

Blessed is
the one who finds
WISDOM

Studies in Wisdom prepared by Dr. Andrew Corbett based on the Book of Proverbs. These studies complement a series of messages available in either audio or video formats available from Legana Media:

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wisdom, *n.*, the morally right
application of
knowledge.

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If you could have anything, and I mean anything, what would you have? Imagine if God personally offered you anything you wanted. This is exactly what a young Jewish man was offered by God. He could have asked for riches, fame, or power. But he didn't. He asked God for *wisdom*. He regarded wisdom as more valuable than any material or glorious gain he could achieve. Decades later he would write this belief down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He would also go on to write some 3,000 proverbs, which partly articulated the wisdom he had received from God (1 Kings 4:32). Some of these proverbs were preserved in the Biblical book called *Proverbs* also called "*The Thirty Sayings*" (Prov. 22:20). These proverbs written nearly 3,000 years ago still speak volumes to us today and give us remarkable insight into how our lives can be enriching and satisfying.

"Blessed is the one who finds wisdom..."

Proverbs 3:13

Blessed is the one who finds wisdom...

He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Corinthians 1:30

WISDOM & Planning

Many Christians live their lives too passively by being content to regard anything that life throws at them as God's will. Thus, when bad things happen to them they are found to say things like, "*Why is God doing this to me?*" Whenever someone else achieves a measure of success they regard this as entirely God's sovereignty and with some measure of disappointment wonder why God hasn't also blessed them. But the Book of Proverbs contains some amazing promises about how our lives can be enriched.

1. Note some of the promises contained in the Book of Proverbs when the principles of wisdom are applied -
 - a) Prov. 1:33 _____
 - b) Prov. 3:2 _____
 - c) Prov. 3:8 _____
 - d) Prov. 3:16 _____

e) Prov. 3:35 _____

f) Prov. 4:12 _____

g) Prov. 8:18 _____

h) Prov. 8:35 _____

The first 9 chapters of the Book of Proverbs is essentially an introduction to the rest of the Book. It speaks of the difference which wisdom can make to a life.

it is wise to plan...

The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance...

Proverbs 21:5

Wisdom helps to make a path through a life-jungle of confusion, temptations, and pitfalls. A life lived wisely is a life of fewer mistakes. Imagine you had the opportunity to relive the past twenty years of your life. If you would you do anything differently you have acquired some wisdom. Imagine you could have known then (twenty years ago) what you know now. How different would your life be now? However, none of us can change the past but with the power of wisdom we may shape our future!

Some people are reluctant to make plans for their future because their previous plans have been such a great disappointment. But it is God's will for us to make plans. Some people fail to plan because they have confused "goals" with "plans". There are some goals which people and churches have little control over. But we have a great deal of control over our planning.

2. What two types of "planning" does the Apostle Paul seem to allude to in Second Corinthians 1:17?

According to some translations, Paul was also making *plans* to go to Spain (Romans 15:24). We should not be fearful that planning is unspiritual. While there is a difference between how the natural and supernatural operate, there are also similarities (for example, sowing and reaping). Some of the things we do in the natural realm as a matter of course, such as *planning*, are thought by some to be quite unnecessary in the spiritual realm. This is partly because we feel that God's sovereignty (control) dissolves us of any say in how we live our lives or of our influence of those events which take place around us. This is a very poor understanding of God's sovereignty. Within God's sovereignty He invites us to participate in a way that does not diminish His absolute control of the universe. This invitation calls us to have desires, dreams, a vision, ambition, and goals! But as Paul alludes to in 2 Corinthians 1:17 this can be done entirely in "the flesh" or in "the Spirit". The wisdom contained in Proverbs shows us how.

the first steps in planning...

Wise planning will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe.

Proverbs 2:11 (NLT)

We wouldn't dream of employing a house builder to construct our house and demand that he did so without the use of plans! Yet some Christians are prepared to attempt to develop their own lives (which are far more important and valuable than a house) without any plans. We need to learn how to develop plans in the Spirit for our lives, families, and churches.

3. What is God's ultimate plan for our lives? (note Romans 8:29, *predestined=planned*)

The first thing we need to understand about God's plan for us is that He plans for us to change! The second thing we need to know is that it is going to be a good plan, but not necessarily a pleasant one. Note this anonymous poem –

When God wants to drill a man,
And thrill a man,
And skill a man
To play the noblest part;

When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!

How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him

Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!

How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses,
And which every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out-
God knows what He's about.

