

The Keys To Wisdom

Love

Patience

Obedience

Mercy

Trust

Understanding

Truth

Discretion



Proverbs

WEEK 11

“Roller Coasters”

Study: Proverbs 15:6-13

Reading: Matthew 14:22-33, Colossians 3:12-17

Memory: Psalms 51:1

Whenever I get a package in the mail I open it right away. Sometimes my wife will get a package in the mail and she will let it sit for a while unopened. I have the hardest time not opening it just to see what is inside, even though most likely whatever is inside is something that I won't care about. I don't like it when I am unable to know something and I am left wondering for a period of time.

Today, we are going to read how God never wonders what is going on in the inside of man. He has the ability to read the hearts and knows what you are thinking and what you are feeling.

What Does the Bible Say?

Righteousness brings blessings, but sin brings trouble. If you haven't realized by now from reading the book of Proverbs, realize today that God blesses righteousness (vs 6).

Those who are wise will not keep their wisdom to themselves, but it will spread to those whom he associates with. On the other hand, foolishness will spread also (vs 7).

God considers those who only sacrifice on the outside an abomination before Him. He is not pleased when a person just goes to church or serves in the church because he has to. God is pleased with the devotion and service of those who love Him (vs 8).

God hates evil, but He loves righteousness (vs 9). Because God is a just God and a Holy God, He will bring punishment upon those who do evil (vs 10). Sheol was the abode of dead spirits. Abaddon appears to be the lowest depth of hell, the “abyss” of the New Testament. The afterlife is a total mystery to man. All we know about it is what the Bible tells us. But to God, he knows all about the afterlife because He is the one who designed and created our lives and He prepared for our deaths. Solomon wanted us to realize that since God had great knowledge of the depths of hell, he certainly has the ability to know our innermost thoughts and feelings (vs 11).

The person who mocks righteousness will not listen to those who try to

correct him when he is wrong. He think that He knows best and therefore doesn't need to listen to anyone (vs 12).

The way we feel on the inside will affect our actions on the outside. When you are happy and joyful, your face will reflect your joy. That doesn't mean that you have to constantly walk around with a huge smile on your face, but you will have a joyful appearance if you are full of joy. On the same token, when you are sad, it will also show on your face (vs 13).

How Does this Apply to Me?

There are many, many practical truths that can be learned from today's reading. One of the ones that stuck out to me is that God has the ability to see in the darkest of places. Though you may be good at covering up what is really going on inside of you, God knows. Whenever you deal with the understanding that God knows everything, it can often lead you to opposite emotions. The fact that God knows your deepest hurt and pain should be a great relief to you. When others don't understand and you can't express it with your words, you can trust that God knows what is taking place. This can provide great comfort to you. On the opposite side of this, if you are living with secret sin, God knows this as well. This should bring great conviction to you realize that you can't hide anything from God. When you try, you only make things worse. When you confess and repent, you will be far better off than trying to keep things secret from God.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Praise God because He knows our innermost thoughts and feelings.
- * Thank God for the joy that He brings in your life.
- * Ask God to help you trust in Him to bring you joy.

Thought for the day

What will be found in the house of the righteous person (vs 6)?

How have you seen this verse true in your life?

What happens to the income of those who act wickedly (vs 6)?

What will spread from the lips of a wise person (vs 7)?

What will come out of the heart of a fool (vs 7)?

Do you think others would call you wise or foolish? Why do you think that?

What is an abomination to the Lord (vs 8)?

Why do you think it is hard to grasp the idea that God hates sacrifices if they are being offered from a person with a heart that doesn't follow Him?

What are ways that religious people can fall into this category today?

What is acceptable to God (vs 8)?

What does verse 9 reveal about the way that we live?

What happens to those who turn from God's way (vs 10)?

How should we view reproof (vs 10)?

What does God know (vs 11)?

Why is it so important to realize this?

What does a scoffer not like (vs 12)?

How will this keep him from becoming wise (vs 12)?

What will help your face cheer up (vs 13)?

What is the opposite of this (vs 13)?

