

# WISDOM FROM PROVERBS

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*



*Notes for your edification*

*By*

*Geoffrey Bull*

Copyright © 2011 Geoffrey Bull

All rights reserved.

Permission is granted for a copy to be made for personal use, but for any other purpose no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

PO Box 549 Cowaramup

Western Australia 6284

[geoffrey@geoffreybull.com](mailto:geoffrey@geoffreybull.com)

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are taken from the *NASB – New American Standard Bible*, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

*MSG* – Scripture quotations marked (*MSG*) are taken from *THE MESSAGE: The Bible in Contemporary Language* by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

*NLT* – Scripture quotations marked (*NLT*) are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

*AMPL* – Scripture quotations marked (*AMPL*) are taken from the *Amplified Bible*, copyright ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49506. All rights reserved.

*NKJV* – Scripture quotations marked (*NKJV*) are taken from the *New King James Version*, copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

*KJV* – Scripture quotations marked (*KJV*) are taken from the Holy Bible, *King James Version*.

## Course Outline

*"Prudence through Precept"*

### The purpose of the book of Proverbs

... is to provide instruction in the source and principles of wisdom

### Goal or purpose of the course

To help us ...

... to understand that wisdom is not a human achievement, it is a gift from God

... to know, revere and obey Him who is the Source of Wisdom

... to learn wisdom's practical guidelines for daily living

... to learn to walk in wisdom in everyday life, no matter what we face

... to raise a standard that provides an example to others of "wisdom's better way"

### Proverbs 1:2–7 ... the writer provides a summary or synopsis of the book of Proverbs

<sup>2</sup>*To know wisdom and instruction,  
To discern the sayings of understanding,*  
<sup>3</sup>*To receive instruction in wise behavior,  
Righteousness, justice and equity;*  
<sup>4</sup>*To give prudence to the naive,  
To the youth knowledge and discretion,*  
<sup>5</sup>*A wise man will hear and increase in learning,  
And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,*  
<sup>6</sup>*To understand a proverb and a figure,  
The words of the wise and their riddles.*  
<sup>7</sup>*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;  
Fools despise wisdom and instruction*

### Key Verses:

#### 1 Corinthians 1:30

... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" ...*

#### Proverbs 9:10

... *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy one is understanding" ...*

## Wisdom from Proverbs

---

### CONTENTS

	Page
<b>Lesson 1</b>	<b>Introduction to Proverbs</b>
	<b>1</b>
<b>Lesson 2</b>	<b>Types of Proverbs</b>
	<b>8</b>
<b>Lesson 3</b>	<b>Foundational Principles for Navigating the Book of Proverbs</b>
	<b>15</b>
<b>Lesson 4</b>	<b>The Fear of the Lord</b>
	<b>28</b>
<b>Lesson 5</b>	<b>The Link between Reverence, Obedience and the Fear of the Lord</b>
	<b>34</b>
<b>Lesson 6</b>	<b>Wisdom – God’s Way</b>
	<b>44</b>
<b>Lesson 7</b>	<b>Themes in the Proverbs</b>
	<b>59</b>
<b>Lesson 8</b>	<b>The Heart</b>
	<b>72</b>
<b>Lesson 9</b>	<b>Our Thoughts and our Words</b>
	<b>84</b>

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 1 – Introduction to Proverbs

This course is aimed at studying the precepts of the book of Proverbs in order to gain some practical guidelines for daily living – or wisdom for daily life. But before we dig into the riches of this book let us first find out a little about the Proverbs and about wisdom.

#### What is wisdom and where do we find it?

- Wisdom is not a human achievement; it is a gift from our heavenly Father (1 Cor 1:30),
- So, to start off with, we must begin with the foundation: the Source of Wisdom.

Job and Proverbs are considered to be the "Books of Wisdom".

#### **Job:**

So let us first see what Job has to say concerning the source of wisdom.

#### **Job 28:12-28**

<sup>12</sup>But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?

<sup>13</sup>Man does not know its value, nor is it found in the land of the living.

<sup>14</sup>The deep says, 'It is not in me'; and the sea says, 'It is not with me.'

<sup>15</sup>Pure gold cannot be given in exchange for it, nor can silver be weighed as its price.

<sup>16</sup>It cannot be valued in the gold of Ophir, in precious onyx, or sapphire.

<sup>17</sup>Gold or glass cannot equal it, nor can it be exchanged for articles of fine gold.

<sup>18</sup>Coral and crystal are not to be mentioned; and the acquisition of wisdom is above that of pearls.

<sup>19</sup>The topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal it, nor can it be valued in pure gold.

<sup>20</sup>Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding?

<sup>21</sup>Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the sky.

<sup>22</sup>Abaddon and Death say, 'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'

<sup>23</sup>God understands its way, and He knows its place.

<sup>24</sup>For He looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens.

<sup>25</sup>When He imparted weight to the wind and meted out the waters by measure,

<sup>26</sup>When He set a limit for the rain and a course for the thunderbolt,

<sup>27</sup>Then He saw it and declared it; he established it and also searched it out.

<sup>28</sup>And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.'

#### **Proverbs:**

Then let us see what Solomon says about wisdom. We start off with a part from his poem (Proverbs 8) about wisdom.

**Proverbs 8:22-31**

- <sup>22</sup> *The LORD formed me from the beginning, before He created anything else.*  
<sup>23</sup> *I was appointed in ages past, at the very first, before the earth began.*  
<sup>24</sup> *I was born before the oceans were created, before the springs bubbled forth their waters.*  
<sup>25</sup> *Before the mountains were formed, before the hills, I was born—*  
<sup>26</sup> *before He had made the earth and fields and the first handfuls of soil.*  
<sup>27</sup> *I was there when He established the heavens, when He drew the horizon on the oceans.*  
<sup>28</sup> *I was there when He set the clouds above, when He established springs deep in the earth.*  
<sup>29</sup> *I was there when He set the limits of the seas, so they would not spread beyond their boundaries.*  
*And when He marked off the earth's foundations,*  
<sup>30</sup> *I was the architect at His side. I was his constant delight, rejoicing always in His presence.*  
<sup>31</sup> *And how happy I was with the world He created; how I rejoiced with the human family!*

This part of the poem reflects on Wisdom's role from the beginning. This is figurative language and Wisdom is not a separate personal identity, but rather, the Woman Wisdom is a personification of God's attribute of wisdom. In this part of the poem Solomon makes the point that God created the cosmos by virtue of His age-old wisdom. It affirms that God's wisdom preceded everything in creation. Wisdom was the "architect" (v 30) through which the world came to be.

**Proverbs 9:10**

... *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" ...*

***The Gospels:***

In Luke 2:40 Luke says that Jesus as a young boy grew physically with "*wisdom beyond his years*". He then follows this with the story of young Jesus going to Jerusalem for the Passover feast, where he speaks about Jesus as a boy having discussions in the temple with the teachers where ... "*all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers*" ... (Luke 2:47). Here is a young boy who reflects God's wisdom.

When Jesus began His ministry the people recognised Him as a man with great wisdom. Mark 1:21, 22 ... "*he entered the synagogue and began to teach. And they were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching as one having authority, and not as the scribes*". Again in Mark 6:2 in His home town ... "*He began to teach in the synagogue; and many listeners were astonished, saying, 'where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him' ...?*"

Jesus knew He was the personification of Wisdom and condemned those who rejected His wisdom, as shown by His statement in Luke 11:31 ... "*The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here*".

Any doubt of this is eradicated when we see that Jesus claims His behaviour represents the behaviour of the Woman Wisdom in Matt 11:18, 19 ... "*For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He*

*has a demon!' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds".*

### **The Epistles:**

Let us hear what Paul says concerning wisdom. He asserts that Jesus is not only wise, but that He is the very incarnation of God's wisdom.

**1 Corinthians 1:30** ... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" ...*

**Colossians 2:3** ... *"Christ ... In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge".*

So with these statements (and there are many more) about Jesus being God's wisdom, it is clear that the New Testament writers associate Jesus with the Woman Wisdom presented in the Proverbs 8 poem.

Also, we see a parallel to Proverbs 8 in **Col 1:15-17** ... *"Christ is the visible image of the invisible God. He existed before anything was created and is supreme over all creation, for through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can't see— such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through him and for him. He existed before anything else, and he holds all creation together."*

Finally, look at the similarity in the passages of **Proverbs 8:22-31** and **Col 1:15-17** with that of **John 1:1-3, 10** which says ... *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. ... the world was made through Him".*

The message is clear; the Woman Wisdom is a metaphorical representation of Jesus, who is the Wisdom of God. The association of Jesus and the Woman Wisdom is a powerful way of saying that Jesus is the embodiment of God's wisdom.

So, we can sum this all up by saying, to find wisdom we need to seek God and His Word. Christ and the Word are one, and in Him is wisdom. Seek Him, know Him, honour and revere Him and His word and wisdom will be yours in abundance.

### **The Proverbs**

The book of Proverbs is full of proverbs! Or wise sayings. But what is a proverb?

Dr Arthur T. Pierson clearly defines a proverb as follows:

*"A proverb is a wise saying in which few words are chosen instead of many, with a design to condense wisdom into a brief form both to aid memory and to stimulate study. Hence, proverbs are not only "wise sayings" but "dark sayings" – parables – in which wisdom is disguised in a figurative or enigmatic form like a deep well, from which instruction is to be drawn, or a rich*

---

## Wisdom from Proverbs

---

mine, from which it is to be dug. Only profound meditation will reveal what is hidden in these moral and spiritual maxims”.

Unger’s Bible Dictionary says, the word ‘Proverb’ itself means “a sententious brief saying setting forth practical wisdom”. (Sententious means “abounding in pithy sentences, axioms, or maxims; terse, brief and energetic”).

Basically, a proverb is a two line poem consisting of a brief saying in which a whole thought or teaching is condensed.

Proverb: If we study the root word for “proverb” in the Hebrew (משל) we find the following meanings:

“Parallel”, “similar”, “to rule or govern”, “rule by command”, “determine role or character”, “instructing behavior”, “to be like”, “to be comparable to”, “rule”, or “standard”. It can also mean, “a description by way of comparison”.

Keep that all in mind while we have a look at what is hidden in the meaning of the word “wisdom”.

Wisdom: There are a number of different words in the Hebrew that are translated into the English word “wisdom”, but the most predominant one (from the Hebrew root חכם) has the following meanings:

“accumulate knowledge”, “learning”, “absorbing Knowledge”, “to make wise”, and by implication “to pound in”.

So if we put all of this together, we understand that the Proverbs are full of wise sayings (rules or standards that are character forming) which, if they are absorbed, accumulated or are pounded into you, will cause you to walk or act with wisdom.

Example: A young plant (a tree) that you want to grow up tall and straight needs to be tied to a stake that is placed firmly in the ground next to it. The stake is a “rule” or “standard” that is “parallel” to the plant and “pounded in” next to the plant, so that it gives support and direction to the plant until it is “mature” and can stand tall and straight on its own.

A wonderful example of this in Proverbs is found in Proverbs 22:6, which says:

*... “Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it”.*

If you want to “pound in” or “to absorb” the wisdom contained in the Proverbs, a really good habit is to read one proverb each day. There are 31 proverbs, one for each day of the month. If you do this over and over, the “stake”, “rule”, or “standard” of God’s word will eventually bring you to a point where His wisdom flows out of you in your every word and action.

*... “Heed instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at my doorposts. For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD”. (Prov8:33-35)*



### Who wrote the Proverbs?

The majority of the Proverbs were written by King Solomon, with parts copied out by Hezekiah's scribes, evidently from an old collection of Solomon's sayings, but also a few parts towards the end of the book are written by Agur (30:1-33) and King Lemuel (31:1-9).

An outline (from Unger's Bible Dictionary) showing the various authors is as follows:

- |  |               |
|--|---------------|
| 1. Solomon's Proverbs                                | 1:1 – 9:18    |
| 2. Solomon's Various Sayings                         | 10:1 – 22:16  |
| 3. The Words of the Wise                             | 22:17 – 24:34 |
| 4. Solomon's Proverbs Set Down by Hezekiah's Scribes | 25:1 – 29:27  |
| 5. Agur's Words                                      | 30:1-33       |
| 6. Lemuel's Words                                    | 31:1-9        |
| 7. The Acrostic Poem of the Virtuous Wife            | 31:10-31      |

It is generally agreed that this book, in its final and present form, comes from the period of Judaism, probably after the time of Ezra, when the wisdom schools were flourishing.

1 Kings 4:30 speaks of the WISDOM OF EGYPT. Egypt was a very advanced nation – scientific and structural feats were accomplished that still puzzle us today. For instance: methods of embalming mummies, methods of constructing massive pyramids, etc. All were feats of great wisdom.

Isa 47:1, 10 refers to the WISDOM OF BABYLON. Architectural and structural wisdom was great. i.e. The hanging gardens.

Jer 49:7 refers to the WISDOM OF EDOM. Recent excavations have uncovered ruins which show Edom to have been a vast and influential people.

But Solomon's wisdom was greater than all of these.

1 Kings 4:29-34. ... *"Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."*

### How did Solomon get his wisdom?

2 Chr 1:6-12 ... *"Solomon went up there before the LORD to the bronze altar which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it. In that night God appeared to Solomon and said to him, "Ask what I shall give you." Solomon said to God, "You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. "Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me*

now **wisdom and knowledge**, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself **wisdom and knowledge** that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, **wisdom and knowledge have been granted to you**. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you."

(see also [1 Kings 3:3-15](#))

1. 2 Chr 1:6, 7: Voluntary worship – praise, worship and thanksgiving for who God is – is the prerequisite for Him to speak to you.
2. 2 Chr 1:7, 10: he asked – for wisdom and knowledge

[James 1:5](#) ... "But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him."

Solomon first worshipped the Lord. His heart and attention was inclined to the Lord. We will see the importance of this when we get to lesson 3. He did not ask for health, money, fame, honour or any material thing. He asked for wisdom to be able to conduct his life and actions according to the will and purpose of God. Because of his right heart attitude, God automatically saw to his material needs – in abundance.

Compare this with [James 4:2, 3](#) ... "You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures."

Paul teaches us believers the same principles (to ask for wisdom) in the prayers he prayed for the believers:

[Eph 1:17](#) ... "while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him."

[Col 1:9-12](#) ... "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light."

[Proverbs 3:13-18](#) ... "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding. For her profit is better than the profit of silver, and her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; and nothing you desire compares with her. Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast."

Note the order: seek wisdom and look what comes in its hands as a bonus (v 16) – the material and health blessings. This is consistent with what Jesus taught in [Matt 6:33](#) ... "But seek first His kingdom and

*His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you”... and also consistent with the abundant blessings Solomon received for seeking wisdom and not material things ( 2 Chr 1:11, 12 ).*

Note in Prov 3:16 – significance of the right hand (symbol of power and strength, and place of protection) - right hand has health, which is more important than wealth, in left hand. (See also Matt 25:31-46 for significance of “right” and “left” hand).

Prov 3:18 ... *“She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who hold her fast.”*

Once you have found wisdom you need to “hold fast” to it, you need to “keep” it. You do this by regular meditation upon the word and constant communion with the Lord.

Ps 1:1-3 ... *“How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.”*

Whatever he or she does ... includes: business of any description, engineering, teaching, studying, home domestics, nursing, any profession you may be in, etc. This blessing comes from the wisdom gained through regular meditation in God’s word and attention to Him.

**Practical Tip** - Read one chapter of Proverbs each day (31 chapters in Proverbs, one for each day of the month). Read and then through the day meditate on the wisdom contained in the proverb you have read each day. Do this daily, month after month to “pound in” or “absorb” the wisdom of God.

Josh 1:7, 8 ... *“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.”*

Note: do not turn to the right (long life and health) or to the left (riches and honour). If you seek God and His wisdom you’ll find it will come with both hands full to meet your other needs.

Once you have found wisdom, which will come with health and material blessings, don’t then revel in the material blessings and honour and forget to “hold fast” and “keep” wisdom by daily meditation and attention to God and His word. (Read Deut 8:1-20 and take particular note of versus 11-14 and 18-20).

3 John 2 ... *“Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.”*

You prosper as your soul (mind, will, emotions) prospers. That’s why there is so much exhortation in the Word to renew your mind through meditating on God’s word. There is no limit to soul prosperity! Remember “wisdom” means “to make wise” and “to pound it in”. So go meditate on the word! ... *“for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success”.*

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 2 – Types of Proverbs

There are 6 different types of proverbs and it is helpful to understand their differences so we can gain a fuller understanding of the Wisdom teaching in the book of Proverbs.

#### 1. Synonymous Proverb

A synonym = word with the same meaning as another.

The poetry of the Old Testament is generally constructed of parallel lines. This type of construction is also known as "synonymous parallelism". So in "synonymous parallelism" or in a "synonymous proverb" the second line says the same thing as the first, but in a slightly different way.

The two lines are not saying the same thing twice, but rather, the second line focuses or intensifies the thought presented in the first line. The second line adds to or clarifies the message of the first by focusing in on a particular aspect of the message presented in the first line. So when we read, we should be asking ourselves 'what does the second part contribute to the first'? Our focus should be on the meanings of the words used. Word studies or comparison of different translations are often very helpful here to understand the hidden wisdom.

Prov 4:20 (NASB)      ... *"My son, give attention to my words;  
Incline your ear to my sayings."*

Prov 4:20 (Message)    ... *"Dear friend, listen well to my words;  
tune your ears to my voice".*

The first part is a general "hey you need to listen to me because I have a lot of good stuff to tell you", whereas the second part is focusing us to "hey tune the antennae of your hearts ear specifically to my still small voice, because you may miss some vital secret if you're not in tune at the moment that I share something special".

Prov 4:21 (NASB)      ... *"Do not let them depart from your sight;  
Keep them in the midst of your heart".*

Prov 4:21 (Message)    ... *"Keep my message in plain view at all times.  
Concentrate! Learn it by heart!"*

There is a difference between having God's word at hand and having it hidden in your heart.

Prov 7:2 (NASB)      ... *"Keep my commandments and live,  
And my teaching as the apple of your eye*

Prov 7:2 (Message)    ... *"Obey my commands and live!  
Guard my instructions as you guard your own eyes."*

---

## Wisdom from Proverbs

---

Not only is God's word important to us for successful living, but it should be treated as something as vital and precious to us as our very sight. Life without sight would be terrible and very restrictive and that is how we should treat God's word and wisdom.

Prov 3:24                      ... *"When you lie down, you will not be afraid;  
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet."*

This should be read in the context of Prov 3:13-26 and compared with or supported by:

Ps 119:165                      ... *"Those who love Your law have great peace,  
And nothing causes them to stumble".*

Prov 19:23                      ... *"The fear of the LORD leads to life,  
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil."*

Ps 4:8                              ... *"In peace I will both lie down and sleep,  
For You alone, O LORD, make me to dwell in safety".*

These are some of the benefits that come in the right and left hand of wisdom when we seek and find God's wisdom.

Prov 11:25                      ... *"The generous man will be prosperous,  
And he who waters will himself be watered".*

Water is essential to survival. Plants flourish and are fruitful when well watered. Compare this to:

Lu 6:38                              ... *"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return".*

2 Cor 9:6                              ... *"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully".*

These passages reinforce the truth the "GIVING IS THE ESSENCE OF LIVING".

## 2. Antithetical Proverb

Antithesis = contrast, direct opposite

It is the contrasting proverb that looks at opposites. Also known as "antithetical parallelism", where the two lines present the truth from opposite perspectives.

The thought is given in the first line and the negative result is given in the second line. The word "**but**" is commonly found in an antithetical proverb, to provide contrast.

Prov 17:22                   ... *"A joyful heart is good medicine,  
But a broken spirit dries up the bones".*

... *"the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Neh 8:10). Joy and laughter is a good medicine, while bitterness and unforgiveness has been linked to illnesses such as arthritis, that eat away your joints and bones.

Prov 14:30                   ... *"A tranquil heart is life to the body,  
But passion is rotteness to the bones".*

The Hebrew root word for passion (קנא) has the following meanings: "envy", "jealousy", "protect ownership", "demanding exclusive rights".

"Envy" and "jealousy" are the zeal or passion for another person's property, while "Protectiveness" is the zeal or passion for one's own property. Both are wrong and will lead to unhappiness and illness. The Amplified expresses this proverb very well:

... *"A calm and undisturbed mind and heart are the life and health of the body, but envy, jealousy, and wrath are like rotteness of the bones".*

Note that Prov 14:30 and 17:22 say virtually the same things. This is wisdom's repetition that will "pound in" the truth. This sounds a bit like Peter in his second epistle where he is "pounding in" or reinforcing the truth to his readers:

2 Pet 1:12-15 ... *"Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind".*

Proverbs 14 has many examples of antithetical proverbs.

Prov 14:11                   ... *"The house of the wicked will be destroyed,  
But the tent of the upright will flourish".*

Prov 14:21                   ... *"He who despises his neighbor sins,  
But happy is he who is gracious to the poor".*

Prov 14:23                   ... *"In all labor there is profit,  
But mere talk leads only to poverty".*

Prov 14:29                   ... *"He who is slow to anger has great understanding,  
But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly".*

### 3. Synthetic Proverb

Synthesis = putting together, combination.

In this type of proverb both lines present a different thought, but they do have something in common. This is the rarest type of proverb. Sometime the lines are linked with an **“And”**. Examples of synthetic proverbs are:

Prov 10:18                      ... *“He who conceals hatred has lying lips,  
And he who spreads slander is a fool”.*

The common thought has to do with the opening or closing of the mouth. When he should open his mouth and confess and sort out his hatred - he shuts it ... when he should shut his mouth and not spread slander – he opens it!

Prov 13:22                      ... *“A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children,  
And the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.”*

The common thought here is the “inheritance” or “wealth”, which is “left” or “stored up”.

### 4. Integral Proverb

Also called the “Completive Proverb”.

The second line completes the thought presented in the first line. It looks like one statement and has a conjunctive word like **“And”**, **“That”**, **“So”**, or **“Even”** at the beginning of the second line.

Prov 13:14 (Ampl)            ... *“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life,  
That one may avoid the snares of death”.*

A flowing fountain will push out concentric waves. Similarly, the fountain of life will push out death and all its snares. This fountain that is fuelled by God’s wisdom is the sword of the spirit, part of our armour against the schemes of the devil.

