

The Keys To Wisdom

Love

Patience

Obedience

Mercy

Trust

Understanding

Truth

Discretion



Proverbs

WEEK 12

“Humbly Trusting”

Study: Proverbs 16:1-7

Reading: James 4:1-16, Ecclesiastes 12:1-14

Memory: Psalm 51:2

One of the things that I observed as my children were growing up is how much they trusted me. This would become more clear when we babysat other children who often questioned what I would tell them to do. Most of the time, my children chose to obey and follow what I told them because they knew that we loved them and had their best in our minds. Part of maturity is learning to trust and often the more that you trust, the more mature you become. As my children matured in their trust, they also experienced greater levels of blessings for that trust. They experienced far greater things than if they had decided to do everything their own way thinking that they were right. Don't get me wrong, my kids were not perfect and certainly struggled at times, but their trust in me often challenged me to choose to trust God more.

Today, we are going to see how God is the Maker of the universe and, as Maker, He knows what is best. We will see how life is much simpler than what we often make it to be and that if we will choose to humble ourselves and trust Him. This will result in the many blessings He has waiting for us.

What Does the Bible Say?

It is easy to attempt to make all the plans for your own life and leave the Lord out of the decision, but ultimately He is the one that is in control. This means that His ultimate plan will happen and your selfish plans will fail. The challenge is for you to make His plans, your plans. This is emphasized more in verse two where we are told how man thinks his way is right most of the time. No matter who a person is, we all think the way we do it is better than others and it is easy to allow that thinking to turn into pride. It is God who knows exactly why you are doing what you are doing and knows if it is good or bad. Determining right and wrong is not based on what you think, but it is found in what God thinks and that is why you need to know Him and His Word. When you choose to follow His desires and His ways, He will make what you do prosper (vs 1-3).

Nothing is made in this world for no reason, but everything we see in this world has a purpose. Every person that God has made has a purpose for being in this world, even those who are evil. Throughout history, God has used evil men in a mighty way to bring glory to Himself through their actions. We can trust that God made and still makes all things for His glory (vs 4).

When we realize that God is the maker of all things and the One who is in control of this world, it should cause us to humble ourselves before Him and trust Him. When we choose not to humble ourselves, pride creeps in and that pride is an abomination to God. That pride will not go unpunished, but will be dealt with harshly by God. Pride that is left unchecked, will also cause a person not to fear God. When we fear God, we will avoid evil and our eyes will be open to the incredible grace and mercy God has chosen to display to us in our lives. It was this grace and mercy that made “atonement” (ESV) for our sins and allowed the price to be paid so that we wouldn’t have to pay it (vs 5-6).

Choosing to live in a way that pleases the Lord will not only lead to peace with God, but will also lead to peace with others. In verse seven we are told that even our enemies will be at peace with us when we choose to live in integrity and honesty. It does need to be remembered that Proverbs are just principles that are generally true because there will be times that enemies will be at odds with us even though we have done all we could do to please God and love them (vs 7).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you looking to God as you make your plans and decisions about life? Are you humbling yourself and seeking what He wants for you or do you tend to make all your plans for the future? God has done so much for you by making a way for you to be saved and to be His child. Yet, it is so easy to reject this and think that you know what is best for your life. Though you may think this, the reality is that God is the one who knows what is best for you and you need to trust His plan and His way. When you do follow His Word and His leading in your life, you will often be amazed at how easy life becomes even when His way calls for doing some “hard things.” God’s way is not full of misery and pain, though sometimes we will face hard times, but it is meant to be joyful and full of peace. Take time today to examine if you are attempting to do what is right in your own eyes or what is truly right in the sight of God.

What belongs to men (vs 1)?

What does God give (vs 1)?

What do you think this verse is saying?

****Man has many desires to do many different things, but it is God who is the One who is in ultimate control of what happens. What He plans will take place in spite of the best efforts of many to do thing their own way.*

What do people think about their actions (vs 2)?

What are areas where you have seen people think they are doing the right thing when they are really not?

What are ways that you have thought you were doing the right thing?

What does God see and know (vs 2)?

What should you commit to the Lord (vs 3)?

What will be the result (vs 3)?

What do you think this practically looks like?

