

# The Keys To Wisdom

Love

Patience

Obedience

Mercy

Trust

Understanding

Truth

Discretion



## Proverbs

WEEK 14

## “The Power of Relationships”

**Study:** Proverbs 18:1-4

**Reading:** Philippians 2:1-30

**Memory:** Psalm 51:4

There are many times were I like to be alone and be a “hermit” though I am fully aware that I must be cautious with this type of attitude. I once talked to a man who didn’t like to go anywhere where there were people and would rather stay at his house and not see anyone. As I talked a little more with this man, I soon began to realize why. This man was extremely opinionated and seemed to want to give his opinion about everything I said. He had no desire to listen and learn, but just wanted to tell me how he felt and what he thought as if his thinking was correct and I was wrong. This revealed the great danger of avoiding people and getting stuck in my own thoughts rather than being challenged by others and approaching others’ opinions and thoughts with an open mind.

Today, we are going to see how a wise man spends time listening to others and learning from them. He learns to see things from the perspective of others and also chooses to speak in a way that encourages those around him.

### What Does the Bible Say?

There is great caution and warning for those who choose to isolate themselves from the influence and accountability of others. This person often does this because he is seeking his own selfish desires and doesn’t want to have to give into the ideas of others. People who isolate themselves do not want to grow and be challenged by others because they think their way is best and they don’t need to be changed. Sound judgment reveals that there is safety in many counselors and that godly friends will sharpen you to become wiser and stronger in your spiritual walk. Other godly individuals will lift you up and encourage you when you are down and help you in your times of need (vs 1).

One of the reasons why people like to isolate themselves is because they are stuck in their own opinions about something and do not want to have their mind changed. It is hard to get along with people if all you do is tell them what you think rather than want to hear what they think about

a matter. A fool only cares about getting his side of the story in or expressing his likes or dislikes, but does not care about gaining any understanding that would come from a different angle than his opinions (vs 2).

The person who does not live in righteousness will lose the respect of others and will bring disgrace upon himself. Even the unsaved world respects many core values and by living in righteousness you will gain respect and honor from those who want nothing to do with Christ (vs 3).

Water was very precious to the people of Israel and most of the time water is mentioned, it is a good thing. Here we are told that our words have the ability to be extremely refreshing and life giving. Our words are compared to a deep well (a well that doesn't run dry) and a bubbling brook which brings fresh water. Your words have the great ability to encourage a hurting soul and lift the spirits of those who are struggling. You can bring hope to the hopeless by a few simple words, but you must choose to use your words in a way that builds others up (vs 4).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Do you find yourself not wanting to talk to or be around other people? This is a dangerous spot to be in and often causes you to stop learning. To live in wisdom, you need other people to sharpen you and help you see things from different angles. Most people experience times in their lives where they no longer want to be around others (often when they are hurting), but you must be careful you don't choose to isolate yourself on a regular basis from the very help that you need.

What do your words reveal about you? Are you the person who brings disgrace on yourself by what you say, or are you the person who brings great life to others with your words. I really like to look at positive words as a great investment. Positive words never lose their value and have the ability to change lives. Take time to evaluate your speech to see if you are building others up with your words.

## **Thought for the day**

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Who seeks their own desire (vs 1)?

Why would you be tempted to isolate yourself?

What does a person who isolates himself tend to think about the thoughts of others (vs 1)?

Why is it very important to be able to listen to the ideas of others?

How can you set up your life in a way to avoid isolation and open the door to let others speak into your life and challenge your thoughts?

What does a fool not want to do (vs 2)?

What does a fool want to do (vs 2)?

How have you found yourself acting foolishly at times according to this verse?

How can you set your life up in a way that helps you seek understanding rather than just giving your opinion?

What comes with wickedness (vs 3)?

How can wrong actions in your life lead to contempt?

What leads to disgrace (vs 3)?

What is this verse warning about?

What are the words of a man's mouth compared to (vs 4)?

What are wise words compared to (vs 4)?

What does this reveal about the words you say?

How can you practically use your words today to be like a refreshing spring to others?