Prov 19:20                      ... *“Listen to counsel and accept discipline,  
That you may be wise the rest of your days”.*

Be teachable, listen to counsel, receive instruction and accept correction, so that in time to come, when you need it, you will be wise and able to face the issues in front of you.

Prov 22:6                      ... *“Train up a child in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it”.*

“The Way” is Jesus (*“I am the way, and the truth and the Life, no one comes to the Father, but through Me”* Jn 14:6). Christ is the “way” in which we want to train up our children. Jesus is the Way, He is the Word, He is the “standard” that we need to “pound in” so that our children can know Him and His ways.

And remember, we teach by telling, but, we **train by example**.

Prov 14:7                      ... *"Leave the presence of a fool,  
Or you will not discern words of knowledge"*.

Compare this to Prov 13:20 (which is an antithetical proverb). The company we keep will influence our thoughts and behavior.

Prov 17:14                      ... *"The beginning of strife is like letting out water,  
So abandon the quarrel before it breaks out"*.

The Message translation says this as follows: ... *"The start of a quarrel is like a leak in a dam,  
so stop it before it bursts"*.

Prov 22:10                      ... *"Drive out the scoffer, and contention will go out,  
Even strife and dishonor will cease"*.

Finally, there are also some cases where there are four lines to the proverb instead of just two, for example:

Prov 25:4, 5                      ... *"Take away the dross from the silver,  
And there comes out a vessel for the smith;  
Take away the wicked before the king,  
And his throne will be established in righteousness"*.

The four lines are related to each other, with the first two lines providing an analogy from metallurgy for the point made about the wicked in the royal court in the second two lines. This is evident as there is repetition of the "take away" that starts each of the two lines. So, just as the metallurgist smelts the silver to separate off the impurities in order to produce a pure sterling silver bar or ornament, so the royal court is to be freed from the influence of wicked people so that the king can have only wise counselors around him so his reign can be just and fair.

See also groupings with similar meanings in Prov 26:17, 18-19, 20, 21, and 22.

## 5. Parabolic Proverb

Parable = story with a moral lesson

In this type of proverb the poetry contains images or illustrations. The first line is an illustration, the second line provides a teaching.

Prov 11:22                      ... *"As a ring of gold in a swine's snout  
So is a beautiful woman who lacks discretion"*.

The Message translation says it all!



Prov 11:22 (Message) ... *"Like a gold ring in a pig's snout  
is a beautiful face on an empty head"*

Being discrete is more important than outwardly looking good!

Prov 25:25 ... *"Like cold water to a weary soul,  
So is good news from a distant land".*

When disaster strikes a foreign land and you have relatives or friends there, it comes as great relief when you get the news that they are ok. Like cold water to a weary person on a hot day.

Prov 25:26 ... *"Like a trampled spring and a polluted well  
Is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked".*

If you compromise your integrity you will be of no use at all. A polluted well is of no use to the thirsty.

Prov 26:9 ... *"Like a thorn which falls into the hand of a drunkard,  
So is a proverb in the mouth of fools".*

A drunken man can't feel the pain. He only feels it when he sobers up and then wonders how it happened. Similarly, a fool that spouts out things he knows nothing about and in doing so makes a fool of himself, goes on to live with the stigma of being such a fool.

Prov 27:15 ... *"A constant dripping on a day of steady rain  
And a contentious woman are alike".*

The Message translation makes it applicable on both sides of the relationship!

Prov 27:15 (Message) ... *"A nagging spouse is like the drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet;  
You can't turn it off, and you can't get away from it".*

There's a storm of hassles all around you that you can't get away from and then on top of that there's the drip, drip, drip that is so irritating!

## 6. Comparative Proverb

This type of proverb generally begins with the word "Better" and the second line starts with "Than" and is also known as "better-than parallelism".

The first line expresses something that is better than that expressed in the second line. This shows the relative value of the two things.

Prov 15:16 ... *"Better is a little with the fear of the LORD  
Than great treasure and turmoil with it".*

Compare this with:

Matt 16:26 ... *"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"*

1 Tim 6:6 (NKJV) ... *"Now godliness with contentment is great gain".*

It is better to have a good relationship with the Lord and those around you and be satisfied with modest means, than to have an abundance of money and be at odds with God and those around you.

Prov 15:17 ... *"Better is a dish of vegetables where love is  
Than a fattened ox served with hatred".*

Prov 17:1 ... *"Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it  
Than a house full of feasting with strife".*

Prov 21:9 ... *"It is better to live in a corner of a roof  
Than in a house shared with a contentious woman".*

## 7. Other Less Obvious Forms:

There are some hidden forms or less obvious means used in Hebrew poetry, most of which will not affect the interpretation of the passages, but which do have some meaning when investigated deeper.

For example, the use of:

**Acrostics:** An acrostic poem is one that starts each new line with a consecutive letter of the alphabet (22 letters in Hebrew alphabet), such as Proverbs 31:10-31, the poem concerning the virtuous woman. Acrostics are generally used to aid memorization. Another example is Psalm 119, where each 8 verse section starts with a new letter of the Hebrew alphabet. This is only seen if reading the Hebrew text.

**Alliteration:** This poetical sound play creates coherence in a poetic unit and sometimes supports the meaning being portrayed, However, it can only be found if you are reading the Hebrew text.

**Numerical Parallelism:** This is a way of saying that there are a number of different examples of a particular phenomenon, however, only a few of which are given. The list that follows the opening statement usually has in it as many elements as the second number stated, as can be seen below. An example is:

Proverbs 30:18-19 ... *"There are three things which are too wonderful for me,  
Four which I do not understand:  
The way of an eagle in the sky,  
The way of a serpent on a rock,  
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,  
And the way of a man with a maid."*

The phenomenon here is the mysterious movement or action of each subject that leaves no trace.

### Conclusion:

Understanding the different types of proverb and poetic forms used in the Proverbs can help us dig deeper and to better understand the hidden meanings in the text. God bless you as you dig deep!

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 3 – Foundational Principles for Navigating the Book of Proverbs

In order to have more success in navigating our way through the book we first need some more foundational information. So in this lesson we look at issues such as the book's audience, the overall structure, the two paths in life, the two Women and who they represent, and knowing the time and circumstance under which each proverb applies and the pathway to Wisdom.

#### The Book's Intended Audience:

In the prologue ([Prov 1:1-7](#)) the intended audience is made clear. It starts off being directed to "people" in general ([Prov 1:2-3](#)), but then this is made more specific when it is divided into two groups to whom the Proverbs are directed, and, last of all, a third group from whom it is excluded.

#### 1. **The Simple:**

Naïve from Hebrew root פתח = "open", "receptive to new ideas."

([Prov 1:4](#)) The first specific group is the "naive" or "simple ones", also referred to as the "youth". This group may well be the "sons" referred to in the first nine chapters of the Proverbs. The simple are neither wise nor foolish, rather, they are generally uninformed. They certainly have the potential to act foolishly, and, when they do, are sometimes grouped with the "fool" or "mockers" as shown in [Prov 1:22](#). The simple minded, however, differ from fools in that they are teachable. ... *"Fools despise wisdom and instruction"*... ([Prov 1:7](#)) but the simple ones will listen and learn. They are "open", "receptive to new ideas."

The intention of the Proverbs is to steer and develop this teachable group of people along the path of wisdom. To "pound in" the truth so they grow "tall and true" in the ways of wisdom.

#### 2. **The Wise or Mature:**

([Prov 1:5](#)) The second specific group mentioned is the "wise" or "mature". The wisdom contained in the Proverbs is also directed to them, as they can also continue to learn and gain more wisdom and become even wiser counselors in turn.

#### 3. **The Fool:**

The fool is excluded, simply because the fools exclude themselves.

[Prov 1:7](#) ... *"Fools despise wisdom and instruction"*, and ...

Ps 14:1 ... *the fool has said in his heart, "There is no God"...*

The final and foundational verse of the prologue (Prov 1:7) states, ... *"the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"*. It is clear from the start, wisdom, knowledge and understanding are sourced in God, and apart from Him there is no wisdom. So fools cannot participate in wisdom because they reject God.

We, both the "young" and the "wise", however, can participate in God's wisdom, if we begin with God and continue to heed His instruction.

### **The Book's Overall Structure:**

To understand and gain the most from the book, we need to commence with a good understanding of its overall structure. While the book of Proverbs does contain short sayings that provide practical advice (wisdom) to enable you to navigate the course of life well, it is not just a random collection of sayings, advice or admonitions, and it is not to be viewed simply just a book from which you can pick and choose advice for practical living.

Rather than approach the book on an occasional random search-and-find basis, we need to sit down and read right through from beginning to end without interruption. If we do this, we will find the book divides into two parts:

- Chapters 1 – 9 and
- Chapters 10 – 31.

The first part contains lengthy discourses, while the latter part contains individual proverbs mainly, with a few minor discourses. The exact number of discourses in Chapters 1 – 9 may be up for debate; however, we may divide it into 18 as follows:

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 1. 1:1-7    | The Prologue – The Purpose of the Book                       |
| 2. 1:8-19   | Admonition to Avoid Evil Associations                        |
| 3. 1:20-33  | Wisdom's Warning not to Resist Her                           |
| 4. 2:1-22   | The Benefits of the Way of Wisdom                            |
| 5. 3:1-12   | The Rewards of Trusting in the Lord                          |
| 6. 3:13-20  | Praising Wisdom  |
| 7. 3:21-35  | The Integrity of Wisdom                                      |
| 8. 4:1-9    | Instruction to Embrace Wisdom                                |
| 9. 4:10-19  | Stay on the Right Path                                       |
| 10. 4:20-27 | Watch Over Your Heart  |
| 11. 5:1-14  | Avoid Promiscuous Women                                      |
| 12. 5:15-23 | Cleave to Your Wife  |
| 13. 6:1-19  | Wisdom Admonitions: Loans, Laziness, Lying, Strife and Pride |
| 14. 6:20-35 | The Danger of Adultery and How to Avoid it                   |
| 15. 7:1-27  | Wisdom's Protection Against the Wiles of the Harlot          |
| 16. 8:1-36  | Wisdom's Autobiography                                       |
| 17. 9:1-12  | Wisdom's Invitation and Advice                               |
| 18. 9:13-18 | Folly's Invitation   |

In most of the discourses the father speaks to the son, while in [Prov 1:20-33](#) and from [8:1 – 9:12](#) we hear the voice of the Woman Wisdom and, finally, in [Prov 9:13-18](#) we hear the voice of the Woman Folly. As we go through, we will find the Woman Wisdom at the heart of the message of the book of Proverbs.

### **The Father Speaking to the Son:**

There is a difference between the implied reader/hearer and the actual reader/hearer of the book of Proverbs. We, in the here and now, are the actual readers/hearers, seeking to understand the message. What we need to understand is that the book of Proverbs in its original setting was not addressed to us (the actual hearer) but to “the son” (the implied hearer). From [Prov 1:8](#) and throughout the book the speaker of the discourses is clearly speaking to his son. The speaker is identified as the father, giving advice to his son about how to live wisely and successfully, avoiding the pitfalls he will encounter in life.

This interaction between father and son was common in the wisdom literature of the nations of the Near East as well as in Israel. Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Northwest Semitic (including Hebrew) texts all feature a father speaking to his son.

[Prov 1:8](#) mentions a “mother” so a family setting is implied. However, whether this is a biological relationship or a master/apprentice relationship is not as important as the fact that the implied hearer/reader is a son, a young male. It is important to establish this fact as it helps us understand the nature of the advice given in the first 9 chapters of the book and the impact of the imagery surrounding the Woman “Wisdom” and the Woman “Folly”. So to read the book correctly, we must put ourselves in the place of the implied hearer, a young male.

In chapters 8 and 9 we will hear the Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly speak. Both will speak of a desire for an intimate relationship with the “son” and this metaphor will have most impact if we keep in mind that the implied reader is a young male.

### **Two Paths:**

In the book of Proverbs we will encounter many powerful metaphors. One such metaphor, used many times over in the discourses, is a Hebrew term (דֶּרֶךְ) translated as “way”, “road” or “path”. A “path” implies three things: a current point of origin (where you are right now in life), a destination (where you are intending to get to) and key transitional moments (forks in the road).

There are two “paths” open to the son; and evil or dark road that leads to death and a just or right road that leads to life.

The father warns the son of “crooked” or “devious” ways:

[Prov 2:12-15](#) ... *“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 delight in doing evil  
And rejoice in the perversity of evil;*

*Whose paths are crooked,  
And who are devious in their ways”*

He also warns his son of one of the dangers that may be incurred on this crooked path; the ambush of the innocent. He instructs his son not to involve himself in such dark activities.

Prov 1:10-15 ... *“My son, if sinners entice you,  
Do not consent.  
If they say, "Come with us,  
Let us lie in wait for blood,  
Let us ambush the innocent without cause;  
Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,  
Even whole, as those who go down to the pit;  
We will find all kinds of precious wealth,  
We will fill our houses with spoil;  
Throw in your lot with us,  
We shall all have one purse,"  
My son, do not walk in the way with them  
Keep your feet from their path”...*

Why does the father warn him? Because these dangers along with other snares and traps about which the father warns his son, all ultimately lead to death.

On the other side, there is the just and right path (or way) that leads to life. Both the father and the Woman Wisdom encourage the son to choose and to stick to this path as it is the path of reward, success, peace and protection.

Prov 2:6-8 ... *“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 He preserves the way of His godly ones”...*

So we see there are two paths; one that is right and leads to life and one that is wrong and leads to death. The father encourages his son to follow the right path and warns him of the perils of the wrong path.

While there are traps, snares, stumbling blocks and enemies on the dark side, and God on the side of life, we must remember the intended reader/hearer is a young male and the two most significant people he will meet on the paths ahead are two women: Wisdom and Folly.

### **The Two Women – Which Will You Choose?**

The path of life will bring before us many situations and circumstances, people and decisions, but the most profound will be the encounters with the Woman Wisdom and the Woman Folly.

Again I remind you, the metaphor of each woman's desire to enter into an intimate relationship with the reader will have its greatest impact if we remember the implied reader is a young male.

We hear the Woman Wisdom speaking in Prov 1:20-23 and then more fully in Chapter 8 and the first part of Chapter 9. The father describes her to his son in the various discourses in the first 9 chapters. Sometimes he speaks of her in the abstract and sometimes he describes the Woman Wisdom herself.

Besides the Woman Wisdom we meet another Woman, Folly. She speaks only once in Prov 9:13-18 and the father only gives his son a brief description of her. However, she also reaches out to the son and desires a relationship with him.

To comprehend the dynamics of the book of Proverbs we need to understand Folly as well as Wisdom. Along with these two women we will also later meet two more, the "wife" and the "immoral" or "promiscuous" woman.

### ***Wisdom or Folly – With Whom will You Dine?***

This ultimate encounter is presented by the end of chapter 9. He must decide which one he will choose. Will it be:

Wisdom?	<u>Prov 9:1-6, 11</u>	<i>... "Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: Whoever is naive, let him turn in here! To him who lacks understanding she says, Come, eat of my food And drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding...."</i>
		<i>... "For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you" ...</i>

Or, Folly?	<u>Prov 9:13-18</u>	<i>... "The woman of folly is boisterous, She is naive and knows nothing. She sits at the doorway of her house, On a seat by the high places of the city, Calling to those who pass by, Who are making their paths straight: Whoever is naive, let him turn in here," And to him who lacks understanding she says, Stolen water is sweet; And bread eaten in secret is pleasant."</i>
------------	---------------------	---

*But he does not know that the dead are there,  
That her guests are in the depths of Sheol" ...*

Like the young man, the intended reader, here we are, the actual readers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, having to make the same decision. With which of these Women do we engage in an intimate relationship?

Before we make the decision we need to first find out who these women are, what they represent and the consequences of the choice we will make. They both reveal a bit about themselves to the young man. What do they say? What are they like?

### **1      *Wisdom:***

Wisdom is bold and may be found in the streets, squares and at the city gates ([Prov 1:20-21](#)). She shouts from the top of the heights where the paths meet ([Prov 8:1,2](#)). These are public places where crowds gather. So she is not afraid to encounter and interact with strangers. Also, the “gates” of a city were the place where the rulers or governors sat and presided over public matters. So wisdom speaks from a place or position of authority. (cf Matt 16:18).

The company one keeps tells you something about them. Wisdom is closely associated with righteousness ([Prov 8:8, 18, 20](#)), truth ([Prov 8:7](#)), wholesome behavior ([Prov 8:8](#)), prudence or good judgment ([Prov 8:12](#)) and counsel, insight, common sense, justice and strength ([Prov 8:14-15](#)).

On the other hand she stays away from deception, pride, wickedness, perversion and arrogance ([Prov 8:7-8, 13](#)). From this we see that Wisdom embraces ethical behavior and shuns all that is evil.

Wisdom was present “from everlasting” ([Prov 8:22-26](#)), assisting in creation and calls herself the architect of creation ([Prov 8:30 NLT](#)).

*... “I was the architect at his side.  
I was his constant delight,  
rejoicing always in his presence”...*

Wisdom rejoices with God and creation, particularly with the human family ([Prov 8:30-31](#)).

On the other hand, She does not appreciate rejection and has a stern side ([Prov 1:24-27](#)). However, Wisdom offers reward for those who love and follow her ([Prov 1:33](#)).

### **2      *Folly:***

There is not much said by Folly. Folly is only described in [Prov 9:13-18](#).

She sits “by the high places of the city”. Like Wisdom, Folly operates from the place where the rulers and crowds gather. She is boisterous, brash, naïve and ignorant. She’s even ignorant of being ignorant. Folly is the complete opposite of Wisdom!



### ***Who is Their Audience?***

According to Prov 9:4, 16 they have the same audience - the naïve young men. These are the same young men that the father speaks to in the various discourses. Wisdom supports the message the father is transmitting to his son, whereas Folly opposes and undermines this message.

In the various discourses, sometimes these young men are referred to as simpletons who lack understanding, mockers who lack good judgment, fools or sons. Whichever, they are immature, still in the process of coming to maturity and therefore this is a critical decision point for them. The terms simple, mocker and fool infer resistance to the Woman wisdom and her ways, however she does all she can to approach and win them over.

Today as we read the book of Proverbs, whether we are men or women, young or old, we must place ourselves in the position of the audience that these two Women are addressing, the immature or unformed, and we too need to make a decision; do we follow Wisdom or Folly?

Both desire a **relationship**. Both have prepared a **meal**. One is sumptuous (Prov 9:1, 2) and one is insidious (Prov 9:17). In Near Eastern culture, to eat a meal with someone is to form an intimate relationship with that person.

The two Women want a relationship. They compete because they know that it is impossible to be united to both simultaneously.

Which will you choose?

### ***Who Do They Really Represent?***

They are not literal women. So who are they?

1. **Wisdom:** Her house is (Prov 9:3) ... *“on the tops of the heights of the city”*. This is the highest point of the city. In the Near East lands the building on the highest point of the city was the temple. In Canaan, Baal resided on Mount Zaphon. In Israel God appeared on Mount Sinai and instructed His people to build the temple, His earthly house, on Mount Zion. Scriptures that support the fact of high places being the place where the deities are found include Ex 3:1, Ex 19:3, Ex 24:12, Ps 2:6, Ps 3:4, Ps 48:1-2, Ps 68:15-16, Ps 24:3, Ps 99:9, Ps121:1-2, Is 2:2-3, Is 28:13 and Joel 3:17, to name a few. Mk 6:46 says Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, symbolizing the place where He would find and commune with His Father. If you look through the scriptures for the word “high places”, “hill” or “mountain” you will see this refers to localities chosen as places of worship of God or idols.

The location of her house makes it apparent that the Woman Wisdom represents God. She is a poetic personification of God’s Wisdom and represents God. The figure of the Woman Wisdom fits in with other metaphors for God’s relationship with His people such as shepherd, father, king, husband, warrior and so on. These metaphors simply point to various aspects of the Divine character.

2. **Folly:** Also has her house located on the highest point of the city (Prov 9:14) ... *“she sits... on a seat by the high places of the city”*. She represents, not herself, but the idols, the false gods and

goddesses. These were the deities, like Baal and Asherah, which tried to tempt Israel away from the one true God, Yahweh.

### ***The Choice:***

The first 9 chapters of Proverbs culminate in a choice that we must make before proceeding through from chapters 10 to 31. With whom will you dine? With whom will you forge an intimate relationship? With Yahweh or the false gods of the nations?

Remember, according to the tradition of the day, to dine with someone is to forge an intimate relationship with them. It's a woman inviting a man to dine, so there are sensual overtones inferred here. This is a literal matter of life and death.

Folly offers and enticing meal but Prove 9:18 ... *"her guests are in the depths of Sheol"*.

Baal and Asherah promised the people fertile fields and fertile wombs. Both highly desirable. But Israel found death, not life, when they worshipped these deities. That is the message of Elijah that we can read in 1 and 2 Kings and the warning Jeremiah gave to Israel.

Elijah spoke during the reign of king Ahab, who was married to Jezebel, a Sidonian. Sidonians were Baal worshipping people. Ahab, king of the northern kingdom of Israel, began worshipping Baal (1 Kings 16:29-31), hoping for life-giving rains. But it was Yahweh, not Baal, who was in charge of the rains. So God sent Elijah to tell the Israelites that ... *"As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word."* (1 Kings 17:1). So instead of life-giving rains and good crops, the worship of Baal brought death.

The prophet Jeremiah gave a similar message to the southern kingdom of Israel when they were facing exile to Babylon. Their Baal worship under the image of adultery brought this message out of Jeremiah:

Jer 3:2-3 NLT    ... *"Look at the shrines on every hilltop.  
Is there any place you have not been defiled  
by your adultery with other gods?  
You sit like a prostitute beside the road waiting for a customer.  
You sit alone like a nomad in the desert.  
You have polluted the land with your prostitution  
and your wickedness.  
That's why even the spring rains have failed.  
For you are a brazen prostitute and completely shameless"...*

It is quite clear: following Folly (Baal worship) although initially inviting, results in death (droughts and no crops first, and then exile to Babylon).

On the other hand, a relationship with the Woman Wisdom brings life and great rewards.

