

PROVERBS

*Everlasting Wisdom
for Everyday Life*

VANCE PITMAN

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About the Author

Vance responded to God's call to Las Vegas, Nevada in 2000, as a church planter sent out from First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia. From a small group of eighteen adults in a living room, Hope Church grew to become a thriving multi-ethnic, multi-generational fellowship of over four thousand members who, today, speak more than fifty languages and who have in common the singular desire to connect people to live the life of a Jesus follower. Vance led Hope to understand that what God is doing is bigger than one church. Since its launch in 2001, Hope has sent hundreds out of its fellowship on mission, invested millions of dollars in God's global activity, and has commissioned more than seventy-five churches in the western United States.

As a seasoned church planter in the West, Vance speaks across the country and all over the world from the passion of his apostolic heart to inspire people to join in God's eternal, redemptive mission of making disciples and multiplying the church among every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In March of 2022, Vance assumed the role of President of SEND Network, the largest church planting organization in North America, and with it, the role of Senior Vice President of the North American Mission Board.

Vance holds a bachelor's degree with a major in history and a minor in business management from the University of North Alabama, and a master's degree in divinity from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He resides in Henderson, Nevada, with his wife Kristie. They are the proud parents of four, and have two grandchildren.

PROVERBS

How to Use this Study

This Bible study book includes four weeks of content for group or individual study.

Personal Study

Each week includes seven to ten proverbs for daily reading and personal study. These studies are meant to cultivate daily time in the Word and a regular practice of reading Proverbs. Each day of personal study has a chapter of Proverbs printed in the book along with a page of devotional content and reflection questions. The Scripture is printed so that you can underline, highlight, and interact with the day's reading.

In this study, Vance Pitman challenges you to join him in reading a proverb a day—reading the proverb that corresponds with the day of the month. If you begin the study in the middle of a month, you can either follow the book or follow the calendar (the personal studies do not have to be read in a particular order.)

Additionally, each day of personal study has a short (one to two minute) video to view on the chapter of Proverbs being covered that day. These short videos are available through Lifeway's On Demand platform. Instructions on how to view all the video content for this study are included on the printed instructions in the back of this book.

Group Sessions

Each week includes a personal study guide that provides questions and directions for group members and group leaders participating in this study. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members and with God's Word.

START. This section includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the main topic of the session teaching.

WATCH. This section provides space to take notes during the weekly video session. All group videos are included with the purchase of this book through Lifeway's OnDemand platform. Instructions on how to view all the video content for this study are included on the printed instructions inside the backcover of this book.

DISCUSS. This section includes questions and statements that guide the group to explore relevant biblical truth and apply what they've studied over the previous week as they've interacted with the personal studies.

Considerations for This Study

This study on Proverbs can be used in a variety of ways. There are four group sessions and thirty-one days of study. Before using the study you will want to determine how you plan to use it.

AS AN INDIVIDUAL Though this is a group Bible study, all video content is included with the purchase of this book; therefore, this study can be done as an individual. In this case, one would want to start the study at the beginning of the month and go through the study sequentially.

AS A GROUP STARTING AT THE BEGINNING OF A MONTH. Ideally, groups would begin this study at the start of a month and go through the group material each week as they meet together. Throughout this resource, the group sessions occur every seven days, but groups can use them sequentially as they meet throughout the month.

AS A GROUP STARTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE MONTH. If your group begins this study in the middle of a month you can either start from the beginning and work through the thirty-one days of content, or you can start at the day of the month you begin and go through the group in order. The group content is not directly tied to the daily individual content, so either approach will work.

Interpreting Proverbs

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to give wisdom to God's people. In Proverbs 1:2, Solomon puts it this way: "for learning wisdom and discipline." But it's important to know more than just the purpose of the book. In order to benefit from the intended purpose, we also have to understand how to read Proverbs.

A good place to begin is by asking, what is a proverb? Proverbs are not exclusive to the Bible, though the types of proverbs found in the book of Proverbs are unique in their nature. In general, a proverb can be defined as a brief but powerful saying that states a general truth. Proverbs are not to be understood as absolute and specific promises of truth. Instead, they express general principles that prove true in most cases.