“It’s Your Choice”

Study: Proverbs 15:14-18

Reading: II Corinthians 1:1-11, Psalm 90:1-17

Memory: Psalms 51:1

When I look back through the photo album that I put together for my high school graduation party, I have to chuckle at some of our family pictures. I don’t just laugh because of the funny outfits that we were dressed in, but because of my attitude almost every time we went to get family pictures. I remember one time in particular that I didn’t want to get our family picture taken so I acted very stubborn. I messed up my hair and my clothes, and when it came time for the pictures, I wouldn’t smile. Needless to say, I made a nightmare out of what could have been a joyful memory for my family. As I look at that picture that was taken, I think of how much easier it would have been and how much more I would have enjoyed it, if I changed my attitude.

Today, we are going to see that we choose whether to be miserable or joyful in this life. God has given us all we need to be happy, but we often choose the things that will make our lives miserable.

What Does the Bible Say?

Once again, we see that a wise man seeks to know more in life, especially about the Bible. But the foolish man gets caught up in spreading what he thinks is true and feeds on assumptions (vs 14).

One of the greatest things about life is that we have a choice whether we are going to be joyful or miserable. Though Christians should be continually full of joy, many of them are not because they choose to be miserable. Our outlook on life will affect our daily attitude. If we trust in God to do all that he says he will do and turn our daily struggles over to Him, we will have a life that is full of joy. If we focus on the circumstances of this life and let the hard times and other people get us down, we will live a life that is drear and full of misery (vs 15).

Wealth has always been a desire of man, as well as a problem for man. Many people think that money will buy them happiness. They put aside what is truly important in life so that they can make money. Solomon tells us that our lives will be far better with little money and a fear of God than

it will be with lots of money and no purpose in life (vs 16). Having the things that money can buy shouldn’t be a priority in our lives. A dinner of vegetables indicated that a person didn’t have a lot of money. Where a dinner with plenty of meat was a sign of wealth. God wants us to realize that earthly possessions shouldn’t be a priority in our lives. Love for God, your family and others is far more important than anything that money can buy (vs 17).

Several times in Proverbs, we are warned about controlling our temper. This is one of the key characteristics of a wise man. Arguments aren’t settled with more arguing. They are settled with an attitude of love and a calm spirit (vs 18).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you continually in bad moods? Do you easily get depressed when something doesn’t go exactly how you want it to go? Do you have a positive or negative attitude about life? God has given you all the abilities and tools that you need to live a happy, joy-filled life. His Word tells us what we need to do and also tells us what He has done for us. If you don’t live a joyful life then your focus in life is on the wrong things. When you worry about things of this world, we will not have the joy that God wants us to have. Depression and sadness often occurs when you focus on what you don’t have or what you can’t do. When you focus on all that God has given you and on what God has allowed you to do, your whole outlook on life will be different. Looking to God will bring continual peace and joy into your life.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Ask God to give you a life that is full of joy.
- * Thank God for all that He has done for you.
- * Praise God because He is a God of great love.

Thought for the day

What does a person with a heart for understanding do (vs 14)?

Why is it so important to have knowledge about something before you can understand it?

Why is it foolish to speak your mind or opinion about something when you don't know all the facts (vs 14)?

What makes every day difficult for a person (vs 15)?

****Some proverbs like this one are a little hard to determine the exact meaning if you just look at the first part or last part. Looking at both the first phrase and second phrase help to shed light on the whole proverbs. This proverb appears to be contrasting ideal. For the person who is lives in continual discouragement where everything is always negative, each day is hard to life.*

What is life like for a person who chooses joy (vs 15)?

How do you think it is better to have less and fear God than to have more and have turmoil (vs 16)?

Why do you think that most people think their lives will be better if they have more?

How can you make sure you are seeking God more than you are seeking the wealth of the world?

What is better with someone you love (vs 17)?

How have you seen this principle to be true in your life?

Why do you think that some people don't understand this?

Who causes problems (vs 18)?

Who helps solve conflict (vs 18)?

