

The Keys To Wisdom

Love

Patience

Obedience

Mercy

Trust

Understanding

Truth

Discretion



Proverbs

WEEK 15

“Focusing on the Future”

Study: Proverbs 19:6-10

Reading: Romans 13:11-14, II Timothy 2:1-13

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

I used to watch a TV show called, “The Biggest Loser.” This show had contestants that worked together and against each other to see who could lose the most weight in a certain period of time. A phrase that one of the trainers would use is “nothing tastes as good as thin feels.” This was meant to motivate the contestants not to eat junk food and to focus on their long term goal of losing weight. It presented the need to sacrifice temporarily in order to gain the long term results they really wanted.

Today, we are going to see that the principle of true wisdom involves avoiding some of the immediate pleasures that try to draw our attention away from what will truly satisfy.

What Does the Bible Say?

The natural tendency of humans is to seek out those people who will give them what they want. Though in and of itself, this is not always wrong, you must be careful that you don’t base your friendships on what you can get out of a person. You must also be careful when you have more than others have, because some people will pretend to be your friends so that they can get as much as they can from you. Friendships should be based on much more than what you can give or get (vs 6).

Though the friends of a wealthy person show him constant love and attention, those who are around poor people often treat them with neglect and disdain. People who don’t have much are often pushed aside, even by people who claim to be their friends. The real challenge from these verses is for you to choose to be a true friend to all people whether they are rich or poor (vs 7).

For a person to really make something of his life, he needs to pursue after wisdom and understanding. Those who seek after wisdom will not give into every temporal pleasure that comes their way, but will work hard at gaining understanding. Short term pleasures are always tugging at the hearts of men to get their attention and draw their focus away from the hard work of gaining wisdom. Yet, those who say “No” to many of the short

term distractions are those who will find great fulfillment when they live in the wisdom they have gained (vs 8).

Though at times it may seem that liars and those who twist the truth might be getting ahead in life, they will face the consequences for their actions. You need to realize this and avoid twisting the truth by being completely honest in all of your dealings (vs 9).

To allow a fool to live in luxury is not a good thing because they will only bring disaster upon themselves. They haven't developed the wisdom to handle the responsibilities that comes with luxury. This would be like giving an inheritance to a child who has not handled his money well. The same principle would apply to having a slave become a leader. Most slaves did not have education or experience in any other field except the one they were brought up in. The pressure of trying to lead would be overwhelming and would often cause disaster (vs 10).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you find yourself giving great time and attention to those who have a lot they can offer you, or do you choose to go reach out to those who need friends and need help? Though it is not natural or easy, as a servant of Jesus Christ one of your responsibilities is to seek to love the less fortunate. This doesn't mean that the poor and needy should be your only friends, but it does challenge you to reach out to those in need.

Are you willing to put in the hard work to obtain something of real value in life? It is very easy to let your mind be sidetracked with the little pleasures that knock you off course and keep you from accomplishing goals that you really want to obtain. Many people in life flounder because they don't make the sacrifice needed to get what they really want in life. You need to choose to be committed to gaining wisdom and understanding. This involves discipline and sacrifice through spending time with God and choosing to put aside some selfish pleasures. The end result will be wisdom that brings far more pleasure than any of the temporal things that you chose to go without along the way.

Are you known as a truthful person? Do you deal honestly with those who you do business with? Do your co-workers, neighbors and family members trust you? Being a man or woman of outstanding character and complete honesty is what God desires from your life.

Who do people often choose to befriend (vs 6)?

Why is this a natural tendency?

Is this wrong? Explain your answer.

How can you make sure you are seeking to befriend others for the right reasons?

How are poor people often viewed (vs 7)?

Why do you think they are viewed this way?

Why would a poor person need to plead with his friends to stay around him (vs 7)?

What does this say about those who are called "friends" (vs 7)?

Who loves his own soul (vs 8)?

What do you think it means to "get sense" (vs 8 - ESV)?

What will a person of understanding discover (vs 8)?

Why do you think this is the case?

Who will not go unpunished (vs 9)?