Once we realise that God has a plan for us to made into the likeness of His Son, and that His plan centres on Christ, not us, for our plans to be in the Spirit they should converge with God's plan for us.

4. Therefore, what does Proverbs 16:3, 16:9 and 19:21 teach us about planning?

Before we concern ourselves with God's "micro" plans for our lives, we need to learn God's "macro" plan for our lives.

5. How can learn God's macro plan for our lives? (Psalm 119:105; 2 Tim 3:16-17)

The first step to making plans in the Spirit is to make plans which align with God's overall plan for our lives which is to make us like Christ. A man who heard a very convincing sermon from an evangelist said that he still had questions to be answered before he could accept Christ. The evangelist therefore said that he would be happy to have lunch with the man and talk further. Over lunch they dealt with each of the man's objections and questions. The evangelist then challenged the man to accept Christ. The man refused. The evangelist asked why. The man confessed that he was a strip-club owner and knew that a commitment to Christ would demand that he relinquished his much loved business! In other words, he wasn't prepared to follow Christ because he knew what God's macro plan for him would involve!

Once we settle this matter of putting God's will for our lives first (note Matthew 6:33) we can then search our hearts to discover what God has put there.

6. Note how Paul states this principle in Philippians 2:13. How does this compare with Proverbs 19:21?

how to plan wisely...

The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.

Proverbs 20:5 (ESV)

I once someone I really appreciate and value ask me about their plans to start a cell group. They discussed how they saw a need for this type of group and that there was no other group similar to this. My instant reply to them was “Don’t do it!” I went on to share how I had come to recognise this person’s strengths and gifts (which were in the arena of creative arts) and that any other time they had tried to work with people in this way it had fizzled. As a result of this conversation they abandoned their plans to start a cell group.

People are each “wired” differently. Some people have ‘marathon’ spirits, while others have ‘sprint’ spirits. Working with people is a marathon. Working on projects is a sprint. If your plans involve people you need to a marathon outlook. Like my good friend, sometimes we propose plans which just don’t fit us but we are not able to immediately recognise it.

7. Therefore, what does Proverbs 11:14; 12:15; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; 24:6 counsel us to do?

Some final thoughts on wise planning...

8. In making plans what do we need to guard against? (Prov. 21:5)

Goals are destinations; plans are the journey. Travel wisely.



WISDOM & Prosperity

Prosperity has become a very contentious issue amongst Christians in recent times. The friction between those who advocate a Gospel emphasising prosperity and those who believe it has become an over-emphasis has given rise to pejorative terms like “hyper-prosperity”, and “the prosperity Gospel”. Many Christians are repulsed by preachers who seem to preach nothing other than financial giving especially when it is just prior to their own “love-offerings”! No other subject seems to stir up as much reaction among people both inside and outside the church as finances and giving. This perhaps has been caused by some well-publicised misappropriations of church funds by various prominent ministries and the countless less widely known cases of other misappropriations. Little wonder many people are repulsed by any Christian minister who majors on the subject of prosperity with a none-to-obvious motive of trying to “fleece the flock”.

But the Bible actually does have a lot to say about finance, giving, and prosperity.

Someone has taken the time to count the number of occurrences the word “love” occurs in Scripture. Depending on your translation it comes to around 700 times. A count was made of Scriptures pertaining to handling money. The result was around 2100 times! I haven’t been able to verify these figures but if they’re right it means that it’s easier to love than it is to handle finance. It also may show us that the Bible is very insightful when it comes to exposing what lies closest to the human heart.

1. What did Jesus say would reveal the true condition of a person’s heart? (Matthew 6:21)

is poverty next to godliness?

Throughout the Middle Ages many Christians adopted the belief that poverty was spiritually beneficial.

2. Perhaps some of these medieval monks based this teaching on Matthew 5:3. But did Christ teach that there was a blessing in being poor in this verse?

3. How might Deuteronomy 15:4 counter the concept that poverty is a sign of God’s blessing (therefore more spiritual)?

what is prosperity?

For some prosperity is equated to opulence or luxury. Ironically many western Christians who despise the “prosperity Gospel” by regarding it as a poor theological veneer covering insatiable greed by manipulating peddlers of the Gospel, would actually be enjoying phenomenal prosperity themselves. So in actuality their issue is not with “Prosperity” but with those who preach and practise a form of “prosperity” which is in effect an attempt to justify their greed.

Prosperity is having your needs met and enough to share with others.

Poverty is a state of deprivation of necessary provisions for life (food, water, clothing, shelter).