What has God made (vs 4)?

What do you think the end of verse 4 means?

Who is an abomination to the Lord (vs 5)?

What do you think verse seven is encouraging us to do (vs 6)?

What will happen when a man’s ways please the Lord (vs 7)?

How have you seen this to be true?

Why is this not true in every circumstance?

“Setting the Example”

Study: Proverbs 16:8-12

Reading: James 3:1-18, I Timothy 4:6-16

Memory: Psalm 51:2

I attended a small K-12 school, and I remember when I was in first and second grade and an older elementary or Jr. high student would pass me in the hallway. I would say “Hi” to them, and if I knew them by name, I would call them by name. Then, the moment of truth would come. I longed for this older student to say “Hi” back to me, but the thing that I desired most was for them to say “Hi Scott” in front of all my classmates. Why? Because I wanted to be cool and impress my classmates when they saw that someone I looked up to knew my name.

Today, we are going to see how leadership roles exist in many places of our lives even starting in early elementary. We will see the importance of standing for the truth in whatever leadership role God has placed us in.

What Does the Bible Say?

In this world that has such a desire for riches and all the things that money can buy, verse 8 helps bring perspective that will help you throughout this life. It is far better to live a righteous life not having a whole lot of money than to be extremely rich and live with the constant guilt and consequences of sin. This doesn’t mean that it is wrong to have money, but as Paul told Timothy, “The love of money is the root of all evil.” Learning to be content with what God has given you and investing in godliness will be a much better choice than selling out to the world’s philosophy which is always looking for more (vs 8).

Verse 9 is very similar to verse 1 as the point of God’s control over this life is emphasized. There is nothing wrong with planning for the future, but you need to always keep in mind that your plans can easily change. Often, too much planning for the future can leave you in doubt and discouragement when your plans don’t come true. Rather, as you look to the future, make plans, but realize that God can change them for His ultimate glory and for your good (vs 9).

In the Bible days, what a king said was something that was of great importance, almost as if it was spoken from God. In fact, the king was to

represent God and what God stood for which would help the people get a proper perspective of God. Though we don’t have kings with the same power today, those who are leaders in their homes, churches and nation often give others the proper or improper perspective of God by the way that they live (vs 10). Verse 12 continues this line of thinking as we are told that when kings live in evil, it is an abomination to God (vs 12).

The fact that God is a God of honesty and He desires His people to do the same is very clear in the book of Proverbs and the rest of Scripture. When a person who claims to be a follower of Christ is dishonest, they give others a negative picture of who God is and often cause people to doubt and mistrust God. The reference in verse 11 to false scales and balances is made often in Proverbs because of what went on in the marketplace. Vendors could hollow out their weights and adjust their scales so it appeared a customer was getting the proper amount, but often they were shortchanged because of this deception. This happens all the time today and that is why states have regulators who are constantly examining to make sure that you get what you pay for. For you as a believer, you need to go overboard to make sure you are not cheating others, but give them what they pay for and even more if possible (vs 11).

How Does this Apply to Me?

What type of leader are you? You might be thinking that you are not a leader, but almost everyone is a leader in some way or another. Sometimes leaders are just those who are older and have younger people looking up to them. You could be a leader in your home, your school, your workplace or your church. Perhaps you are a leader in some organization or governmental position. Wherever you are in life, most likely you have some type of leadership role. The question you need to ask yourself is if you are living a pure and honest life as a leader. Those following you (many times you don’t realize they are following you) will often mimic your actions, whether good or bad. Followers are often turned on to something by the example of their leaders or turned off because of a negative example. Take time to examine your role as a leader today and ask yourself what type of example you are setting when it comes to godliness, honesty and righteousness.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Ask God to help you lead in a way that impacts others for Him.*

What is better (vs 8)?

Why is it hard to think this way at times?

What does the heart of a man do (vs 9)?

Is it wrong to make plans in life? Explain.

What does God do (vs 9)?

What do you think verse 9 is teaching?

What does a king speak with (vs 10)?

***A king is powerful. Just as a president is powerful. They will have many followers and what they say has a much greater impact than the normal person does.

What should a king's mouth not do (vs 10)? Why not?

What are God's (vs 11)?

What do you think this teaches us about the way that God chooses to do things?