What does this verse indicate about the danger of speaking lies (vs 9)?

How do you make sense of this proverb after you see people who lie and seem to gain advantage in life because of this?

What is not fitting (vs 10)?

Who should not rule (vs 10)?

What do you think verse 10 is teaching?

“How To Act Towards Others”

Study: Proverbs 19:11-14

Reading: Ephesians 5:21-33, Colossians 3:18-25

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

Though men are normally a little less emotional than women, they do experience great emotions. The hearts of men are normally touched deepest through their wives and children. It is those things that often help a man feel a great sense of worth or a great sense of emptiness. The greatest of these for most men is to know that his wife loves him deeply. When a man’s wife loves him and is verbally and physically expressing it, even if everything else in the world is going wrong, that man will still feel like he can conquer the world. When the man is not feeling the love of his wife, he finds strength from his children if possible, though it will not fully replace the love of a wife.

Today, one of the lessons we are going to learn is the power that wives have in the lives of their husbands. They have the ability to push their husbands to new heights through their love or drag them down into the pit of despair.

What Does the Bible Say?

Being slow to anger is something that comes more natural to some people than others, but it is a vital characteristic to work on in your life. Lashing out towards others in outbursts of anger or in fits of silence displays the great carnality of a person’s heart and is an outward sign of extreme selfishness. Everybody at one time or another gets angry, but how you respond when you are angry is very important. Words said in anger and actions committed in anger often leave wounds that are difficult to heal. Though it is not easy, one of the best solutions to getting angry is a choice that you must make to overlook someone else’s sin or mistake. Remembering that you are human too and that you make mistakes as well will help you control your anger and show others great grace and mercy (vs 11).

You should respond to others how you would like others to respond to you. Verse 12 takes you to the other end of the spectrum and puts the reader in the position of the offender that is showed kindness or anger.

Though you probably don’t have a king and will probably never know your political leaders personally, the picture of a king is someone who is in authority over you. Think about how you feel when your authority responds to you in anger compared to when he acts graciously towards you. Everyone prefers grace over anger, and, as a servant to that authority, you need to do what you can to encourage grace from that leader rather than to have to face his wrath (vs 12).

Two things that bring great distress to a man involve his children and his spouse. When a child is acting foolishly and making decisions that are unwise, it brings great grief and heartache to his father. Deeper grief is often felt when his spouse is constantly in disagreement with him. An arguing spouse isn’t always one who verbally argues, but just as damaging is the spouse who offers the “silent treatment” as their way of arguing. Both of these grieve the heart of a father and husband and often cause him great emotional pain (vs 13).

Though almost everyone in those days received some type of inheritance, the man who received a good wife was the man who was truly blessed. In those days, most marriages were arranged by the parents and the men and women were not often able to choose who they wanted. A husband and wife had to make the choice to love one another, especially since most marriages were arranged. This was not always easy, but the benefits of making this choice were worth the sacrifice (vs 14).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How do you respond when things don’t go your way? Do you choose to overlook offenses or do you lash out in anger? You probably don’t realize how others really view you at times, but the more you lash out in anger, the less respect you will have and the more problems you cause.

Are you being the child and the spouse that God wants you to be? Is your life an encouragement to those around you, specifically those who are closest to you? You probably underestimate the power you have to affect the lives of those closest to you, but you need to realize that your attitude and actions have a lot to do with how your family members live and feel. Examine your life and actions over this past week to see if you have been the person that is encouraging others by showing deep and intimate love or if you have been damaging others by being caught in a world of selfishness. It is much easier to get trapped in selfishness than you realize and you must constantly guard against it.

What helps a person avoid responding in anger (vs 11)?

What does the end of verse 11 exalt?

Why is being slow to anger often difficult?

How can you work on becoming a person who chooses to overlook an offense?

Why is working on this area in your life so important to you and to those you come in contact with on a daily basis?

What was a king's wrath compared to (vs 12)?

Why was this the case?

How can you relate to this in your life today?

What was the king's favor compared to (vs 12)?

