

Wisdom for the Everyday

In the book of Proverbs we find timeless wisdom on living and working in a godless world. Proverbs call us repeatedly to listen to what God is trying to say to us. They call us to think about our choices in life and their consequences. Like Jesus' parables, these Proverbs present us with choices and call us to act wisely as our responsive action.

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**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: ESV

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
1	Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold. She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.	Proverbs 3:13-15	<p>The book of Proverbs deals with everyday life. It's a great book to turn to before we start work in the morning, because it deals directly with many of the issues we face each day: honesty, the value of hard work, dealing with conflict, wise communication, the balance between planning and faith and the folly of self-promotion, unfaithfulness and deceit. It helps us understand what foolishness and wisdom look like in the real world. Whoever finds wisdom and exercises wisdom is truly blessed.</p> <p>Why is wisdom such a rare quality? In what areas of your life do you need wisdom right now?</p>	Lord God, please open my eyes to understand more of your wisdom and help me by your Holy Spirit to think and speak and act wisely. Amen.
2	Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.	Proverbs 3:5-6	<p>Trusting in the LORD is to underpin <i>our whole life</i> and to permeate <i>all</i> our thinking and doing. We are to use our God-given skills and knowledge wisely. We are to plan wisely. But we are also to commit all our plans to the Sovereign LORD and trust him to keep his promise, to 'make our paths straight'. Wise planning and faith are complementary and tightly interwoven, not mutually exclusive. Both are an expression of God-given wisdom.</p> <p>In what ways do you need to trust God more? How do you balance the need to plan and act with the need to trust?</p>	Lord. I commit to you today all my plans for my family, my work and myself. Give me wisdom in the decisions I make today and help me to trust you more. Amen.

Wisdom for the Everyday (continued)

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
3	Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.	Proverbs 8:10-11	<p>Wisdom is a greatly undervalued quality in our society. We typically value, skill, experience, reliability, commitment and success. We may also value creativity, celebrity, beauty, sporting prowess and academic achievements, but wisdom seldom rates a mention. Yet wisdom is both rare and valuable. Time and energy spent in seeking wisdom will yield better returns than any monetary investment. If you are learning to value wisdom, then you are wise indeed. If you know someone who is truly wise, you know you have met someone special.</p> <p>Think of the some of the terms we commonly use to describe people: intelligent, smart, 'savvy', 'emotionally intelligent', practical: How does wisdom differ? In what ways have you learned to value wisdom in your life?</p>	Heavenly Father, help me to recognise and value wisdom in other people and to value always what is truly important. Amen.
4	Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.	Proverbs 10:9	<p>We need only to read the daily news to see the truth of these statements and to be reminded that we stray from the path of integrity at our peril. When we are dishonest, we are kidding ourselves that we won't be found out, that we won't be held to account and that there is no God who sees or cares. Proverbs again presents us with a choice: the path of integrity or the way of dishonesty. This is not a mere side issue in our relationship with God, it is inextricably bound up with our professed faith.</p> <p>What tests to honesty and integrity do you face in your daily life? How do you equip yourself to face these tests?</p>	Almighty God, May integrity and uprightness protect me because my hope is in you. Amen.
5	Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honours him.	Proverbs 14:31	<p>These two proverbs taken together sum up what God thinks about exploitation of the poor on the one hand and generosity on the other. Exploitation is condemned everywhere in Scripture, not least in the book of Proverbs. On the other side of the coin, generosity of spirit is a hallmark of a godly man or woman. Notice the strong connection between our use of money and our relationship with God.</p> <p>If someone knew nothing about your professed faith, what would they learn about you from the way you treat people in need?</p>	Loving Father, give me eyes to see the need around me, a loving and generous heart and help me to give to those in need and never to abuse any authority trusted to me. Amen.

Wisdom for the Everyday (continued)

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6	The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, and a man is tested by his praise.	Proverbs 27:21	<p>True humility is impossible to counterfeit. It is unrelated to role or position. Humility is a right understanding of ourselves in relation to God and others, and a right assessment of our 'successes' in the context of the bigger picture of the will of God. In an increasingly self-absorbed society, it is a standout quality. In the words of C.S Lewis, 'Humility is not thinking less of yourself. It is thinking of yourself less'.</p> <p>How do we handle success and the praise of others? Do we grab all the glory and attention for ourselves and conveniently forget the contributions of others or do we acknowledge and celebrate the contribution of others and our dependence on them?</p>	Lord, teach me to handle success when it comes; always to recognise the contribution of others and to remember how much I am dependent on you. Amen.
7	Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.	Proverbs 31:8	<p>We all have a duty of care: for those who cannot care for themselves, for those who are not getting a fair deal, for those unable to speak for themselves. In the face of injustice, silence and inaction is a sin. If we turn religion into a purely private affair, divorced from any wider concerns about the state of the world and the desperate need of most people, then we are closing our ears to the Word of God, which speaks loudly about injustice.</p> <p>In what ways can you speak and act justly when others are treated unfairly in your workplace or community?</p>	Lord, help me to be fair and honest in all my dealings with others and give me the courage to stand against injustice in my workplace and community. Amen.
8	<p>There is gold and abundance of costly stones, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.</p> <p>A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.</p>	Proverbs 20:15, 25:11	<p>According to Proverbs, the wise person knows when to speak and when to keep silent. The wise person knows what to say when she opens her mouth, and knows the <i>right time</i> to say the <i>right thing</i>. Knowing the power of our communication by mouth, email, Facebook, blogs and tweets, we would be wise to pray over all our communication.</p> <p>Who, in your circle of contacts, could you help today by speaking or writing some wise words of encouragement?</p>	Set a guard over my mouth, Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips'. Help me today to be wise in all my communication. Amen.

