

Member Meditations on the Book of Proverbs

Mt. Zion Church of Christ

Anonymous Member...

The book of Proverbs seems to me to be a book of active, conscious choices. We can choose to fear the LORD and actively pursue wisdom or we can choose to live for ourselves and actively pursue folly.

Both pursuits are active choices. Because the search for wisdom is active, there are choices to be made (and vice versa in the pursuit of folly). Proverbs 2 lays out some examples of the active, conscious choices one makes in the search for God's wisdom. Some of the active words used in Proverbs 2 include: receive, treasure, incline ear, apply heart, cry out, lift up voice, seek, search, understand, find. All of these words or phrases are active and all are choices.

The active search is not just a singular, one-time choice...one must receive and retain instruction and wisdom, which is also very active and a very conscious choice. Proverbs 4: 4-5 says, "He also taught me, and said to me: 'Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth.'" Verse 13 in that same chapter says, "Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; keep her, for she is your life."

These conscious choices to actively pursue wisdom have continual and lasting benefits. Proverbs 3:13-18 lays out many of the benefits of the pursuit of wisdom: "Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her."

Even though suffering will come to all of us at different points in our lives, regardless of whether or not we are "living right," the book of Proverbs lays out how much suffering can be avoided by actively and consciously choosing to pursue wisdom over folly. I know I personally could have avoided much suffering in my own life by actively and consciously pursuing wisdom instead of intentionally chasing folly, and I think the book of Proverbs lays out the lines of separation (taking a line from David's sermon!) between the benefits of choosing wisdom versus the detriments of choosing folly.

This book of Proverbs is also one that I see God's love all throughout. As the book opens with a beautiful portrait of a father instructing his son, so this book seems to me to be God speaking in the same way to us. He loves us so much as to provide us a book of choices to help us walk with Him as we pursue His paths of righteousness. Just as I imagine the father and the mother sitting, walking, instructing, discipling the son mentioned through the book, so I imagine our Father God guiding us in the same way through the words in this book. This pursuit of wisdom is not something we should (or are even able to) do in isolation.

But we must first have a healthy and reverent fear of the LORD. Just like with our own children—when those hearts are receptive and open to receiving the wisdom from lessons we have learned over the course of our lives, much learning can take place. But if our children are stubborn and rebellious and trying pursue their own way, not much good

comes from us trying to force our advice on them. Every pursuit of wisdom must begin with a heart humble enough to love and respect what Isaiah 55: 8-9 tells us about our loving Father, “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” I think this verse beautifully captures one way that we can reverently and lovingly and wisely fear the LORD and remember that HE IS GOD and I am not.

Anonymous Member...

Proverbs is full of very informative mind provoking comparisons of how to & how not to live our lives. They are old analogies, but they are still yet new, true & timeless. They will stand true until this world ends!

Ryan Barrick...

Proverbs, though written differently than most Bible books, contains snippets of life altering information and is a continual narrative that displays God’s character, as well as man’s proper response to Him in daily living.

We experience different times and seasons in our lives and when we go into God’s presence, I think we carry what’s heavy on our minds. It’s in those moments the Helper, the Holy Spirit inside of us, speaks, guides, and comforts. Lately I’ve experienced empathy for Ukrainians, those in Russia opposed to the war, and overall all who find themselves being oppressed by a man pursuing evil and injustice. God reassured me multiple times in Proverbs that evil has an expiration. It’s no surprise to see that story of brokenness that started way back in the garden when Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil continuing in our world in 2022. It won’t stop until Jesus returns and the restoration of all things comes to light.

The knowledge of “good and evil” essentially places a burden upon us--a burden that our loving Father never wanted us experiencing. That’s why in the garden He placed the Tree of Life--in clinging to that tree mankind would have experienced the fullness of God-- a life of purity, holiness, and all goodness. But self-willed man chose to go against the one thing God commanded and chaos, turmoil, and division claimed its place in the world. Learning good and evil is painful--both are a part of our world and we must navigate our lives being shaped through the impacts of both. Many of these Proverbs are written in a style that states the good and follows with the bad, or vice versa. Overall, when we pursue goodness, we can expect good things--likewise when we pursue evil, we can expect bad things, but neither are without exceptions in a lifetime.

To me, Proverbs is a call for humanity to trust in God and as a result, live their lives in reflection. It also shines light on the good and evil warfare we find inside of us and what we have to process unfolding in those around us. God is giving us advice for daily living to deal with the deleteria humanity has gotten itself into. A key verse for me is Proverbs 3:5-6--“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and he will make your paths straight”. Essentially we should cling to the “Tree of Life” (God), and trust in Him rather than relying upon our own theologies that often only continue to create messes, for He will show us the Way out because He has given us the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE. Jesus Christ is the pathway that leads us out of the burden of knowing good and evil and He will return us to a life that was the way the Father intended.

What Proverbs taught me about who God is...

- He’s deliverer (Proverbs 20:22)

- He guides (Proverbs 20:24)
- He's just (Proverbs 21:2)
- He's creator (Proverbs 22:2)
- He's defender (Proverbs 24:12)
- He hears the righteous (Proverbs 15:29)
- God hates things (Proverbs 6:16-19)
- Giver of wisdom (Proverbs 2:6)
- He disciplines those He loves (Proverbs 3:11-12)