# “Talking Yourself Into Trouble”

**Study:** Proverbs 18:5-10

**Reading:** Psalm 91

**Memory:** Psalms 51:4

## What Does the Bible Say?

Justice is one of the main themes of the book of Proverbs because it is at the heart of who God is. God is a God of justice, and when His children display justice, they are presenting the correct picture of who He is to the world around them (vs 5).

Another main theme in Proverbs is the use of our tongue. The fool uses his tongue to get himself in trouble and often gets roughed up a bit because he did not know how to control his tongue. His words lead others to have a negative opinion of who he is and lead him directly into problems. To make this verse more applicable, think about how you have used your words lately. Have they gotten you into trouble because you couldn't control your tongue? If so, you are probably in this category of a fool and need to take steps to let God correct that in your life (vs 6-7).

A “whisperer” or “talebearer” is a form of a fool since he does not control his tongue in a wise manner. He treats news about others like a very delicious snack and swallows it up quickly. He then takes that news and spreads it to others, often causing great harm because it was something that did not need to be spread (vs 8).

Verse 9 compares a person who is not diligent in his work to someone who brings harm and destruction. When a person is assigned a task and does not do it, it cannot just be looked at as laziness, but needs to be seen as something that causes harm. The verse is challenging us to be diligent at the tasks we volunteer for and the tasks we are assigned to do. When we don't do our part, the whole group suffers. This could apply to a country, a church, a company or a family. When everyone does their part, things go well, but when we become slack in what we do, it causes great harm for everyone (vs 9).

Solomon compared the name of the Lord to a strong tower where people feel safe from harm. Strong towers were large upper rooms that were very well fortified. When an enemy was attacking the city, all the inhabitants would run to the tower for safety while their army did battle in

the city. A similar comparison in today's society would be that of a bomb shelter. When he described that the “name of the Lord” was like a strong tower, he was making reference to the authority and power of God. When a king or leader attached his name to something, it would carry greater weight, similar to what advertisers do today when they pay an athlete to endorse their product. The more famous the athlete, the more potential the item has to sell (vs 10).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you practice justice when making choices or decisions or do you find yourself showing favoritism for whatever reason? It is vital that you choose to make a fair and just decision because that has a profound affect on how people choose to view God.

Are you a fool when it comes to the use of your tongue? Even when you are joking, you must be careful in the way you talk to others because your tongue has more power than you realize. As you read yesterday, your words have the ability to be like a spring of life, but as you read today, your words also have the ability to bring great destruction. This includes the idea of spreading tales (true or false) or being eager to hear the “dirt” about others. A wise man chooses not to listen to things that tear others down and he also chooses his words wisely.

Do you realize that going to God is the safest place you can go? So often we run to friends or indulge ourselves in the things of this world when we feel down and discouraged or are under the attack of Satan. It is easy to seek shelter and protection from places that will not keep you safe, but when you go to the Lord, there you can find protection and safety. You can find peace of mind and trust in His power to keep you from harm that you may fear.

## Suggestions for Prayer

- \* *Thank God for the safety that He provides.*
- \* *Ask God to help you use your words in a positive way.*
- \* *Praise God because He will keep you from harm.*

## Thought for the day

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What is not right to do (vs 5)?

Why would a person choose to acquit someone who is guilty?

What is important to show to an innocent person?

Why do you think God cares about justice taking place?

What are areas where you may find yourself condemning an innocent person or acquitting a guilty person?

What do the words of a fool do (vs 6)?

*\*\*\*If you find yourself in constant quarrels with multiple people, one of the first places to look to stop these quarrels has to be the words that you say.*

What do fools ask for with their words (vs 6)?

What do the mouths of fools bring (vs 7)?

How have you seen this to be true?

What can you do to avoid this in your life?

What are rumors compared to (vs 8)? Why?

*\*\*\*People love to eat up gossip and rumors like people love chocolate. The problem is that those rumors often become what people believe to be true and leads to further problems.*

What is a person who doesn't carry their weight compared to (vs 9)?

What does this teach you about the importance of doing your part?

What is God's name compared to (vs 10)? Why?

How have you found this verse to be true in your life?