Prov 3:16-18    ... *"Long life is in her right hand;  
In her left hand are riches and honor.  
Her ways are pleasant ways*

*And all her paths are peace.  
She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,  
And happy are all who hold her fast”....*

She does warn against ignoring her though:

Prov 1:32-33 (NLT)     ... *“For simpletons turn away from me—to death.  
Fools are destroyed by their own complacency.  
But all who listen to me will live in peace,  
untroubled by fear of harm.”*

We all, old or young, male or female, stand in the same position as the implied reader, the young man, facing the ultimate decision: will we embrace Folly or Wisdom?

### **Knowing the Time and Circumstance Under Which Each Proverb Applies**

As we read each proverb we need to carefully consider whether it is true, absolute and automatic, or whether there is a specific time, circumstance or situation under which it applies. Starting with the first proverb at the beginning of the second part of the Book of Proverbs, we will see that all proverbs are not necessarily always absolute and automatic, but rather they are true principles dependent on the right time and circumstance being applicable.

*Example 1:*     Prov 10:1     ... *“A wise son makes a father glad,  
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.”*

Is this proverb always true in every circumstance? Consider the case where a son has a drunkard, or drug addict for a father; a man who is never in his “right mind”. Or a self absorbed mother who cares little for her children and is seldom at home. Will either of these parents care if their son is wise or foolish and whether they have done something good or bad? More than likely not, simply because they are self-absorbed and aren’t giving much thought towards their child.

However, if the parents themselves are wise and upright, then we can accept the truth and absoluteness of this proverb. So the validity of the proverbs depends on the situation, time and circumstances. So to read a proverb as if it was always true, absolute or automatic in every circumstance, could be erroneous.

*Example 2:*     Prov 26:4-5     ... *“Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
Lest you also be like him.  
Answer a fool as his folly deserves,  
Lest he be wise in his own eyes”.*

At face value these two proverbs look like being contradictory, but are they? No, they are both true if they are read and understood according to the intention of the writer. Their validity is dependent on the time and circumstance being correct, as is echoed in Prov 15:23 (The Message):

*... “Congenial conversation—what a pleasure!  
The right word at the right time—beautiful!*

Bear in mind that all of the proverbs were written assuming the right circumstances for its desired and correct application. A wise person knows the right time, circumstance and situation to speak the right word and apply the right principle as expressed in the appropriate proverb.

Example 3:     Prov 26:7, 9 (NLT)     ... *"A proverb in the mouth of a fool  
is as useless as a paralyzed leg.*

*A proverb in the mouth of a fool  
is like a thorny branch brandished by a drunk.*

These two proverbs show us why proverbs are not simply magical words that can be memorized and applied mechanically and automatically to bring success. Only a fool will try and apply a proverb irrespective of its suitability to the situation.

The imagery used in these proverbs is powerful. Just as a paralysed leg will not help a person walk, so a proverb will not benefit a fool or help them act wisely. Similarly, just as a thorny bush in the hand of a drunk is likely to both injure the drunkard, without him even knowing he is hurting himself, as well as those around him who get hit by the thorns, so the fool's use of a proverb will also be ineffective for himself and dangerous to others around him.

How does this apply to us? Take Prov 3:9-10     ... *"Honor the LORD from your wealth  
And from the first of all your produce;  
So your barns will be filled with plenty  
And your vats will overflow with new wine."*

The fool's approach to this is ... "if I give some money to the Lord I am guaranteed to become super wealthy! Yay"! And if we, like the fool, give out of a selfish and greedy attitude, we will not get the blessing, and in fact we may get a rebuke from the Lord instead.

The wise person will look at the context of verses 9 and 10 to be certain they are applying them correctly. The context is about trust in the Lord, about honouring Him and about the reverential fear and respect for Him. If our giving is with the correct attitude, one of blessing and honouring the One on whom we place our dependence and trust, then we can rest assured of His provision in our time of need. It's when we give to bless rather than give to get, that we are assured of the Lord's provision.

So the proverbs must not be assumed to be automatic and absolute under any circumstance, but rather, in line with the intention of the writer, they must be applied in context, at the right time and under the right circumstances for them to be effective.

### **The Ways Through Which We Grow in Wisdom**

There are a number of ways in which we grow in wisdom.

**1. Observation and Experience:**

In life in general we learn by being observant and through experiencing various situations and circumstances. Similarly, wisdom is learned through observation and experience. However, if we are not observant we cannot expect to grow in wisdom.

On a few occasions, in order to reinforce his teaching, the father encourages the son to use this process of observation. One such example is where the father is giving his son instruction concerning sluggardly or laziness:

Prov 6:6-8

*... "Go to the ant, O sluggard,  
Observe her ways and be wise,  
Which, having no chief,  
Officer or ruler,  
Prepares her food in the summer  
And gathers her provision in the harvest.*

It appears that the father is hoping this observation will help the son better understand and appreciate the teaching that follows immediately afterwards!

Prov 6:9-11 (The Message)

*... "So how long are you going to laze around doing nothing?  
How long before you get out of bed?  
A nap here, a nap there, a day off here, a day off there,  
sit back, take it easy—do you know what comes next?  
Just this: You can look forward to a dirt-poor life,  
poverty your permanent houseguest!"*

Similarly, as a teaching tool and particularly to reinforce his plea, the father also shares with his son observations he has made in warning his son against the dangers of an immoral woman and the deathly consequence of her seduction, as graphically portrayed in Prov 7:6-23 . Again, the father is hoping the observation he has shared will open his son's eyes so that he will heed the plea that follows in Prov 7:24-27.

In both cases, the use of observation greatly enhanced the teaching or warnings that followed. Without the observations as illustrations to reinforce the teaching, it is likely that the son would probably not have grasped the importance of what the father was trying to get across to him.

Observation and experience are an integral and vital part of our growth in wisdom. What is important is having and maintaining a teachable attitude.

**2. Teaching Handed Down by Tradition**

Observation and experience does not necessarily have to be ours personally, we can learn from the observations and experience of others. That's why it so important to have fellowship with one another to share and learn from each other's experiences! So that we may grow in wisdom and knowledge and understanding. That's why sharing life's experiences and observations with our children is so important!

We see an example of teaching passed down through generations in Prov 4:3-9 where instruction is handed down from grandfather to father to son. And having told his son what he learned from tradition, from verse 10 onwards the father is saying to his son that he has learned from both his and his father's experience and observations that if the son holds fast to what he is being taught he will be wise and will enjoy a life of blessings.

The Proverbs 7 passage we read is also a case of a father handing on his observations to his son so he can benefit, if he chooses to heed his father's advice.

Also, in the section beginning at Prov 22:17 (Section forming the "Words of the Wise") we are informed in verse 17 that these are the words of the "wise" and in verse 20 there is reference to "previous" counsel and knowledge that have been passed on to the reader.

Prov 22:17

*... "Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
And apply your mind to my knowledge;  
For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,  
That they may be ready on your lips.  
So that your trust may be in the LORD,  
I have taught you today, even you.  
Have I not written to you excellent (previous) things  
Of counsels and knowledge,  
To make you know the certainty of the words of truth  
That you may correctly answer him who sent you?"*

It's summed up in Prov 19:20 NLT

*... "Get all the advice and instruction you can,  
so you will be wise the rest of your life*

### **3. Learn from mistakes**

This is closely linked to learning by observation and experience. We all make mistakes, and the Proverbs accepts that as a fact. What we do with our mistakes is what is important. There is much clear advice and warning in this respect.

Prov 12:1 (The Message)

*... "If you love learning, you love the discipline that goes with it— how shortsighted to refuse correction! "*

Prov 10:17

*... "He is on the path of life who heeds instruction,  
But he who ignores reproof goes astray*

Prov 11:2 NLT

*... "Pride leads to disgrace,  
but with humility comes wisdom"*

So one of the ways to advance in wisdom is to learn from our mistakes.

### 4. **Revelation**

God is the source of wisdom and apart from God there is no wisdom. We cannot obtain it by good works or any efforts of our own. Wisdom is a gift from God in the same way that salvation is a gift from God. Paul makes this clear to us:

1 Cor 1:30 ... *"But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption..."*

We have seen that the Woman Wisdom represents God. As we heed her we listen to God. All true wisdom, insight, knowledge and understanding comes from God, even that which we gain from tradition, experience, observation, instruction and correction.

Prov 2:6-8 ... *"For the LORD gives wisdom;  
From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.  
He stores up sound wisdom for the upright..."*

Christ lives in us (Col 1:27). Christ has been made wisdom unto us (1Cor 1:30). So each time, before we go through the Proverbs in search of wisdom, we need to pray the prayers Paul prayed for us in Eph 1:17 and Col 1:9-12 ask the Heavenly Father to reveal Christ, who is our wisdom, to us:

Eph 1:17 Pray ... *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ."*

Col 1:9-12 Pray ... *"to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light".*

### **To Summarise**

The Proverbs are situation sensitive or context dependent and should not simply be taken as absolute or applied mechanically. Observation, experience, instruction handed down, learning from mistakes and, most important of all, revelation are all essential ingredients in growing in wisdom.

Revelation can only come as we humbly submit to God as the source of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding. That's why theme of the "fear of the Lord" is so important throughout the Proverbs.

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 4 – The Fear of the Lord:

Prov 24:3-4     *"By **wisdom** a house is **built**,  
And by **understanding** it is **established**;  
And by **knowledge** the rooms are **filled**  
With all precious and pleasant riches."*

This makes it very clear that for us to succeed in building our lives we must have wisdom, understanding and knowledge. So let's investigate how we go about attaining this wisdom that is sourced in God alone.

Prov 9:10        ... *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"...*

Job 28:28        ... *"Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is understanding"...*

The fear of the Lord is .... **Wisdom**

Prov 1:7            ... *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"...*

The fear of the Lord is ... **Knowledge**

Prov 14:27        ... *"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,  
That one may avoid the snares of death"...*        and,

Prov 16:22        ... *"Understanding is a fountain of life to one who has it"...*

So, the fear of the Lord is ... **Understanding**

The **fear of the Lord** is the source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding, which we need to succeed and to be fulfilled, in accordance with God's plan for our lives.

Can we afford to neglect the "fear of the Lord"? Prov 1:29-32 provides our answer!

*... "Because they hated knowledge  
And did not choose the **fear of the LORD**.  
They would not accept my counsel,  
They spurned all my reproof.  
So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way  
And be satiated with their own devices.  
For the waywardness of the naive will kill them,  
And the complacency of fools will destroy them"...*



That's a serious warning!

Also, for those that think that they are naturally wise and have knowledge in and of themselves and don't need God, and for those who think wisdom and knowledge, once obtained from God, are an end in themselves, take heed to Jeremiah's and Micah's words:

Jer 9:23-24 ... *"Thus says the LORD, 'Let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, let not a rich man boast of his riches; but let him who boasts boast of this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the LORD who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness on earth; for I delight in these things,' declares the LORD."*

Micah 6:8 ... *"He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"*

So let's take heed and continually embrace the "fear of the Lord" and learn to walk in His wisdom.

Ps 128:1-4 ... *"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who walks in His ways. When you shall eat of the fruit of your hands, you will be happy and it will be well with you. Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine within your house, your children like olive plants around your table. Behold, for thus shall the man be blessed who fears the LORD."*

Before going on to learn more about what the fear of the Lord is, let's look at what it is not.

**What the fear of the Lord is not:**

1. **Natural Fear:** It's not the type of fear associated with dangerous situations like, fear of heights, snarling dog, a venomous snake or spider, or some other similar thing. These are phobias and have nothing to do with the fear of God.
2. **Demonic Fear:** Demonic fear is tormenting and destructive. It bombards you with ideas of failure. You only see your inability to cope in situations.

1 John 4:18 ... *"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love".*

When you are dominated by fear, you cannot operate effectively from the spirit. But when you operate in the realm of the Spirit, God will make you fearless because ... *"greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world"* (1 John 1:4). God's love in you will produce confidence which will drive out all tormenting fear.

3. **Religious Fear:** Religion has taught people to be afraid of God through portraying Him as an ogre with a whip ready to punish anyone for the slightest thing.

Isaiah 29:13 ... *"the Lord said ... this people draw near with their word and honor Me with their lip service, but they remove their hearts far from Me, and their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote"...*

Religious fear comes from a poor understanding of the true character and nature of our loving heavenly Father. Satan's tactic right from the Garden of Eden has been to try and keep man separate and distant from God and to misunderstand God. The first thing Adam did after eating the fruit was hide, because he feared God's retribution. Instead of running to God for help he ran from God in fear.

Religious fear teaches a person how to display the appearance of godliness, but keep from ever truly responding to God from his or her heart.

4. **The Fear of Man:** When you fear man it becomes very difficult to obey God.

Prov 29:25 ... *"The fear of man brings a snare"...*

Fear of man, or man pleasing, causes you to act according to their expectations rather than what you believe God is telling you to do.

None of these fears are the "fear of the Lord". Man and Satan will threaten, demand or manipulate, while God will reassure and encourage you.

2 Tim 1:7 ... *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind".*

Renew your mind in God's word. What He says is far more important than what the world says. The fear of the Lord will deliver you from the fear of man, the devil, religion and phobias.

### **What the Fear of the Lord is:**

From the scriptures we started with, we saw that the fear of the Lord is:

- The beginning of Wisdom,
- The beginning of Knowledge, and
- It is understanding.

Ps 111:10 ... *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom".*

Prov 15:33 ... *"The fear of the LORD is the instruction for wisdom".*

But these are the **benefits or result** of the fear of the Lord, so we need to look further to get a better understanding of what is really meant by "the fear of the Lord":

Prov 8:13 ... *"The fear of the LORD is to **hate evil**"....*

Ps 97: 10 ... *"**hate evil**, you who love the Lord" ...*

Prov 14:2 ... *"He who **walks in his uprightness** fears the LORD"...*

Ps 128:1 ... *"How blessed is everyone who fears the LORD, Who **walks in His ways**"...*

To **hate evil** and to **walk uprightly** is really what it means to “fear the Lord”. And if you do that you will get wisdom, knowledge and understanding to help you on your way! So the person who fears and loves the Lord should have a deep down repulsion for all evil and a burning desire to live uprightly.

Evil is a destructive force against humanity, it causes moral decay, misery, sorrow, misfortunes and suffering, to name a few. It was never God’s intention from the start that mankind would live in moral decay, misery, corruption and sorrow. That’s because there is no evil in God and He takes no pleasure in wickedness.

Ps 5:4                   ... *“For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; No evil dwells with You”...*

Evil is a corruption of what God established on the earth. Satan introduced sin and rebellion; Adam received it and introduced it to the world.

Rom 5:12           ... *“just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men”...*

Just look at some of the opposites that evil and corruption has brought into the equation:

<b>GOD Established</b>	<b>EVIL corrupted</b>
Abundance	Lack
Peace and order	Strife and disorder
Give, Share	Retain, Greed
Love	Hate
Health	Sickness and suffering

Evil has brought about the things in the right column. The fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Cooperate with Him and chase it out!

We do not have to live in corruption and evil and their consequences:

2 Pet 1:4           ... *“seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having **escaped the corruption** that is in the world by lust”...*

Rom 8:2           ... *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death”...*

Rom 6:6-7       ... *“knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would **no longer be slaves to sin**; for he who has died is **freed from sin**”...*

Christ has dealt a death blow to sin and the evil nature and set us free from the law of sin and death. We are partakers of His divine nature. The Greater One lives in us! We have victory over sin. We no longer have to bow to evil! We are more than conquerors through Christ Jesus!

Christ's nature is one that repels and hates sin and evil. Darkness flees from the presence of His holiness. In submitting to Christ within you, to His nature of love, holiness and mercy, you will find stirring up within you a desire to see people set free from the darkness of Satan's onslaught against mankind. God's repulsion for sin and evil will be stirred up within you. That submission to him and His hatred for evil is what is essentially the "fear of the Lord".

As you love, fear, revere and draw near to God, out of that deep relationship will flow His love and power. You will become a channel through which He will flow and set people free! You will become a repellent of evil and corruption! You will be a bearer of Light and Life that dispels darkness!

Evil, corruption and darkness will not be able to stay in your presence, like Peter you'll see people set free!

Acts 5:15      ... *"to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them"...*

Natural man loves evil.

John 3:19      ... *"and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil"...*

Natural man's love for evil is obvious if you just listen to their conversation. It centres around, lust, negative things, bad language, criticism, and so on.

But deep down every man longs to be free from this captivity to evil.

Eccl 3:11      ... *"He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end"...*

The desire for eternal life and a love for eternity has been placed by God in everyone's heart, yet in a way that it is hidden and requires the revelation of the Holy Spirit to bring man to understand that desire and its means of fulfillment through Christ.

The problem is man's lack of knowledge.

Hos 4:6      ... *"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge"...*

That's why it is our privilege and calling to shine the light of truth and turn their captivity into freedom. As you do this, know that you do it in the strength of the Lord:

2 Chr 16:9      ... *"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His"...*

Ps 33:18      ... *"Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him"...*

Ps 32:8      ... *"I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you"...*

Like a father or mother keeps an eye on their child to see that no harm comes and that the child is doing the “right” things, so our heavenly Father is keeping an eye on us. His strong support, His guidance and His counsel (wisdom, knowledge and understanding) are guaranteed to those who “fear the Lord”.

The fear of the Lord and the delight and hunger for His word go hand in hand:

Ps 112:1-9 (read)

So to truly live and walk in the fear of the Lord we must:

1. Be willing to align your thoughts, attitudes and desires to those of God. He is a loving, merciful, righteous Father who wants to see everyone freed from sin and the consequences of evil. So we are to hate evil and love righteousness and upright living.
2. Spend time in the presence of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to open the Word to you so that Christ, His attitudes, character and desires may be revealed to you and that any sin in your life may be exposed and cleared out.

Rom 8:26      ... *“In the same way the Spirit also **helps** our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”...*

“Helps” comes from a compound word in the Greek “sunantilambanetai”.

“sun” – together with

“anti” – against

“lambano” – take up, bear, carry

So let the Spirit “take hold together with you against” evil. Face off against evil in His strength and let Him help you walk the Christ life. Let Him use you as a channel for His love and power to touch others and set them free.

#### Conclusion:

... *“the **fear of the Lord** ... is to **hate evil**”...*

... *“He who **walks in his uprightness** ... **fears the Lord**”...*

And to the one who fears the Lord is the blessing of **wisdom, knowledge** and **understanding**. And remember ...

*“By **wisdom** a house is **built**,  
And by **understanding** it is **established**;  
And by **knowledge** the rooms are **filled**  
With all precious and pleasant riches.”*

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

## **Lesson 5 – The Link Between Reverence, Obedience and the Fear of the Lord**

Ps 33:8 ... *"Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him"*.

The Hebrew root word for fear (אָרַא) has the following meanings: "fear", "call to constant attention", "fearing", "being anxious of enemies", "being awesome" and "being aware of a presence".

### **Reverence or Respect:**

- Reverence for God is expressed through a deep respect, love and adoration.
- Reverence is honouring God above all else.
- Reverence is a heart attitude of gratitude, respect, adoration and worship first of all for who God is – His holiness, His purity, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His omnipresence, and that in Him all things find their meaning and purpose. That He is our all in all.
- Reverence is the gratitude, respect and adoration we have for God, secondly, for what He has done out of His infinite mercy, love and compassion for us. A thankfulness for our redemption from all corruption and evil and for the abundant life we have in Christ.
- It's the adoration of heart towards God which says, "You hate evil so much and desire so strongly to see man live free of all evil and corruption, to live uprightly by His pure and holy life, that You gave your only begotten Son, Jesus, to die on our behalf. To give His life so we could share in it.
- Reverence is worship – which is a response to a revelation of who God is and what He has done for us in His demonstration of mercy, love and kindness.

### **Obedience:**

It is not your eloquent words of respect and adoration that impress God as much as your heart attitude and willingness to submit to him and obey Him.

Your submission to Him and obedience to His instructions, directions and commands will reveal your true love and respect for Him.

This is what the "Fear of the Lord" really is; it's the submission and obedience to Him, His word and the voice of His Spirit.

John 14:15 ... *"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments"...*

Prov 8:13 ... *"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil"...*

Prov 14:2 ... *"He who walks in his uprightness fears the LORD"...*

- The "Fear of the Lord" is the action or result of the reverence and respect you have for Him.
- Your inward reverence and respect is expressed by your outward actions. Your actions demonstrate your reverence, respect and submission, all of which collectively make up your "fear of the Lord".

## Wisdom from Proverbs

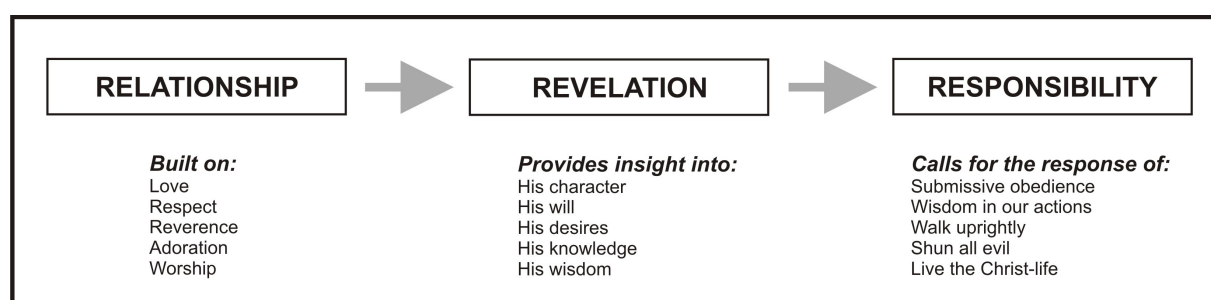
---

You bow before Him and take in the Word, listen to the voice of His Spirit – receive a revelation of the character and nature of the Father and His desires and ways – then, in submission, you respond and put out the word in acts of wisdom. Why? Because ...

Prov 9:10 ... *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"...*

John 14:21 ... *"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and **will disclose Myself to him.**"*

Let's put this into a picture so we can see graphically how it all fits together:



Let's look at an example of this in the scriptures to explain it further:

In Genesis 27 we have the account of Jacob cheating his brother Esau out of his birthright blessing and incurring the wrath of Esau. Esau wanted to kill him, so Jacob ran away and hid from Esau.

