

GOD'S WISDOM IS

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PROVERBS SERIES STARTS 17 NOVEMBER

Bible Reading Guide

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WELCOME

I've really enjoyed my study of Proverbs in recent months and I'm excited about doing this series together as a church. I've discovered that Proverbs is a book much loved by Christians, not so much by preachers because of its unusual structure. As such, I'd appreciate your prayers that we'd do it well.

We're told in the opening chapter in v.2 that Proverbs are given to us "for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight" (NIV). We are set up in verse 7 to understand that "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction".

As such Proverbs helps us to live as those who know and understand who God is, with Him occupying the right place in our lives. With God in His right place, Proverbs then shapes our world view, trains us, shapes our character, helps us to truly understand reality, reject folly and embrace wisdom.

My prayer for this series is that, if you don't already, you'll come to love the book of Proverbs and use it regularly. I've been asking God to help each one of us read and understand it well, so we can all be blessed by having our, character, thoughts, actions and world view shaped by it.

Please join me in this prayer, your brother in Christ,



Matt Lehmann
Senior Pastor



READING PROVERBS AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

In this study guide my goal has been to help you see the value of Proverbs and encourage you to use it regularly as a follower of Jesus. As you work through the bible studies you'll note I haven't taken the opportunity to use Proverbs as a launching point to the New Testament and to Jesus.

This is a deliberate choice, as a starting point to explain this, have a listen to the apostle Paul wrestling with wisdom and how it relates to Jesus in 1 Corinthians 1:20-24 & verse 30 (NIV):

“²⁰ Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. ²² Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God ³⁰ It is because of him [God the Father¹] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

We could spend many sermons unpacking this passage but this quote from Lindsay Wilson expresses my view of how Proverbs and Jesus interrelate, “Every proverb must ultimately be read in the light of Christ. This does not mean that we need to read Christ into the book of Proverbs ... but acknowledges that all Scripture climaxes in Christ, even though the wisdom books do not focus on God's saving rescue of his chosen people. Christ, however, is the Lord of all creation as well as the Lord of redemption ... in addition, Christ is also the wisdom of God”²

¹ My addition for context

² Wilson, L. Proverbs, Tyndale Old Testament Commentary (TOTC) 2017, p.46

READING PROVERBS AS A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

Now there's much we could mull over about this all and if you want to think about it further Goldsworthy's "Gospel and wisdom" is a good next step (shown on the next page). In the end however, I think the way forward for us as Christians is quite simple. After studying the book of Proverbs set yourself a goal to read the gospel of Luke.

Approach it with the view of seeing Jesus as God's wisdom embodied, lived out and in its fullest expression. You'll see that much of what Jesus says builds on, and brings out the full meaning and implications of, wisdom literature. As you read Jesus words it will enhance your view of the wisdom of Proverbs. Proverbs, in turn, will help you love Jesus more and see Him as He is declared in scripture to be, 'the wisdom of God'.

As Christians the foundation of our relationship with God is Jesus sacrificial death on the cross for us (Romans 5:8, 6:23 and Col 1:21-22). We actively seek to live under the lordship of Jesus (Col 2:6-7) as the Spirit seeks to transform us to more into the likeness of Jesus (2 Cor. 3:18), growing us in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)³. Proverbs doesn't use that language, but rightly understood it marries together beautifully with Proverbs call to live as those who fear the Lord, seeking to embrace God's wisdom, rejecting folly and have our very characters transformed. As such I don't think we have to 'make' Proverbs and Jesus fit together, they already do.