## “*Humbling & Helping*”

**Study:** Proverbs 18:11-14

**Reading:** I Timothy 6:1-13, Revelation 3:14-22

**Memory:** Psalms 51:4

**A**s a kid, I would often say, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Though this sounds good, and as kids we tried to fend off the negative words of others with this statement, the reality is that this statement is not true. Words do hurt. Emotional heartache goes deep, much deeper than physical wounds as we will read about in Proverbs today.

### What Does the Bible Say?

Riches are constantly warned against in Scripture because they tend to stand in the way of a person's relationship with God. We are told in verse 11 that rich men trust in their riches, just like people would trust in the city walls to keep them safe. In their own minds, their wealth will protect them from anything because they feel that they can buy their way out of trouble. Riches give a person a false sense of security, causing them not to trust in God, but to trust in themselves. This does not mean that wealth is bad. God is the giver of wealth. But, it does mean that those who have been entrusted with great possessions need to be careful not to trust in them rather than in God (vs 11).

Not only does money tend to give a person false trust, but pride in abilities and talents can also give a person a misguided sense of security. Thinking that you are better than others or that your ability to do things makes you better than those around you often sets you up for a fall and those falls are not fun. The opposite of pride needs to take place in your life as you continually humble yourself. When you humble yourself, you will often get the honor that those who are prideful are seeking after (vs 12).

One of the ways we can all act very foolishly is by giving an answer, opinion or judgment about something before we know the full story. It is easy to hear one side of a matter and make a judgement or to see something take place without knowing all the facts and choose sides. The wise man makes sure he knows the whole story and often avoids great mistakes by

doing this (vs 13).

Physical pain hurts, but most people know that it will not last and are able to bear through it. On the other hand, emotional pain goes so much deeper and causes much greater pain. A person with a crushed spirit will often carry pain in quiet ways that can't always be seen or noticed. This pain often goes very deep and is very difficult for those who have been crushed to battle through this pain. This is why it is so important for you to be careful of how you treat others and to see the need to be compassionate and empathetic when they have deep emotional wounds (vs 14).

## **How Does this Apply to Me?**

Do you desire to be rich? Most people want just a little more money, thinking that money can help solve many of the problems they face. They think that their stress level will decrease and they can have increased peace and security, but that is not true. Most people that have more, worry more because they have more to worry about. Your peace and security should not be in the amount of money you have or the possessions you have gained, but they should be in God and His promises to you.

Do you trust in your talents or abilities? Do you find yourself looking down on others because of what you can do but what they can't? This pride often leads to destruction and heartache, while choosing to humble yourself produces the opposite results. When you choose to realize that all you have is from God and is just a gift that can be taken away at any moment, it helps you realize how much you need God.

Are you quick to cast judgement, or do you take time to listen to both sides of a matter? Making a call after only hearing one side of an argument is easy to do, but it is not wise.

How are you helping those around you deal with their emotional pain? It often hurts far more than you realize and that is why those who have been hurt need others to come alongside and help them. You should also try to avoid being the one who deals out emotional pain by being filled with love and care for others.

## **Thought for the day**

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What is a rich man's wealth compared to (vs 11)?

Why do you think this comparison is made?

How do riches help people?

How can riches be a danger to people?

How can riches provide a false security like a high wall?

How can you avoid trusting in the riches that God has blessed you with?

What comes before destruction (vs 12)?

How have you seen this happen in your life or the lives of others?

What comes before honor (vs 12)?

How can you place yourself in a position that allows you to reach a point where you are honored?

When should you give an answer (vs 13)?

Why is it very easy to state your opinion or give advise when you don't know the whole situation?

What can you do to become wiser in giving your opinion and advice?

What can a man's spirit battle through (vs 14)?

What is very detrimental to a person's spirit (vs 14)?

What do you think it means to have a crushed spirit?

Have you ever had your spirit crushed? Explain.

How do you think you can avoid crushing the spirit of other people?