How are you following the example of God in the way you are being honest in all your dealings?

What is an abomination (vs 12)?

What should characterize a leader (vs 12)?

Why is it so important that leaders live a righteous life?

What areas in life has God placed you as a leader? Who has God placed under you for you to be an example to?

Would you be willing to tell others to follow you as you follow Christ?

“Wisdom Towards Authority”

Study: Proverbs 16:13-17

Reading: Romans 13:1-14, I Timothy 2:1-8

Memory: Psalm 51:2

Iknew a man who had very wealthy parents, but the way this man and his wife treated his parents was not very respectful. Though the parents attempted to be loving and caring, this couple often were skeptical of their motives and responded by being mean to the parents. Even when his parents bent over backwards for him and gave him extra money for something, both he and his wife tended to complain about what the parents did wrong rather than live in thankfulness. It was very clear that this couple had an issue with authority and that issue had also caused problems in their marriage and other areas of life. Specifically, it caused great harm to their spiritual growth because they often treated God like they treated those that God had placed over them as their authorities.

Today, we are going to see how God desires us to treat our authorities and see the importance of humbling ourselves before them regardless if we agree with them or not. When we are living properly before those God has placed in authority over us, we will experience great joy.

What Does the Bible Say?

One of the repeated themes of Proverbs is honesty. Here in verse 13 we are told that those who speak the truth are a great delight to the king. An application for today would be that employers and leaders love when the people under them are truthful because the truthful people are the ones that can be trusted (vs 13).

Verse 14 also talks about a king, but in a little different way. This verse described how when a king becomes angry at someone, it could often lead to the death of that person or at least great problems in their life. The person who has offended the king is wise if he goes back to the king and does what he can to make things right. He realizes what will appease the king and instead of being stubborn and not apologizing, he goes above and beyond to appease the king. For personal application of this verse and others that mention the king, think of those who are in leadership over you at work, school, in your government, on your sports team or any other

association you are involved in. They are like your “kings” when it comes to practically applying the truth of Proverbs (vs 14).

When you make your leaders happy with you, it produces joy and makes things much easier for you. When you please them with your actions, you will experience the great blessings that come from your choice to please them. The picture of clouds bringing rain is often negative in our society today because it spoils our plans, but clouds and rains in the Bible days were something that were longed for and rain was a picture of happiness since it provided the water needed for their crops (vs 15).

Though the society around us teaches us that making more money will always bring more happiness, the Bible does not agree. We are told that increasing in wisdom is far better than increasing the amount of money you have in this world. It is far better to have understanding than it is to have the finest silver. This reveals that what a person has and is on the inside is much more important than what they have on the outside. A person could have everything and be miserable, while a person with practically nothing could live in daily bliss. Seek after wisdom and understanding far more than you do the wealth of this world (vs 16).

Highways were main roads that were normally much safer and easier to travel on because of the terrain and the protection from robbers. In verse 15 a highway is a picture of how a person walked in their lives and describes how those who walk on the highway of righteousness will avoid evil. Walking on the highway of righteousness would help avoid the dangers and pitfalls that the little side roads would often have (vs 17).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How do you treat those who are in leadership over you? Are you honest with them? Do you show them respect whether you agree with them or not? Do you submit to them as you are told to in Scripture? Do you seek to be a person of wisdom who can deal in a wise way with conflict? The need to live in a proper way under your earthly authorities is vital. You will almost always have someone over you in this world to whom you will be accountable and who you will have to work under. Learning how to deal wisely with those God has placed over you is greatly important. Take time today to evaluate your actions and responses to your authorities and let God show you how you can act in more wisdom.

What brought delight to a king (vs 13)?

Why do you think speaking what is right will win you favor with your authorities?

What do you think speaking righteous words looks like?

What are areas where you may be tempted not to speak what is righteous?

What was a messenger of death (vs 14)?

What do you think this meant?

What would a wise man do (vs 14)?

When it comes to how you treat your authorities on earth, would you be considered a wise person?

What could bring life (vs 15)?

Why was the favor of a king compared to rain (vs 15)?

What do you think verse 15 is teaching?

How do you do what you can to find favor with your authorities?

What is wisdom better than (vs 16)? Why?