³ Wilson, Proverbs (2017) p.46

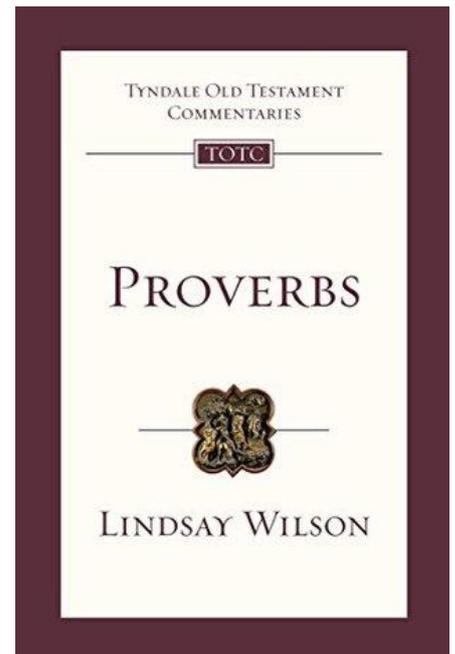
THANKS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

A VERY BIG THANKYOU

A very big thankyou to Katy Smith who helped me get my head around the book and try to approach it well as a preacher. This was especially helpful as not many preachers have attempted to teach Proverbs as a whole.

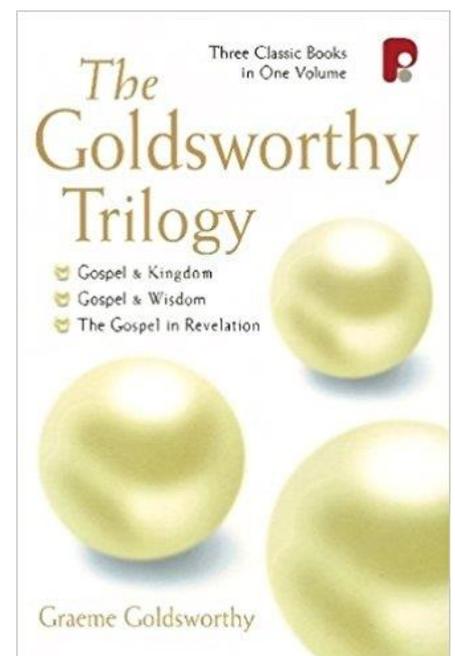
A GOOD COMMENTARY FOR THE LIBRARY

I've used Lindsay Wilson's commentary on Proverbs as part of the Tyndale Old Testament Commentary series published 2017. I rarely fall in love with commentaries but I certainly did with this one and have used it extensively. If such things appeal to you it is very approachable and practical and would be a worthy addition to your library.



ANOTHER GOOD BOOK TO STRETCH YOU

I've only skim read this one but many really helpful quotes have made quite an impact. I'll certainly be going back for a full read and I'm sure there'll be a few quotes used in the series. It's a bit more stretching but from what I've seen so far, it's good stuff. It's title is Gospel and Wisdom, published in 2000 by Graeme Goldsworthy and it's often sold as part of 'The Goldsworthy trilogy'.