# “Wise & Discerning”

**Study:** Proverbs 18:15-18

**Reading:** Joshua 18:1-10, I Samuel 14:36-46

**Memory:** Psalms 51:4

## What Does the Bible Say?

Verse 15 talks about the man of understanding or the intelligent man. The key to becoming this type of person is to have a desire to learn and know more. This does not mean the person is naturally smart or gifted in learning, but the intelligent person is one who is not satisfied with where they are spiritually. They are not content with just knowing enough about God, but they want to know more about Him and how He desires them to live. Practically speaking, this person chooses to spend time in the Word of God on a regular basis and chooses to be a student of the Word. They desire to hear it on the radio, to read about it, to talk about it. They make knowing and understanding God a priority in their life. The person who chooses to do this will be the person who dwells in wisdom (vs 15).

Though verse 16 might appear to be talking about a bribe, the Hebrew word for “gift” is different than the Hebrew word used for “bribe.” This is a reference to how a wise man would bring a gift with him when he went to visit someone. This gift would be a way to show honor and respect towards the other person and would often lighten the spirit and soften the heart. It also reveals that the gift bearer realizes he is privileged to be at the place where he is visiting and not just pridefully thinking he deserves it. It seems that this was a good practice in that culture and is still something that can be done today to show love and respect when you are invited into the home of another person (vs 16).

The importance of knowing a matter fully before casting judgment is emphasized many times in the book of Proverbs. It is easy to hear one person’s story and allow yourself to get worked up about something without hearing what the other side has to say. It is often amazing how different the story is when you talk to the other person involved in the situation. The truth normally lies somewhere in the middle because people naturally bend the story to make themselves look better and give a negative view of the other person. It is not that those telling their story are purposefully lying or being deceptive, but it is very easy to leave out

important details that they don’t find necessary to tell (vs 17).

One of the ways that quarrels were solved was by the casting of lots. It is unsure what the lots were, but they were probably some type of marked stones used to help determine an outcome. Though it seems like it was a “game of chance” there are several biblical references to the lots being directed by the hand of God. Simply put, when it was hard to make a choice between two parties, lots would be cast to find out which side was right.

Should we do this today? First, we don’t know what lots were and perhaps that is why we don’t know. Most likely, God does not want us to continue the practice. We are told in the New Testament that if we need wisdom to ask God and He will give it to us. We have the Holy Spirit inside of us to help us determine the right choice to make. Can we flip a coin or draw straws to help us determine things at times? Sure, in little matters like who goes first, but in most matters, seeking counsel from God and letting Him reveal it to us is much better (vs 18).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Would you be described as an intelligent person? No, I am not asking if you are smart, but if you are a person who has a purpose and desire to know God more and understand His Word in a deeper way. Your daily actions reveal your desire to know Him more and by taking time to examine them, you can clearly see what your desire in life is.

Do you humble yourself before others, showing honor and respect to them? Verse 16 wasn’t about being deceitful or even buttering a person up, but it describes how a genuinely humble person will show honor and respect to others by bringing a gift with him for those he is visiting.

When you are told something, do you believe it fully or do you seek to know both sides of the matter? Even when people you trust tell you things, you need to make sure you know the whole story before taking action or casting judgement. No matter how good the intentions of a person are, it is natural for the story to go their way. We are reminded over and over again about the importance of hearing both sides of a story. Make it a point to gain full understanding before stating your opinion.

## Suggestions for Prayer

\* *Ask God to help you be a wise and discerning person.*

What type of heart acquires knowledge (vs 15)?

Why type of ear acquires knowledge (vs 15)?

Why is gaining knowledge so important?

Why do you think people fail to gain knowledge?

How can you set your life up in such a way that you are consistently growing in your knowledge of God and what He desires?

What does verse 16 reveal about the giving of gifts?

How is the giving of gifts different than a bribe?

How can you determine if something is a gift or a bribe?

How have you experienced benefits in your life by giving a gift or having others give you a gift?

What happens when a person first tells you something (vs 17)?

What is often revealed when you hear the other side of the story?

Why is it so important to hear both sides of a story?

Describe a time where you have jumped to a conclusion by only hearing one side of a story? What problems did that cause?

How can you avoid doing this in your life?

What did the casting of lots do (vs 18)?