Then, after some time has passed, in Genesis 32 we have the story of Jacob meeting up with his brother Esau. He thinks Esau still hates him so he tries to appease Esau by sending him presents of flocks and herds. Jacob split up his family and servants so that if Esau was still mad at him his wives and children would be in hiding while Esau would only encounter the rest of his people. So Jacob takes his two wives, two maids and eleven children over the other side of the Jabbock stream and left them there.

Then we get to Gen 32:24-32.

He is alone at night and a "man" (who turns out to be God) wrestled with him. Jacob doesn't let go of the "man" until he receives a blessing from Him. In this encounter God asks Jacob "What is your name?" In that statement He was not looking for simple identification. He was asking for Jacob to describe his character or personal qualities. Jacob replies, "Jacob" which means "heel catcher", or "supplanter". In other words he was saying I am a trouble maker, devious man, horrible person.

God immediately replies, "you shall no longer be a supplanter or devious person (a 'Jacob'), but you are now a prince with God or one who rules with God" (an 'Israel'). God gives him a covenant name, because the 'el' part of Israel is one of the names used for God in the Old Testament.

Jacob immediately responds by asking God what His name is. To which God says “why do you ask”, to imply, “you know who I am”. This is evident when Jacob named the place “Peniel” which means “the face of God” and says “I have seen God face to face and have survived”.

God blesses Jacob, and touches the sinew in his thigh socket leaving him with a permanent limp. It was to be constant reminder that he was not to walk after the ‘old life’ of the flesh, but rather in the strength of his new life ‘Israel’ – prince with God. For us, it’s a reminder that weakness is the way of the cross, for when we are weak then we are strong, as we now live by the life and strength of Another.

Then in Genesis 33 we hear of how Jacob and Esau meet. Esau is no longer mad with him and all is well. Then ([Gen 33:20](#)) Jacob erects an altar and calls it “El-Elohe-Israel”, which means “God, the God of Israel”. Prior to this Jacob had always referred to God as the “God of my father” or “God of Abraham and God of my father Isaac” ([Gen 32:9](#)), but from here on he refers to God as “God of Israel” – his own God. One with whom he has had a personal encounter and One with whom he now walks in a personal covenant relationship.

Then in Genesis 34 is the encounter of Dinah, Leah’s daughter, being raped by Shechem (son of Hamor) and the slaughter of all the Hivite men by Simeon and Levi (Jacob’s sons) after they had been circumcised. Jacob was now concerned as he thought this would bring the wrath of the Canaanites and Perizzites upon him and his clan.

So, in Genesis 35, God tells Jacob to get up and go to Bethel and live there. Jacob obeys and tells his clan to get rid of all idols, foreign gods and purify themselves before their journey to Bethel. As we move on in chapter 35 we can learn from this, that **repentance and a pure heart precedes revelation**. Also we can learn from [Genesis 35:5](#) that true repentance and walking in integrity will result in the ‘glory of God’ being present in and upon us. With that comes God’s protection and favour.

Jacob gets to his destination safely and builds an altar to worship God and calls the place ‘El-Bethel’ (the God of Bethel, or more literally, the God of the house of God).

Then God appears to Jacob again and blesses him again, and it is here we see **relationship** leading to **revelation** and revelation leading to **responsibility**:

[Gen 35:9-15](#) (read).

**Relationship** – [verse 10](#): Israel is a covenant name signifying the covenant RELATIONSHIP he had with God. Jacob’s worship of God and seeking Him had brought him into a covenant relationship with God.

**Revelation** – [verse 11](#): “I am God Almighty” (El Shaddai). God reveals Himself to Jacob. Relationship leads to revelation.

“El” is used numerous times in the Scriptures as a name for God. Shaddai, translated “Almighty”, comes from a word “shad” which means breast. The milk from a woman’s breast contains all the nutrients and antibodies a baby needs to grow healthily. It is a complete diet. So while the name Shaddai, translated to “Almighty”, suggests God is all powerful and able to do anything, it really contains the meaning that He is One who nourishes, supplies and satisfies **all** our needs. Being the All Sufficient One He pours out or sheds forth all the sustenance and blessing we could possibly need.



So in this name God is seen to be the total source of power and blessings, the All-Sufficient and All-Bountiful One. He is able to triumph over all and any situation or opposition; He is more than sufficient for all these things. *"He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think, according to the power that works within us" ... (Eph 3:20)*. He achieves His will by His power and sufficiency working in us. This is the power and sufficiency that worked a miracle in the deadness of Sarah's 90 year old womb. This is the sufficiency that raised a dead Lazarus from the grave. This is the sufficiency that will provide the answer to any and all of our needs!

This is the name that introduces to us the God who is all-bountiful in the fullness and fruitfulness He imparts to all who trust Him, rest in Him and wait patiently on Him. He is the All-Sufficient One who says, *"apart from Me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). He's the one in and through whom we can with confidence say *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Phil 4:13).

His name God Almighty (El Shaddai) speaks to us of His infinite supply of grace in self-sacrificing love that pours itself out for others. It tells us He never tires from pouring His mercy and blessings on his people. But it also reminds us that His strength is made perfect in our weakness and His sufficiency is most evident in our insufficiency. It's only when we come to Him empty and looking to His sufficiency that He fills us and causes His rivers of living waters to flow out from within us to touch the thirsty and needy around us. It's through His sufficiency that we can, in His power, meet the needs of others.

So, like Jacob, as we walk through life in a relationship of dependence and trust in Him, God will reveal Himself to us and we will find that He is more than sufficient to meet the needs of our situation and circumstances and the challenges of the assignments He sets for us.

**Responsibility** – verse 11: God told Jacob to be fruitful and multiply, and that this would be done through His abundant provision and ability. Jacob had a responsibility that flowed from the relationship he enjoyed and revelation he received.

These principles apply to us. We demonstrate the "fear of the Lord", the respect and reverence we have for Him, as we fulfill the responsibilities God has given us that flow from our relationship with Him and the revelation He brings to us as a result of our intimate relationship.

The more we draw near in worship and adoration, in seeking Him, to know Him, the more He brings fresh revelation (knowledge, understanding and wisdom) to us. And the more revelation we receive the more responsibility He places on us to *"walk in the light"*, to be *"salt and light in the earth"*, to be His ambassadors, to present Christ to a lost and dying world. The more we submit and obey and carry out our responsibilities the nearer He draws to us and the more He reveals of Himself to us and the more responsibilities He will entrust to us. And so the whole process deepens.

The relationship we have with God is borne out of the reverence, respect and adoration we have for Him. As we draw near to Him He reveals Himself and His ways, His wisdom, knowledge and understanding to us. As we come to the revelation of who He is and His plans and purpose for us we see the responsibilities we need to fulfill as His ambassadors. As we submit and obey we demonstrate our real love for Him, our fear of the Lord. So we see the linkages between reverence, obedience and the fear of the Lord; the links between relationship, revelation and responsibility.

Before we move on to the next section there is a point, a cautioning, that must be raised.

A person can make serious mistakes by accepting and walking through the open doors of apparent opportunities without first consulting with the Lord. This happens when we presume that since we have come thus far with God's blessing, that all our steps and decisions will automatically enjoy the same blessing.

We see an example of this where Israel enjoyed early victories in Canaan under Joshua's leadership because he sought and followed God's direction. But then, in Joshua 9, we see that the Gibeonites deceived Joshua into a treaty through false pretences because (Josh 9:14) ... *"the men of Israel ... did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live; and the leaders of the congregation swore an oath to them"*... So even after they found out they had been deceived by their enemies, Israel were forced to honour the treaty and live in peace with them instead of being able to destroy them. Israel's failure to seek God's counsel resulted in them being compromised.

What this tells us is that yesterday's wisdom and direction does not automatically insure that we will not make mistakes and do foolish things today. We must continually, every day, bow our hearts before God, seek Him continually and receive fresh wisdom, instruction and correction, if necessary, so that our decisions and actions are in response to His specific direction for the situation we currently face.

#### **The Fear of the Lord is Learned:**

Deut 17:18-19 ... *"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may **learn to fear the LORD** his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes."*

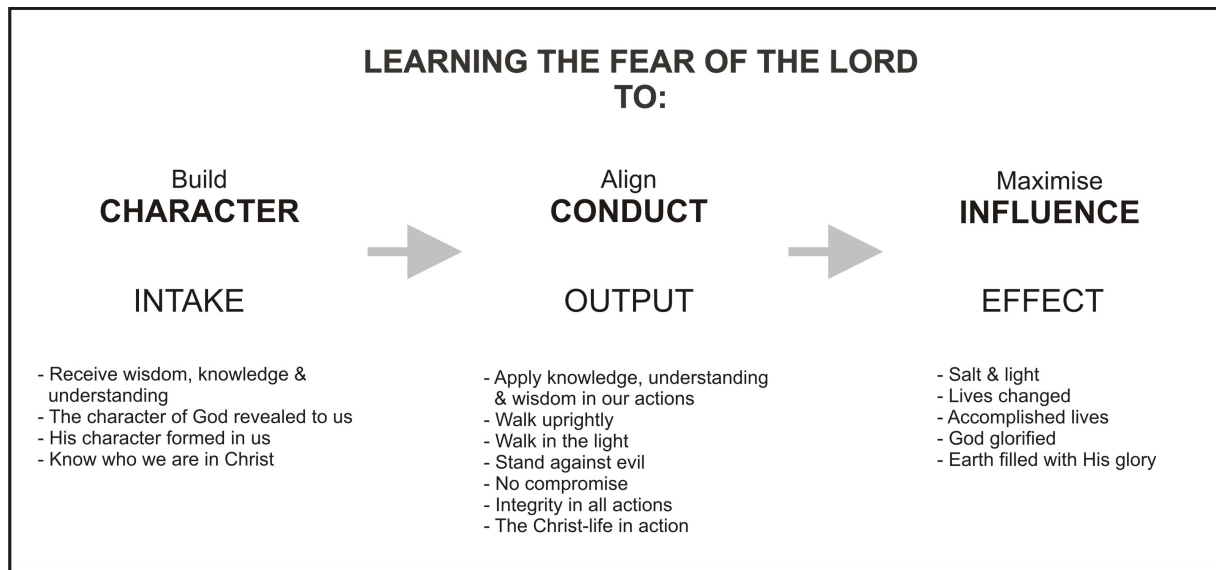
Deut 31:11-13 ... *"when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and children and the alien who is in your town, so that they may hear and **learn and fear the LORD** your God, and be careful to observe all the words of this law. Their children, who have not known, will hear and **learn to fear the LORD** your God, as long as you live on the land which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."*

Psalms 34:11-14 ... *"Come, you children, listen to me;  
I will **teach you the fear of the LORD**.  
Who is the man who desires life  
And loves length of days that he may see good?  
Keep your tongue from evil  
And your lips from speaking deceit.  
Depart from evil and do good;  
Seek peace and pursue it."*

The Holy Spirit is calling us, He's saying, "I want to teach you the fear of the Lord so that you can fulfill the Father's purpose and plan for your life. So that you can live an accomplished life. An abundant life (John 10:10).

It's a call to yield to the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, so He can teach us how to live the abundant life. A life in which we learn from Him so we can apply His wisdom, knowledge and understanding in our lives

We need to learn the fear of the Lord as this is the source of wisdom, knowledge and understanding, without which we cannot live accomplished and victorious lives. We learn the fear of the Lord so that as we bow before Him He can build His **character** in us. We submit and obey His instruction so that our **conduct** is upright and consistent with His ways. As we apply wisdom in our actions we **influence** the world around us for God's glory.



### How to Learn the Fear of the Lord:

To learn the fear of the Lord requires a decision, determination, discipline and diligence on our part.

You have to:

Prov 4:1 ... *"give attention that you may gain understanding"*...

2 Tim 2:15 (KJV) ... *"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

Prov 2:1-12 (read).

We learn the fear of the Lord by spending time in God's presence, talking to Him, in His word, and through the enlightenment, teaching and revelation of the Holy Spirit.

First there are the **conditions** (v1-4):

Note the number of times there is the conditional statement ...*"If you"* ...

Then note the action words: ... “receive” ... “treasure” ... “attentive” ... “incline” ... “cry” ... “lift your voice” ... “seek” ... “search” ...

It is clear that there is a decision, determination, discipline and diligence we have to exercise.

Then there are the promises or rewards (v 5-22):

The promise is declared by the ... “**then** you will” ...

Look back at Deut 17:18-19 ... “that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, **by carefully observing** all the words of this law and these statutes.”

Deut 31:11-13 ... “so that they may hear and learn and fear the LORD your God, and be **careful to observe** all the words of this law.

Prov 7:1-2 ... “My son, **keep** my words  
And **treasure** my commandments within you.  
**Keep** my commandments and live,  
And my teaching as the apple of your eye.”

Prov 4:13 ... “**Take hold of** instruction; do not let go  
**Guard** her, for she is your life”.

Prov 4:20-23 ... “My son, **give attention** to my words;  
**Incline** your ear to my sayings.  
**Do not let them depart** from your sight;  
**Keep** them in the midst of your heart.  
For they are life to those who find them  
And health to all their body.  
**Watch over** your heart with all diligence,  
For from it flow the springs of life.”

Prov 8:32-35 ... “Now therefore, O sons, **listen** to me,  
For blessed are they who **keep** my ways.  
**Heed instruction** and be wise,  
And **do not neglect** it.  
Blessed is the man who **listens** to me,  
**Watching daily** at my gates,  
**Waiting** at my doorposts.  
For he who **finds** me finds life  
And obtains favor from the LORD.

Advice to the not so wise; to those who are not diligent in learning the fear of the Lord and who expect God to come to their rescue whenever they click their fingers. These folks misquote Ps 81:10 which says ... “open wide your mouth and I will fill it”...

These folks would do well to consider Matt 12:34 ... *"the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart"...* and Prov 4:23 ... *"Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life"...*

It's quite simple; whatever your heart is full of will come flowing out of you. You have to first draw near to God and His word, be filled with His wisdom and His Spirit, and then in your time of need the Holy Spirit will have something to work with and to quicken to you.

Learning the fear of the Lord involves the training of your words and actions. Christ is in us and He is our prime example:

1 Pet 2:22 ... *"Who committed no sin, **nor was any deceit found in his mouth**"...*

Acts 10:38 ... *"You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about **doing good** and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him"...*

Eph 4:17-5:1 (read).

Be imitators of God. Say and do only that which you have heard from Him or seen in Him.

Prov 8:13 ... *"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil".* Put it all away. Shun it, get rid of it.

Prov 14:2 ... *"He who walks in his uprightness fears the Lord".*

Rom 13:14 ... *"put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust".*

Learning the fear of the Lord and the renewing of the mind are one and the same thing. The focus is on ... *"Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God"...* (1 Cor 1:30).

### **Learning the Fear of the Lord is Connected Directly to Learning or Gaining Wisdom:**

Job 28:28 ... *"And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding'".*

If we put Prov 13:14 and Prov 14:27 together then, *"the teaching of the wise"* is equated to *"the fear of the Lord"* and both are *"a fountain of life"*.

'Wisdom' and the 'fear of the Lord' promote a life that lives in line with God's word, stimulated by a trust and a deep respect and reverence for Him.

1 Cor 1:30 says ... *"Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God"...* Christ is in us and He is wisdom. What we need is a revelation of Christ as our wisdom.

Eph 1: 17 tells us to pray that ... *"that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him"*. So we are urged to pray that Christ may be revealed to us. That He may reveal to us His attribute of wisdom. Our heart cry should be like Paul's ... *"that I may know Him"* ... (Phil 3:10). See also John 17:3.

1 Cor 2:16 .... *"we have the mind of Christ"*. In the same way that Christ is in us (Col 1:27) we have the mind of Christ. In the same way that we have to 'grow in Christ' we need to be 'learning and putting on His mind'. What we need is a revelation of Christ and His mind (His wisdom, knowledge and understanding). That's why we need to draw near to Him and walk in an intimate relationship based on our respect and love for Him, as He will only reveal himself to those who walk in a deep relationship of respect, submission and obedience.

2 Chr 16:9 ... *"For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is **completely** His"*.

There is no room for compromise or lukewarmness.

Solomon was very wise and became very powerful, but compromise brought about his downfall.

2 Chr 1:7-12 Tells us how Solomon received wisdom and favour from God.

Then later he wavered in his devotion to God and through compromise fell from grace.

1 Kings 11:4-13 ... *"For when Solomon was old, his wives **turned his heart away after other gods**; and his **heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God**, as the heart of David his father had been ..... Now the LORD was angry with Solomon **because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel** ..... So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant". ..*

Prov 3:13-26 (read). We should not stop short with "finding" or "gaining" wisdom and understanding (v13), but must "take hold", "hold her fast" (v18), "let them not depart" and "keep" (v21) them. Our walk and devotion to the Lord is to grow stronger day by day and be a continual, not sporadic, relationship for us to live the abundant Christ-life.

### Results or Promises that are Ours if We Fear of the Lord:

- *Wellbeing, long life and health:*
  - *Deut 5:29*
  - *Deut 6:2, 24*
  - *Ps 112:1-3*
  - *Prov 3:7-8*
  - *Prov 10:27*
  - *Prov 14:27a*
  - *Prov 16:6-7*
  - *Prov 19:23a*
  - *Prov 22:4*
- *Protection*
  - *Ps 34:7*
  - *Ps 33:18-19*
  - *Ps 60:4-5*
  - *Ps 115:11*

- *Prov 14:27b*
  - *Prov 19:23b*
- *Provision*
  - *Ps 34:9*
  - *Ps 111:5*
  - *Ps 128:1-4*
- *God's Goodness and Mercy*
  - *Ps 31:19*
  - *Ps 85:9*
  - *Ps 103:11, 13, 17*
  - *Ps 147:11*
- *Fulfilled desires*
  - *Ps 145:19*
- *Revelation knowledge*
  - *Ps 25:12-14*

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 6 – Wisdom – God's Way

We ended off last time with the promises that are ours if we revere and honour God and demonstrate a "fear of the Lord" in our lives, attitudes and corresponding actions. Promises for those whose heart is completely His.

We may well ask, "Are these promises always automatic, mechanical and instant?" We will find that the answer is that they can be, but not always. So now we are going to focus on the two sides to this answer.

#### Promises Fulfilled Without Delay:

Let's look again briefly at a few of these promises and some examples from experience and from the scriptures, where we see the fulfillment of the promises to those who demonstrated a fear of the Lord:

- **Health and Wellbeing:**

Prov 3:7-8      ... *"Do not be wise in your own eyes;  
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.  
It will be healing to your body  
And refreshment to your bones.*

This tells me that I can expect to be healthy and strong if I fear the Lord (respect, revere, trust and honour Him), applying His wisdom and not following my own wisdom. Some examples show this to be as stated in the word:

- *Personal experience:*

I can bear witness to the truth of this statement. I foolishly tried to lift something too heavy too quickly and tore the biceps tendon off the bone of my left fore-arm and at the same time tore the tendon in my left shoulder. I found a good orthopedic surgeon and submitted to his knife to fix my arm. But before the two operations, one for the lower arm and one for the shoulder, and during the entire recovery process, I placed my trust in the Lord to bring my arm back to its normal function. My trust was in God to help the surgeon and the physiotherapist, to give them wisdom from above to ensure they did the right things. Praise be to God, I have fully recovered and this arm is as strong if not stronger than it was before and able to do everything 100 percent as it was designed to do in the first place. I believe that a result of living a life in the "fear of the Lord" has brought *"healing to my body and refreshment to my bones"*.

Also there have been occasions when I have been facing very important work assignments or meetings, where I have had people all around me coughing and spluttering and full of flu, and where I have called out to the Lord for his protection against the flu because I simply could not afford to be ill at critical times. Each time He was faithful and kept me in health.



- *Examples from Scripture:*

Matt 9:18-26 (read)

Here we have a record of two people who God brought to health and wellbeing because they feared, revered and trusted Him.

The synagogue official ... *"bowed down before Him"*, demonstrating his reverence, trust and fear of the Lord. The result was that his daughter was healed.

The woman suffering from a hemorrhage for 12 years was healed when she touched Jesus garment because she trusted in Him and humbly went up and touched His garment. Her action was a demonstration of the "fear of the Lord", a placing of her trust in Him. He healed her and commended her for placing faith, trust and dependence on Him to heal.

There are many more examples from the scriptures and from our lives that can substantiate this wonderful truth that God will heal or keep in health those who love, honour and fear Him.

• **Protection:**

Psalm 34:7 ... *"The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear Him,  
And rescues them."*

Prov 19:23 ... *"The fear of the LORD leads to life,  
So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil."*

- *Family experience:*

During the time of the bush war in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) my father, a missionary in that country, used to travel out to the remote areas to distribute bibles and tracts and to hold services in the local communities. Once, on his way to a remote mine he came under fire from a group of guerillas bearing automatic weapons. They were hiding in the rocks on the side of the road. The car was riddled with bullets. A bullet hit the distributor and put the engine out of action. The car rolled a couple of hundred metres past the attackers and then came to a halt. Dad got out, locked the car and walked briskly up the road in the direction of the mine. He had to walk a few kilometers to reach the mine security gate. The Lord protected him and kept him safe. Later the car was taken to the panel and paint folks for repair. They were amazed he had not been killed as there were bullet holes right through the doors on the driver's side, yet not a trace of the bullets. Dad recons that the angels have got the bullet shrapnel!

Dad later said that all the time the 91<sup>st</sup> Psalm was going through his head and that he knew he was safe in his Heavenly Father's hands.

Psalm 91:1-16 ... *"He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High  
Will abide in the shadow of the Almighty.  
I will say to the LORD, "My refuge and my fortress,  
My God, in whom I trust!"  
For it is He who delivers you from the snare of the trapper*

*And from the deadly pestilence.  
He will cover you with His pinions,  
And under His wings you may seek refuge;  
His faithfulness is a shield and bulwark.  
You will not be afraid of the terror by night,  
Or of the arrow that flies by day;  
Of the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
Or of the destruction that lays waste at noon.  
A thousand may fall at your side  
And ten thousand at your right hand,  
But it shall not approach you.  
You will only look on with your eyes  
And see the recompense of the wicked.  
For you have made the LORD, my refuge,  
Even the Most High, your dwelling place.  
No evil will befall you,  
Nor will any plague come near your tent.  
For He will give His angels charge concerning you,  
To guard you in all your ways.  
They will bear you up in their hands,  
Lest you strike your foot against a stone.  
You will tread upon the lion and cobra,  
The young lion and the serpent you will trample down.  
Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;  
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.  
He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and honor him.  
With a long life I will satisfy him  
And let him behold My salvation."*

You may well ask, "Why did God let this happen? Why did He not just stop the attackers from even being there in the first place so Dad could pass unhindered?" Well, in the car Dad had a box of bibles and scripture tracts. These were stolen by the guerillas, who had smashed the windows to get into the abandoned car to steal whatever they could find. Dad saw this "non-conventional" method of scripture distribution, to reach those he would normally not be able to reach, as the purpose for this incident, and for that he praised God.