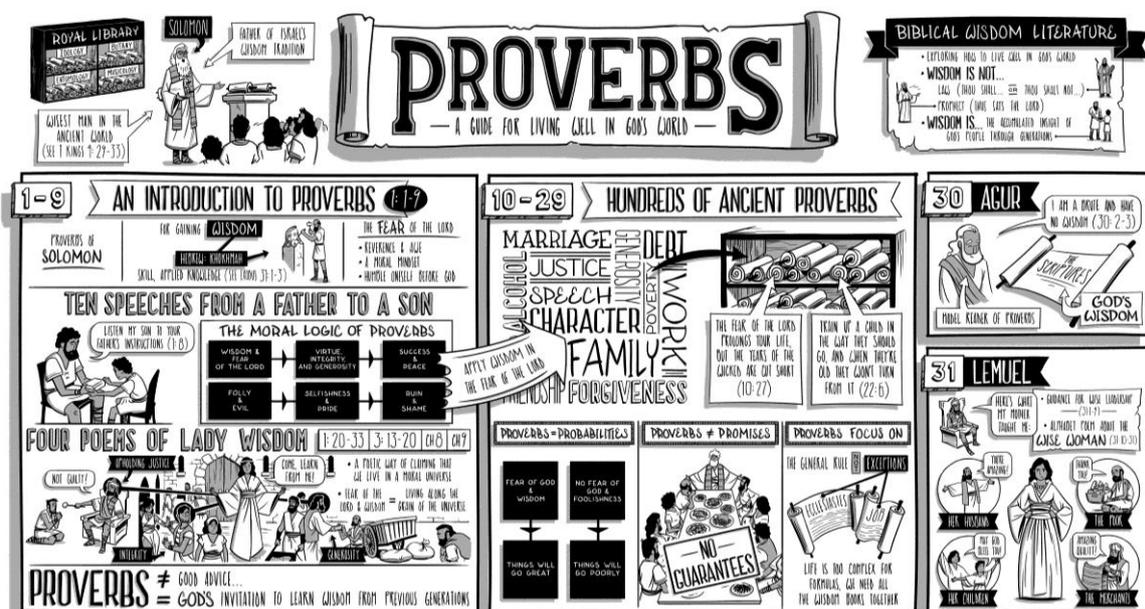
THANKS AND FURTHER RESOURCES

SOME OTHER HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR YOUNG AND OLD

The Bible Project do some great little videos and wall charts that are very helpful in seeing how the book fits together. It's important not to take video's or commentaries as authoritative and have a look at the book of Proverbs yourself, but these are helpful particularly for visual learners.

See <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/proverbs/> and go the second video Proverbs (Read Scripture) first. There is also a broader Proverbs video there too (with the scary looking lady). I might have worded a few things differently in this video but it is a helpful starting point to see how Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Job all fit together.

You can also download the below poster which is really good as an overview to put on the fridge for the series or for the kids to colour in. We have some of these printed out for the kids so ask Katy Annis or any of our kids leaders.



BIBLE READING – WEEK 1

Read: Proverbs 4:1-27

1. What are the benefits and costs of wisdom put to us in verses 1-9?
2. What are the contrasts between the wise and the wicked v.10-19?
3. How comprehensive is the Father's call in v.20-27, what does it include?

Read: Proverbs 5:1-23

1. What are some of the consequences of embracing folly?
2. How does the imagery of the chapter strike you regarding adultery?
3. How does verses 21-23 drive the point home?

Read: Proverbs 6:1-19

1. How does this chapter broaden the picture out of what it means to embrace folly from the imagery of chapter 5?
2. What do verses 16-19 teach us about what it means to fear the Lord?

Read: Proverbs 6:20-35

1. Adultery is declared wrong in God's law. How do these verses seek to persuade us this is a good thing as well as protect us from adultery?
2. For those of us who have never committed adultery, do you think the right response is to say "I've never done it, I'm okay, let's move on" or are there broader implications and learning to be found here?

Read: Proverbs 7:1-27

1. In chapter 8 wisdom is personified with a clear call and passionate call to follow then in chapter 9 a clear decision is called for between Lady Wisdom and Dame Folly. How does chapter 7 set us up for this?
2. How do the opening verses of chapter 7 seek to keep us from embracing extreme folly, in this case adultery?

BIBLE READING – WEEK 2

Read: Proverbs 10

1. Many of the Proverbs in chapters 10-15 make a strong link between character and consequences, how many can you spot in this chapter?
2. How, both positively or negatively, have you seen this play out in your life or others around you? How does this encourage you to live?

Read: Proverbs 11

1. How do Proverbs like v.22 strike you? Without giving a clear lesson they yield a great deal by what they imply, what do you take from it?
2. If you read verses 23-31 together what impression does it make on you, how might it apply as you think about wealth, security and generosity?

Read: Proverbs 12

1. There's much in this chapter about the power of words, read again verses 6, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23 and 25, what stands out to you?

2. Pray and ask God for wisdom so that our words may be well considered, and trustworthy and also that we may listen well, and be discerning.

Read: Proverbs 13

1. What does this chapter teach us about wealth and poverty?
2. How does verse 23 nuance the general teaching in Proverbs that righteousness leads to prosperity and other good things?

Read: Proverbs 14

1. Does verse 20 seem fair to you? Have you considered before that some Proverbs help us understand how the world works without declaring it right or wrong? How does this help you read Proverbs well?
2. How does the following verse (v.21) build on the previous verse?