The proverbs found in the book of Proverbs are unique in that they have been given by God. This gives us certainty of their benefits. Further, the wisdom found in Proverbs is not only beneficial in daily life but also guides us toward eternal life with God. Throughout the book of Proverbs, Solomon exhorts his readers to pursue wisdom over foolishness. As we pursue the wisdom found in this book, we can be confident in its benefits for our lives today and even more so of their eternal value. As Vance reminds us, "Proverbs provides everlasting wisdom for everyday life."¹

1. Paraphrased from the *CSB Study Bible* intro to Proverbs

WEEK ONE

Pursuing Wisdom

PROVERBS 1-7

No.

Date

Date

No.

Wisdom's Necessity

Every day, all people face situations that invite them to choose from one of two options—wisdom or foolishness. You might not have ever thought about it that way, but it's no less true. In every time and culture, marriage, parenting, friendship, work, and relationships have presented opportunities for unwise thoughts, words, and behaviors. Add the continual redefining of those relationships in our day and time, and those opportunities increase exponentially.

The problem is, we don't often know what is the wise thing to think, say, or do. We may think we know. Have you ever thought you knew the right thing to say or do only to later discover you were wrong? We've all been there! It happens in every area of our lives. We need wisdom for our thoughts, words, earthly relationships, decision-making, life "in" the world, and walk with the Lord.

Ephesians 5:15-17 puts it this way: "Pay careful attention, then, to how you walk—not as unwise people but as wise—making the most of the time, because the days are evil. So don't be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." It is not only life experience that shows us we need wisdom. God Himself speaks that truth into our lives. Gratefully, though, God doesn't only tell us to walk in wisdom, He has given us His Word to teach us how.

The book of Proverbs, specifically, offers everlasting wisdom for everyday life. It helps us see life from God's perspective. It aims to help us acquire and apply God's wisdom to the decisions and activities of everyday life at every stage of life. That's why this study encourages us to read through the book of Proverbs, one chapter each day. We need God's wisdom, and Proverbs gives that wisdom to us.

Are you ready?

Start

Use this page to introduce the idea and then get the conversation started.

Proverbs is a book that invites us to find and embrace wisdom. The primary way it does this is by comparing wisdom with what the Bible calls “foolishness.” Since wisdom is a word that means different things to different people, let’s think through this together.

How would you finish the following sentences?

A person who is wise . . .

A person who is foolish . . .

What are some situations in your life when you knew you needed guidance?
Where did you turn to find the answers you were looking for? Why?

Everyday we find ourselves in situations that require wisdom. We need wisdom for everyday life. Thankfully, there’s a book of the Bible where God invites us to tap into His wisdom—the book of Proverbs. Throughout this study, we’ll walk through the book of Proverbs, discovering together how to see life from God’s perspective.

Prayer

Thank God for the gift of His Word. Acknowledge your need for His everlasting wisdom in everyday life. Invite Him to fill you with that wisdom as you pursue Him in your study of Proverbs.

Watch

Use this page to take notes as you watch the group teaching session.

To access the teaching sessions,
use the instructions in the back
of your Bible study book.



Discuss

Use this section to discuss the video teaching.

Vance said, “The Bible is as relevant as the times we are living in.” Why do some people struggle to believe that is true? Have you ever questioned whether or not the Bible is relevant in your own life? Explain.

In the gold rush of the 1800s, people left everything behind to mine out treasure—to find gold. How does that serve as a picture of what God intends for us in relationship to His everlasting wisdom? What does it require of you?

Vance explained, “Wisdom is seeing life from God’s perspective.”
Read Ephesians 5:15-17. Why do we all need God’s perspective?

Read Proverbs 1:7. Solomon’s words here infer that we have two choices regarding God’s Word. What are they? What attitude do you need to receive everlasting wisdom for everyday life? Why?

Read Proverbs 1:1-6. What “everyday life” outcomes will you receive in pursuing God’s wisdom?

How is it that Proverbs can provide wisdom in every stage of life (vv. 4-5)?

Vance gave a sampling of wisdom in Proverbs related to the following areas of life—your relationship with God, your relationships with others, decision-making, and the words we speak. In which of these areas of life do you currently sense the most need for wisdom? Why?

Vance has challenged us to, each day, read the chapter in Proverbs that corresponds with the day of the month. What wisdom do you hope to glean as you join in that journey?

Close the group in prayer and remind them to complete the week’s personal study.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

THE PURPOSE OF PROVERBS

1 The proverbs of Solomon
son of David, king of Israel:
 2 For learning wisdom and discipline;
for understanding insightful sayings;
 3 for receiving prudent instruction
in righteousness, justice,
and integrity;
 4 for teaching shrewdness
to the inexperienced,
knowledge and discretion
to a young man —
 5 let a wise person listen
and increase learning,
and let a discerning person
obtain guidance —
 6 for understanding a proverb
or a parable,
the words of the wise,
and their riddles.
 7 The fear of the LORD
is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and discipline.