Dad was a man who feared God and one who enjoyed God's protection and a long life in fruitful ministry. In fact, after this incident Dad he lived a further 38 years before he went to be with the Lord a few months before his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday.

- *Example from Scripture:*

David was a man who feared the Lord. Psalm 86 is a prayer that David wrote, and it contains these words:

Psalm 86:11-13

*... "Teach me Your way, O LORD;  
I will walk in Your truth;  
Unite my heart to fear Your name.  
I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,  
And will glorify Your name forever.  
For Your loving-kindness toward me is great,  
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol."*

David certainly was one who enjoyed God's protection and 1 Sam 17 is a record of God's protection of David as he faced the 2.95m giant, Goliath:

1 Sam 17:31-37, 45-49 (read)

David certainly was a man who feared God and, as a result, enjoyed the protection and favour of God.

There are many other examples of people in the scriptures who feared God and enjoyed His protection.

- ***Provision and wealth:***

Psalm 34:9

*... "O fear the LORD, you His saints;  
For to those who fear Him there is no want."*

- ***Personal Experience:***

In 1979, when my daughters Cheri and Robyn were 18 months and 2 months old respectively, we went off to the USA to Bible school for a couple of years. We had sufficient finances to get there and see our way through school. We had been accepted by the college and had made our flight reservations. Then, clearly, the Lord told me to start giving the money away and He directed where and to whom it was to go. I really checked that this was His will and not the devil trying to trick us out of going to Bible school. But it was God, and so all the money went to where He directed. That left us with nothing and time was running out to get the airfares paid.

A pastor friend from a city 500 km away phoned and asked if everything was set for us to go. He knew we were going as we had used him as one of our referees for the college application. He specifically asked if our airfares were paid. He told me that a member of his congregation had been told by the Lord to pay our airfares. When I told him they had not been paid, he said, "Ok, now they are paid!"

We flew from Harare to Brussels, where we had to change flights to fly to the USA. In Brussels airport, in the midst of the crowds, a man, a stranger, came up to me and said, "Here, the Lord told me to give this to you", and he put US\$105 into my hand. As we had a 7 hour stop-over in Brussels airport that gave us some money to buy some refreshments, and money for food when we got to Bible school.

In a similar way the Lord provided all the way through our time in the USA. He had specifically told me not to work for money but to spend all my available time in the Word, in prayer and in ministry. So I did that and He kept His side of the deal. Sometimes things were very tight and there were some very humbling occasions where we were given money by people who were themselves in a desperate state. I will share one such example.

We had been without money for some days and just about all the food had run out. The girls, especially baby Robyn needed milk and there had been no milk for some days. We had prayed and prayed and it seemed without avail. Then one morning I turned to Cheri, then just 2 years old, and said to her, “daddy and mummy have prayed, now it your turn to pray and ask God for some food”. So Cheri prayed. This is what she said, “dear Jesus, please give daddy money for milk and bubblegum, amen”. We went off to classes as normal and the kids their children’s care school. After school I went past the mail box and found a letter. It was from a very poor Mexican couple we had ministered to when we went on a preaching weekend to Corpus Christi. These folks were poverty personified. In their letter was a note thanking us for the ministry and telling us that the enclosed gift, a \$5 note, was from their “overflow”. I went to the local store and bought milk and bread and a couple of other things, but not bubblegum. When I came home the next door neighbor, who had no idea of our circumstances, came up to me looking very sheepish and handed me a little brown paper bag and said, “This may seem crazy but I really heard the Lord telling me to give this to you”. In the bag were a couple of packs of bubblegum! God answered Cheri’s very specific prayer.

Every school vacation the Lord provided places for us to go; sometimes families invited us home with them for the vacations. I had asked the Lord if at all possible that we would like to see a bit of the States while we were there and that we would also like to have a van to travel in. Every vacation we had a van, fuel and accommodation and we saw most of the central and eastern states! All our school, fees were paid, we were fed and clothed. To God be the praise! He is faithful to His word.

*Examples from Scripture:*

1 Kings 17:1-6 ... *“Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.’ The word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. It shall be that you will drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.’ So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.”*

Ravens eat meat, let alone bring it to a person! But God used ravens. He specializes in the impossible!

Phil 4:18 ... *“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.*

Paul, like Elijah, was a man who greatly feared God, and God saw to it that Paul’s need were amply supplied.

We could go on citing example after example of God’s provision to those who fear Him, for He certainly is faithful to His word. But now we need to look at this subject from a different facet – where the promises don’t appear to take place instantly, or automatically, or in what we perceive to be a reasonable timeframe, or the way we think things should pan out.

**His Ways are Higher Than Our ways:**

Isa 55:8      ... *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.  
"For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways  
And My thoughts than your thoughts."*

While God's word is clear that He will provide for, protect, honour, reveal Himself to, grant health to and look after those who fear Him, on some occasions we don't see these answers popping up automatically or immediately. And we ask why. Sometime we may question God and His word.

Sometimes we beat up on ourselves and think we must have done something wrong and that's why God is not answering.

Let's look at some examples and see if we can get some understanding of this sometimes perplexing matter.

**1.      *Job:***

The first chapter (v1-3) of Job makes it clear that Job was a man that feared God, was blameless, upright and turned away from evil. This in turn had brought him prosperity in every dimension. He was *"the greatest of all men of the east"*.

God knew that Job feared Him for nothing and that no matter what happened to Job, Job would always fear the Lord and trust and honour Him implicitly. So God allows Satan to lift his hand against Job, with the condition that he does not take Job's life. Then V 13-19 explains how all of Job's children, servants and livestock were wiped out. In V 20-22 we read that Job shaved his head, tore his robes and worshipped God and throughout this ordeal he did not blame God. Following this, in Chapter 2, we see that Satan is permitted to touch Job's health and strikes him down with boils, covering his whole body with boils. In quick succession Job lost his children, his wealth and his health and is thrown into unimaginable suffering.

Now imagine your thoughts if you were in Job's place in the midst of this terrible situation. What thoughts would be going through your mind in light of Proverbs 3:7-10 and Proverbs 8:17-21? His wife tells him to "curse God and die". His friends Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, who came initially to comfort him, are beginning to accuse and attack his attitude. Yet in the midst of this catastrophe his response to his wife's comment is (v10), *"You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"* and the verse goes on to say *"In all this Job did not sin with his lips."*

If we study the chapters that follow we will see what the three "friends" were saying and will find their comments all focus on "retribution theology". Their thoughts could even be supported by verses from Proverbs. Examples are: Prov 10:9, 11:3, 11:5, 11:19, 11:21, 12:21, 13:21 and 15:6 to name a few. All of these basically say that if you do wrong you will reap trouble. And this is true, there is no questioning it, if we sin we will bear the consequences of that sin. However, retribution theology reverses this and is dogmatic in saying, "if you are reaping trouble it must be because you sinned or did something wrong".

But where this goes wrong is that trouble is not only a result of sin or wrongdoing, as is clearly the case with Job.

So for many chapters (Ch 3-31) of the book we find the interchange going on between Job and his three friends. All three friend's dialogues are occupied with the retribution argument. They all are saying to Job that when he was good he was blessed, but now that he is in trouble he should be looking for where he sinned or did something wrong so he can repent and get straight with God and get his blessings restored.

Eliphaz makes this clear from the beginning:

Job 4:7-9      ... *"Consider now: Who, being innocent, has ever perished?  
Where were the upright ever destroyed?  
As I have observed, those who plow evil  
and those who sow trouble reap it.  
At the breath of God they perish;  
at the blast of his anger they are no more."*

Job does not say at any point that he is without sin and agrees that no one can be righteous before God (Job 9:2), but he objects to the line of reasoning Eliphaz and the others are handing out. He is adamant and says his suffering is not a result of sin. But he does question whether he can get justice from God.

Job 9:21-24      ... *"Although I am blameless,  
I have no concern for myself;  
I despise my own life.  
It is all the same; that is why I say,  
'He destroys both the blameless and the wicked.'  
When a scourge brings sudden death,  
he mocks the despair of the innocent.  
When a land falls into the hands of the wicked,  
he blindfolds its judges.  
If it is not he, then who is it?"*

Job strongly counterattacks his friends and questions their "wisdom".

Job 12:2-3 (NLT)      ... *"You people really know everything, don't you?  
And when you die, wisdom will die with you!  
Well, I know a few things myself—  
and you're no better than I am.  
Who doesn't know these things you've been saying?"*

He slams their wisdom with the words:

Job 13:12 (Message)      ... *"Your wise sayings are knickknack wisdom,  
good for nothing but gathering dust."*

Clearly Job does not take his friends advice because he questions their wisdom. He throws their argument out and puts forth his idea that God is unfair. His remedy to the matter is that he should consult God and calls for an interview with God.

Eventually Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar exhaust their arguments and while they do not concede their viewpoint, they grow quiet. Then onto the scene comes a youth, Elihu. He is a young smart-aleck who thinks he knows everything. He has waited, out of respect for age for the three friends, to resolve Job's problem, but he can wait no longer, he's mad with Job for trying to justify himself before God and must have his say.

Job 32:6-9 (Message)    ... *"I'm a young man,  
and you are all old and experienced.  
That's why I kept quiet  
and held back from joining the discussion.  
I kept thinking, 'Experience will tell.  
The longer you live, the wiser you become.'  
But I see I was wrong—it's God's Spirit in a person,  
the breath of the Almighty One, that makes wise human insight possible.  
The experts have no corner on wisdom;  
getting old doesn't guarantee good sense.  
So I've decided to speak up. Listen well!  
I'm going to tell you exactly what I think.*

But, despite the fact that Elihu says he's going to teach them something new, he comes out with exactly the same retribution argument the other have dished up so far.

Job 34:11 (Message)    ... *"He makes us pay for exactly what we've done—no more, no less.  
Our chickens always come home to roost."*

Eventually Job gets his request for an interview with God, who he says will give him a fair hearing and just answer. But what he got is not quite what he was bargaining for, as God does not give him a direct answer as to why he is suffering, in fact all he gets is a rebuke from God. God chastises him for casting aspersions on the divine reputation.

Job 40:8 (Message)    ... *"Do you presume to tell Me what I'm doing wrong?  
Are you calling Me a sinner so you can be a saint?"*

What God does is He answers a question that has been in the background of the entire book; *"What or who is the source of wisdom"*. God's answer is that He alone is wise. God's first words to Job set the stage and introduce the next few chapters. He asks Job for answers to questions that only He, the Creator, could answer.

Job 38:2-3 (Message)    ... *"Why do you confuse the issue?  
Why do you talk without knowing what you're talking about?  
Pull yourself together, Job!  
Up on your feet! Stand tall!*

*I have some questions for you,  
and I want some straight answers.*

The questions God asks show that He alone has full knowledge and control of the natural order which He created, and contrasts this with Job's ignorance. Implied, is that what is true of the natural order also stands true for the moral order. God knows why Job has suffered, but Job is still none the wiser as God does not give him a direct answer.

God asks a series of rhetorical questions and makes statements concerning the source of wisdom such as:

Job 38:36-37    ... *"Who has put wisdom in the innermost being  
Or given understanding to the mind?  
Who can count the clouds by wisdom?..."*

Finally, Job comprehends the authority of God and His statements and in humble response, repents for having cast aspersions on the divine reputation. He humbly bows before the Almighty God acknowledging that He alone is in command of all creation and submits himself to God's will.

The book concludes with Job's submission to God, the three friends rebuked by God, Elihu ignored and Job's wealth and glory restored to much more than it was formerly.

### ***How does the story of Job help us in our study of the book of Proverbs?***

The purpose for looking at the life of Job has been to examine how the story of Job helps us read and correctly apply Proverbs. For this we consider two issues, wisdom and suffering.

#### ***Wisdom:***

While the matter of the suffering of the innocent is important in the book, the main topic is that of wisdom. The question "who is wise?" takes precedence and drives the discussion. Everyone claims to be wise or that their argument is the correct one, but only towards the end of the book, when God speaks, is the matter settled. No human can lay claim to wisdom for God alone is wise and he gives wisdom as he sees fit (the poor old ostriches lost out! Job 39:13-18).

Repentance and submission was the only and correct response, as demonstrated by Job.

Job 42:5-6 (Message)    ... *"I admit I once lived by rumors of you;  
now I have it all firsthand—from my own eyes and ears!  
I'm sorry—forgive me. I'll never do that again, I promise!  
I'll never again live on crusts of hearsay, crumbs of rumor."*

Truly, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Our part is that of total trust, submission and reverence towards God, acknowledging that no matter what we see or feel, He is God, He is in control, and He alone is wise.



### ***Suffering:***

God provides an indirect answer to Job's question of why he is suffering by answering the more important question concerning wisdom. In this life no one is exempt from pain and suffering in some form or other. We would all like answers for why we have to put up with whatever is plaguing us and we would all derive some comfort from understanding, even if the pain remained.

Even though God has not chosen to provide insight into this question of suffering, we can learn one thing of significance from the book of Job; it rejects the misguided and incorrect doctrine of retribution.

The doctrine of retribution is based on the truth that if you sin you will suffer in some way, but it turns this around to incorrectly assume that if you are suffering you must have sinned. It takes the truths from Proverbs that those who submit to God's ways of wisdom will ... *"live securely, and shall be at ease from the dread of evil"*... (Prov 1:33) and that ... *"adversity pursues sinners"*... (Prov 13:21) and it turns these around. It errs by exchanging the cause and the effect.

Job's three friends took the truth that sin leads to suffering to the point of believing, erroneously, that anyone who is suffering must have sinned. By reversing the cause and the effect they were claiming that all suffering is explained by sin. They were saying that Job's suffering was a telltale sign that he has sinned. In other words they would not be seeing Job as a wise man in terms of the book of Proverbs.

Where the book of Job is of significance in relation to the book of Proverbs is that it provides us correction to this faulty theology of retribution. It denies the mechanical or automatic application of the connection in the Proverbs between wise behavior and material reward, between living uprightly and good health. It does this through the example of a man who suffered ill health and material loss for a reason apart from sin.

It is clear right from the first chapter of Job that Job's suffering was not a result of his sin. Job was like another man who we find in John Chapter 9, a blind man, who, like Job, suffered for a reason other than sin.

John 9:1-7     ... *"As He passed by, He saw a man blind from birth. And His disciples asked Him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?" Jesus answered, "It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him." "We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work. "While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world." When He had said this, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and applied the clay to his eyes, and said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which is translated, Sent) So he went away and washed, and came back seeing."*

The disciples question to Jesus reflects the same kind of thinking as Job's three friends, retribution theology. But Jesus puts the matter straight.

Another occasion where we see a similar situation is found in Acts 3:1-4:5. This is after Pentecost, in the days of the early church. The disciples are on their way to the temple at the hour of prayer. They pass by a man who had been lame since birth. He was now 40 years old. For many years this man had been

placed daily on a pallet alongside the gate Beautiful, a good vantage point from which to beg for alms. Jesus would have walked past him often, yet had not healed him. Jesus was the embodiment of wisdom. He knew when this man was to be healed and the purpose for his lameness. Then Peter, quickened by the Holy Spirit, sees him on this special day and tells him that they have no money to give him but that he should rise up and be healed. The man is healed, he gets up and goes off walking and leaping and praising God. This causes quite a stir and gives Peter the opportunity to preach the gospel to the crowds and not only is the lame man healed that day but also 5000 are saved as a result of the preaching. Truly this was a day when God was glorified.

Somehow, the difficult truth to understand with Job, the blind man and the lame man is that the suffering of faithful servants of God brings Him glory.

The book of Job does not provide all the reasons for suffering but it does disabuse the misguided and incorrect doctrine of retribution as the only reason for suffering. Job for once and for all settles the matter that personal sin is not the only reason for suffering, whether physical or material.

In reading the book of Proverbs we need to be careful that we don't, like the proponents of the retribution theology, exchange the cause and the effect and assume that this forms the only and final truth concerning the matter. Proverbs does not stand alone; it is part of the Bible. If on reading the Proverbs we were to conclude that the godly wise would always live blessed lives and never have to suffer, we would be wrong. Job was an innocent and righteous man, yet he suffered terribly for a while before being restored to his former wealth and wellbeing. There is always the exception to the rule and you cannot use a person's suffering as a tool for unfairly diagnosing their spiritual or ethical life.

We also must be careful not to read and expect that the promises will be instantaneous and automatic, as we will learn from the lives of some of God's great men.

### **2. Joseph:**

Joseph's life provides us with a good object lesson in the wisdom of Proverbs. His story is found in Genesis chapters 37-50.

Jacob favoured Joseph over all his other sons and showed his preference through giving him gifts and other special treatment. This infuriated his brothers who were clearly jealous of Joseph. So one day when they were out in the fields far from home tending the flocks, they took hold of Joseph, threw him in a pit. They took his coat of many colours tore it and put animal blood on it so they could tell their father he had been killed by a lion. Then when some foreign traders came past where the brothers were they sold Joseph to them as a slave. From here on Joseph is subject to abuse and neglect by the succession of people who own him.

Now from a human perspective it appears that all is lost and his life is hopeless. However, from the divine perspective it is quite in order, as God is quietly in control here maneuvering his man into a place where one day he will rescue Jacob's family, God's chosen family, from the ravages of a famine that will hit his homeland. At the end of Genesis (Gen 50:20) we eventually hear Joseph articulate this divine perspective when Joseph forgives his brothers for their act of unkindness towards him. He says to them ... *"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive"*.

In Genesis 39 we read that the presence of Joseph in Potiphar's house brings multiplied blessings. God is with Joseph and the blessings Potiphar enjoys from Joseph's presence result in Joseph finding favour and being awarded increased privileges and responsibilities.

However, one day he is alone in Potiphar's house with Potiphar's wife and she (the woman "folly" personified) tries to seduce him. He refuses and says ... *"There is no one greater in this house than I, and he has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great evil and sin against God?"* (Gen 39:9). She tries again and again to seduce him but he refuses. On one occasion she pulls his garment off him and he flees. She then tells her husband he came to her to try and seduce her and when she started screaming he fled but she managed to rip his coat off. So the falsely accused Joseph gets thrown into prison.

In prison Joseph meets and ends up interpreting dreams for two of Pharaoh's officials, his cup bearer and his baker. The baker ends up being put to death and the cup bearer is released to go back to his duties, in accordance to the interpretation of the dreams.

Joseph is forgotten in prison until Pharaoh has a dream. No one can interpret the dream, then the cup bearer remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh how he had interpreted his dream. Joseph is brought onto the scene and God gives him the interpretation for Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh is impressed and appoints Joseph to a top position in his government. He then ensures the survival of Egypt, increases Pharaoh's power, but most important of all, he is there to provide food for his own family when they arrive from their famine-ravaged home. By doing this he keeps alive God's covenant people.

Of importance, from this story of Joseph, we understand that the connection between obedience or uprightness before God and reward is not automatic, mechanical and immediate. In the short term Joseph ends up in a pit and later in prison; in the long term he ends up in a high position and enjoys amazing blessings along with this entire family. Regardless, all along Joseph honours God. What is of utmost significance is that the path of godly wisdom is the only path to take. It's not ours to know when or how God will fulfill His part, it is only ours to do our part: to fear God and honour Him in all our ways.

### **3. Dad**

My father, who spent his entire life faithfully serving God on the mission field, had a hobby. He made bible cases and other useful things out of leather or synthetic materials. The pieces of the bible cases were sewn together with leather thronging. This required many small holes to be punched out of the leather along the edges of the pieces that were to be sewn together. He used to punch out each hole one at a time, a laborious process.

Then one day he got an idea and went to a second hand shop to see if he could buy an inexpensive drill press. He found one, paid for it and took it to my brother-in-law, a fitter, to modify it to hold a whole row of punches. My brother-in-law took one look at it and told my dad the frame was cracked through and that the press would not work. So dad took the drill press back to the shop where he bought it.

Dad explained nicely to the shop keeper the problem and handed him the drill press. The shop keeper picked it up and threw it at my dad, swore at him and told him it was his tough luck and that he was to go away. Dad picked up the drill press from where it landed on the floor and placed it on the counter and continued to reason with the man. The shop keeper in a temper came around and grabbed hold of

my dad, punched him in the stomach, winding him, and then forcefully threw him out of the shop. Dad landed heavily and broke his arm at the elbow in three places.

In hospital the attending doctor not only realized the arm was broken and attended to it, but had the wisdom (no doubt quickened from above) to put dad through a scan of the abdomen to check for potential soft tissue and organ damage. The scan revealed something quite unexpected and unrelated to the punch or the fall. There was an aneurism of the aorta. The aorta was blown up like a balloon and ready to pop at any moment. Dad was taken into theatre and the aorta repaired then the arm bones wired together.

The doctor later said he may have had only hours, days or at most weeks to live had this gone undetected.

Dad's response to the whole ordeal was that he was not angry at the shop keeper, but was thankful that God had used him as an instrument to give him a longer life. It was not his time to go, God had many more years of faithful ministry for him to undertake. After his recovery, dad went back to the shop to give the man a gospel tract in the hopes that the man would read it and come to salvation. Back home he prayed for the man's salvation and that of his shop attendants.

God's ways are higher than our ways. Before the diagnosis of the aneurism we all would have only seen the incident as an evil attack and thought bad of the shop keeper. But all along our Heavenly Father knew dad's condition and used this to prolong dad's life and to bring God glory. Dad's painful suffering had nothing to do with sin in his life. This was one of those mysteries that only God knew about and for which He ultimately brought blessing to my dad and all of our family, and glory to God.