Why do you think verses like verse 16 are often repeated in Scripture?

What will happen to those who walk on the highway of righteousness (vs 17)?

How can we preserve our lives (vs 17)?

How can you be tempted to get off the highway of righteousness and follow your own selfish desires?

“Wisdom Brings Discernment”

Study: Proverbs 16:18-21

Reading: II Corinthians 10:12-18, James 1:22-27

Memory: Psalm 51:2

Have you ever wondered, “How could I ever do that? I wouldn’t know where to start!” There have been times when I have said that in life but found that not too much later I was doing what I didn’t think I could do. How? Through learning and growth in that area. When I learn in an area and practice it over and over, I find that I normally figure out how I am to act and what I am to say.

Today, we are going to see that when we spend time in the Word of God we gain wisdom and as we gain wisdom, we will be discerning. A discerning person will know what to say and when to say it.

What Does the Bible Say?

Most humans at one time or another struggle with comparing themselves with someone else. This is a constant battle that we go through as men. When we compare, it either causes us to feel better about ourselves or worse about ourselves, depending on who we look at. The source of this comparing is pride and this pride will lead to destruction. When we fail to realize that all we have is from God and we are just stewards of our bodies, our possessions, our talents and our jobs, we become haughty and set ourselves up for a fall. The victory over this can only come through the Holy Spirit and understanding your sinfulness and weakness before an almighty God. In a moment, God could take away everything that you have pride in and bring you to nothing. Though it may at times look like it is the prideful people who are making all the money and getting the nice things, we are reminded that living with humility is far better than having to deal with the consequences of pride (vs 18-19).

Listening to wisdom, especially the wisdom that comes from the Word of God, will be greatly beneficial to you. Those who do more than just hear the truth with their ears, but think through it and apply it to their lives will find great good in their lives. It is the knowledge of the Word that will lead to the knowledge of who God is. Once we find out who He is it enables us to trust Him. As we trust Him, we will experience the blessings of all He

is and all that He desires for our lives (vs 20).

Wisdom, the theme throughout Proverbs, is vital to every area of life. Here, we see that a wise person is discerning. That means they think through situations and understand why they do what they do. This extends to every area of life from what a person allows into their body, to what a person chooses to wear, to where a person decides to go, and how they act and respond in every situation of this life. This discernment also shows up in what comes out of your mouth. A wise person will be one who is very sweet in his speech. He is not just a sweet talker to get what he wants, but is genuinely wise in what he says and his speech does much to avoid problems and bring about blessings (vs 21).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Paul wrote, “Not that we dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who are commending themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.” (II Corinthians 10:12) This understanding was not a new concept but was one that God had been displaying and revealing since the beginning of time. In Proverbs we see that this comparing led to pride and that this pride would lead to great destruction. The opposite of pride is genuine humility that understands that everything is a gift from God. The truly humble person lives in constant thanks and praise to God for what he or she has, while at the same time encouraging others to look to God and not putting others down.

What does your speech reveal about you? Does it reveal great wisdom, or does it reveal a heart that is selfish and wanting your own way. What comes out of your mouth often reveals who you really are inside and many times what comes out is not the best. People who seek after the Word will seek to grow in wisdom, and, while growing in wisdom, they will find themselves much more discerning throughout every area of life.

Suggestions for Prayer

* *Thank God for all he has given you.*

* *Ask God to help you be daily growing in wisdom.*

Thought for the day

What goes before destruction (vs 18)?

What do you think pride looks like in your life?

What goes before a fall (vs 18)?

What do you think a “haughty spirit” is (vs 18)?

What are areas of pride in your life? How are you allowing God to give you victory in these areas?

What is better in life (vs 19)?

How have you seen this verse to be true?

Why do you think that seeking after the wealth of this world has such a powerful pull?

What can you do to make sure you are seeking after God rather than the wealth that this world offers?

Who will discover good (vs 20)?

What do you think this means?

Who will be blessed (vs 20)?

What do you think it means to trust in the Lord?

What is the wise person called (vs 21)?

Why is discernment so important?

What does sweetness of speech do (vs 21)?

What do you think the end of verse 21 means?

How can you put it into practice?

