

PROVERBS 2

Proverbs is God's advice on real-life-stuff made available in writing.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it. — Proverbs 2 (ESV)

PROVERBS 5

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it. — Proverbs 5

Sexual sin is destructive. While it presents an image of joy, life, and pleasure, it actually brings bitterness, darkness, death and wandering.

God's wisdom is simple:

1. Draw the line sooner (v 8).
 2. Enjoy sex within God's boundaries (v 15).
 3. Healing is possible!
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1. Why are there so many verses (4-6, 9-14, 21-22) that describe the destruction of sexual immorality? Is anyone willing to share a personal story of their experience with the destruction that sexual immorality can bring?

PROVERBS 16:1-16

The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the spirit. Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established. The LORD has made everything for its purpose, even the wicked for the day of trouble. Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished. By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil. When a man's ways please the LORD, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice. The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps. An oracle is on the lips of a king; his mouth does not sin in judgment. A just balance and scales are the LORD's; all the weights in the bag are his work. It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of a king, and he loves him who speaks what is right. A king's wrath is a messenger of death, and a wise man will appease it. In the light of a king's face there is life, and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain. How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver. — Proverbs 16:1-16

The human instinct that fuels the worlds' dysfunction is that we passionately follow our heart and feel right about it. God provides for us now until his plan resolves this. He is working a plan that will solve it and clean up the mess.

1. God's interim plan gives us:
 - a. ability to harmonize our hearts with God's and so be established by him in the very things we were made for.
 - b. parents, wisdom, law, kings and kingdoms to rule.
2. God's solution is a person, a king who will change our hearts. When Jesus is King of the earth:
 - a. he will continually speak to humans the very words of God and render judgments that are irrefutably just.
 - b. evil will be loathsome in his kingdom, from the top down. So his kingdom will never end.
 - c. his officials will speak justly and accurately.
 - d. any who speak otherwise will be justly and duly corrected.
 - e. his wisdom will bring unprecendated blessing to all.

1. Verses 1-2 relate to the prime problem of humanity AND a devious “skill” we have that makes it worse! What is the problem verse one says we have? AND, How have you seen the devious “skill” of verse 2 ruin people?
2. Verse 3 seems confusing. It jumps past our heart issues and says to “commit your works to the Lord.” Why does this prove to be perfect advice? How does one go about committing their works to the Lord? How do you get answers from Him?
3. Verse 5 talks about those who are “arrogant in heart.” What do you think of when you hear that phrase? What have you learned the warning signs are in your life that you are becoming arrogant in heart?
4. Verse 9 is important in terms of managing our “heart troubles” and our life-decisions. What is the hope that this verse gives us? What is your greatest challenge in discerning the direction the Lord wants you to take in a matter?
5. Read verse 10. An “oracle” is a statement made that aligns perfectly with the heart of God in a matter. God has given this potential to those who rule, to speak His wisdom. Why then have rulers historically been so abusive and self-centered? What makes so many of them devoid of any concern for God? How does God deal with them?

4. Verse two is easy to understand, but let's put it into practice: To whom can you practice more listening and understanding rather than simply forming or expressing your opinion?

5. Take some time and pray about the current conflicts going on in your family, groups and work.

PROVERBS 30:1-9

The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle. The man declares, I am weary, O God; I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One. Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name? Surely you know! Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. Two things I ask of you; deny them not to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. — Proverbs 30:1-9

Big Idea: The pursuit of wisdom leads us to humility and a desire for God's rule in our lives.

1. Often times we think weariness is a sign that we are doing something wrong. Why does Agur say he is weary? Why would we want to hear wisdom from a man who declares he is weary? Is it possible to be weary and yet still wise at the same time?
2. Verses 5-6 are great statements about God's words. If this truly expresses our convictions about God and his word, what are some very practical things we should do in light of it?
3. Verses 8-9 help us have perspective on all the stuff we have. Let's make sure to practice generosity this week. What has God given you that needs to be given away to help keep you from denying the Lord?

4. Are you willing to pray for the Lord to remove falsehood and lying from your life? If you did, what falsehood would he want to remove from your life?

PROVERBS 3:1-12

My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you. Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man. Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment o your bones. Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights. — Proverbs 3:1-12

As you engage a relationship with God, he will deliver you from evil.

- Trust in the Lord (vs 5-6)
- Fear the Lord (vs 7-8)
- Honor the Lord (vs 9-10)
- Do not despise the Lord (vs 11-12)

1. What is a specific circumstance in your life that God is using to build your trust in him?

2. What do you think the term “firstfruits” (verse 9) means in terms of 21st century American culture?

3. How is God's voice of discipline different than your voice of discipline?

4. Why is it so hard to accept that God loves us in the midst of discipline? How can we help each other to have this perspective?