AVOID THE PATH OF THE VIOLENT

8 Listen, my son,
to your father's instruction,
and don't reject
your mother's teaching,
 9 for they will be a garland of favor
on your head
and pendants around your neck.
 10 My son, if sinners entice you,
don't be persuaded.
 11 If they say — "Come with us!
Let's set an ambush
and kill someone.
Let's attack some innocent person
just for fun!
 12 Let's swallow them alive, like Sheol,
whole, like those who go down
to the Pit.
 13 We'll find all kinds
of valuable property
and fill our houses with plunder.
 14 Throw in your lot with us,
and we'll all share the loot" —
 15 my son, don't travel that road
with them
or set foot on their path,
because their feet run toward evil
and they hurry to shed blood.
 17 It is useless to spread a net
where any bird can see it,

18 but they set an ambush
to kill themselves;
they attack their own lives.
 19 Such are the paths of all who make
profit dishonestly;
it takes the lives of those
who receive it.

WISDOM'S PLEA

20 Wisdom calls out in the street;
she makes her voice heard
in the public squares.
 21 She cries out above the commotion;
she speaks at the entrance
of the city gates:
 22 "How long, inexperienced ones,
will you love ignorance?
How long will you mockers
enjoy mocking
and you fools hate knowledge?
 23 If you respond to my warning,
then I will pour out my spirit on you
and teach you my words.
 24 Since I called out and you refused,
extended my hand and no one
paid attention,
 25 since you neglected all my counsel
and did not accept my correction,
 26 I, in turn, will laugh at your calamity.
I will mock when terror strikes you,
when terror strikes you like a storm
and your calamity comes
like a whirlwind,
when trouble and stress
overcome you.
 28 Then they will call me,
but I won't answer;
they will search for me, but won't
find me.
 29 Because they hated knowledge,
didn't choose to fear the LORD,
 30 were not interested in my counsel,
and rejected all my correction,
 31 they will eat the fruit of their way
and be gluttoned with
their own schemes.
 32 For the apostasy
of the inexperienced
will kill them,
and the complacency of fools
will destroy them.
 33 But whoever listens to me
will live securely
and be undisturbed by the dread
of danger."

A Journey, Not a Destination

When you consider the need for wisdom in society today, you might automatically think about people who make up the younger generations. And that's certainly true—in fact, Proverbs is written from the perspective of a parent to a child. Solomon wrote much of the book, and in Proverbs 1:4-5 he specifically mentioned the *inexperienced* and *young* as his audience. Whether young in experience, in age, or both, Proverbs promises prudence, knowledge, and discretion.

But Proverbs is not only for the young and inexperienced! In verse 5, Solomon identified a third group of people when he wrote, "let a wise person listen and increase learning." In other words, Proverbs also contains a promise for those who are older in experience, in age, or both. Those who have been walking the journey called Christianity for some time can and should continue to grow in wisdom and then pass that wisdom on to others.

What that means is that wisdom is not a state in which you can fully arrive this side of heaven. No matter what stage of life you're currently in, you need to grow in wisdom. Wisdom is a journey!

Proverbs 1:7 teaches us that wisdom's journey begins with an attitude. Think about it this way—we live in the information age, but the vast amount of information at our fingertips has not made us any wiser than the generations before us. That's because information apart from the fear of God only makes us more informed sinners. The pursuit of wisdom that does not have its starting point in teachability before the Father always ends in dissatisfaction.

Whether young and inexperienced or older with a lifetime of experience, the kind of knowledge we desperately need comes to those who hunger to know God. When we fear God and treasure Christ, we learn true wisdom. Humility before the Lord leads to teachability which produces wisdom!

Since wisdom comes from knowing and delighting in Christ, what are some practical ways you might grow in your affection for Christ?

Why can a person possess a wealth of knowledge and still be a "fool"?

Wisdom's journey begins with an attitude.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

WISDOM'S WORTH

2 My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands
within you,
2 listening closely to wisdom
and directing your heart
to understanding;
3 furthermore, if you call out
to insight
and lift your voice to understanding,
4 if you seek it like silver
and search for it
like hidden treasure,
5 then you will understand the fear
of the LORD
and discover the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge
and understanding.
7 He stores up success for the upright;
He is a shield for those who live
with integrity
8 so that he may guard the paths
of justice
and protect the way
of his faithful followers.
9 Then you will understand
righteousness, justice,
and integrity — every good path.
10 For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will delight you.
11 Discretion will watch over you,
and understanding will guard you.