“Thorn Bushes”

Study: Proverbs 15:19-21

Reading: II Timothy 2:1-7, James 1:13-18

Memory: Psalms 51:1

When I went deer hunting in Wisconsin I found that I enjoyed tracking deer after they were shot, especially when I was helping someone else. I found that most deer instinctively head for cover when they are injured. They would travel to the thick parts of the woods where they could lie down and rest. One year, my brother-in-law and I tracked a deer for several hours. This deer zig-zagged and went in circles, continually staying in the thicker brush. The brush that it traveled through was very thorny. Many times, we would have to walk through narrow paths with our hands up in the air as the thorns would snag our hands. One thing I learned over the years was to always wear thick clothes when tracking deer. If I didn't, the thorns break through my thin clothes and give me several scratches.

Today, we are going to read how easy it is to get caught up in the thorns of sin which will make life a little more painful and often make getting out of that situation painful as well.

What Does the Bible Say?

Solomon, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, did a wonderful job of using word pictures throughout the book of Proverbs. In verse 19, he compared the lazy man to a person who is trying to take a shortcut through a field of thorns. The problem was that no one could walk a straight or easy path when they are trying to get through a field of thorn bushes. The lazy man thinks that it will be quicker and easier to take the shortcut, but instead, he has made it much more difficult for himself. On the other hand, the righteous and diligent man chooses to walk on an existing path. This path is flat and clear of thorns. It may not have looked like the quickest choice at first, but at the end of their journey, the righteous man's choice was by far the better choice (vs 19).

One of the best ways to have peace in your relationships is to walk in wisdom. Too often, children cause stress on their relationship with their parents by choosing to do the foolish thing. The foolish choices that

children make are normally based in selfishness and what they think will be best for them in that moment. Wise children look into the future and realize what affects their choices will have on themselves and how their choices will affect others. This can apply to children at any age. Often the decisions adult children make bring much more stress to their parents than when their children were young (vs 20).

There are many people, even many Christians, who find themselves in love with sin. They find fun and excitement in doing what is wrong. Many people live for the pleasures that sin brings. The problem is that they don't understand what their love affair with sin is doing to them. They don't realize the consequences they will face because of their love for sin. Neither do they realize that one day, the fun is going to run out. They will constantly be seeking ways to find another high in life and will have no joy or peace. That is why God wants us to walk the path of righteousness. On that path, we will find fulfillment in life (vs 21).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you trying to live the Christian life in laziness? Do you try to take the shortcuts? Do you think it is too much work to spend time with God on a regular basis? When you are spiritually lazy, you are missing out on some of the great things God has for you. When you try to take other shortcuts instead, instead of doing things God's way, you will become ensnared in the thorns of sin. Is the Christian life always easy? No, it's not. Does it take work to live how God wants you to live? Yes, it takes work and discipline to live a godly life. Will the work and discipline it takes be worth it? Yes, it will. Not only will it be worth it in heaven, but you will find that the joys and blessings that God brings into your life will be worth it here on earth.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you live a disciplined Christian life.*
- * *Thank God for showing you which road to take in life.*

Thought for the day

What is the way of a sluggard compared to (vs 19)?

Why do you think Solomon described it this way?

What will the path of the upright be like (vs 19)?

Why would a person choose the way of a sluggard over the path of the upright knowing what the results may be?

What are ways that you can find yourself choosing the way of the sluggard?

What can you do to establish a plan in our life to help you be a person who is spiritually upright and not spiritually lazy?

What will a wise son do (vs 20)?

How do you think this verse extends far beyond the adolescent and adult years?

What does a person who makes continual foolish choices do (vs 20)?

Think about the choices you are making. Do your choices cause great joy to your parents, or do your choices lead your parents to many hours of worry about you? Explain your answer.

What often brings excitement to a person who takes sense (vs 21)?

What are ways in your life where it is easy to find your temporary happiness in sinful actions?

Why do you think you find these types of sin so fun?

Why is it easy not to think about the consequences for your actions when you are involved in them?

What will a man of understanding do (vs 21)?

How can you be that person who lives in understanding?