Dad lived a further 17 years before going to be with the Lord. As the end of his favourite Psalm says:

Ps 91:14-16     ... *"Because he has loved Me, therefore I will deliver him;  
I will set him securely on high, because he has known My name.  
He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;  
I will be with him in trouble;  
I will rescue him and honor him.  
With a long life I will satisfy him  
And let him behold My salvation."*

We change direction a little now as we look at one more example.

#### **4.     Daniel**

In Daniel Chapter 1 we see that Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem and as part of a settlement takes Daniel and his three friends back to Babylon. There they were expected to become Babylonian in their lifestyles and loyalty. They would be trained and put to service in the Babylonian empire.

Daniel and his friends remain loyal to God. In the midst of adversity they show us that God takes care of His faithful servants. They refused the rich food and chose to eat vegetables and water only. This was so that when they proved to be healthier than the others who ate the rich food of Babylon, that God would be glorified.

But at first Daniel was denied the opportunity of having plain food. However, he did not lose his cool but demonstrates godly wisdom in his patience. He demonstrated his knowledge of God's wisdom as found in the Proverbs:

Prov 14:16-17 ... *"A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil,  
But a fool is arrogant and careless.  
A quick-tempered man acts foolishly,  
And a man of evil devices is hated*

Prov 14:29 ... *"He who is slow to anger has great understanding,  
But he who is quick-tempered exalts folly."*

He knew that if he was patient and exercised wisdom God would bring about the favour he needed.

Prov 22:11 ... *"He who loves purity of heart  
And whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend."*

Prov 25:15 ... *"By forbearance a ruler may be persuaded,  
And a soft tongue breaks the bone."*

Daniel eventually quietly convinced the servant who delivered the rich food to bring vegetables and water. After ten days the four men looked healthier than the others who ate the rich food. The king is impressed and he assigns Daniel and his friends to his court.

In the second chapter of Daniel, we see the depth of God's wisdom in operation in Daniel. The king has a dream without revealing what his dream was he expected someone to tell him what he dreamt and what it meant. None of his wise men can do this. They give up with the words:

Daniel 2:10-11 NLT ... *"The astrologers replied to the king, "No one on earth can tell the king his dream! And no king, however great and powerful, has ever asked such a thing of any magician, enchanter, or astrologer! The king's demand is impossible. No one except the gods can tell you your dream, and they do not live here among people."*

The king gets mad and decrees the death penalty for all the wise men including Daniel and his friends. Daniel did not panic; he asked for time and sought God in prayer. God revealed everything to Daniel and he was able to tell the king the contents and meaning of his dream. Daniel responds by praising God (Dan 2:20-23). When Daniel stood in the king's presence to reveal the dream he took no credit for himself but rather he immediately started by giving the credit to God for the wisdom to interpret the dream. As a result Daniel was promoted and given gifts and blessed.

Dan 2:27-28 NLT ... *"Daniel replied, "There are no wise men, enchanters, magicians, or fortune-tellers who can reveal the king's secret. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what will happen in the future. Now I will tell you your dream and the visions you saw as you lay on your bed."*

From this passage it is clear that God and God alone is the source of wisdom, and He keeps His faithful servants safe by revealing His mind to them. There are mysteries that only God's wisdom can reveal and unfold to our understanding. We may be taken through some tough and uncomfortable circumstances but will be used as vessels unto honour if we faithfully place our trust in Him regardless of what we see or feel. At the right time He will reveal his mind and give us the understanding we need for the situation we face. It will not always be plain and "automatic", as it appears at face value in the word.

### **Conclusion:**

As we read the proverbs let us bear in mind the understanding we have gained from these various stories from scripture and our personal life's experiences and remember, His ways are higher than ours.

The promises can be instant and automatic, but sometimes, for reasons known only to God, they can be delayed for a while. There are situations and circumstances where only God has understanding of what's going on. But rest assured that He does give revelation to those whose heart is completely His.

1 Cor 1:30 ... *"But by His (The Father's) doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God"...* Christ is the embodiment of wisdom and He lives in us. Draw near to Him, abide in Him and ask Him to reveal Himself and His wisdom to you.

God is faithful to His word and all He asks of us is that we fear Him, trust and rely on Him without wavering, regardless of what we see, feel, touch or hear going on around us. He is faithful; He has your best interests at heart. We may not always have understanding of things, but if we cleave to our Lord He will show you that He is in control and He has everything under control. If He is for us, who can be against us!

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### **Lesson 7 – Themes in the Proverbs:**

As we read through the book of Proverbs, it becomes clear very quickly that there are many brief statements on a number of different subjects which appear in random order. We also find some duplicate or near duplicate sayings cropping up in different places. For those of us who like things to be clear, well organized and presented in a systematic way, this may be a bit perplexing.

We may also find statements on a subject that appear to be contradictory. Here we need to apply care and to remember that context is important in our interpretations. It may be useful to go back and re-read the section "Knowing the Time and Circumstance Under Which Each Proverb Applies" in Lesson 3. Reading in context is a fundamental principle of Biblical interpretation.

However, it is useful to carry out thematic studies and we will now look at how we go about doing this.

### **Procedure for Thematic Studies in Proverbs**

There are a series of steps we need to take that will apply to any theme or subject we choose to look at:

1. Read through the entire book of Proverbs and note down the verses that pertain to the theme or topic in which you are interested. Make a list of them. Some proverbs may only vaguely fit into your topic, so look, meditate and think carefully on which to include and which to exclude.
2. Write or type out the verses and spend some time, several days, reading through them. In doing this you will see some sub categories appearing. It is useful to use a number of different translations as they all provide a slightly different view of the same passage. If you don't have several different translations but do have a computer connected to the internet then [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com) is a useful resource. It has a large range of translations and in numerous languages too.
3. Re-arrange the verses into the broad sub categories. Some proverbs may appear contradictory at first, so this re-arranging is a useful exercise to help you clearly understand the statements in the light of their context.
4. Then look at the topics and verses and see how they fit into the greater context of the entire Bible. Start with how they fit into the rest of the book of Proverbs, then with other wisdom literature (Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes), followed by the rest of the Old Testament and also the New Testament. It is particularly important to see how the teaching fits in with that of Jesus. Ultimately, we should be looking for Christ and His viewpoint on whatever we are studying.

In this lesson and the ones that follow, we will look briefly at some of the themes presented in Proverbs.

For men in particular the stumbling blocks in life are often related to the subjects of Fortune, Fame and Females. There is the matter of the tongue and our words that can either lead us into trouble or be a source of blessing. Our words and actions bear a direct relationship to the state of our walk in Christ and degree to which our minds are renewed. There's the matter of integrity too. The Proverbs has much to say on these and many other topics. We will start off by looking at the theme of money or fortune.

### Money or Fortune:

Fortune hunting is one of Satan's big lures. Behind this lure is a cunning strategy that recons on the fact that if we become wealthy we will be self sufficient and will be less inclined to depend on God. That's all he wants, to make us compromised in our relationship with our Lord. Look at [Prov 1:10-19](#).

To examine this topic we need to gather and examine the proverbs relating to wealth and poverty. We will not examine every one of the proverbs relating to this topic, but that is something you can do later, following the steps outlined for thematic study.

The main verses from Proverbs relating to wealth and poverty are:

- Ch 3: 9-10, 13-18, 27-28
- Ch 6: 6-11
- Ch 8: 10-11, 17-21
- Ch 10: 2-6, 15-16, 22
- Ch 11: 4, 6, 16, 18, 24-26, 28
- Ch 12: 11
- Ch 13: 7-8, 11, 18, 21-23
- Ch 14: 4, 20-21, 23-24
- Ch 15: 6, 16-17, 27
- Ch 16: 8, 16, 19
- Ch 17: 1, 18
- Ch 18: 9, 11, 23
- Ch 19: 4, 6-7, 10
- Ch 20: 4, 13, 17
- Ch 21: 5-6, 17, 20, 25
- Ch 22: 1-2, 4, 7, 9, 16, 26-27
- Ch 23: 4-5, 20-21
- Ch 24: 27
- Ch 26: 14-15
- Ch 28: 3, 6, 11, 16, 19-22, 27
- Ch 29: 7, 13-14, 24
- Ch 30: 7-9, 24-25

There may be a few more verses you would like to add to this list, but these are the main ones.

Having listed the various proverbs relating to wealth and poverty we now group them into sub categories and then will look at some of them under the various sub headings. The list of sub headings we will look at is as follows:

- God made both the rich and the poor
- The Lord blesses the upright with wealth
- Laziness and folly results in poverty
- Unjust and illicit gain will ultimately result in poverty
- Wealth accumulated by fools and the unjust will disappear



- Wisdom is more desirable than wealth
- Wealth is not everything
- Giving is the essence of living

There may be better ways to subdivide or more divisions to add, however we will look at these ones.

### 1. God made both the rich and the poor:

Prov 22:2 (NLT)      ... *"The rich and poor have this in common:  
The LORD made them both."*

Job 31:15 (NLT)      ... *"For God created both me and my servants.  
He created us both in the womb."*

Psalms 139:13-17      ... *"For You formed my inward parts;  
You wove me in my mother's womb.  
I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
Wonderful are Your works,  
And my soul knows it very well.  
My frame was not hidden from You,  
When I was made in secret,  
And skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;  
Your eyes have seen my unformed substance;  
And in Your book they were all written  
The days that were ordained for me,  
When as yet there was not one of them.  
How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!"*

In the book of Proverbs we will see much about how God blesses the upright with wealth and how the foolish and unjust come to poverty. It is true that God does bless the righteous, this cannot be denied. It is also true that foolishness leads to poverty. However, before we start we must understand one thing. Not all upright, God fearing people have an abundance of wealth and not all poor people are unjust, foolish or unrighteous. There are vast numbers of God fearing people on this earth who do not have an abundance of material wealth.

So as we proceed in this study of wealth and poverty we need to bear in mind the lesson we learned from Job and Joseph and the words of Isaiah 55:8. God's ways are higher than ours. He has made each individual to fit into a unique place and function on this earth. He loves each and every man, woman and child equally. He has made some to rule and others to be ruled over; some to have an abundance of material wealth and others to have little of this earth's goods. He alone knows why. It's ours to trust, revere, love and honour Him. He will honour His word, HIS WAY.

### 2. The Lord blesses the upright with wealth

Prov 10:6a      ... *"Blessings are on the head of the righteous."*

It's a fact and right from the first place wealth is mentioned in the book, Proverbs asserts that God blesses those who fear and honour Him with material wealth.

Prov 3:8-9     ... *"Honor the LORD from your wealth  
and from the first of all your produce;  
So your barns will be filled with plenty  
And your vats will overflow with new wine".*

It's interesting to note that at this first place wealth for the righteous is mentioned, it is related to honouring God by giving to Him. Our wellbeing and prosperity is directly related to placing our trust in God, not leaning on our understanding and in all our ways, including giving, to acknowledge Him.

A few verses later God again reinforces this truth, for those who seek and walk in His wisdom.

Prov 3:13-16     ... *"How blessed is the man who finds wisdom  
And the man who gains understanding.  
For her profit is better than the profit of silver  
And her gain better than fine gold.  
She is more precious than jewels;  
And nothing you desire compares with her.  
Long life is in her right hand;  
In her left hand are riches and honor."*

Wisdom (God) speaks again in a similar fashion in chapter 8:

Prov 8:15-21     ... *"By me kings reign,  
And rulers decree justice.  
By me princes rule, and nobles,  
All who judge rightly.  
I love those who love me;  
And those who diligently seek me will find me.  
Riches and honor are with me,  
Enduring wealth and righteousness.  
My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold,  
And my yield better than choicest silver.  
I walk in the way of righteousness,  
In the midst of the paths of justice,  
To endow those who love me with wealth,  
That I may fill their treasures".*

This fact is confirmed through other scriptures and in particular in God's dealings with king Solomon when Solomon asked God for wisdom to rule His people:

2 Chr 1:10-12     ... *"Give me now **wisdom and knowledge**, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself **wisdom and knowledge** that you may rule My people*

*over whom I have made you king, **wisdom and knowledge** have been granted to you. And I will give you **riches and wealth and honor**, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you."*

Also we see a further confirmation of this truth, that God blesses those who love Him and walk in righteousness, in Jesus words in Matthew's gospel:

Matt 6:31-33 ... *"Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you".*

So we see a relationship between reverence for God, honouring Him and placing our trust in Him and material reward. We also see that wealth is a consequence of gaining and living by Godly wisdom (...*"in her left hand are riches and honour"*...). Now while we can accept this truth and expect that if we honour God He will bless us, we must be careful not to treat this as if it is a simplistic, magical and instant formula for success. God will honour His word, but as we have learned, He will do it in His way, in His time, according to His plan and purpose that has been formulated by His infinite wisdom.

The important thing for us to bear in mind is that we honour, revere and trust God implicitly, unwaveringly and walk in His ways, regardless of what is happening in our lives.

We are also encouraged and expected to be diligent and put some effort in to ensure we have our needs met. We are not to sit around doing nothing, expecting supplies to fall out of the sky. In fact Paul tells Timothy that if we (believers) do not provide for our families we are worse than infidels (see 1 Tim 5:8).

Prov 12:11a ... *"He who tills his land will have plenty of bread..."*

Prov 10:4b ... *"the hand of the diligent makes rich."*

Paul backs this up with his admonition to the Thessalonians

1 Thess 4:11-12 ... *"and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you, so that you will behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need."*

One of the ways God blesses the righteous is by giving us healthy bodies and sound minds and good educations so we can get a good job and then as we put these faculties to work and labour diligently He gets us favour leading to promotions, better jobs and higher wages.

When God does bless us we can enjoy His blessings knowing He is our provider and that He loves to bless us and wants to see us rejoice and be happy too.

Prov 10:22 ... *"It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, And He adds no sorrow to it."*

Wealth gained illicitly will come with trouble attached; God's blessings come with no sorrow attached.

### 3. Laziness and folly results in poverty

We have seen, as it states in Prov 22:4, that ... *"The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, honor and life"* and now we will see that the opposite is true; that laziness and foolishness lead to poverty.

Laziness is a trait or hallmark of the foolish and there are a number of proverbs that clearly show the fate of the lazy.

The first place laziness, or sluggardly, is mentioned in relation to poverty is in Proverbs 6. Here, as in other proverbs, the writer uses hyperbole to ridicule the foolish sluggard and point out graphically where and how he is going wrong in life.

Prov 6:6-11     ... *"Go to the ant, O sluggard,  
Observe her ways and be wise,  
Which, having no chief,  
Officer or ruler,  
Prepares her food in the summer  
And gathers her provision in the harvest.  
How long will you lie down, O sluggard?  
When will you arise from your sleep?  
A little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to rest--  
Your poverty will come in like a vagabond  
And your need like an armed man"*.

This is reinforced in Prov 10 and Prov 20:

Prov 10:4-5     ... *"Poor is he who works with a negligent hand,  
But the hand of the diligent makes rich.  
He who gathers in summer is a son who acts wisely,  
But he who sleeps in harvest is a son who acts shamefully."*

Prov 20:4     ... *"The sluggard does not plow after the autumn,  
So he begs during the harvest and has nothing."*

There are some who make excuses as to why they can't go to work, saying there's wild animals out there and they'll kill me if I go out to work. Then they immediately flop over in bed and loaf the day away.

Prov 26:13-14 (Message)     ... *"Loafers say, 'It's dangerous out there!  
Tigers are prowling the streets!'  
and then pull the covers back over their heads.  
Just as a door turns on its hinges,  
so a lazybones turns back over in bed"*.

There are also those who are just bone idle, expressed graphically in the following proverb!

## Wisdom from Proverbs

---

Prov 26:15 (Message)      ... *"A shiftless sluggard puts his fork in the pie, but is too lazy to lift it to his mouth."*

The result of this idle behavior is destruction and poverty.

Prov 18:9 (Message)      ... *"Slack habits and sloppy work are as bad as vandalism."*

Poverty also comes to those who just want to play and seek pleasure and live the "high life" and not do anything worthwhile and to those who just talk and never put action to their words.

Prov 21:17 (NLT)      ... *"Those who love pleasure become poor; those who love wine and luxury will never be rich."*

Prov 14:23      ... *"In all labor there is profit, But mere talk leads only to poverty"*

There are also those foolish people who go in pursuit of the get rich schemes and worthless ventures only to see their efforts are all in vain and they end up losing everything.

Prov 12:11 (NLT)      ... *"A hard worker has plenty of food, but a person who chases fantasies has no sense."*

Prov 28:19      ... *"He who tills his land will have plenty of food, But he who follows empty pursuits will have poverty in plenty."*

Fools don't like correction and this leads to their downfall and poverty.

Prov 13:18 (NLT)      ... *"If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept correction, you will be honored."*

There's the saying "look before you leap". It's a safeguard that fools ignore.

Prov 21:5 (NLT)      ... *"Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty."*

So from all of the above it is clear that the actions of the fool, or inaction of lazy person as it turns out, leads only to poverty.

James confirms that wrong or foolish motives lead to lack, but he also provides a solution to this problem.

James 4:1-10      ... *"What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. **You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.** You adulteresses, do you not*

*know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us"? But He gives a greater grace Therefore it says, GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE. Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you."*

#### **4. Unjust and illicit gain will ultimately result in poverty**

It is not only foolishness or laziness that leads to poverty. There are other causes of poverty, also spoken of in the book of Proverbs, including injustice, oppression, greed, fraud and lying.

Prov 22:16 ... *"He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself  
Or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty".*

Prov 10:2 ... *"Ill-gotten gains do not profit,  
But righteousness delivers from death."*

Prov 11:6 ... *"The righteousness of the upright will deliver them,  
But the treacherous will be caught by their own greed."*

Prov 15:27 ... *"He who profits illicitly troubles his own house,  
But he who hates bribes will live."*

Prov 20:17 ... *"Bread obtained by falsehood is sweet to a man,  
But afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel."*

Prov 28:20b ... *"he who makes haste to be rich will not go unpunished."*

The above proverbs remind us of a person who has robbed a bank, gained a huge amount of money and is eventually caught by the police. There may be a temporary period where he enjoys the money, but after he is thrown into prison think of his family. They suffer and live in poverty because he is no longer there to bring home an income for them to live on.

Prov 13:21 sums it all up with the words ... *"Adversity pursues sinners".*

Violence, fraud, illicit means can result in riches being gained. We see this around the world with kidnappings, bank robberies and many cases of fraud that we read of in the papers.

Prov 11:16b ... *"ruthless men attain riches."*

David confirms in the Psalms that the wicked do sometimes prosper.

Ps 37:16 ... *"Better is the little of the righteous  
Than the abundance of many wicked."*

Ps 73: 3 ... *"For I was envious of the arrogant  
As I saw the prosperity of the wicked."*

However, there is one certainty, these illicitly and unjustly gained riches will not last.

#### **5. Wealth accumulated by fools and the unjust will disappear**

The writer must have been thinking of a stock market crash when he penned the following proverb!

Prov 11:28 ... *"He who trusts in his riches will fall".*

Whether he was thinking that way or not, there are two things we must keep in mind; 1) none of us, whether the upright or the foolish, should put our trust in earthly wealth (Our trust should be in God alone) and, 2) the wealth of fools and the unjust will fritter away.

Prov 13:11 ... *"Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles."*

Prov 21:6 ... *"The acquisition of treasures by a lying tongue  
Is a fleeting vapor, the pursuit of death."*

Prov 23:4-5 ... *"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth,  
Cease from your consideration of it.  
When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.  
For wealth certainly makes itself wings  
Like an eagle that flies toward the heavens."*

Prov 28:22 ... *"A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth  
And does not know that want will come upon him."*

The fact that the unjust and fools do accumulate wealth is a matter that troubled David, yet he knew that theirs was a slippery end and that in the long run the sinner would not prosper. He knew his trust should remain steadfast in God and that God was his refuge, strength and faithful provider.

Ps 73:1-28 (Read)

In the long run, when we consider the important issues in life, we will find that money and wealth are not what they are made out to be and are not going to be of much help.

Prov 11:4 ... *"Riches do not profit in the day of wrath,  
But righteousness delivers from death."*

There are difficult issues that we may have to face one day for which money will not be the answer. The answer will only be found in Christ and walking in His righteousness.

## 6. Wisdom is more desirable than wealth

It certainly is more comfortable to have wealth rather than poverty, but is having an abundance all there is to life. Should this be life's goal, to prosper materially? I don't think so, not does the author of Proverbs. The most important consideration is that we know God, honour Him, and walk in righteousness and wisdom, whether we are wealthy or poor (We have learned that the righteous are not always wealthy and that there are many poor folks who are godly).

So our prime concern should be to seek and honour God, for the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

Prov 3:13-14    ... *"How blessed is the man who finds wisdom  
And the man who gains understanding.  
For her profit is better than the profit of silver  
And her gain better than fine gold."*

Prov 8:10-11    ... *"Take my instruction and not silver,  
And knowledge rather than choicest gold.  
For wisdom is better than jewels;  
And all desirable things cannot compare with her."*

There are many things money cannot buy, like peace, loving relationships, righteousness, quietness, the absence of strife, honour, favour, and integrity, to name a few.

Prov 15:16-17    ... *"Better is a little with the fear of the LORD  
Than great treasure and turmoil with it.  
Better is a dish of vegetables where love is  
Than a fattened ox served with hatred."*

Prov 16:8        ... *"Better is a little with righteousness  
Than great income with injustice."*

Prov 16:16     ... *"How much better it is to get wisdom than gold!  
And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver."*

Prov 17:1        ... *"Better is a dry morsel and quietness with it  
Than a house full of feasting with strife."*

Prov 22:1        ... *"A good name is to be more desired than great wealth,  
Favor is better than silver and gold."*

Prov 28:6        ... *"Better is the poor who walks in his integrity  
Than he who is crooked though he be rich."*



## 7. Wealth is not everything

There is no question that money helps us survive in life; we need it to pay the bills and feed and clothe the family. However, there are many things material wealth cannot buy and it ultimately has limited value.

In fact, sometimes wealth can work against us. Consider the matter of kidnapping. Have you ever heard of a poor person being kidnapped?

Prov 13:8 (Message)     ... *"The rich can be sued for everything they have, but the poor are free of such threats."*

We cannot take our material things with us beyond the grave.

Matt 6:19-21     ... *"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for **where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"*

The first few verses of James chapter 5 have some strong words for those who have live compromised and unjust lives, in particular verse 3.