12 It will rescue you from the way
of evil —
from anyone who says
perverse things,
13 from those who abandon
the right paths
to walk in ways of darkness,
14 from those who enjoy doing evil
and celebrate perversion,
15 whose paths are crooked,
and whose ways are devious.
16 It will rescue you
from a forbidden woman,
from a wayward woman
with her flattering talk,
17 who abandons the companion
of her youth
and forgets the covenant of her God;
18 for her house sinks down to death
and her ways to the land
of the departed spirits.
19 None return who go to her;
none reach the paths of life.
20 So follow the way of the good,
and keep to the paths
of the righteous.
21 For the upright will inhabit the land,
and those of integrity will remain
in it;
22 but the wicked will be cut off
from the land,
and the treacherous ripped out of it.

God's Mouth to Your Ears

What voices are loudest in your life? Do they all agree with you? Who has permission to speak wisdom into your life—both when it feels good and when it hurts a little bit?

In Proverbs 2:6-7, Solomon assures us that true wisdom is only God's to give, and He does give it. But God's wisdom is not always easy to hear. In fact, Jeremiah 23:29 describes God's Word as a fire and a hammer that breaks apart the hardest places. The truth is, sometimes God's wisdom hits us where it hurts. Our natural inclination might be to resist or even reject that wisdom. So we need ears that are ready to receive it and hearts that pursue it. That starts by attentively listening and storing up God's words and commands (Proverbs 2:1).

Being attentive to something means constantly tending to it. This takes consistent and concerted effort. We must regularly lean into God's Word—letting it shape, mold, encourage, inform, and correct us. We must listen for His voice. There is simply no substitute in the life of a believer for time spent with God daily in His Word and prayer.

This is precisely the reason we're seeking to read Proverbs daily. If we are going to walk in God's wisdom each day, we must establish time each day to receive that wisdom. We must surrender to God daily and seek Him so that we will be transformed, and our lives will prove His will.

To move forward in the journey of wisdom, we must tend to the words of God and incline our hearts to understand. Many voices shout for our attention; let's ensure that God's voice is loudest.

What are your ears most attentive to right now? What obstacles keep you from being most attentive to God's Word?

What is a life situation where you need God's Word to shape your understanding?

There is no substitute for time spent with God in His Word and prayer.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

TRUST THE LORD

3 My son, don't forget my teaching,
but let your heart keep
my commands;
2 for they will bring you
many days, a full life, and well-being.
3 Never let loyalty and faithfulness
leave you.
Tie them around your neck;
write them on the tablet
of your heart.
4 Then you will find favor
and high regard
with God and people.
5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not rely on
your own understanding;
6 in all your ways know him,
and he will make your paths straight.
7 Don't be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and turn away
from evil.
8 This will be healing for your body
and strengthening for your bones.
9 Honor the LORD
with your possessions
and with the first produce
of your entire harvest;
10 then your barns will be
completely filled,
and your vats will overflow
with new wine.
11 Do not despise
the LORD's instruction, my son,
and do not loathe his discipline;
12 for the LORD disciplines the one
he loves,
just as a father disciplines the son in
whom he delights.

WISDOM BRINGS HAPPINESS

13 Happy is a man who finds wisdom
and who acquires understanding,
14 for she is more profitable than silver,
and her revenue is better than gold.
15 She is more precious than jewels;
nothing you desire can equal her.
16 Long life is in her right hand;
in her left, riches and honor.
17 Her ways are pleasant,
and all her paths, peaceful.
18 She is a tree of life to those
who embrace her,
and those who hold on to her
are happy.

19 The LORD founded the earth
by wisdom
and established the heavens
by understanding.
20 By his knowledge the watery depths
broke open,
and the clouds dripped with dew.
21 Maintain sound wisdom
and discretion.
My son, don't lose sight of them.
22 They will be life for you
and adornment for your neck.
23 Then you will go safely on your way;
your foot will not stumble.
24 When you lie down, you will not
be afraid;
you will lie down, and your sleep
will be pleasant.
25 Don't fear sudden danger
or the ruin of the wicked
when it comes,
26 for the LORD will be your confidence
and will keep your foot from a snare.