“Wise Counselors”

Study: Proverbs 15:22-24

Reading: I Kings 12:1-24

Memory: Psalms 51:1

Throughout the ages, many people have caused great pain to come upon themselves because they have chosen to listen to unwise counsel. Rehoboam was one of the sons of Solomon who took over as king of Israel after his father’s death. Under the reign of Solomon, the people had been heavily taxed. The people called Rehoboam to be their spokesman and through him they asked Rehoboam to lower the taxes. Rehoboam told them that he would make his decision in three days. He then went to the wise elders who had served under Solomon and asked them what he should do. They told him that if he lowered the taxes, he would find favor in the eyes of the people. He then asked his friends that he had grown up with what they thought he should do. His young friends told him to raise the taxes. After the three days, he told Rehoboam that he was going to raise the taxes instead of lowering them. Needless to say, the people weren’t happy with his decision. Because of this, Rehoboam led a rebellion that caused a split in the kingdom of Israel. Rehoboam lost 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel to Rehoboam because of his foolish decision.

Today, we are going to see the importance of listening to wise counsel. We shouldn’t just listen to the ones that we agree with, but we should listen to the ones who are proven to be wise and godly.

What Does the Bible Say?

Verse 22 applies to all areas of life. Solomon knew it was important to seek counsel from others. When a person plans to do something or has to make a decision and doesn’t consult others, he is often frustrated when his plans don’t work out. It is far better to sit down with people who are knowledgeable and wise and talk plans over with them or to seek counsel from wise sources. They will often add ideas and insight that you have not thought about. This can apply from areas of business to spiritual decisions. Men often fail because they are too proud to ask others for advice or counsel. They want to do it their way which often results in frustration because of failure (vs 22).

As humans, we all love to talk and to give our advice and opinions. We often think that we are right and everyone else is wrong. In his life, Solomon realized that how much a person says is not near as important as what they say and when they say it. When we give advice, counsel or rebuke at the right time it will be a great benefit to the person that we are advising. The Bible often tells us that we need to help those who are sinning by revealing to them what they are doing wrong and letting them know how to change. Many people are afraid to do this because they know how much it might hurt the one who is sinning and put a strain on their relationship. That is why Solomon told us that the right timing is extremely important. If we ask God, He will give us wisdom to know when we should and shouldn’t say something (vs 23).

When we follow God’s Word and seek to become wise, we will be headed towards blessings and a joyous meeting with Christ. When we step off the path, we begin going backwards and will receive the opposite. This verse is not teaching us that we can earn our salvation, but it is teaching us that we will be blessed when we live for God (vs 24).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you seek the advice and counsel of others when you have to make important decisions in your life? Do you ask those who have experienced a similar circumstance and people who are known for their wisdom? Often, if people seek counsel to help them make decisions, they will try to find others who they know will agree with them. When this is done, it is worse than not seeking counsel at all. You should seek those around you who can help you, even if you don’t think they will agree with you. By seeking wise counsel, you can avoid many failures in your earthly dealings as well as in your spiritual life.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to lead you to wise men who will give you godly counsel.*
- * *Thank God for giving you others to help you.*
- * *Praise God because He is a God of wisdom.*

Thought for the day

What leads to failure in life (vs 22)?

What leads to success in life (vs 22)?

What are different sources of counsel people turn to when making decisions?

****In our day and age we have a great benefit that many generations have not had because we have access to great counsel online. There are multiple resources to help and give us wisdom in our time of need. Though this is a great benefit, it can also be a great detriment. Though the sources of good counsel is multiplied, the sources of bad counsel is multiplied as well. So many people online pose as "experts" in their field, but it is tough to know who to trust. Though online counsel is a great help, counsel from godly men and women who you know and trust, who also know you, should not be neglected. Many times the true experts are not those who have a degree, but those who have lived a wise, godly life and faithfully loved and served God through it all.*

What does verse 23 teach us about using our words in a wise way?

****When you offer sincere compliments or encouragement at the right time, it greatly helps the individual you are speaking to. You have great power in your words and can bring such refreshment and joy to others through the things that you say.*

How had someone encouraged you with their words?

Write down a few ways that you can encourage others with the things that you say.