How have you seen the favor of the "kings" in your life?

What will a foolish son do to his father (vs 13)?

What is a quarreling wife compared to (vs 13)?

Why do you think he is compared to this?

What are reasons that a wife can tend to become a wife who is like a continual dripping rain?

What does a person get from their parents (vs 14)?

Who is from the Lord (vs 14)?

What do you think this verse means?

What do you think this verse is teaching you for daily living?

“Facing the Consequences”

Study: Proverbs 19:15-19

Reading: I Corinthians 5:1-13, Hebrews 12:5-17

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

One of the hardest things for parents to do is watch their children go through difficult times. The love and natural instinct is to try to fix the problem their child is in. Though at times this is necessary, if the problem that child is facing is because of their own doing, fixing it for them could be harmful. Many parents have lost thousands of dollars trying to bail their children out of financial situations thinking they are helping their children. Instead, they are enabling their children to continue in the same foolish choices that caused the trouble in the first place.

Today, one of the lessons we will learn is how parents need to discipline their children and allow their kids to face consequences for their actions in order to help them grow.

What Does the Bible Say?

People who are lazy are also people who love too much sleep. This laziness will often lead to hunger and struggles because the person is unwilling to get out of bed to go to work. This does not mean that sleep is bad, but there are many principles in Proverbs that warn against being a person who sleeps too much (vs 15).

In the Old Testament, obedience to God and His Word carried with it the promise of a long life. This does not mean that everyone who dies young is a great sinner, but this is a general principle reminding us of the fullness of life we can have by obeying God. Those who obey God will live an abundant life, yet those who choose to do evil will often live a life of much misery when they reap the consequences of their actions. Those who follow the principles of God's Word are often much healthier on the inside than those who do not follow God's ways (vs 16).

When we give to the poor, we are actually giving to the Lord. Though it does cost us money and is a sacrifice, we can trust that God will repay us for our choice to give. This is a principle that does not always make economic sense because we often look at just the numbers rather than the power of God to keep His Word (vs 17).

Many parents are often afraid to punish their children because they think it will drive their children away from them, but the opposite is normally true. Choosing to punish children is a sign of love and when a child is disciplined correctly they are much more likely to turn out the way the parent desires them to turn out. By punishing your child properly, you are actually delivering them from many problems they might have faced later in life because they will learn obedience, honor and respect (vs 18).

It is very important that you allow people to face the consequences for their actions. This is how people learn not to do things again because their punishment helps drive home the need for obedience in their minds. When you deliver a person from their punishment because of your mercy, sometimes you are doing much more harm than good. You will have to continue to deliver them and bail them out of their problems over and over again because they haven't had to learn the hard way. As hard as this is, especially for parents, you need to let people pay for the mistakes they make to allow them to grow and mature (vs 19).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you love sleep? Sleep is a good thing and many times in our society people don't get enough of it. At the same time, it is easy to love it too much and let it be a detriment to you.

Do you want a full life that is full of joy and peace? You can have it as you choose to follow the principles of God. It will not always be easy, but God will be with you through the heartaches.

Are you giving to those who are in need? The Bible talks about this over and over, but this is often neglected in our society today. There are several people and organizations that help the needy and you can easily find them if you ask God to show them to you.

Do you show too much mercy to your children or others when they mess up? Yes, you should forgive them, but you should also allow them to face the consequences for their actions so they can learn. Don't let them off the hook, especially for the little things, because those little things will get bigger and bigger.

Thought for the day

What happens to slothful people (vs 15)?

Why will they often be in a position of suffering (vs 15)?

How can you know if you are a slothful person?

****It is easy for some people to overwork themselves because they fear that they are lazy. They believe they have to be working all the time and don't take the proper rest that they need. Talking to others about this area will often help you realize if you are slothful, overworking or have a good balance.*

Who finds life (vs 16)?

Who finds death (vs 16)?

****Though this verse could be referring to physical life and death, it could also be understood in the context of spiritual life and death.*

What will a generous person do (vs 17)?

Who will repay the lender (vs 17)?