4. What did Paul imply were the elements of contentment (which is an aspect of Biblical prosperity) in 1Tim 6:8?

5. Can a Christian prosper and obey Hebrews 13:5? Explain.

Biblical prosperity is contentment *with* generosity.

6. How does Proverbs 8:18 show us that prosperity is not an enemy of godliness?

7. Note these promises for those who are generous-

(a) Prov. 11:24 _____

(b) Prov. 14:21 _____

(c) Prov. 19:17 _____

(d) Prov. 28:8 _____

Biblical prosperity regards God as the Provider. For the one who prospers they regard everything they have as being from God (Gen. 22:14; 1Chron. 29:16; Ps.84:11; James 1:17). They also regard prosperity as being for a purpose. When we prosper we are able to be channels of blessing. The Book of Proverbs contains amazing insights into how we can prosper.

prosperity changes attitude...

The prosperous acknowledge that -

1. God is the Provider and deserves to be thanked.
2. God provides in different ways that will never reward laziness.
3. God expects prosperity to be stewarded.
4. God can bless others abundantly without anyone else being deprived.
5. God prospers for a purpose.

8. What does 3John 2 reveal about how God wants us to prosper?

Prosperity doesn't begin with a growing bank balance. Prosperity begins in your soul. It is an attitude. Through living wisely we can become prosperous.

The true story is told of a Vietnamese man and his family who were refugees in America. Due to his lack of English he was unable to get a job. He did however have experience in selling fruit and vegetables which is what he did at a market stall.

This stall created an income of \$24,000 per year (not a great deal in the American context). With this income he rented a one room apartment for him, his wife and two daughters, and paid for their living expenses, totalling \$8,000. He banked the remaining \$16,000. He was able to do this for four years. After four years he used the \$64,000 as a deposit on a Fruit and Vegetable Warehouse and Distribution business and within another few years this business was generating an income of \$1,000,000 per year for him.

When did he begin to prosper?

what would *you* do with \$1,000,000?

The first principle of prospering is to acknowledge what you have.

8. According to Proverbs 3:6 what happens when we acknowledge the Lord?

Most people have never really calculated how much they will earn over their working life. The average worker will have a 40 year career. Using today's average pay rates, if this worker earns \$30,000 a year over 40 years they will earn \$1,200,000!

The second principle of prosperity is to honour God.

9. When we honour God with what He has given us, what does Proverbs 3:9-10 promise?

The third principle of prosperity is to use wisely what we are given.

10. What does Proverbs 24:5 commend rather than physical might?

The fourth principle of prosperity is diligence.

11. What instructions does God give those to whom He has entrusted flocks to according to Proverbs 27:23-24?

about poverty

Proverbs not only sheds wisdom about prosperity, but also teaches us what leads to poverty –

12. Note the following Proverbs about what leads to poverty -

- a) Prov. 10:4 – slackness
- b) Prov. 13:18 – ignorance
- c) Prov. 14:23 – all talk, no action
- d) Prov. 20:13 – too much sleep (Prov. 6:10-11)

- e) Prov. 21:5 – hastiness (act without thinking)
- f) Prov. 22:16 – grovelling
- g) Prov. 23:21 – drunkenness and gluttony
- h) Prov. 28:19 – refusal to work, preferring to follow after fantasies
- i) Prov. 28:22 – stinginess

Prosperity or poverty is not about opulence or starvation. Prosperity is a responsibility. In Brian Houston's book, "You Need More Money" he lists several things that the prosperous can do with what God has blessed them with –

- Help those in need
- Purchase land on behalf of churches
- Give to missions projects

*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and
be in health, just as your soul prospers.*

3John 2

[illegible]

WISDOM & Parenting

Few topics are as emotionally charged as ‘parenting’. When Kim and I had just one child we had some strong views on parenting which we had acquired from various sources and felt were the most Christ-honouring. Whenever we shared those views with a struggling parent we were sometimes fobbed off as not being qualified enough to tell anyone else how to parent. We were sometimes told that until we had experienced what it was like to parent a two year old (the “terrible twos”) we could not possibly understand just how difficult it was. But we never did have a terrible time with any of our two year olds (or any age for that matter).

As our family grew to two children, then three, and it spanned teenage years to pre-school years, we simply continued to experience the fruit of what we felt the Bible instructed parents. Much of this wisdom to parent comes from the Book of Proverbs.