Why do you think this is stated in Proverbs?

What do you think you can learn from this Proverb?

How should you make decisions today?

## ***“To Bring Life or Death”***

**Study:** Proverbs 18:19-24

**Reading:** Colossians 4:1-6, James 3:1-12

**Memory:** Psalms 51:4

I grew up being a very critical person who enjoyed making fun of others. I normally did it in a joking way and wasn't out to hurt people, but I often did. I started to change a little bit in college, though I did find a group of friends that would mock each other in a fun way that wasn't hurtful. What I wasn't mature enough to realize was that though I could say one thing to my college buddies and it would be hilarious, saying those same words to a teenager in the youth group I was leading was extremely harmful. I hurt many people and it wasn't until later that I realized the long lasting harm that I had done with some of my words.

Today, we are going to see the importance of using our tongues in a way that brings life and not death to the spirits of others.

### **What Does the Bible Say?**

When an opposing nation was attacking another nation, they would normally attack their weakest cities first and would many times avoid the strong cities or would take them last since they were much more difficult to conquer. Solomon compares the person who has been offended to one of these strong cities. He described how it was easier to conquer a mighty city than it was to win back a person that you have offended. He also related how arguing with other people is like building bars in a castle which would make it very difficult to get back inside that person's life. Solomon was describing the importance of avoiding arguments and fights and was encouraging his readers not to do things to hurt others. The word "offend" doesn't mean that you can't do something another person doesn't like. There will always be people who don't like something you do. But, it has the idea of doing things that are hurtful to others. Often these things are not done on purpose, but they happen when we act or talk in a selfish manner, not caring about the feelings of others (vs 19).

One of the greatest ways you can hurt others is with your tongue. This is why Solomon placed such a great emphasis on our use of it and reminded us in verse 20 how our lips should be used to help satisfy our souls. In

other words, we should use our words in a way that is a help and encouragement to others which will also fill us up inside through the friendships and the joy that we establish through the positive use of our words. Verse 21 goes a little deeper into this thought describing how the power to bring life to a person or bring death to a person is in the tongue. He is not saying the tongue is an actual weapon to bring actual life or death, but that your tongue can be used to kill a person's spirit or to lift that person's spirit. By the way, when we are speaking about the tongue, it is not just verbal words, but also written words (vs 20-21).

Marriage is not something to be looked down on, specifically when a man finds a good wife. The challenge is for men not to just settle for a woman who is attractive or will give him what he wants, but to look for a woman who is of godly character (vs 22).

Verse 23 is a statement of fact, though Solomon is rebuking the rich in the verse. He understood that poor people had to continually beg to get what they needed, while the rich people would look down on the less fortunate and treat them in a rough manner. The challenge for you from this verse is to treat all men with respect and not to "talk down" to anyone (vs 23).

Though having lots of friends is many times a good thing, it can also be a bad thing if you don't have a close friend you can really count on. Many people can be lonely in a crowd because they have lots of people they know, but no one they can share their hearts with. It is a challenge to take the steps to focus on establishing a few intimate and close relationships rather than having lots of friends that you can't share your heart with (vs 24).

### **Suggestions for Prayer**

- \* *Thank God for giving you the ability to build others up with your words and deeds.*
- \* *Ask God to help you become wise in the way you use your words.*
- \* *Praise God that He knows how you can be full of joy.*

### **Thought for the day**

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What is offending a brother compared to (vs 19)?

Why do you think this comparison was made?

What happens when you quarrel with someone (vs 19)?

What is this verse challenging you to avoid?

How can your words bring great satisfaction (vs 20)?

Why do you think Proverbs has so many verses that deal with your speech and the words that you use?

What power is in the tongue (vs 21)?

What will those who use their tongues wisely find?

What does verse 22 declare about finding a good wife (vs 22)?

What will a good wife help a man with (vs 22)?

How do you think a man is able to find a good wife?

How can you strive to be the best wife or husband that you can possibly be?

What do poor people have to do (vs 23)?

How do rich people often treat poor people (vs 23)?

What are ways that you can be tempted to treat others this way?