****Though the poor may not always be able to repay, God will repay those who are generous to those who are in need.*

What will proper discipline produce in children (vs 18)?

What happens when parents fail to discipline their children (vs 18)?

Why do you think it is tough in this society for parents to biblically discipline their children?

Who will face the consequences for their actions (vs 19)?

What will happen if you enable a person to keep making foolish choices (vs 19)? How can you find the balance between mercy and enabling?

“Correction, Love & Change”

Study: Proverbs 19:20-22

Reading: James 4:13-17, I Corinthians 13:1-13

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

What Does the Bible Say?

Wanting to gain wisdom and being willing to accept instruction are vitally important characteristics for all believers to have. Sadly, this aspect of the Christian life is often overlooked as people live selfishly and are too prideful to admit that they might be wrong. Granted, no one ever likes to be told they are wrong and many times people do not offer their criticism in a proper way, but choosing to accept advice and instructions, even if it is not asked for, will make you a much wiser person. Many times, others can see your flaws much better than you can and though they may not always be completely right, listening to instruction and correction is one of the best things you can do (vs 20).

Though it is good to plan and organize your life, you must remember that you are not the one in control of what happens to you. Ultimately, it is God who is in control of your plans and you must realize that and let Him make the changes He needs to. Many people often get depressed or discouraged when their plans are not fulfilled or when God chooses a much different plan. The loss of a loved one, physical struggles, loss of a job, and unexpected expenses are all part of life and often included in God’s plan for the lives of His children. Though these are not included in your plans. We must remember that He is in control and His plan and way is always best (vs 21).

Many people seek after all types of things to bring satisfaction in life, but one of the things that truly fulfills a person is when they find another human who loves them no matter what happens in life. This is why marriage is so special, though our society has totally warped this understanding. For you the challenge is to be that person who constantly loves others with a love that does not change regardless of the circumstances.

The man or woman of character not only loves unconditionally, but they realize what is truly important in life. They are not willing to lie in order to get ahead, but understand the importance of telling the truth and

being honest, even if it means that they will be out some money, or if it causes them to live a life that has financial struggles (vs 22).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you a person who accepts instruction easily? No one likes instruction or correction, but in order to gain wisdom you must be willing to listen and make the changes necessary to grow. By approaching all criticism, correction and instruction with an open mind you will gain the respect of others and you will find yourself better off for it. Though you may think that you take instruction well, it wouldn’t hurt to ask a few of your close friends if they think you are open minded to instruction. They will probably have a better idea of how you handle it than you will.

Do you find yourself getting upset at God when He changes your plans? When things don’t go the way that you want, do you get tired and frustrated? It is very easy to get so caught up in planning the everyday activities of life and planning for your future that you take all of the planning into your own hands and don’t allow God to be God. He doesn’t always make your wishes come true and you don’t always live “happily ever after” because of your perfect planning. Sometimes, life is hard, but you must remember that God does what is best for you and you need to allow Him to make changes to your desires in order to accomplish His.

Are you known for the way that you love others with a steadfast love, or is your love conditional based on your emotions or what you can get out of that relationship? Everyone wants a friend that they know will love them no matter what takes place and you have the great opportunity to be that friend to others. Don’t allow yourself to get caught up in the selfishness of life that leads to neglecting true and real love.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for bringing people into your life to help correct you.*
- * *Ask God to help you to be open to correction, love and change.*
- * *Praise God because He knows what is best for your life.*

Thought for the day

What are you told to listen to (vs 20)?

What are you told to accept (vs 20)?

What will be the result when you do this (vs 20)?

Why do you think there are times where it is difficult to take advice from others?

Why is it not always easy to accept instruction (vs 20)?

How can you set your life up in a way that allows you to listen to advice and accept instruction?

How are the plans of men described (vs 21)?

Is there anything wrong with having plans? Explain.

What is greater than any plans that men can make (vs 21)?

How can this verse be a great comfort to you when things don't go as you planned?

Why is it hard to accept when things happen that are completely different than what you planned?

What can you do to help yourself accept the things that happen in your life that are not planned?