In dealing with parenting there is the danger that many who have experienced the pain of divorce, abandonment, widowhood, or singleness will feel condemned. This is not my intention. My hope is that those who are right now not experiencing the ideal will be able to become a better parent as a result of our study. In having just taught on this subject to a variety of people in diverse parenting situations I was very aware that my presentation of the ideal could indeed crush those whose past was previously Christless but had now meant they were responsible for children. One such mother wrote to me after the teaching session and said-

“Great sermon...thankyou very much...Your message at first made me a bit sad. But I decided that the flesh wasn’t going to win and through God’s grace I am becoming a better parent. Keep up the good teaching, I love it!”

a vision for children...

The modern world is geared toward sending a message to young adults that parenting children is inconvenient, unkewl, costly, and draining. One magazine article recently stated that the average child will cost his parents over \$350,000 to raise by the time he is ready to leave home. All of this is designed to scare prospective parents from having kids, or if they do from having too many. This figure is a fantastic myth.

Another myth is that the world is already over-populated and that it is irresponsible to bring any more children into the world. This is quickly dispelled when we do the maths. The entire world’s population could fit easily in the state of Alaska and have around 100 m² of personal space! And Alaska is only 1% of the world’s landmass!

When God said to go and multiply and fill the earth, He may have meant it...

1. Note Malachi 2:14-15. What does God regard as a purpose of marriage?
-

For centuries missiologists (people who study missions) have speculated how the Church can realise the Great Commission. Great evangelistic crusades, church planting, cell group evangelism have all been tried and contributed to many coming to Christ. But sometimes all of this happens at the expense of those who are already ripe for the Gospel: *the children of Christians*. I think it is an absolute tragedy when Christian ministers are so busy saving the world that they have no time for their own children, which then results in their children rejecting the God of the fathers. Some of greatest opponents of the Church including Friedrich Nietzsche and Antony Flew, who have influenced untold numbers away from God, were both the neglected children of Christian ministers!

In the book (which was made into a movie), *“A River Runs Through It”*, Norman Maclean tells the story of his brother Paul and their relationship to their father who was a Presbyterian. Their very godly dad was a stern man who had a twisted sense of grace (*“salvation is by grace, grace is an act of art, art is hard work”*) which deeply affected his outlook on life. The one thing their father loved to do was fly-fish. Because Norman and Paul craved their dad’s attention they loved to go fly-fishing with him. Eventually fly-fishing itself replaced time spent with their busy father. Paul’s life took a turn for the worse as he drowned his aching heart into fly-fishing, drinking, gambling, fighting and women. One night his father received a call from the police to say that they had found young Paul beaten to death in an alley by someone who took gambling debts far more seriously than he did.

If Christian parents, especially professional Christian ministers, regarded the parenting of their children as a higher priority we could perhaps come closer than we ever have in realising the Great Commission. That is, if all we did was lead our kids to Christ and disciple them, the next generation church could be the largest in history! As well as this, we could well be reducing the number and intensity of the church's worst opponents!

The best way we can change the future for Christ is to love, train, teach, and disciple our children!

2. What does Psalm 127:3 claim is actually a gift and reward from God?

3. What does Psalm 127:5 state brings blessing to a person?

“my son...”

Twenty three times through the book of Proverbs the expression “my son” occurs. We get the impression that Solomon's wisdom largely came from his father David. He repeatedly cites what his father taught him.

4. What does Solomon recall his father teaching him in Proverbs 1:8?

It seems that Solomon was taught that he needed to be taught! It also appears that his father clearly articulated what his role as father was. Today, many fathers have forsaken their Biblical mandate to “father” their children by expecting educators, pastors, or the government to do it instead.

the role of fathers

1. Fathers _ _ _ _ _

5. Based on Proverbs 3:12, what are fathers of children primarily responsible to do?

2. Fathers _ _ _ _ _

6. Based on Proverbs 4:1, what is a major role of fathers?

3. Fathers _ _ _ _ _ their wife

7. What do we see David doing before Solomon based on Proverbs 6:20?

4. Fathers _ _ _ _ _ their children

8. What is the promise contained in Proverbs 22:6

Training involves showing. Children watch their Dads closely and are very good at imitating them!

wise parenting includes...

An obviously loving, united, marriage

Fathers and mothers parent out of the strength of their marriage. It is a mistake to think that a married couple exist to parent their children. Their marriage should be a higher priority than their children. The decisions and edicts of their spouse should never be undermined by them in front of their children.

Consistency

Wise parents know that they have to stick to their guns. They don't make rash threats or rash promises. They consistently discipline. Their children are at ease and relaxed around them. My children know that they can hug me anytime (and they do!). This is because I am consistent with my affection.