“*Wisdom Affects Others*”

Study: Proverbs 16:22-25

Reading: James 1:1-12, Ephesians 2:14-22

Memory: Psalm 51:2

When a person uses the term “I feel” in their conversation, you better listen carefully to what they are saying and choose to be discerning about what you believe. It is easy to get caught up in what people “feel” or “think” rather than what God says. This does not mean that we should never discuss our feelings or thoughts. I will often say those words to differentiate what the Bible says and what I think the Bible might be saying. We need to be cautious not to let the feelings or opinions of others become more important than what the Word of God actually says.

Today we will see how living on the feelings and opinions of others will often get us in much trouble, but when we seek God and live in wisdom, we will not only be a help to ourselves, but will be a help to others as well.

What Does the Bible Say?

The KJV uses the term “well spring” and the ESV uses the term “fountain” to describe how our understanding of the truth can mean abundant life to others. In our day and age, we look at a fountain as something in a park or something we drink out of, but in Bible days with water sources much more rare, a well flowing spring was something that was very special. Most cities were founded on places where there were springs because they did not have the piping or well drilling equipment we have today. Many places in Israel experience arid conditions where they do not get great amounts of rain except early in the year during the two month rainy season. When Solomon described how our wisdom can be like a fountain to another person, it is a description of how we have the ability to bring great joy and refreshment to the life of another. The opposite is true of a fool because his instruction only brings more foolishness and leads to emptiness in life (vs 22).

The wisdom of a person will often show up in the way that they make their practical decisions in life. When a person has to judge between

different things, the judgment they make will reveal their level of wisdom. The wiser a person becomes, the better judgments he will make. This wisdom also helps him in his speech and allows him to be more persuasive in what he says. When a person knows what he is talking about and has the reputation of being wise, many people take notice and listen (vs 23).

People often don't think much about the words that they say, but we are told in verse 24 that "gracious words" (ESV) are like honey to those who hear them. Honey was a valued sweetener in the Bible days just like sugar is today. When we speak kindly to others with love, it has the ability to make life much sweeter and helps bring health to the whole body of those who are speaking and those who are hearing (vs 24).

Verse 25 reveals why many people are confident they are doing the right thing, but don't understand that they are actually doing the wrong thing. Many men think their way is right, but don't realize that the end produces great problems and heartache. This is why the study of the Word of God and knowing what God thinks and what God wants is so vital. It is why being accountable to other believers in a church setting is very important to help keep us on the right track. It is so easy to do what we think is right but be way off from what God actually desires (vs 25).

How Does this Apply to Me?

How is your life affecting others around you? A few of the verses that dealt with wisdom today dealt with the fact that wisdom not only affects your life, but all those who you come in contact with. As you go about your day, think about how you have the great ability to be a help to others today by your actions and words. Choose to be an encourager who lifts others up with your words and acts of kindness. Choose to be a person who others come to for help and encouragement rather than a person who leaves people with a negative experience.

How do you know what the right thing is that God wants you to do, especially when it is not spelled out in His Word? Many people decide to trust the "gut feeling" inside of them, but their gut is often wrong. God wants you to seek His wisdom and not your own. He wants you to ask and He will show you exactly what He wants, rather than you trying to guess on your own.

Suggestions for Prayer

* Ask God to help you live, act, and speak in wisdom.

What is good sense compared to (vs 22)?

How can you be a fountain of life to others?

Think about your actions and conversations over the last week. Were they marked by giving life or did they tend to turn others away?

What can you do to make sure that your words are constantly giving life to others?

What is the instruction of fools compared to (vs 22)?

Have you received foolish instruction before? How can you avoid this?

How can you make the words that come out of your mouth better and more productive (vs 23)?

****It begins in the heart. The more you let God change your heart and conform how you think and feel to His Word, the wiser and more helpful the words that come out of your mouth will be.*

What are gracious words compared to (vs 24)?

Why do you think they are compared to this?

How have you been helped by the words of others recently?

How can you become a help to others by your words?

What seems right to men (vs 25)?

What is the result of trusting in your own version of what is right and wrong (vs 25)?

What do you think this verse is teaching?

How can you apply this teaching to your daily life?