What is desired from others (vs 22)?

How are you a person who gives continual, steadfast love?

Who is better than a liar (vs 22)?

What do you think that proverb is teaching?

What are areas in life where you are tempted to lie?

“Fear & Wisdom”

Study: Proverbs 19:23-26

Reading: Ecclesiastes 12:1-14, II Thessalonians 3:6-15

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

What Does the Bible Say?

Having a proper, healthy fear of God is the way to a truly joyful and fulfilled life. It will cause great satisfaction and contentment in the heart of a person regardless of his financial or social position in life. The person who fears God in the right way does not have to be afraid of harm coming to him because he makes the right choices so that he avoids the chastisement of God and the natural consequences for sin. Fearing God does not mean that you are afraid to talk to Him or living in constant concern that He is out to hurt you, but it is truly believing that God will do what He says He will do. It is understanding that if God says He will punish you for wrong, He will punish you. That fear will help keep you living in His plan for your life and will also allow you to trust that He will keep the promises of blessing that He has made to you as well (vs 23).

People who are lazy will not even work for food. They will expect others to provide for them and take care of their needs rather than letting their hunger motivate them to work. An underlying theme of this verse that is presented elsewhere in Scripture is that you need to be careful that you don't enable a lazy person by giving them what they are not willing to work for themselves (vs 24).

Solomon divides men into three main categories in verse 25. The scoffer (the fool), the simple and the wise. The scoffer is often punished because of his words and actions, though he does not learn from his punishment. Those who are simple (immature) see the punishment of the scoffer and learn what to avoid, though they don't often grow from it. The wise man, on the other hand, takes rebuke and allows it to make a great change and difference in his life. He is constantly growing and learning which allows him to continually increase in wisdom (vs 25).

The person who does not respect their parents but criticizes and takes advantage of them brings great shame to himself and will end up in all types of trouble. The challenge is for you to do the opposite by respecting and exalting your parents. By doing this, you will bring great honor and

blessings upon your life (vs 26).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you truly believe that God will do what He says He will do? If so you are on your way to a healthy fear of God that will help you in every area of life. You will avoid certain things because you know the harm it will bring and you will do other things because you know the benefits. Allowing yourself to view God as the complete and total authority for your life is one of the best things you can do.

Are you gladly working and laboring on a regular basis to help provide for your family? Work is a good thing that God has designed for you to do. Though labor was made hard after the fall of man, work is ordained by God and you should put your effort into the job that God has given you.

Are you a scoffer, a simple man or a wise man? The answer can probably be seen by the way you handle rebuke. If you constantly reject correction and instruction you are probably a scoffer. If people are afraid to approach you to help you see a flaw in your life you might not be a scoffer, but you are probably in the category of the simple because you don't really want to learn and grow. If you are continually open to rebuke and allowing God to challenge you in your spiritual growth you are probably in the category of the wise man.

How do you treat your parents? Do you view them with great respect and honor or are you constantly critical and find yourself making fun of them at times. Choosing to show respect and honor, even when you don't think your parents deserve it, will be a great help to you in life.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Thank God for the parents that He gave you.
- * Ask God to help you be a wise man who fears Him.
- * Praise God because He knows what you need to be fulfilled in life.

Thought for the day

What leads to life (vs 23)?

What does it mean to fear the Lord (vs 23)?

What will fearing the Lord lead to (vs 23)?

Why do you think the fear of the Lord brings satisfaction (vs 23)?

What will not happen to the person who fears the Lord?

How do you explain this verse when you see someone who is living for God and they go through difficult times?

What will the sluggard do (vs 24)?

What will the sluggard not do (vs 24)?

Have you ever met someone you would put in the category of a sluggard? Why would you say they were a sluggard?

****There are many people who don't want to be told what to do and therefore they aren't able to hold down a job. They often live on the charity of others rather than become a productive member of society.*

Who will learn when scoffer is punished (vs 25)?

Why do you think they will learn?

What happens when you reprove a man of understanding (vs 25)?

What lesson do you think verse 25 is teaching?