What can happen to a man who has many acquaintances (vs 24)?

Why type of friends should a person be looking for (vs 24)?

What do you think verse 24 is teaching you about friendships?

How can you apply this to your current situation in life?

# “Actions and Consequences”

**Study:** Proverbs 19:1-5

**Reading:** 1 Timothy 6:1-10

**Memory:** Psalms 51:4

Several years ago, my wife and I decided to buy our first home. We found a great deal on a “fixer upper” and eagerly began the process of making the home livable. The biggest problem with this choice was that I had a large amount of excitement about it, but I had virtually no knowledge when it came to construction or carpentry. I was clueless and by the time I was finished fixing up the home, you could see evidence of how clueless I was because very little I did was done right.

Today, we are going to read how it is wonderful to be excited about things, but when we take on things in our life just because we are excited about it, we will often cause further problems. The wise person accompanies that excitement with proper knowledge for a balanced approach to success.

## What Does the Bible Say?

Once again we are confronted by the truth that there is a lot more to life than wealth. In the culture this was written to, there was often a big gap between the rich and the poor. It was easy for those who were poor to have a continual longing to be rich. To do this, some would seek to gain their riches by living a life that was crooked and took advantage of others often by cheating and stealing (vs 1).

Though being excited about something often causes a person to put more time and effort into what they are doing, we are cautioned not to let our zeal for something cause us to act without wisdom. Sometimes we rush into things without taking time to think through the whole process and end up in trouble because we did not fully evaluate the situation. This does not mean that we have to be overly cautious in everything that we do, but it challenges us to make sure we don’t just act on emotion. Rushing to do something will often lead to mistakes and errors that could easily have been avoided (vs 2).

People who act in foolishness often blame God for the negative results when things don’t turn out well. Rather than letting their consequences

open their eyes to their wrong choices, they harden their hearts towards God and become upset at Him for not doing things their way. When negative things happen in your life, don’t blame God but first look at your actions to see if you were the cause of the problem. Many times you will find that it was your foolishness that caused much of your troubles (vs 3).

When a person becomes wealthy, they often find themselves with many people wanting to be their friends. Most of these people just want in on the money and the benefits of it, though it is often hard to determine who the true friends are. The way to find out who the true friends are is to lose that money. Those who still will talk to you and spend time with you are genuine friends. The real challenge from this verse is to be a true friend rather than one who seeks friendships for your own personal gain (vs 4).

Though it may appear at times that those who tell lies get away with what they are doing and they seem to get ahead in life, you must remember that they don’t. They will eventually have to face up to their dishonesty and their foundation will crumble (vs 5).

## How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you think that having a little more money will help you be a better person? Do you picture life as being much easier if you just had a little more? If you seek after wealth, you will find that it is difficult to say you have enough because the more you have, the more you buy and the more you have to draw your attention away from God. This wealth you seek will also produce more false friends. Choosing to be content with what you have and walking in wisdom is far better than what any amount of money can buy.

Do you think through your actions before you do them or do you tend to act in haste? Do you take time to pray about things and wait for an answer or do you let your emotions get the best of you and act without waiting on God. Acting in haste will often bring negative results and it is easy to blame those results on God and turn from Him because of the consequences of your errors.

Are you known for your honesty? Though it might seem that little lies may get you ahead, you must realize that lying will only lead you into a deeper hole.

What does it mean to walk in integrity (vs 1)?

What is described as being better in verse 1?

Why do you think people often choose wealth over integrity?

How can you make sure you are putting integrity over wealth?

What is not good (vs 2)?

How do you think you can have a zeal or desire for something, but do it without knowledge?

What happens when we rush into things too quickly (vs 2)?

How have you seen this true in your life?

What often happens when a man faces the consequences for his foolish action (vs 3)?

How have you been tempted to do this?

How can you avoid this?

What often comes with wealth (vs 4)?

Why do you think this is the case?

How can you be a good friend to others?

Who will not go unpunished (vs 5)?

Why do you think people think they can get away with lies and deception?

How have you been tempted to do this?

How can you set your life up to make sure you are a truthful person?

### ***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.*