TREAT OTHERS FAIRLY

27 When it is in your power,
don't withhold good from the one to
whom it belongs.
28 Don't say to your neighbor,
"Go away! Come back later.
I'll give it tomorrow" —
when it is there with you.
29 Don't plan any harm
against your neighbor,
for he trusts you and lives near you.
30 Don't accuse anyone without cause,
when he has done you no harm.
31 Don't envy a violent man
or choose any of his ways;
32 for the devious are detestable
to the LORD,
but he is a friend to the upright.
33 The LORD's curse is on the household
of the wicked,
but he blesses the home
of the righteous;
34 He mocks those who mock
but gives grace to the humble.
35 The wise will inherit honor,
but he holds up fools to dishonor.

When You Don't Know What to Do

If anyone ever had reason to trust in himself, it was Solomon. He was king, he was wise, and there would never be anyone like him ever again (1 Kings 3:5,12). But Solomon understood where his wisdom came from. As much wisdom as Solomon had been given, God's wisdom was far greater. His understanding is beyond measure (Psalm 147:5); the depth of His wisdom is unsearchable (Romans 11:33-36); He knows us better than we know ourselves (1 John 3:20).

Even the wisest among us don't know what to do sometimes, and it's important to acknowledge that. That's why Proverbs 3:5-6 gives us two practices and a promise. The first practice is to trust God (v. 5). We can't trust in the Lord with our whole hearts and also lean on our own understanding. Trusting in the Lord involves a change in posture—from thinking we know what to do to understanding that while we don't know what to do, God always does. God has a plan for our lives broadly, and He also has a plan for every detail of our lives. We are safe and secure when we rely on Him to carry out those plans. We can trust God with everything!

The second practice reveals whether or not we are doing that. When we truly trust God, we know Him in all our ways (v. 6). Other translations use the words *acknowledge* or *follow* here. The point is, wisdom invites God into everything. It is through relationship that God speaks into our lives. You can't compartmentalize that relationship and expect to know what to do when you don't know what to do.

Here's the promise—when you trust God and follow Him in every part of your life, "He will make your paths straight" (v. 6). God will lead you in the direction you need to go and will provide everything along the way.

This means it's okay to not know what to do. We don't need to be consumed with knowing all the answers. Instead, we need to be consumed with knowing God. He will faithfully direct us and accomplish His will through our lives.

In what areas of life do you tend to lean on your own understanding instead of the Lord's?

What would it look like, practically, for you to trust God with all your heart this week?

Trust that God has a plan and follow Him.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

A FATHER'S EXAMPLE

4 Listen, sons, to a father's discipline,
and pay attention so that
you may gain understanding,
² for I am giving you good instruction.
Don't abandon my teaching.
³ When I was a son with my father,
tender and precious to my mother,
⁴ he taught me and said,
"Your heart must hold on
to my words.
Keep my commands and live.
⁵ Get wisdom, get understanding;
don't forget or turn away
from the words from my mouth.
⁶ Don't abandon wisdom, and she will
watch over you;
love her, and she will guard you.
⁷ Wisdom is supreme—
so get wisdom.
And whatever else you get,
get understanding.
⁸ Cherish her, and she will exalt you;
if you embrace her, she will
honor you.
⁹ She will place a garland of favor
on your head;
she will give you a crown of beauty."

TWO WAYS OF LIFE

¹⁰ Listen, my son. Accept my words,
and you will live many years.
¹¹ I am teaching you the way
of wisdom;
I am guiding you on straight paths.
¹² When you walk, your steps will not
be hindered;
when you run, you will not stumble.
¹³ Hold on to instruction; don't let go.
Guard it, for it is your life.
¹⁴ Keep off the path of the wicked;

don't proceed on the way
of evil ones.

¹⁵ Avoid it; don't travel on it.
Turn away from it, and pass it by.
¹⁶ For they can't sleep
unless they have done what is evil;
they are robbed of sleep
unless they make someone stumble.
¹⁷ They eat the bread of wickedness
and drink the wine of violence.
¹⁸ The path of the righteous is
like the light of dawn,
shining brighter and brighter
until midday.
¹⁹ But the way of the wicked is
like the darkest gloom;
they don't know what makes
them stumble.