Where does the path of life lead (vs 24)?

What do you think this means? (*Hint: Look at the last part of the verse which contrasts what was written in the first part.*)

What does it mean to be prudent? How are you a prudent person?

"Right Priorities"

Study: Proverbs 15:25-29

Reading: Matthew 6:1-34

Memory: Psalms 51:1

Several years ago, I have a father tell me how God had blessed his daughter when she made God her priority. She wanted a job and applied at the local grocery store. They told her that she would have to work on Sundays, so she told them that she would not be able to take the job since she wanted to attend church. A few months later, she was babysitting for one of the managers of the grocery store and he asked her why she didn't apply for a job at the store. She told him that she did, but that she wouldn't work on Sundays. A couple of days later, she received a call from the store and was hired. She never had to work a Sunday for the couple of years that she worked there.

Today, we are going to see how God will bless us when we choose to make Him our priority. He will provide for us and take care of all our needs. All we have to do is put God before everything else.

What Does the Bible Say?

Though God doesn't want his children to seek after riches, He will often bless us with prosperity. If living for Him is a priority in life, He will give us all the things that we need and provide for many of our wants. Solomon tells us that God will bring misery to the lives of those who are proud. Though it may look like they have a lot, they are empty inside. Normally, widows were the complete opposite of the proud. They had little ways to earn money and to keep their homes. The righteous widows would not starve or be poor. God would bless them and give them what they needed (vs 25).

God hates the thoughts of evil men, but loves the pure and pleasant thoughts of the righteous. Every Christian should strive to have thoughts of God continually and seek to hate the evil that tempts them to turn from God's plan (vs 26).

Those who get money illegally or by deception will cause great problems to come on themselves and their families. God wants us to live lives of honesty. He will bless us when we stand up for what is right (vs

27).

The wise and righteous man thinks before he speaks. He ponders what he is going to say. On the other hand, fools will give quick responses and many times will cause great problems. We have seen throughout Proverbs the importance of wise words. Wise words don't come automatically, but come after much thought and effort is made in placing the right thoughts in your mind.. What comes out your mouths is a result of what you continually put in your heart (vs 28).

One of the places that a Christian should never want to be is far from the Lord. God tells us that He will be far away from those who are wicked. The Bible also tells us that God is everywhere. How can He be both near and far? This verse speaks about the relational aspect between God and man. It contrasts the spiritual relationship of the wicked with the spiritual relationship of the righteous. Each one of us should desire to have a close relationship with God (vs 29).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you think that if you have more money or more things you will be happy? Happiness and joy aren't based on what you have, they are based on your attitude in life. Those who are proud and look at all that they have accomplished will bring ruin to their lives. You need to make God the priority in your life and look to Him to take care of you. God will always give you what you need when you seek Him. Each Christian is faced with a choice about where their priorities will be placed. You may choose to try to earn lots of money to have more stuff, but when you do, you will lack the joy that God gives. The other choice is to follow God and let Him provide money and things for you which will also lead to abundant joy. Is God the priority in life or are earthly things a priority?

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Praise God because He blesses the righteous.
- * Thank God for providing all your needs.
- * Ask God to help you make Him the priority in your life.

Thought for the day

What often happens to people who are full of pride (vs 25)?

Does this mean that all men who are full of pride will face earthly destruction? Explain.

What will God do for the widow (vs 25)?

Why do you think God uses the illustration of a widow?

What is an abomination (vs 26)?

What are areas where you are tempted to have wicked thoughts?

What are you doing to help you avoid thinking wicked thoughts?

Where do gracious words come from (vs 26)?

What does this reveal about the great importance of having a pure heart?

Who causes problems (vs 27)?

What do you think are ways that you can find yourself greedy?

Who will find life (vs 27)?

Are there any areas of your life where you are tempted to be bribed?

*** *It may be easier than you think to overlook something that is not right if you know that there may be a financial advantage that comes to you.*

What does the righteous man do (vs 28)?

What does the wicked man do (vs 28)?

According to the words that have come out of your mouth this week, would you consider yourself righteous or wicked? Explain.

What does God hear (vs 29)?