James 5:3 (NLT)     ... *"Your gold and silver have become worthless. The very wealth you were counting on will eat away your flesh like fire. This treasure you have accumulated will stand as evidence against you on the day of judgment."*

This is why at Agur in the penultimate chapter of Proverbs prays the following prayer:

Prov 30:7-9     ... *"Two things I asked of You,  
Do not refuse me before I die:  
Keep deception and lies far from me,  
Give me neither poverty nor riches;  
Feed me with the food that is my portion,  
That I not be full and deny You and say, "Who is the LORD?"  
Or that I not be in want and steal,  
And profane the name of my God."*

Godly wisdom is echoed through Paul's words

1 Tim 6:6-11     ... *"Yet true godliness with contentment is itself great wealth. After all, we brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can't take anything with us when we leave it. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the true faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows."*

Heb 13:5 ... *"Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we confidently say, the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What will man do to me?'"*

### **8. Giving is the essence of living**

As mentioned earlier, right from the first place Proverbs mentions the blessings that accrue to the righteous, the matter is directly related to giving (Prov 3:5-10).

The whole purpose for being blessed and having abundance is so that we can bless those around us who are in need.

Our Heavenly Father is our prime example and it was out of His love for the lost and dying that we were given the best gift heaven could afford and which we could ever have desired.

John 3:16 ... *"For **God so loved** the world, that **He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life."*

Our Heavenly Father cares very much for the needs of the poor and so must we, His children. Let Christ exercise His heart of compassion through you, His vessel.

Prov 29:7 ... *"The righteous is concerned for the rights of the poor,  
The wicked does not understand such concern."*

We are encouraged to keep our eyes and ears open to the needs of those around us and to be a blessing wherever we can.

Prov 3:27-28 (Message) ... *"Never walk away from someone who deserves help;  
your hand is God's hand for that person.  
Don't tell your neighbor "Maybe some other time"  
or "Try me tomorrow"  
when the money's right there in your pocket."*

Yes we should always check with God so that our giving is in line with what He is doing in the individual's life, but if our Father gives the go ahead we should never withhold what is due to the person in need.

1 John 3:17 ... *"But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?"*

In blessing those in need, God assures us that He will see to our needs and will bless us in return.

Prov 11:24-25 ... *"There is one who scatters, and yet increases all the more,  
And there is one who withholds what is justly due, and yet it results only in want.  
The generous man will be prosperous,  
And he who waters will himself be watered."*

## Wisdom from Proverbs

---

Prov 22:9 ... *"He who is generous will be blessed,  
For he gives some of his food to the poor."*

Prov 28:27 ... *"He who gives to the poor will never want,  
But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses."*

Take heed of the latter part of that proverb, it's saying if God has brought a needy person to us and wants us to be a blessing and we then don't obey His prompting, we will reap the consequences of disobedience.

Motives in giving are important.

Prov 22:16 ... *"He who oppresses the poor to make more for himself  
Or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty."*

Even if it seems illogical, we should never think or fear that by giving to others that we will have lack. God's ways are higher than our ways. His laws for giving are in accordance with his higher laws. All that is important is that our motives remain pure and we bless in obedience to our Father's direction.

Luke 6:38 ... *"Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."*

Paul reinforces the truth that we are to be diligent in our labouring and to use our wealth to bless others in need.

Acts 20:35 ... *"In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must **help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, '**It is more blessed to give than to receive.**'"*

An important thing to keep in mind; You cannot out give God!

We can draw one final conclusion to the matter of wealth and poverty; Whether we have much or little what is important is our unwavering love, obedience and honour for the Lord.

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 8 – The Heart

#### The Question:

What does the frequently used word 'heart' mean? What is the 'heart'?

Many authors and preachers use the word 'heart' interchangeably with the word 'spirit'. Are these two words interchangeable? This is something we need to check against the scriptures. What does God's word have to say on this matter?

If 'heart' = 'spirit' then how do you interpret the following verses?

Prov 15:13     ... *"A joyful heart makes a cheerful face,  
But when the heart is sad, the spirit is broken."*

Psalms 77:6     ... *"I will remember my song in the night;  
I will meditate with my heart,  
And my spirit ponders"*

Psalms 12:2     ... *"They speak falsehood to one another;  
With flattering lips and with a double heart they speak."*

Ezek 18:31     ... *"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"*

If these two words are interchangeable then why have them both in the same verse? Or is it possible that they are not interchangeable?

GREEK – in the Greek there are two different words for 'heart' and 'spirit'. They are separate and distinct from each other. We will also include a third word, 'soul' as this also sometimes gets used interchangeably with 'heart'.

- 'kardia' is the word for 'heart'
- 'pneuma' is the word for 'spirit'
- 'psuche' is the word for 'soul'

HEBREW – in the Hebrew there are also separate and distinct words for the three words in question.

- 'leb' or 'lebab' (pronounced lev or levav) is the word for 'heart'
- 'ruach' is the word for 'spirit'
- 'nephesh' is the word for 'soul'.

1 Thess 5:23     ... *"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you **entirely**; and may your **spirit** and **soul** and **body** be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

That which makes up your “**entirety**” is your spirit, soul and body. That’s the complete ‘you’. Note the order, it starts from the innermost part and works outwards; spirit – soul – body. You are a spirit, you have a soul and are housed in a body.

The Old Testament people were exactly the same as those of the New Testament, they were spirit, had a soul and were housed in a body.

Dan 7:15 ... “I, Daniel, was grieved in my **spirit** within my **body**, and the visions of my **head** troubled me” (Other translations use “mind” in place of “head”).

Ps 142:3a, 4b, 7a ... “When my **spirit** was overwhelmed within me”... ... “No one cares for my **soul**”... ... “Bring my **soul** out of prison”...

Ps 143:1b, 3a, 4a, 6b, 7a ... “For the enemy has persecuted my **soul**” ... ... “Therefore my **spirit** is overwhelmed within me” ... ... “My **soul** longs for You, as a parched land”... ... “Answer me quickly, O LORD, my **spirit** fails”.

Zech 12:1 ... “the Lord who ... forms the spirit of man within him”.

So it is clear that we are made up of spirit, soul and body. These three parts work together to make us who we are.

One day, when we go to be with the Lord in heaven, we will leave our old bodies behind (in the grave) and our spirits and souls will go together to heaven where they will receive new incorruptible bodies. Our spirits and our souls will not be two separate blobs floating around in heaven; they will be inseparably connected and housed in our new bodies for all eternity.

Let us look more closely at the word ‘spirit’.

“spirit” (‘pneuma’) is used or interpreted three ways in the New Testament:

- The “spirit” referring to the real inner person as referred to in 1 Cor 14:14 ... “For if I pray in a tongue, my **spirit** prays, but my mind is unfruitful”.
- The “Spirit” referring to the Holy Spirit who works within us as mentioned in Rom 8:26 ... “In the same way the **Spirit** also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the **Spirit Himself** intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words”.
- The “spirit of your mind” referring to “attitude” of mind as mentioned in Eph 4:23 ... “and that you be renewed in the **spirit of your mind**”.

All three of the above passages use the Greek word “pneuma” (spirit) and it is by context that we interpret them to the three different meanings. The one we are interested in is the spirit that refers to our inner person.

Now back to spirit, soul and body.

Salvation in the three parts of a person takes place in different stages. In relation to redemption we are past, present and future beings:

PAST – our **spirit was saved** (redeemed) – made new, perfect and complete – instantly at the time we were born again.

1 Pet 1:23 ... *“for you **have been** born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God”.*

The imperishable seed, Christ, is placed in your spirit and you experience a re-birthing. This work of salvation is instant and complete. Nothing you do or don't do will make it more or less complete.

2 Cor 5:17 (NKJV) ... *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new”.*

PRESENT – our **soul is being saved**. It is an ongoing renewal process. This process started at the time we were born again in spirit. This requires that we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as he teaches us Christ and how to walk in Christ in our daily lives.

Jas 1:21 ... *“Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able **to save** your souls.*

This ongoing salvation process that takes place in the soul involves the mind, will and emotions in a renewal process. It is a process in which we align (renew) our mind and will in particular with the mind and will of God as expressed implicitly in His word. This process will continue until we go to be with the Lord.

FUTURE – Our **body will be saved**; this is an event for the future. It will be exchanged for an incorruptible body at the coming of the Lord Jesus when He comes to take us to be with Him for all eternity.

1 Cor 15:51-53 ... *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality”.*

This three part salvation of spirit, soul and body is summed up in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians:

2 Cor 1:10 ... *“He ... who delivered us (spirit) from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us (soul), He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us (body)...”*

At salvation an exchange takes place in your **spirit**, the 'old man' is exchanged for the 'new man'. Christ comes to take up residence in your spirit. 1 Cor 6:17 ... *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit”.* This work of salvation is instant and complete. The **soul** (mind, will and emotions) does not experience any immediate change at salvation, but does change over time as our minds are renewed. The soul experiences an ongoing process of salvation. At salvation the **body** does not experience any change. As we grow older so our bodies begin to tire out and wear out until one day, when we go to be with the Lord, then we will receive a brand new body. So salvation of the body will happen in an instant sometime in the future.

Your spirit, which is one with Christ, is the real you. But inseparably attached to your spirit is your soul. Your spirit and soul make up your 'spiritual' part and that is housed in your body which is your 'fleshly' part.

As the spirit is complete and perfectly saved, and as the body will be changed some time in the future, so our attention now should be directed to the process of salvation of our souls.

When we are born again the incorruptible seed (Christ) is placed in our spirit and we become one in spirit. The incorruptible is just that, free of sin. ... *"In Him there is no sin"* ... (1 Jn 3:5).

1 Jn 3:9 ... *"No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God".*

This is referring to your born again spirit. Your spirit, in which Christ dwells and with whom you are one, cannot sin. Sin cannot come from that which is incorruptible. The incorruptible "Seed" lives and abides there and He cannot sin.

So thus far we have seen what we are comprised of spirit, soul and body and we have confirmed that the born again spirit is incorruptible.

However, we know that believers, the born again in whom the incorruptible seed lives, can and do commit sin. So if sin cannot come from our regenerated spirit then where does it come from?

1 John 1:5-1 John 2:6 ... *"This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.*

*My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

When our mind is fixed or focused on the flesh, the pulls of the body, and we follow the flesh rather than the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit within us (who points us to Christ), then we sin. Our soul (mind, will and emotions) play an important part here. As Paul so clearly said to the believers in Rome:

Rom 8:6 ...*"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."*

To the degree our minds are renewed and we choose to submit to the Spirit, we will be doers of the word and walk in the light. To the degree it remains unrenewed, we will find ourselves yielding to the flesh and walking in darkness.

As discussed earlier, the soul is in the *process* of being saved or renewed.

Now with this understanding of the 'spirit' (saved, complete, whole) and 'soul' (not yet perfect and in the process of being renewed) let's turn to the word 'heart'.

This word 'heart' is used, by some, interchangeably with either spirit or soul.

In most places in the Bible where the word 'heart' is used it is used to refer to the spiritual rather than the physical part of a person. That is, it is seldom referring to the organ that pumps blood around your body. So it is the spiritual 'heart' in which we are interested.

The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines the Hebrew word for heart (lebab) as: "the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature".

However, if we simply interchange 'heart' for 'spirit' and vice versa we run into difficulties with some scriptures:

Mark 11:23 ... *"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and **does not doubt in his heart, but believes (in his heart)** that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him".*

The part in parentheses is added as it is implied.

So this verse tells us that we can believe or doubt in our heart. But if 'heart' can be interchanged with 'spirit' we have a problem because we have established that the spirit cannot sin. Doubt is sin according to Rom 14:23 ... *"But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin".*

So in scriptures like this one we find the word 'heart' is used negatively and positively, or, that the heart can sin or act righteously. If 'heart' in these cases means 'spirit' this is not possible, so 'heart' cannot just mean 'spirit'.

On the other hand, we could possibly say 'heart' can mean 'spirit' or 'soul', and we get to select which it is each time. But if we did that then every scripture would have to be subject to your own interpretation, and that would lead to trouble.

So there has to be something consistent in the Word of God about 'heart' and its use.



Deut 2:30 ... *"But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his **spirit** and made his **heart** obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as he is today".*

Ezek 18:31 ... *"Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a **new heart** and a **new spirit**! For why will you die, O house of Israel?"*

Heart and spirit are found in the same verse, so they cannot mean the same thing.

Ps 12:2 ... *"They speak falsehood to one another;  
With flattering lips and with a **double heart** they speak".*

1 Chr 12:33 ... *"Of Zebulun, there were 50,000 who went out in the army, who could draw up in battle formation with all kinds of weapons of war and helped David with an **undivided heart**.*

Literally, "not of divided heart". Have we got two spirits? No.

Ps 73:7 ... *"The imaginations of their heart run riot.*

KJV says ... *"they have more than heart could wish."* So apparently a 'heart' can imagine or wish.

Prov 6:18a ... *"A heart that devises wicked plans".*

So a 'heart' can devise evil and sin.

Prov 15:28a ... *"The heart of the righteous ponders (KJV "studieth") how to answer"...*

The 'heart' can study or think and make decisions.

Hos 10:2 ... *"Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images".*

If their 'heart' is divided does that mean their spirit was cut in two?

Man was made in the image of God. God is spirit and He made us in His image and likeness. We are spirit, we have a soul and we are housed in a body. Cats, dogs, cows, sheep, birds and fish were not made in God's image and likeness. They are not spirit beings. So consider the next verse:

Dan 4:16 (NKJV) ... *"Let his heart be changed from that of a man,  
Let him be given the heart of a beast"...*

If 'heart' can be interchanged with 'spirit' that means animals would have to have spirits, and that is not so.

Mark 2:8 (NKJV) ... *"But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"*

The two different words are used in this verse. Why, if they are interchangeable?

Heb 3:12 ... *"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God".*

James 3:14 ... *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.*

Both of these were addressed to the "brethren", the born again, who cannot have evil or unbelief in their born again spirit.

So what is the 'heart'? It cannot refer to the 'spirit' alone.

### The Answer

The answer lies in Peter's words:

1 Pet 3:4 ... *"but let it be the **hidden person of the heart**, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet **spirit**, which is precious in the sight of God."*

The 'hidden person' of the heart is the spirit. The spirit is not the heart. The spirit is **part** of the heart. The heart is made up of the spirit and the soul. The 'heart' is the totality of the spiritual part of a person. Body is the flesh part.

That's how you can have a "divided heart". When your spirit and soul are not aligned and are in opposition to each other.

Ps 86:11 ... *"Teach me Your way, O LORD;  
I will walk in Your truth;  
Unite my heart to fear Your name."*

Another way we might say this is: Unite my heart; let my soul and spirit be aligned. Let my mind, will and emotions line up with my spirit, in which You dwell, O Lord.

Prov 3:5 ... *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart  
And do not lean on your own understanding".*

You are one in spirit with Christ, now let your soul (mind, will and emotions) align with the spirit, align with the living and abiding word of God. Don't have your mind, will and emotions aligning with what you see, hear, feel, taste and touch around you in the corrupted world. Let all your heart (spirit and soul) be aligned. Have a united heart.

Prov 14:14 ... *"The backslider in heart will have his fill of his own ways,  
But a good man will be satisfied with his."*

The only part of the heart that can backslide is the soul part. If our soul (mind) is fixed on the things of the flesh, the cares or the world, the hassles around us rather than on the spirit, it will pull away

(backslide) from the truth. We then end up with a divided heart, a backslidden heart and all the troubles that brings. That's why the first generation of Israelites did not make it out of the wilderness, because they had evil unbelieving hearts.

Heb 3:10,11 ... *"therefore I was angry with this generation, and said, 'they always go astray in their heart, and they did not know My ways'; as I swore in My wrath, 'they shall not enter my rest'."*

The battlefield is in the soul part of the heart. We are made up of spirit, soul and body. The soul is in the middle. It is pulled by both the spirit or by the flesh. Which way it yields is dependent on what our mind, will and emotions are focused on; spirit or flesh.

One of the prime objectives of the Christian walk is to enter God's rest. We do this by aligning our soul with our spirit, as the living and abiding Word is resident in your spirit. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Col 1:27).

That's why there is so much in the Word of God concerning the renewing of the mind. This is the "saving of the soul" we talked about earlier.

Rom 12:1-2 ... *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect."*

Our bodies, the flesh and its pulls and desires, are to be presented as a sacrifice. The mind is to conform to God and His will, not to the pulls and temptations of the corrupt world.

2 Cor 10:4-5 ... *"for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."*

The fortresses are in the mind, in the soul part of a person. We destroy these fortresses by placing every thought in obedience to, or alignment with, Christ. This requires alignment of our will, our mind and our emotions (our soul) with the incorruptible seed, the living and abiding Word.

Phil 4:8 ... *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things."*

NKJV says ... *"meditate on these things"*. KJV says ... *"think on these things"*.

Isa 26:3 (NKJV) ... *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You."*

Why is the control of our mind, will and emotions (soul) so important? Because that's the only part that the devil can get to and try and captivate.

He cannot touch your re-born spirit. But if he can control your soul (mind, will and emotions) he can divide your 'heart' and a person with a 'divided heart' is on the pathway to trouble. That person will not enter God's rest. They will not walk in the power and beauty of the Christ life.

The only way you can effectively release the power of the living and abiding Word, with Whom you are one spirit (1 Cor 6:17), from within you, is by having a united heart. A heart in which the soul is completely aligned with the spirit.

3 John 2      ... *"Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers".*

Amos 3:3      ... *"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"*

James 3:11      ... *"Does a fountain send out from the same opening both fresh and bitter water?"*

So let us resolve to get our soul and spirit in agreement, because **unity** is the means by which the **power** is released.

Col 3:12-17      ... *"So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience**; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect **bond of unity** (unites the heart). **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father."*  
part in parenthesis added

You live by the contents and condition of your soul. Where or on what is your soul focused?

Rom 8:6      ... *"For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace."*

Mark 11:23      ... *"Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes (in his heart) that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him".*  
The part in parenthesis is added as it is implied.

'To doubt' is the same as saying 'to differ'. True believing is to line up spirit and soul so they do not differ.

Jas 1:6-8      ... *"But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."*

Doubting creates a difference, a division, between spirit and soul and prevents your faith from working. You cannot go in two directions at once. It's the unity of soul and spirit, the united heart, that releases the faith and power of Christ within you. It's when **all** our heart is yielded to God, that good things happen.

David knew this very well.

Ps 119:2, 10, 34, 58, 69, 145

... *"How blessed are those who observe His testimonies,  
Who seek Him with **all their heart**.*

*<sup>10</sup>With **all my heart** I have sought You;  
Do not let me wander from Your commandments.*

*<sup>34</sup>Give me understanding, that I may observe Your law  
And keep it with **all my heart**.*

*<sup>58</sup>I sought Your favor with **all my heart**;  
Be gracious to me according to Your word.*

*<sup>69</sup>The arrogant have forged a lie against me;  
With **all my heart** I will observe Your precepts.*

*<sup>145</sup>I cried with **all my heart**; answer me, O LORD!  
I will observe Your statutes."*

All of these verses speak of seeking and keeping God's word with a **whole heart** (all my heart).

"Integrity" comes from the word "integer" – which means whole number, not a fraction. It speaks of uncompromised character – an undivided heart.

Now our understanding of the 'heart' is becoming clearer. But there's more.

Heb 4:12

... *"For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of **soul** and **spirit**, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the **heart**."*

(The context of this verse is the matter of "entering His rest" and it is worthwhile to study Heb 3:1-4:16).

Spirit, soul and heart are all used in this passage, for a good reason.

- The Word is the only thing which will divide, or tell apart, what's in your soul from what's in your spirit.
- The word is the only thing which will tell which part of your 'heart' your thoughts came from; your spirit or from your flesh (your carnal mind). It also knows your true intentions.

Why the mention of 'joints' and 'marrow'?

Joints are compared to the soul, while marrow is compared to the spirit.

Joints:

- Joints are the hinge that join two things together and the soul is the 'joint' between my spirit (spiritual part) and my body (carnal part)
- The joint can bring two parts closer together or separate them further apart
- The soul is like a projector screen. Messages are transmitted onto it from either the spirit or the flesh. Depending on which way it is pointing.
- It can vacillate between the two sides, the spirit or the flesh, but ultimately it must make a decision and tell the body to act in accordance with the decision it has made.
- It can lean towards the spirit and receive godly instruction and then get the body to act accordingly. Our words and actions then align with the word of God.
- Or it can lean to the flesh, often influenced by a weak will and the emotions or feelings, and decide to tell the body to follow the cravings of the flesh.
- So one way or the other, the soul, the joint, is either aligned with the spirit (a united heart) or it is aligned with the flesh (a divided heart).

Marrow:

- Marrow is like the spirit, there's life in the marrow and life in the spirit.
- Marrow produces new blood and "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Lev 17:11). Christ is the producer of life and he's resident in our spirit.
- Everlasting life is in your spirit

So the Word of God pierces ... *"as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both **joints** and **marrow**"...*

Heb 4:12 also says the word is ... *"able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the **heart**."*

Prov 23:7 (NKJV) ... *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."*

Matt 12:34 (NKJV) ... *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."*

So the living active Word of God, the Sword of the Spirit, can stand between soul and spirit and judge the thoughts and intentions that are going on in your 'heart'. It is the arbiter of those thoughts and intentions. The Word is the truth and it will stand as judge of the thoughts and intents and will declare a verdict that they are either pure (aligned with the spirit, that is aligned with the word) or evil (aligned with the flesh, the carnal part that is opposed to the word). This is how God confirms or convicts us.

The word is a light that penetrates and illumines the recesses of our heart. It allows our soul to see, know and understand that which is in the spirit where Christ dwells and to see that which is consistent with His ways and desires. The more we meditate on God's Word, which is in total harmony with Christ who is our life and with whom we are one spirit, the more our soul (mind, will and emotions) is fed the truth and is renewed.

The spirit is the *"hidden person of the heart"* (1 Pet 3:4). So that's why we need to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us. The word penetrates between soul and spirit and by revelation we "see" and

“understand” as the Holy Spirit gives us understanding of the truth and what He desires to accomplish in us.

So we should pray for a “*spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ*” (Eph 1:17) and then cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He teaches us Christ. We are to do as God’s word declares:

Phil 2:12 ... “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”.