THE STRAIGHT PATH

²⁰ My son, pay attention to my words;
listen closely to my sayings.
²¹ Don't lose sight of them;
keep them within your heart.
²² For they are life to those
who find them,
and health to one's whole body.
²³ Guard your heart above all else,
for it is the source of life.
²⁴ Don't let your mouth
speak dishonestly,
and don't let your lips talk deviously.
²⁵ Let your eyes look forward;
fix your gaze straight ahead.
²⁶ Carefully consider the path
for your feet,
and all your ways will be established.
²⁷ Don't turn to the right or to the left;
keep your feet away from evil.

Two Paths, One Choice

God's wisdom is a gift given to us, but we must make the choice to receive it. Using the metaphor of two paths, Proverbs 4 makes that choice plain. Imagine standing at the start of a trail, knowing that one path will lead to certain injury and disappointment, while the other will lead you safely to the most grand and glorious view. That choice would be easy to make, right?

The same principle holds true in our walk with the Lord. There is a "path of the righteous" that shines brightly (v. 18) and a path "of the wicked" that is filled with gloomy darkness (v. 19). The path of the righteous is the journey of wisdom, and the path of the wicked is the journey of foolishness. The path of the righteous is lived inside God's boundaries, and the path of the wicked is lived outside of those boundaries (vv. 20-22,27).

It seems simple—if you carefully consider which path to take, you will choose the wise way (v. 26). Still, there are many deep-thinking people in the world who are on the wrong path. They believe that every path can be a good and right way. They choose a direction that suits their preferences and, in doing so, believe they can find their own truth and walk in it.

The reality, though, is that there is only one truth, and that is what we must carefully consider. The writer of Hebrews put it this way: "Make straight paths for your feet" (Hebrews 12:13). The straight path is the path God gives us in His Word, the one Jesus paved for us, and the one upon which His Spirit leads us. It is the path of healing from whatever stumbling we have previously done and the path of wisdom, certainty, and righteousness for all future steps we take.

Why is it important to evaluate the path you're taking on a regular basis?

What might be some signs you're on the right path? Some signs you're on the wrong path?

There is only one truth, and that is what we must carefully consider.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

AVOID SEDUCTION

5 My son, pay attention to my wisdom;
 listen closely to my understanding
 2 so that you may maintain discretion
 and your lips safeguard knowledge.
 3 Though the lips
 of the forbidden woman
 drip honey
 and her words are smoother than oil,
 4 in the end she's as bitter
 as wormwood
 and as sharp as a double-
 edged sword.
 5 Her feet go down to death;
 her steps head straight for Sheol.
 6 She doesn't consider the path of life;
 she doesn't know that her ways
 are unstable.

7 So now, sons, listen to me,
 and don't turn away from the words
 from my mouth.
 8 Keep your way far from her.
 Don't go near the door of her house.
 9 Otherwise, you will give up
 your vitality to others
 and your years to someone cruel;
 10 strangers will drain your resources,
 and your hard-earned pay will end
 up
 in a foreigner's house.
 11 At the end of your life,
 you will lament
 when your physical body
 has been consumed,
 12 and you will say,
 "How I hated discipline,

and how my heart
 despised correction.
 13 I didn't obey my teachers
 or listen closely to my instructors.
 14 I am on the verge of complete ruin
 before the entire community."

ENJOY MARRIAGE

15 Drink water from your own cistern,
 water flowing from your own well.
 16 Should your springs flow
 in the streets,
 streams in the public squares?
 17 They should be for you alone
 and not for you to share
 with strangers.
 18 Let your fountain be blessed,
 and take pleasure in the wife
 of your youth.
 19 A loving deer, a graceful doe —
 let her breasts always satisfy you;
 be lost in her love forever.
 20 Why, my son, would you
 lose yourself
 with a forbidden woman
 or embrace a wayward woman?
 21 For a man's ways are before
 the LORD's eyes,
 and he considers all his paths.
 22 A wicked man's iniquities will
 trap him;
 he will become tangled in the ropes
 of his own sin.
 23 He will die because there is
 no discipline,
 and be lost because of
 his great stupidity.

The Way to Avoid Danger

If we had started this study by listing the top ten areas of life where wisdom is needed in our culture, sex would likely be somewhere near the top. We live in a sex-saturated culture, but our culture's view on sex tends to be contrary to that of Scripture.

Our culture proudly emphasizes everything about sex except for God's plan. And, truth be told, the message given to us might seem good and right (v. 3), but what seems good and right in the world leads us away from God's wisdom, not toward it (v. 4). God has given us the wisdom we need. In fact, Scripture has a lot to say about God's design for sexual intimacy.

