just as long as you do it in front of her mom and dad*. If you’re spending time with your date make sure it’s in public where there’s no opportunity. If you’re alone by yourselves where there is opportunity make sure you’re not there long. Guys, when you get the two together beware... *time plus opportunity equals trouble*.

Solomon says in verse 9, “lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one...” Sex outside marriage throws away personal dignity. Allow yourself to be used, or use someone else, and it shatters self-worth. Animals are motivated by impulse and pleasure. Humans are called to live by principle!

Verses 18-19 are written to the married man tempted with the offer of this seductress. “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving

deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.” Guys, the best defense is a good offence. A satisfying sex life with your spouse is a good deterrent to the temptress.

A movie star who appeared on a talk show was asked, “What makes a great lover?” His answer surprised the host, “A great lover is someone who can satisfy one woman all her life, and who can be satisfied by one woman all his life long. A great lover isn’t the guy who goes from woman to woman. Any dog can do that.” A great lover is content to explore the joys of sexual pleasure with his spouse.

Verses 24-25 of chapter 6 describe the loose lady’s ammunition. What she uses to trap the gullible young man. She has 3 tools: *flattery*, *figure*, *flirtations*.

Don’t fall for her ploys. They say before a snake eats you it coats you with its saliva. So it is with the sexual predator. They butter you up, just before they chew you up and spit you out. Verse 26 warns us, “For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.”

In verse 27 Solomon asks a question, “Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?”

In other words, play with fire and you’re eventually going to get burned. At that point, it’s no longer a matter of *if*, but *when*... It doesn’t matter how much you love the Lord... how strong a grip you’ve got on your emotions... *enough time plus enough opportunity equals trouble*. Under the right circumstances we all can buckle... beware!

In chapter 7 Solomon gives an example of a young man who makes all the mistakes... “I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night.”

Rather than take the long way home after work, he decides to walk right by the loose lady’s house. He’s an accident waiting to happen. Never underestimate the importance of logistics in the fight against sin. End up at the wrong place at the wrong time, and you give the devil an opportunity. I like the Danish proverb, “No one can be caught in a place he does not visit.” Even if it adds 15 minutes to his commute this man is better off going home another way.

Read verses 14-15, and you see how far this woman goes to trap this young man. She tosses out the trump card. She uses “*the religious rationale*”. Just this morning she offered God an offering. It must be His will they sleep together...

It always amazes me how sexual passion can tinker with theological conviction. Suddenly, people conclude the Bible doesn’t really mean what it says about sin. It’s open to interpretation. There’s a special case. God made an exception.

Hey, it’s not an *exception*, rather it’s a *deception*.

Look at the outcome. Verse 22, “Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter...” Verse 23, “He did not know it would cost his life.” Verse 27, “Her house is the way to hell...” Beware of sexual immorality. For a moment of pleasure it cost him his life. *Is it really worth the price?*

Bible Scan - Proverbs 1-12

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study, you can email Pastor Sandy: sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - October 1, 2000

10/2, 7:30 pm Ladies Night Out, "Just A Container or a Chosen Vessel?"; 10/31 Hallelujah Fest; New early service, Sunday mornings 8:15-9:15. Pastor Sandy's study is the same, but we sing hymns. Come and join us!

For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapel.org/stonemountain/biblescan.htm

Next Bible Scan - October 8 - Proverbs 13-31

"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." - Proverbs 3:5-6

Memory Verse

MISS WISDOM

In Proverbs 8 Solomon uses a poetic device called *personification*. He talks about wisdom as a woman. An "it" is called a "she". A nonhuman entity is given human characteristics. It's all to draw a contrast between wisdom and the loose lady. Both are after the young man's attention - both want his devotion.

Guys, here's the real beauty! Here's the girl of your dreams! Here's the catch of all catches! Here's the rose among thorns! Feast your eyes on... that gorgeous... *Miss Wisdom*! Notice what Solomon says of her in verse 11, "For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her."

What would you say if I told you I could fix you up with *Miss Wisdom*? Tonight, you can meet her... From verse 12-36 she introduces herself... She's attractive. She's rich. She's trustworthy. She says in verse 17, "I love those who love me..."

In chapter 9 she even has her own house. A marriage banquet has been prepared... in verse 4 she offers herself to you, "Whoever is simple (or foolish), let him turn in here!"

Guys, come and wed yourself to wisdom!

BUYING ECHOES

Chapter 9:8 is an interesting proverb, "Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you." A fool thinks he knows it all. He's unteachable. Try to inform him, and he'll resent your efforts. But a wise man is just the opposite. He's humble. Point out a mistake, and he'll take it to heart. He'll even thank you.

Once a golf pro was giving a lesson, but every time he made a suggestion the student had a better approach. The pro would just agree and move on. When the lesson was over he charged \$75. A bystander couldn't believe it. He asked the pro how could he take the money when he didn't teach the man anything.

The pro answered, "I learned a long time ago that it's a waste of time to sell answers to a man who wants to buy echoes." That's the point of this proverb.

It was Earl Weaver, long time manager of the Baltimore Orioles, who said, "It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." Don't you be a know-it-all!

Devotion Box - Proverbs To Ponder

Proverbs 10:19 tells us, "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise." I've discovered if I talk long enough, I'll say something I shouldn't say. *Thinking out loud* has caused me more trouble than any other mistake I've made.

Guys, limit how long your mouth is open, and you'll have fewer opportunities to stick your foot in it! The Greek philosopher Plato said, "Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools talk because they have to say something."

Proverbs 11:30 is especially applicable to followers of Jesus, "he who wins souls is wise." Hey, this is why we're taking up space. The reason we're still on earth is to win souls. When was the last time you prayed with a person to receive Jesus?

Every teenager needs to pay close attention to Proverbs 12:26, "The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked

leads them astray." If peer pressure is a reality, make sure you set yourself for some positive peer pressure. Get with the right people, and their example will help you be the right person.

Proverbs 12:27 starts with a hilarious picture, then teaches a serious lesson. "The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting..." He's got food. His fridge is full. He's just too lazy to get up and cook. The verse ends, "But diligence is man's precious possession."

The word "*diligence*" conjures up the idea of a logger chopping a tree over and over along the same cut until finally the tree falls. Even though it's boring - even though it's mundane - he keeps laying the ax to the same spot over and over.

That's how it is to get up and go to work every morning. It's like chopping the same spot on the tree. It's not always thrills and chills. At times it's boring. At times you'd rather sleep in... "but diligence is man's precious possession."