Prov 4:23 ... “Watch over your heart with all diligence,  
For from it flow the springs of life.”

Heb 5: 14 ... “But solid food is for the mature, who because of **practice** have their senses **trained** to discern good and evil.”

Heb 4:16 ... “Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Let God’s word and the Holy Spirit help **unite your heart**.

Let our desire and heart cry to God be:

Ps 86:11-13 ... “Teach me Your way, O LORD;  
I will walk in Your truth;  
Unite my heart to fear Your name.  
I will give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with all my heart,  
And will glorify Your name forever.  
For Your lovingkindness toward me is great,  
And You have delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

A final prayer in closing is:

1 Thess 3:13 ... “that He may **establish your hearts without blame in holiness** before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His saints”.

Now that we have a better understanding of “heart” we can gain more insight as we continue with our thematic studies in Proverbs.

*"Make your ear attentive to wisdom ... search for her as for hidden treasures"*

### Lesson 9 – Our Thoughts and Our Words

Our desire has been to search out and gain wisdom from the Proverbs. That's the overall theme of these lessons. In this lesson we want to see how we can gain wisdom in relation to our thoughts (what occupies our minds) and our words (what we say). We include the subject of thoughts because our thoughts will ultimately determine what we say.

Prov 18:21 ... *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue".*

Our words are powerful forces that bring about destruction, damage and hurt, or, blessing, encouragement and admonition, to ourselves and those around us to whom our words are directed. For example:

Prov 15:1 ... *"A gentle answer turns away wrath,  
But a harsh word stirs up anger."*

What comes out of our mouths emanates from the thoughts that take place deep within us. And it is clear that these thoughts and the words that spring from them have a major impact on our lives and the lives of those around us. To control our conversation we first need to take charge of our thoughts. So in this lesson we seek to examine the Scriptures concerning the matter of our thoughts and our words – what goes on in our minds and what comes out of our mouths.

The verses from Proverbs that have to do with thoughts and the tongue are as follows:

The Tongue – Our Words:

This list includes most of the verses from Proverbs that relate to the words of our mouths and include words such as; 'mouth', 'lips', 'tongue', 'speak', 'speaks', 'speech', 'word' and 'words'.

- Ch 2: 6, 16
- Ch 4: 5, 24
- Ch 5: 2, 3, 7
- Ch 6: 2, 12, 17, 19, 24
- Ch 7: 5, 21, 24
- Ch 8: 6, 7, 8, 13
- Ch 10: 6, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 31, 32
- Ch 11: 9, 11
- Ch 12: 2, 6, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 22, 25
- Ch 13: 2, 3
- Ch 14: 3, 5, 25
- Ch 15: 1, 2, 4, 7, 14, 23, 26, 28
- Ch 16: 1, 10, 13, 21, 23, 24, 27, 30
- Ch 17: 4, 7, 27, 28
- Ch 18: 4, 6, 7, 8, 20, 21
- Ch 19: 1, 28



- Ch 20: 15
- Ch 21: 6, 23, 28
- Ch 22: 11, 12, 14, 17, 18
- Ch 23: 9, 16
- Ch 24: 2, 7, 26, 28
- Ch 25: 11, 23
- Ch 26: 7, 9, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28
- Ch27: 2
- Ch 28: 23
- Ch 29: 20
- Ch30: 32
- Ch 31: 8, 9, 26

### The Mind – Our Thoughts:

Included are most of the verses from Proverbs that relate to our thinking and includes words such as: 'thoughts', 'thinks', 'consideration', 'considers', 'mind' and 'minds':

- Ch 12: 5, 8
- Ch 14: 15
- Ch 15: 14
- Ch 16: 9
- Ch 17: 20
- Ch 18: 2, 15
- Ch 22: 17
- Ch 23: 7
- Ch 24: 2

There are a number of sub topics we could construct from these proverbs concerning our thoughts and our words, however our discussion will consider the following headings:

- Your words begin with your thinking
- The source of your thoughts
- Re-program your mind
- Censor your thoughts
- The tongue – our confession
- The power and importance of words
- Watch over your mouth

### 1. Your Words Begin With Your Thinking

To control your words you first need to take charge of your thoughts.

Matt 12:34 (NKJV)     ... *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."*

Matt 12:34 (NLT)     ... *"For whatever is in your heart determines what you say."*

Matt 12: 34-37 (Msg) ... *"You have minds like a snake pit! How do you suppose what you say is worth anything when you are so foul-minded? **It's your heart, not the dictionary, that gives meaning to your words.** A good person produces good deeds and words season after season. An evil person is a blight on the orchard. Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation."*

Prov 23:7 ... *"For as he thinks within himself, so he is."*

Whatever is going on in your thoughts is going to come out in your conversation. Your conversation will reveal the condition of your heart.

## 2. The Source of Your Thoughts

To control our thoughts we first need to know where our thoughts come from. They come from:

1) **The five physical senses** (sight, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching). Almost everything you have learned since a child has come to you via your five physical senses. It's primarily from what you see and hear - what you've been watching and who you've been listening to.

2) **The devil.** Satan lives to bombard your thoughts with error, lies and evil. He is subtle in his ways. Be on the alert for he is constantly prowling around seeking someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8).

3) **God.** God reveals His thoughts to us by the Holy Spirit, our Teacher, that we might know the things of God. The Holy Spirit's prime purpose and task in a believer is to reveal Christ to us, that we may know Him, His ways and His will.

1 Cor 2:12-16 ... *"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For who has known the mind of the lord, that he will instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."*

The first sources of thoughts are directed through our physical senses. The second source of thoughts is directed to our soul (mind) but not to our spirit, as Satan has no access to our spirit. The third source of thoughts, those from God, is directed to our heart (our soul and spirit). The Holy Spirit reveals those things that are in the hidden person of the heart, the spirit (where Christ dwells), to our soul (mind).

Your mind will only be able to receive and understand the thoughts God speaks into your heart to the degree you have renewed your mind in His word.

Rom 12:1-2 ... *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do*

*not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Heb 5:14 ... “But solid food is for the mature, who because of **practice** have their **senses trained** to discern good and evil.”

This brings us to the next step.

### 3. Re-Program Your Mind

Deceitfulness, lying, dishonesty, lack of integrity, to name a few, are inherent in the nature of an unregenerate person. Look at a small child. Did you have to teach them to lie, or steal, or be unkind or to be disobedient? No, it came naturally as they were born in sin and the devil has made a good job of corrupting fallen man’s mind. That’s why, now that we are born again and have a new nature, we need to re-program our minds.

It’s through the renewing of our minds that we learn to know the difference between good and bad thoughts. Satan is very subtle in his attacks of our mind. He will very often put thoughts that are very close to the truth, but are not the truth, into your mind. All he is after is that we compromise the truth. He will never come along with a nine dollar note! So we need to focus on the truth so that we will know the counterfeit when it comes along.

**Example:** Bank tellers. In their training they are only given genuine money to handle so that they can get the feel and sight of genuine money firmly fixed in their feeling and sight senses. Then eventually when the counterfeit notes arrive they will immediately feel or see the difference and pick them out. They are never given counterfeit money to learn what counterfeit looks or feels like. They are only given genuine money to fix in their minds what the true form is like.

Your mind is like a computer; it only knows what it has been fed. You have to program it and feed it the data it needs to get the job done. This programming and data input has been happening to your mind since you were born. The problem is that not everything that has been input has been good. So now that you are a believer you need to carry out a re-programming and data clean up exercise. That’s what the words refers to as the renewing of the mind.

This mind renewal process starts with meditating on the Word of God and listening to the voice of the Spirit. Like the bank tellers, start with the truth (the Word) and get that firmly fixed in you. It also means being careful to prevent bad data entering you, so be selective about what enters your mind from sources like TV, newspapers, magazines, books, films, conversations, associations with certain people, the company you keep, etc. Do this for yourself and encourage your family to do this also.

Prov 22:6 ... “Train up a child in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

This will save you a lot of heartache later and you will see God honouring His word as your children grow up.

How do we do this with our busy days? First we need to prioritise the events in our lives. Time management. God comes first, so make time for Him to speak to you through His word and prayer. Then, as a suggestion on redeeming time that would otherwise be lost, try using an iPod or CD's programmed with the Bible. Then as you walk about, ride your bike, or travel in your car or on the bus, or relaxing in your lounge after dinner, or for a few minutes before going to sleep at night, you can feed your mind on God's Word. You can also listen to good teaching and preaching CD's.

Prov 22:17-21 ... *"Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise,  
And apply your mind to my knowledge;  
For it will be pleasant if you keep them within you,  
That they may be ready on your lips.  
So that your trust may be in the LORD,  
I have taught you today, even you.  
Have I not written to you excellent things  
Of counsels and knowledge,  
To make you know the certainty of the words of truth  
That you may correctly answer him who sent you?"*

This is a call to attend to getting your thoughts aligned with God's.

Matt 13:11 ... *"To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven"...*

Eph 1:9 ... *"He made known to us the mystery of His will"...*

Ps 119:105 ... *"Your word is a lamp to my feet  
And a light to my path."*

1 Cor 2:16 ... *"we have the mind of Christ"...*

We can and must train our minds to align our thoughts with God's thoughts. He is constantly speaking to you, learn to listen and take in his word.

Prov 3:5-6 ... *"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 your paths straight"*

Don't depend on your senses or circumstances. Only God's word is secure and sure. Let the Holy Spirit bring to maturity in you the mind of Christ.

Prov 2:1-16 (read)

That's' the first step in the reprogramming (renewing) of our minds, the focus on getting the truth into our minds.

John 8:32 ... *"and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."*

Prov 12:19a ... *"Truthful lips will be established forever."*

The next step is cleaning out the bad data and installing protection against viruses.

#### 4. Censor Your Thoughts

2 Cor 10:3-5 ... *"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying (casting down KJV) speculations (imagination KJV) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we **are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.**"*

There is a process here: it starts with thoughts, the data that is fed into the "computer" of your mind. Then comes the decision; what you are going to do with these thoughts? Dwelling on a thought turns it into an imagination or speculation. Then if you continue to dwell on the imagination and let it govern your actions and words it eventually turns into a stronghold or fortress.

The thoughts are the original ideas that enter your mind – imaginations are the image these ideas form in your mind when dwelt upon – and strongholds are the results of imaginations becoming a reality and taking control in your life. This is how phobias form.

**Example 1:** You see a shark in the water. You've probably seen the film "Jaws" so you know sharks have the potential to cause you harm and you dwell on the fact that there are sharks in the ocean and have all sorts of bad images going around in your mind until it gets to a point where you develop a phobia and never go swimming, even when no sharks are present.

**Example 2:** Hypochondriacs are people who have developed symptoms of sickness from their thoughts. They start with some thought, don't take it captive but rather dwell on it and speak about it and go on until it becomes a stronghold and they convince themselves that they are ill. Psychosomatic illnesses are also developed largely through stress. This is thoughts turned into worry turned into stress which then causes illness.

Prov 13:10 ... *"Through presumption comes nothing but strife" ...*

We see or hear something, often only partial information. That's the initial thought that enters our mind. Then we dwell on this and soon enough it becomes a speculation or imagination. Then a little further on this develops into a presumption and we speak and act on this presumption and the next thing is a whole lot of strife stirred up.

We need to train ourselves, with the Lord's help, to immediately and systematically weigh up every thought that enters our minds. If it does not line up with the word of God or if it makes our conscience (the voice of the spirit) uneasy, then throw it out.

Mark 4:24 ... *"And He was saying to them, **"Take care what you listen to.** By your standard of measure it will be measured to you; and more will be given you besides. For whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him."*

The difference between 'hearing' and 'listening' is that listening involves a thinking and meditation on what you have heard. You can't always avoid hearing something, but you can weigh it up and throw it out if it is not true or good. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Ask yourself, does it line up with Philippians 4:8, if not throw it out.

Phil 4:8 ... *"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things."*

If we want beautiful gardens we plant the seeds of pretty flowers and shrubs. We don't ever plant weeds. We only pull weeds out and throw them in the bin because they spoil our garden and rob the nutrients that the flowers need. Satan is constantly trying to sow seeds of bad thoughts (weeds) into the garden of your mind. As soon as you detect or see them pull them out so they don't rob you of the joy and goodness that the Lord has poured into you to make you a beautiful and joyful person.

Censor the thoughts that come into your mind, let fear have no place in you. Fear divides your heart.

James 4:7 ... *"Submit therefore to God Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

It is very important that we censor our thoughts and meditate on God's word to ensure our hearts are filled only with those things that are true, honourable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, excellent and worthy of praise. Then when we speak and act it will be out of a pure heart and we will release life filled words and action.

Matt 12:34 (NKJV) ... *"For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks."*

Now that we have considered the matter of our thoughts, which control our conversation, let us move onto the subject of our words.

### 5. The Tongue – Our Confession

A question we should be asking ourselves is: Do we have 'terminal tongues' or 'living lips'? Are we speaking out condemning and life quenching words, or are the words we speak creative, bringing life and hope to the hearers?

One of the secrets to living a victorious Christian life is the ability to speak out only that which is in alignment with Christ who is within you. In other words, it is the ability to control your tongue that is vital to victorious life.

James 3:2 ... *"if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man..."*

The words of your mouth have influence over your life, whether you like it or not, whether you believe it or not, as that is true.

Prov 18:21 ... *"Death and life are in the **power** of the tongue, And those who love it will eat its fruit".*

The Hebrew uses the word “yād” that is translated to the word ‘power’ in the above verse. The literal meaning of “yād” is ‘hand’. The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament defines the primary meaning of this noun as: “the terminal part of the arm used to perform functions of man’s will”.

The hand is that which can carry out good or bad works. It can form a fist and punch and hurt someone, or it can gently support and assist an elderly person to walk across a busy street, thereby helping them. Hands are used to peel vegetables to feed the family, to hold a spanner to fix the car, to carefully and artistically arrange flowers in a vase; all good and helpful tasks. Or, it can wield a knife and stab someone, steal the purse out of a handbag, slap a child across the head in anger; all bad and harmful actions.

So death and life are in the ‘hand’ (the part that carries out the actions, good or bad) of the tongue.

Just as an aside, it is very interesting to note that the Hebrew word “yādâ” means ‘praise’ or ‘give thanks’. That’s what our tongues were created to do! Whatever we say should ultimately glorify and bring praise to God.

Now back to the matter of ...“death and life are in the power of the tongue”...

Prov 18:21 (Message) ... *“Words kill, words give life;  
they’re either poison or fruit—you choose.*

This is in agreement with Rom 8:6 ... *“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace”* ... The mind, what we are thinking, will determine what we say. What we say will have its consequences; death or life.

When your thinking is aligned with Christ who is your life and with His word, when your heart (soul and spirit) is united, and these thoughts convert into words, as you speak you release His power and life into the situation.

Mark 11:12-14, 20-23 ... *“On the next day, when they had left Bethany, He became hungry. Seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went to see if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He **said** to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again!” And His disciples were listening...*

*.... As they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots up. Being reminded, Peter said to Him, “Rabbi, look, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.” And Jesus answered saying to them, “Have faith **of** God. Truly I say to you, whoever **says** to this mountain, ‘Be taken up and cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he **says** is going to happen, it will be granted him.”*

Jesus **spoke** and in His **words** was a power that caused the tree to wither up by the next morning. This was the same power that was released when He **spoke** at the foundation of the earth when He created everything.

But there's something interesting in what He said to His disciples. A paraphrased form would be:  
....*"Have (the) faith **of** God and have a united heart, then when you speak God's power will be released"*.  
To understand ...*"have faith **of** God"* ... we need to look at Gal 2:20.

Gal 2:20 (KJV) ... *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith **of** the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."*

Unfortunately the KJV is the only version that translates this verse correctly (literally). All others erroneously replace the '*faith **of** the Son of God*' with '*faith **in** the Son of God*'.

A note for grammarians: In the relevant part of this Gal 2:20 passage the genitive case is used. It is used to attribute quality to the word it modifies (faith) by telling to whom it belongs (the Son of God). So the literal and only translation it yields is "the faith **of** the Son of God". It tells us the faith belongs to the Son. For the passage to have been translated as faith **in** the Son of God the locative case would have had to be used. The locative case is the case of location or position. This case was not used, so the passage cannot be translated as "faith **in** the Son of God". The genitive case is also used in Mark 11:22.

We live by the faith **of** the Son of God. We live by His life and we live by His faith. Our part is to simply abide in Him, trust Him and obey His every command. Then as we say and do what He instructs us to say and do, so His power is released through our words and actions and good things happen. We are the container, he is the contents. As we are filled with Him and as He pours out of us in our conversation so His power is released into action.

That's why Jesus said in Mark 11:22 ... *"Have faith **of** God."* He is saying if we rest in Him with a simple childlike trust, when He gives us something to say and we say it then He will see to it that the job gets done and the answer will be established just as we have declared, because it is His power and His faith in action.

If you face a demon possessed person and the Lord tells you (by discerning of spirits or word of knowledge) to cast the demon out, and you speak out and tell it to go, it will go because the power of God has been released into the situation and the demon has to submit to the higher authority of Christ who defeated Satan and all his hosts at the cross of Calvary. It's Christ's faith, His power and His life within you that is released when you speak from a united heart. As we remember from the last lesson, a united heart is one in which the soul (mind, will and emotions) and the spirit (which is one with Christ) are aligned.

Read Acts 19:13-16. It's not just using the words "in the name of Jesus" attached to whatever else we are saying that gets the job done, as the sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, found out. Why did the evil spirits say that they knew Jesus and Knew Paul, but not these imposters? Because Jesus is the Son of God to whom they have to submit, and because Paul knew he lived by the life and faith of the Son of God and when he spoke it was Christ in Him that was speaking through his lips and the demons knew and submitted to Christ in him.

As believers in whom Christ lives, our tongue and lips and mouth are His tools through which He wants to speak.



***Stop and think.***

What we say and the source of our words is important. We need to stop and look back and think about what we have been thinking and saying and its effect in our life and the lives of those around us. Have our words spread life or strife? Whose words have been coming out of our mouths?

**6. The Power and Importance of Words**

Heb 13:3 ... *"By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the **word** of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible."*

John 6:63 (NLT) ... *"The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very **words** I have spoken to you are **spirit** and **life**."*

Words are spiritual forces. But it's only God's words that produce life.

Heb 1:3 ... *"And He (Christ) is the radiance of His (The Father's) glory and the exact representation of His (The Father's) nature, and upholds all things by the **word** of His power..."*  
*(words in parenthesis added)*

Christ, who is Spirit and who is omnipotent, speaks and upholds all things by His words. Not only have His words created all that exists, but His words also uphold everything in its place.

God's word is spiritual law. Both the spirit world and the natural world are controlled by God's words.

God's spoken word has creative power:

Genesis chapter 1 has many ... *"and God said, 'let there be'"* ... statements and the things he spoke into being were immediately created. It was God's words, releasing His creative power, that formed the world and all that is in it as well as the sun, moon and stars.

So God's words control the natural world.

Mark 1:23-27 ... *"Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God!' And Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.'"*

God's words also control the spirit world. By His words Jesus cast out demons.

Words are spiritual forces that have effect in both the natural and spirit realms, either working for or against you. God's word in your mouth, flowing out of a united heart, releases a spiritual force that will work for you. Idle words, coming from a doubting or divided heart or from bad thoughts, are spiritual forces that will work against you.

God's laws are like any other laws, for instance look at electricity: you can cook with it, use it for heating on a cold day, or have light in your home at night. All of these are positive uses of electricity. On the other hand, you can abuse it and get electrocuted. All laws have a positive and negative side to them. Words are no different, they produce life or death and if our words are aligned with God's words we will enjoy life.

Words are powerful, so choose your words carefully! Think before you speak.

God's word is just as powerful today as they were when He spoke at creation and as they were when spoken by Jesus when He walked on earth. Today He speaks through those in whom He dwells. He speaks through your lips and mine.

John 15:7-8     ... *"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*

Jesus came to give 1) abundant life and 2) to destroy the works of the devil. He did this by the words He spoke. He spoke and healed the sick. He spoke and said "it is written" ... and defeated the devil. He spoke and demons were exorcised.

Nothing has changed since those days. He wants to do bring life to the needy and destruction to the works of darkness through His words. He lives in you and me and wants us to bear the same fruit. He wants to speak through us to release His power into the people around us.

Prov 10:11     ... *"The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life".*

Words are important and words are powerful, so give thought to what you say. Make sure they align with and come from the One by whose life and faith you live.

## **7. Watch Over Your Mouth**

Prov 13:3     ... *"The one who guards his mouth preserves his life;  
The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin."*

Prov 21:23     ... *"He who guards his mouth and his tongue,  
Guards his soul from troubles."*

Our prayer to God should be the one David prayed:

Ps 141:3-4a     ... *"Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips. Do not incline my heart to any evil thing."*

**Example:** The wise man and the chicken feathers. There was a woman who had a problem with her tongue; she was always speaking words that caused strife and trouble in her community. She eventually listened to wise counsel and went to see an elder for help. The wise man told her to go to the market in the nearby village and buy a chicken. He told her to chop its head off, bleed it and then proceed on her journey back home. He told that as she walked home she was to pluck the feathers and throw them on

the side of the path so that by the time she got home all the feathers were to be plucked out and the chicken ready for cooking. She was told to cook and eat the chicken and if she did all those things her problem would be solved. She did exactly as the wise man instructed, but nothing changed, her tongue continued to cause strife. A few days later she went back to the wise man and told him that his plan had not worked. He said to her, "No, not yet. Now go and pick up all the feathers, then your problem will be fixed". She immediately replied, "But the wind has blown the feathers far and wide, I'll never be able to find them all, probably not even a few of them". To which he replied, "That's exactly what happens to your words. They spread far and wide and you can't get them back. The damage they do you can't undo. The only way you can fix your problem is by thinking about what you say before you say it and only let out those words that are uplifting and kind. Now go home and think about that and maybe your ways will change".

James 1:26 ... *"If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless."*

Finally, our daily prayer should be:

Ps 19:14 ... *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer."*

---

## References

1. Merrill F Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago 1979.
2. Matityahu Clark, Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew, Feldheim Publishers, 1999.
3. Tremper Longman III, How to Read Proverbs, IVP Academic, 2002.
4. Harris, Archer, Waltke, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Moody Press, 1980.