After warning his son of the dangers of seduction and adultery, Solomon gave him wisdom about how to avoid those dangers—find pleasure in your wife (v. 18) and “be lost in her love forever” (v. 19). God wants both wives and husbands to enjoy each other, and when the Bible speaks romantically, it always assumes monogamy and marriage. This is true romance: to love and enjoy your husband or wife all the days of your life.

Solomon loved his wife, and it was evident in his words and actions. However, 1 Kings 11 tells us that Solomon didn't avoid danger. This wise man very foolishly took many women as his wives and that sin turned his heart away from the Lord.

There were consequences. God didn't tell Solomon how to live, and then step back and become an observer. Solomon's foolish actions grieved God, and He tore the kingdom out of Solomon's hands. It is impossible to hide any sin from the Lord. He is all-seeing and all-knowing, and He wants better for us than a life bound by the seduction of the world.

What is a danger you need the wisdom of God's Word to help you avoid?

If you are married, what can you do to express your delight in your spouse and God? If you are not married, what can you do to express your delight in God and in any potential spouse you may have in the future?

The world leads us away from God's wisdom, not toward it.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

FINANCIAL ENTANGLEMENTS

6 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor or entered into an agreement with a stranger,
 2 you have been snared by the words of your mouth—trapped by the words from your mouth.
 3 Do this, then, my son, and free yourself, for you have put yourself in your neighbor's power: Go, humble yourself, and plead with your neighbor.
 4 Don't give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids.
 5 Escape like a gazelle from a hunter, like a bird from a hunter's trap.

LAZINESS

6 Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise.
 7 Without leader, administrator, or ruler,
 8 it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest.
 9 How long will you stay in bed, you slacker? When will you get up from your sleep?
 10 A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the arms to rest, and your poverty will come like a robber,
 11 your need, like a bandit.

THE MALICIOUS MAN

12 A worthless person, a wicked man goes around speaking dishonestly, winking his eyes, signaling with his feet, and gesturing with his fingers.
 14 He always plots evil with perversity in his heart; he stirs up trouble.
 15 Therefore calamity will strike him suddenly; he will be shattered instantly, beyond recovery.

WHAT THE LORD HATES

16 The LORD hates six things; in fact, seven are detestable to him: arrogant eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots wicked schemes, feet eager to run to evil,

19 a lying witness who gives false testimony, and one who stirs up trouble among brothers.

WARNING AGAINST ADULTERY

20 My son, keep your father's command, and don't reject your mother's teaching.
 21 Always bind them to your heart; tie them around your neck.
 22 When you walk here and there, they will guide you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; when you wake up, they will talk to you.
 23 For a command is a lamp, teaching is a light, and corrective discipline is the way to life.
 24 They will protect you from an evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a wayward woman.
 25 Don't lust in your heart for her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyelashes.
 26 For a prostitute's fee is only a loaf of bread, but the wife of another man goes after a precious life.
 27 Can a man embrace fire and his clothes not be burned?
 28 Can a man walk on burning coals without scorching his feet?
 29 So it is with the one who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.
 30 People don't despise the thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is hungry.
 31 Still, if caught, he must pay seven times as much; he must give up all the wealth in his house.
 32 The one who commits adultery lacks sense; whoever does so destroys himself.
 33 He will get a beating and dishonor, and his disgrace will never be removed.
 34 For jealousy enrages a husband, and he will show no mercy when he takes revenge.
 35 He will not be appeased by anything or be persuaded by lavish bribes.

Light for Your Life

Think about a time you've experienced a power outage. When everything goes dark, especially at night, you want to find a source of light, right? Without light, we can't see where we're going. Proverbs 6:23 tells us the same principle holds true in our spiritual lives—without the light of God's Word, we all stumble through life. We don't know where to go or what to do. But God gave us His Word to show us His way in the midst of the darkness of this world.

Proverbs 6 calls attention to some specific areas where we might stumble in the dark—issues of finance (vv. 1-5), work ethic (vv. 6-11), dealing with dishonest and arrogant people who stir up trouble (vv. 12-19), and sexual temptation (vv. 20-35). We live in these realities; still, many of us don't seek God daily in His Word. Instead, we walk in the dark with fear, anxiety, frustration, stress, and confusion, wondering why we don't know what to do.

God has given us the light of His Word to direct our steps in every dark place we might find ourselves. He doesn't want to steal our joy. Neither does He want us to continue in confusion, anxiety, and frustration. God's wisdom in His Word leads us to get the most out of this life for which He created us. He wants us to enjoy life!