“A Proper View”

Study: Proverbs 15:30-33

Reading: Isaiah 41:1-20

Memory: Psalms 51:1

When I first started as an assistant pastor, I was amazed at the fact that I could have a relationship with the pastor of the church. Growing up, I always had the idea that the pastor was so much better than I was. In my mind, the only reason that any of the pastors would talk to me was to correct me for what I was doing wrong. I had developed an improper view of pastors because of the way I lived my life. I felt guilty around them because I knew that I didn't always do what was right. This improper view was created in my mind. I didn't realize that the pastors preached and corrected me the way they did because they loved me and wanted what was best for me. Once I became a pastor myself, I had some of my former pastors reach out to me and let me know that they had been praying for me for years.

Today, we are going to see that we can develop an improper view of God. When we don't view God in the correct way, it will affect every area of our lives.

What Does the Bible Say?

Encouragement is an important area that often gets overlooked. We don't realize what a blessing and help we can be to others when we encourage them. Because of our sinful, selfish nature, it is much easier to criticize than it is to encourage. One of the ways that Christ can be displayed in our lives is when we are an encouragement to others. Our focus shouldn't be on the things others do wrong or the problems that others have. Instead, we should focus on how we can help others do what is right and how we can help them work through their problems (vs 30).

Not only in Proverbs, but throughout Scripture, God placed a strong emphasis on listening to the correction of others. A wise man wants others to tell him when he is not doing right (vs 31). Not only is the person who rejects correction a fool, but he is doing himself great harm. The only way that we are going to grow closer to God and allow Him to make our lives what He wants us to be is when we are open to correction and willing to change (vs 32).

A person can't become wise if he lacks a fear of the Lord. Having a proper view of God is the first step to becoming wise. The more we know God, the more we will allow Him to instruct us in our lives. Many times, people make foolish decisions because they have an improper view of God. There are many reasons that a person develops an improper view of God. An wrong view of God can come from false information that others have given them. Many times, our view of God comes from how we were treated by our male authorities. The only right view of God comes from His Word. The only way to establish a proper fear of the Lord is by getting to know Him by studying His Word on a continual basis. To have the proper fear of the Lord, we have to humble ourselves and realize that we can have nothing apart from Him. It is God who gives us all things (vs 33).

How Does this Apply to Me?

What is your view of God? Do you view God as a loving Heavenly Father who cares for you and wants what is best for you, or do you view Him as a judge whom you are constantly striving to please? Do you feel guilty because you don't think that you do enough for God? It is easy to get caught in the trap of trying to please God instead of getting to know and love Him. A wise man fears God because He knows God. He knows how much God loves and cares for Him, and He also knows how much God desires that we live for Him. God wants you to obey His Word because He knows what is best for you. He knows what sin will do to you and wants you to avoid it at all costs. When you spend time with Him everyday, you will begin to realize who He is. The more you know God, the more you will fear God. The more you fear God, the wiser you will become.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Praise God for being a God of love.
- * Thank God for giving you the ability to know Him.
- * Ask God to help you develop a proper fear of Him.

Thought for the day

What causes a heart to rejoice (vs 30)?

What do you think the beginning of verse 30 means?

****When some one looks at you with eyes of care and compassion, it brings rejoicing to your heart. This is a challenge to physically express love and appreciation to others by the way you look at them.*

What does good news do for a person (vs 30)?

Would you describe yourself as a person who continually encourages others by bringing joy into their lives?

What will wise men do (vs 31)?

Why is it hard to listen to reproof?

Why do you think reproof is described as “live giving” (vs 31)?

Why so you think this is important to remember when you are reprovved?

Why do you think that a person who fails to listen to correction “despises himself” (vs 32 - ESV)?

What does a person gain when they listen to reproof (vs 32)?

Think about how you have been reprovved and corrected by others. How did you respond?

What are ways you can establish your life so that you are able to listen to reproof and instruction?

What is the beginning of wisdom (vs 33)?

Why do you think the fear of the Lord is often mentioned in Proverbs?

What comes before honor (vs 33)? What do you think this means?

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.