How do you think a violent child would be described (vs 26)?

What will that child do to his parents (vs 26)?

Have you ever seen this happen? Explain. What can you do avoid becoming a violent child?

“Never Stop Learning”

Study: Proverbs 19:27-29

Reading: II Timothy 3:10-17, Psalm 119:9-16

Memory: Psalm 51:1-5

Having visited elderly people for many years, I have noticed several things that help shape how I want to live. One of the things that has been very clear to me is the importance for me to continue to learn no matter how old I get. I have visited several elderly individuals who have stopped learning in life and when you visit them all you have to talk about is what happened in “the good old days.” It is difficult to converse about current events or what is going on in the lives of others because they just don’t know. Some of this is due to memory loss, but much of it is due to the fact that they have stopped listening and learning. I have visited others who are constantly learning about things in life well into their 90's and they understand what is going on in the world around them and visiting them is often a joy.

Today, we are going to read how a wise man never stop learning. We will be challenged to be people who are continually seeking to grow and learn in life, specifically about the things that God declares in His Word.

What Does the Bible Say?

No matter who you are and no matter how old you get, you are never beyond learning and being instructed. Once anyone reaches the point where they stop receiving instruction, they start to stray from knowledge and put themselves in a dangerous position. Sadly, many believers fall into this category because they reach a certain point in their spiritual life where they become content with where they are and stop learning. Though they think they are okay with what they know, this knowledge will start to fade and the straying will begin. Being purposeful about receiving instruction and being open to receive correction is tough at times, but very vital. Being purposeful means that you actively listen. This could mean that you sit in the front of church so you give your undivided attention to what is being said. It could mean that you plan to read books that help in your spiritual growth. It could be that you choose to turn the TV off to read your Bible, or that you turn the radio station from secular programming to Bible teaching.

Being purposeful in receiving instruction will look different to different people, but it is more important than you realize (vs 27).

Without DNA and complex crime scene investigations, much of the evidence during Bible times that was brought before a judge was based on the testimony of witnesses. This is why having witnesses who were honest and truthful was extremely important. Sadly, just as today, many people would lie to help a friend or for personal gain and would be a witness who did not care about justice. This was not only a crime against his fellow man but is a direct rebellion against God (vs 28).

Those who are scoffers and those who live and act as fools are people who bring punishment upon themselves. By their words and actions, they are asking for rebuke and will face difficulties because of how they choose to live. A scoffer is a person who is critical of others, normally those in authority, because they always think their way is better. A fool is a person who acts on their emotions or desires without thinking about how those actions might impact themselves or others. Though many people don’t realize it, it is not too difficult to become a scoffer or a fool (vs 29).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you a person who receives instruction or do you tend to mock those in authority and avoid instruction? Constantly approaching life with an attitude of learning will make a powerful difference in your life now and in your life as long as you live. Once you stop learning, your mind gets weaker and you often loose out on great wisdom.

Are you honest in all of your dealings with others? Honesty is vitally important to God and He expects complete honesty from all of his children.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for the ability He has given you to learn.*
- * *Ask God to help you never stop learning.*
- * *Praise God because He can never be fully understood.*

Thought for the day

What will lead you to stray from knowledge (vs 27)?

Why do you think it is easy to cease to learn?

How is your life set up to challenge you to be a continual learner?

What are the ways that you have found easiest for you to be a continual learner?

What are some changes you may need to make in your life to help you become a life long learner?

Who in your life do you greatly respect because they are a life long learner?

Why do you respect them?

How can you follow their example?

Who mocks justice (vs 28)?

What do you think it means to mock justice (vs 28)?

What do you think are ways you can fall into this category?

What do wicked men do (vs 28)?

What do you think this looks like in someones daily life?

Is there any sin that you are consuming on a regular basis? Explain.

What will scoffers receive (vs 29)?

Why do you think scoffers are often mentioned in Proverbs?

How can you avoid being a scoffer?

What do fools receive for their foolish actions (vs 29)?

Memory Verses

Psalms 51:1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! 3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. 4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.