God doesn't only want us to enjoy life on vacation; He shows us how to enjoy life in our daily work. He doesn't only show us how to enjoy life in the very best years of marriage; He shows us how to enjoy life when we're single or when marriage brings challenges. We face temptations all through life—how to spend our money or our time, and how to think, speak, and act in many other contexts. Those who pursue wisdom will turn to the light of God's Word and trust that He knows best, always binding His commands to their hearts (v. 21). What does God promise to those who do that? He will give us the direction, protection, and counsel we need (v. 22).

What is a past situation in which you were guided by God's Word?

In what current situation do you need to turn to the light of God's Word for direction?

We cannot know God's will apart from God's Word.

MONTH	DAY	YEAR

7 My son, obey my words,
 and treasure my commands.
 2 Keep my commands and live,
 and guard my instructions
 as you would the pupil of your eye.
 3 Tie them to your fingers;
 write them on the tablet
 of your heart.
 4 Say to wisdom, "You are my sister,"
 and call understanding your relative.
 5 She will keep you
 from a forbidden woman,
 a wayward woman with
 her flattering talk.

A STORY OF SEDUCTION

6 At the window of my house
 I looked through my lattice.
 7 I saw among the inexperienced,
 I noticed among the youths,
 a young man lacking sense.
 8 Crossing the street near her corner,
 he strolled down the road
 to her house
 9 at twilight, in the evening,
 in the dark of the night.
 10 A woman came to meet him
 dressed like a prostitute,
 having a hidden agenda.
 11 She is loud and defiant;
 her feet do not stay at home.
 12 Now in the street,
 now in the squares,
 she lurks at every corner.
 13 She grabs him and kisses him;
 she brazenly says to him,
 14 "I've made fellowship offerings;
 today I've fulfilled my vows.

15 So I came out to meet you,
 to search for you, and I've found you.
 16 I've spread coverings on my bed —
 richly colored linen from Egypt.
 17 I've perfumed my bed
 with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
 18 Come, let's drink deeply
 of lovemaking until morning.
 Let's feast on each other's love!
 19 My husband isn't home;
 he went on a long journey.
 20 He took a bag of silver with him
 and will come home at the time
 of the full moon."
 21 She seduces him
 with her persistent pleading;
 she lures with her flattering talk.
 22 He follows her impulsively
 like an ox going to the slaughter,
 like a deer bounding toward a trap
 23 until an arrow pierces its liver,
 like a bird darting into a snare —
 he doesn't know it will cost him
 his life.
 24 Now, sons, listen to me,
 and pay attention to the words
 from my mouth.
 25 Don't let your heart turn aside
 to her ways;
 don't stray onto her paths.
 26 For she has brought many
 down to death;
 her victims are countless.
 27 Her house is the road to Sheol,
 descending to the chambers
 of death.

Wisdom Exceeds Intention

Saying the right thing in a given situation is fairly easy. Yet, it is something else entirely to act in accordance with the things we say. Anyone can make a statement that sounds good and is approved by others, but we show the worth of our words when we back up our words with action that shows we truly mean what we say.

Another way to say this is that wisdom isn't found in mere intellectual assent or even the very best of intentions; wisdom requires action. We may intend to follow Christ faithfully in the wisdom He gives, but unless we follow this intention with action and direction—our intention does us no good.

Many people resist God's wisdom entirely because of the gulf between wisdom and action. They struggle to reconcile the hypocrisy of words and actions that do not match.

But the father in Proverbs 7 didn't want the wisdom he gave his son to simply be "a good idea my dad shared one time." God's wisdom is far more than that. So the father implored his son to let the wisdom he received exceed intention. Regarding those wise instructions, the father used words like *obey*, *treasure*, *keep*, and *guard* (vv. 1-2). He told him to tie them to his fingers, and write them on the tablet of his heart (v. 3). Then to drive the point home even further, he told him a story of seduction (vv. 6-27).

The father had seen with his own eyes the failure of good intentions when a young man gave into seduction. Because the young man did not obey, treasure, keep, and guard God's wisdom, he paid the full price—his life. The father knew his own son, like all of us, would be deceived by and attracted to forbidden things in life. He couldn't emphasize wisdom for him—or us—enough. God's instructions are not merely good knowledge or intentions to possess; they are a life-giving treasure we must choose to live out daily.

Why is all of the Christian life a call toward good action and not only good intention?

Why is it so difficult for people to receive God's wisdom related to the subject of sex?

Wisdom requires action.