“Growing in Wisdom”

Study: Proverbs 16:26-33

Reading: Galatians 5:13-16, James 3:1-18

Memory: Psalm 51:2

What Does the Bible Say?

Though it is a wonderful thing to help take care of the poor, there is a balance between taking care of the poor and enabling a person to become lazy. When a person is constantly provided for by others, they get used to having things handed to them and they choose not to work. In verse 26 we see that a person’s appetite is one of the primary things that urges him on to work. When a person becomes hungry, it will help him understand his need to work so he can earn money to buy food. The balance between taking care of the poor while not enabling them to be lazy will be different for each person, and you need wisdom from God to help decipher each situation you are presented with (vs 26).

At times, one of the best ways to make a proverb applicable to your life is to turn it around. We can see this in verse 27 which could easily be skipped over thinking it might not apply, but if we say it backwards, it helps us see how easily our hearts can become evil. Reworded it could say, “A person who hurts others with his tongue is like a worthless man who plans to do evil.” This helps us apply the verse and realize the importance of a gracious tongue rather than a sharp tongue. The emphasis on the tongue continues in verse 28 where the results of being dishonest and being a gossip are described. Those who use their tongues to hurt others can ruin friendships and cause constant problems (vs 27-28).

Looking at verse 29 backwards can also help make it more applicable. You can easily be tricked by another into something that is great evil and that is why it is so important to be wise and to know who to listen to. It is also important to know who to hang around and to become friends with. Many of these dishonest people that appear friendly have their own agenda at heart. They “wink” their eye and have a little smirk on their face because they delight in tricking others and getting someone else to accomplish their plan. The simple and undiscerning person can easily walk right into this trap without even realizing what is going on (vs 29-30).

Grey hair is a picture of a person who is elderly and is often given as a

picture of wisdom. The principle taught here is that a wise man lives an abundant and full life while fools often live shorter lives and lives filled with pain as a result of their wrong choices (vs 31).

In this world, people often look at having power as a goal to obtain. To be in charge of many and the prestige that comes with it is very appealing to some people, but this desire often causes those who desire it to be corrupt in order to obtain their dream. Having power is not bad, but being a person of character that is patient and full of self-control is much better than any type of earthly authority you may obtain. A leader who has patience and self-control will be a leader who truly has an impact in the lives of others (vs 32).

Verse 33 takes us back to a point that we have seen many times which reveals how God is in control, even when we “cast lots” or throw dice. We are not sure exactly what the casting of lots was, but probably had to do with some type of marked stones. This verse reveals that even games of chance and choices made by “luck” do not just produce random results but are under the controlling hand of God (vs 33).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Today, you looked at several different verses with several different applications so take time to briefly ask yourself some of the following questions to evaluate your spiritual life and let God reveal any changes that you need to make.

1. Are you working hard to provide food for your family? Are you enabling others to be lazy, or are you helping teach them to work?
2. Do you help others with the words that you say, or do you hurt others and tear them down? Do others like to be around you because they know they will be encouraged, or are they afraid that they will be put down?
3. What type of people are you regularly associating with? Do you seek to be around wise people, or do you find yourself associating constantly with those who are deceptive and selfish?
4. Are you living in wisdom so that you can live a full life?
5. Do you seek power and authority in any area of your life or do you seek to let God work patience and self-control in you? These things are part of the fruit of the Spirit given in Galatians 5 and are evidence that you are living yielded to the Holy Spirit.
6. Do you live like you truly believe that God is in control of everything?

What urges a person to work (vs 26)?

Why do you think work is a good thing?

Why is it important not to enable those who are not willing to work?

How can you know when you are enabling laziness or helping out those who are in need?

What does a worthless man do (vs 27)?

How can he do this with his speech (vs 27)?

How do you think you can be worthless at times?

What does a dishonest man do (vs 28)?

Why do you think this is what dishonesty causes?

What does a gossip do (vs 28)?

How can you avoid being a person who shares gossip?

What do evil men have the ability to do (vs 29)?

What type of person is described in verse 30?

How can you avoid this type of person?

What is gray hair compared to (vs 31)? Why?

What is better than being great and strong (vs 32)?

What does living a life of self control allow a person to do (vs 32)?

What does verse 33 reveal about who is truly in control of all the events of this life?

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!