

Foundations Devotional

• FOR THE WEEK OF DEC 13 - DEC 19 •

MONDAY // PROVERBS 1-2

The Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes are a result of Solomon's prayer for wisdom. Proverbs contains some of the most practical advice in the entire Bible, and its wisdom covers everything from relationships to leadership, from how to spend money to how to spend time. Proverbs begins by stating that the purpose of the book is to provide wisdom and insight for how to live as a child of God. Next, chapters 1-2 describe why a person should desire wisdom and the benefits wisdom brings to a person's life. At its core, wisdom is the skill of living life according to God's ways, which Solomon summarized in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and discipline." Fear of God speaks to the awe and wonder that results from understanding who God is and how entirely dependent we are on Him. This is the foundation on which everything else in our lives is built.

TUESDAY // PROVERBS 3-4

Proverbs 3-4 continue Solomon's instructions to those in their youth. In these two chapters, as in other parts of Proverbs, wisdom is personified as a woman seeking others who will listen to her teachings. Whether or not a person listens determines the path of his or her life. Those who fail to heed her instructions will suffer devastating consequences, while those who pursue wisdom will receive many benefits, as these chapters describe. In chapter 4, Solomon roots his plea for wise living in his own upbringing and the tradition of the Israelites—David passed down the importance of wisdom to Solomon, and Solomon passed it on to his children through discipleship. Chapter 3 makes it clear that we gain wisdom through the study of God's Word. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself and His truth, and it teaches us how to live for God and share His love with the world. The close of chapter 3 points out an important teaching—one of the reasons we need wisdom for living is so that we know how to relate in godly love to the people in our lives.

WEDNESDAY // PROVERBS 16-18

Proverbs 16-18 are part of a larger division of the Book of Proverbs that contains wisdom for everyday life. Three of the most well-known proverbs are found in these chapters: "Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall" (16:18); "The name of Yahweh is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are protected" (18:10); and "A man with many friends may be harmed, but there is a friend who stays closer than a brother" (18:24). These three proverbs show the diversity of topics and teachings presented throughout this book. From these proverbs alone, we are reminded that pride is a destructive sin, God is our Protector, and everyone needs the support and love of trusted friends. What these and all other proverbs have in common is that they teach us how to put God's values into practice in our daily lives, which is something we will spend the rest of our lives learning how to do.

THURSDAY // PROVERBS 31

Proverbs 31 is known for its description of biblical womanhood. But this final proverb is about much more than being a woman. Proverbs 31 closes the book with a picture of godly wisdom on display in family life. The virtuous wife and mother described here gives all people an example to follow. The main principles affirmed in this proverb are a person's trustworthiness, responsibility, and godliness—characteristics that can only be lived out if you are seeking God's wisdom for daily living. Verse 30 draws attention to the fear of the Lord as an admirable quality, which brings the Book of Proverbs full circle from where it began in 1:7. Worship of and respectful submission to the Lord's authority is the key to wisdom in every area of life.

FRIDAY // 1 KINGS 11-12

First Kings 11 marks a turning point for Solomon and the Kingdom of Israel. At this point in his life, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines whom he allowed to practice pagan religions, even constructing places of worship for them. Solomon's life of excessive wisdom and riches (which were originally gifts from God) led him to compromise his faith and his leadership through disobedience, and the consequences were quick and devastating. God judged Solomon by dividing the kingdom of Israel. Tensions had been growing among the tribes, and only the grace of God held the kingdom together. Now that it was no more, the kingdom of God's people divided into two. Although Solomon was a wise and godly ruler for much of his life, the end of his reign is yet another reminder of our need for a true and better King, which we have in Jesus. We are also reminded through this story of God's faithfulness to His people—God did not turn His back on either of the kingdoms, and the story of His faithfulness and pursuit of His people continued on toward completion.

WEEKEND // FINISH UP ANY YOU DIDN'T DO