BIBLE READING – WEEK 3

Read: Proverbs 15

1. There are lots of strong contrasts here in chapter 15, how does this help sharpen the choice before us to embrace wisdom or suffer under folly?
2. What contribution does verses 25-33 make to our understanding of what it means to fear the Lord?

Read: Proverbs 16

1. How do verses 1-9 speak to regarding the plans of our hearts, how important our motives are and our trust in God's sovereignty?
2. How do verses 20-24 instruct us to think about how well we listen, how we use our words and how important the motives of our heart are?

Read: Proverbs 17

1. Many of the Proverbs in chapters 16-22 have themes of retribution, e.g. verses 5 and 11. How does this shape our world view in an unjust world?
2. What kind of picture is developed contrasting wisdom and foolishness as you read verses 2, 6, 10, 21, 24, 25, 26 and 27?

Read: Proverbs 18

1. How do verses 10 and 11 work together to help us consider where true safety is found? How does that speak to our current western culture?

2. How do the many facets of verses 12-15 speak to you about the various aspects of our character and how they are linked to our actions?

Read: Proverbs 19

1. Proverbs reveal their true depth when they are weighed against other proverbs. How do verses 1, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 14, 17, 22 & 26 build a deep picture and nuance the wisdom of each other?

BIBLE READING – WEEK 4

Read: Proverbs 20

1. How do verses 5 & 6 shape the way we think about our relationships with each other and what we should value?
2. Why do you think some Proverbs are content to describe the world as it is without commending or criticising like verse 14?

Read: Proverbs 21

1. As you read today try to spot the way Proverbs is seeking to encourage you to embrace wisdom and reject folly.
2. Verse 14 shows us the effectiveness of a bribe without affirming them nor rejecting it. How do verses 2, 3 and 15 help us wrestle with v.14?

Read: Proverbs 22

1. Verse 7 makes a statement about how the world works, how do verses 1, 2, 8, 9, 16, 22 & 23 and 26 & 27 keep shaping our world view?
2. What is the difference pastorally if we take verse 6 as an iron clad promise from God versus something that is generally true?

Read: Proverbs 23

1. In the opening chapters of Proverbs, we were warned from picking bad company and having the strength to reject those who would entice us into sin, how does that knowledge bring much richness to this passage?

2. Pray for our church family that we'd have the wisdom and character to spot and reject those who would entice us to embrace folly.

Read: Proverbs 24

1. How do verses 1-6 encourage you to pursue wisdom?

2. How do you verses 10-12 challenge you as someone who knows Jesus?

BIBLE READING – WEEK 5

Read: Proverbs 25 & 26

1. Read Luke 14:10 and re-read Proverbs 25:6-7. Have you ever thought of Jesus being as being the personification of wisdom, soaked in Proverbs?
2. What does Proverbs 26:7 & 9 say to you about the nature or Proverbs and the need to be someone who fears the Lord to use them well?

Read: Proverbs 27

1. How many aspects of daily life are covered in ch.27, how can we use Proverbs to highlight an all-encompassing view of wise living?
2. What areas of life can you pray for God to shape your character in?

Read: Proverbs 28

1. There are many contrasts between what it looks like to embrace folly versus pursuing wisdom, how has Proverbs shaped your view of the need to make these kinds of choices daily?
2. Read Proverbs 2:1-5 and turn it into a prayer for you and our church.

Read: Proverbs 29

1. As you read this chapter, ask yourself what kind of character God is seeking to develop in you as you read it.

2. How do you read verse 18 as a follower of Jesus?

Read: Proverbs 30 & 31

1. How has your view of the book of Proverbs changed over the series?

2. The final image of the woman thoroughly shaped by the book of Proverbs is a beautiful one to challenge both men and women. How have you felt Proverbs encouraging you to embrace God's wisdom.

3. Read Matthew 7:24-27 and pray.

Studies adapted from Trinity Church Colonel Light Gardens for Trinity Church Mount Barker in 2019.