Wisdom for the Everyday (continued)

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9	When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.	Proverbs 10:19	<p>There is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Proverbs give us some very helpful guidelines as to the situations when silence is the wisest response. For example, when someone else is speaking we should be listening; when we are ignorant of the subject being discussed; when we have nothing useful or helpful or kind to add to the conversation; in arguments, when words simply add fuel to the fire. Sometimes silence is the wisest response. Sometimes silence is golden.</p> <p>How can you best avoid, or help defuse, situations where an unhelpful argument is a likely outcome?</p>	Lord, help me to listen more and speak less. Amen.
10	The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.	Proverbs 9:10	<p>Knowing God, not just knowing about him, is the source and basis of true wisdom. The 'fear' (that is reverence and respect for his person and authority) of the LORD is the <i>beginning</i> of wisdom but not the <i>end</i> of wisdom. It is not the whole story. Why? Because the wisdom of God includes the love of God. We see that love perfected and in all its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:18-25). Fear, love and wisdom are inextricably linked in our relationship with God.</p> <p>Think about where you stand with God. Do you fear him in a good way, respecting his awesome power and authority? Or do you fear him in a bad way... fear that he may not forgive you? Read some of the wonderful statements God has given us in his Word to take away our fear: Romans 8:1; 1 Timothy 1:15, 16; 1 John 1:8,9 and 5:13.</p>	Lord God, I want to know you more, honour you more and understand your greatness and your love more deeply. Amen.
11	Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favour and good success in the sight of God and man.	Proverbs 3:3-4	<p>Love and faithfulness are at the core of the character of God as revealed in Scripture and in the person of Jesus. So, as we seek to live a life consistent with the character of God, these qualities should increasingly characterise our lives and relationships. We are 'to write them on the tablet of our heart' – that is, to make them central to our life. We are to 'bind them round our neck', which is to make them a constant reminder of their importance. This last image also reminds us that, like jewellery designed to adorn the beauty of the wearer, so love and faithfulness bring beauty to lives and relationships.</p> <p>Think about the relationships you value most and the covenant commitments you have made. In what practical ways can you show these qualities of love and faithfulness?</p>	Father, please keep me faithful, to you; faithful in my relationships and faithful in the work you have called me to do. Amen.

Wisdom for the Everyday (continued)

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12	<p>A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.</p> <p>A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.</p>	Proverbs 15:1, 18	<p>In situations where two people start expressing strong opinions, when emotions get fired up, then there is often a critical moment of choice for those involved. Whether to escalate the scale of conflict or to resolve it. These two proverbs present this choice very clearly. The gentle answer will turn away anger and calms the quarrel. On the other hand, the harsh word adds fuel to the flames and the hot-tempered one stirs up more dissension, as one might stir up a hornet's nest.</p> <p>Think about a conflict situation you have been in recently, at home or at work? How does God want you to resolve it?</p>	O God of Peace, help me to be a peacemaker in my home and in my work. Amen.
13	A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.	Proverbs 25:28	<p>Proverbs warns us about the negative effects of a lack of self-control. The picture is one of chaos and defencelessness: a person loses it, shouts and screams, whether in road rage, office rage or a drunken brawl. They are no longer thinking or controlling what comes out of their mouth, nor are they concerned about the effect of those words on anyone else. The person in full flight may feel that they are in control and acting powerfully, but Proverbs gives us the more penetrating picture; they are really out of control and are therefore vulnerable... like a city whose walls are broken down. But self-control is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22); i.e. the outward evidence of God being at work in our life.</p> <p>In what situations are you prone to 'lose it' and let discussions turn into hurtful arguments or worse?</p>	Lord God, May your Holy Spirit control my life and make me more like Jesus, Amen.
14	The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot.	Proverbs 10:7	<p>Proverbs gives us much more than warnings, instructions, and wise sayings. It also presents us with role models to put flesh on the bones of what wisdom looks like in real people. There is the godly woman (chapter 31), who runs her home and business with dignity, respect and generosity; and the godly man, who cares for the poor, faces the future with confidence and sleeps peacefully at night with a clear conscience (3:23-27). Just thinking about those people who have been good role models for us, may bring a smile to our face and spur us on to live with renewed energy and wisdom. In the words of Proverbs, even their memory is a blessing (10:7).</p> <p>Which wise people are your role models? What characteristics do they have which you most admire and wish to emulate?</p>	Lord, thank you for all those who have modelled the Christian life to me. Help me to inspire and encourage others. Amen.