Diligence

Wise parents know that when they are tired, when they are weak or worn down, it is just easier to give up proper parenting standards. Wise parenting requires diligence. It hurts. At times its real hard. But diligence is an investment a wise parent is prepared to make.

Stewardship (Ps. 127)

Wise parents recognise that their children are not *their* children- they are the Lord's! Since they are a gift, parents are essentially stewards (managers) of what God has loaned them.

Amen.

WISDOM & Piety

Piety is right living. In recent times it has become a derogatory term. If someone accused you of being “pious” they may well be insulting you! But the term *piety* conveys godliness, righteousness, and purity. These are some of the words used in Proverbs to convey the need for believers to be pious. In fact Proverbs uses the word righteous(+ness) 87 times. The embracing of wisdom will result in good changes of behaviour.

connection between thinking and acting...

One Christian thinker, Bill Muehlenberg, recently noted the following:

The question is, is there a connection between orthodoxy and orthopraxis? That is, does right thinking lead to right behaviour? In a 2003 volume by Barna (that Sider relies on), Think Like Jesus (Integrity), Barna argued that there is a connection. He first argued that Christians need to develop a thorough biblical worldview. This is based on Scripture and a belief in moral absolutes. Such a worldview would entail at least six components:

- God is the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator who still rules the universe today;
- Jesus Christ lived a sinless life while on earth;
- Satan is a real, living entity;
- salvation is a free gift, not something we can earn;
- every Christian has a personal responsibility to evangelize;-the Bible is totally accurate in all that it teaches.

Barna notes that only a small percentage of evangelicals have a biblical worldview with these elements. In fact, his research has found that only 9 per cent of born-again adults have such a worldview, and only 2 per cent of born-again teenagers have it. That is the bad news.

But the good news is, those who do have a biblical worldview tend to live more Christlike lives than those who do not. Some of the specific findings include: those with a biblical worldview are nine times more likely than all the others to avoid adult-only material on the Internet. They are four times more likely than other Christians to boycott objectionable companies and products and twice as likely to choose intentionally not to watch a movie specifically because of its bad content.

Also, they are three times more likely than other adults not to use tobacco products and twice as likely to volunteer time to help needy people. Forty-nine percent of all born-again Christians with a biblical worldview have volunteered more than an hour in the previous week to an organization serving the poor, whereas only 29 percent of born-again Christians without a biblical worldview and only 22 percent of non-born-again Christians had done so. Thus a solid biblical foundation does make a difference.

1. What does Proverbs 2:9 say is the result of embracing wisdom?

2. What benefits does wise pious living bring based on Proverbs 4:18?

If we think that by following God and His laws we are disadvantaged in this world, we are deceived! The promises contained in the Proverbs is that when we live righteously (piously) we will flourish (Prov. 11:28). The world lives by cheating, lying, stealing, compromising, and selfishness. This way of living leads to death and emptiness (Prov. 10:2; 11:4; 14:12; 16:25)

the fruit of a righteous life...

3. What does Proverbs 11:30 say that the righteous (pious) produce?

To be fruitful in the spiritual sense is different to how we would use the word in other senses. In most senses it implies that someone has benefited themselves by being effective or productive. But in the spiritual sense it means that someone has helped someone else. Proverbs 11:30 says that the righteous are like a tree of life. Trees do not usually produce fruit for themselves to eat! The pious help others with no motivation for self gain. They volunteer!

4. What is the principle for why we serve others so willingly found in Colossians 3:23?

We're surrounded by a generation that always asks "*what's in it for me?!*" But as Christians we serve when there's apparently nothing in it for us. We are prepared to be a fruitful tree of life for others to come and eat from. This is the difference Christ makes. That's why the Church is largely a volunteer organisation (and probably the world's largest volunteer organisation!). Brian Houston, the pastor of Australia's largest church (Hillsong) says that the health of any local church is determined by its volunteers. But Christians volunteering is not just restricted to what happens within a church. It extends out to the world. Christians volunteer in a wide range of contexts (such as: hospitals, schools, community service groups, nursing homes, foreign aid societies).

5. Note what Proverbs 11:30b says the wise righteous (pious) person also does-

I was taught that Proverbs 11:30 was an evangelism verse. It is. But I've since discovered that its not the winning of souls by preaching but by the way they live. That is, because the righteous provides fruit for others to live off they are able to win souls. There is also a sense in which the righteous understand that they have to win people- not just win them for Christ. This means that the righteous don't just regard preaching as the way people are converted, but the way they live. A long time sceptic and critic of Christianity, Malcolm Muggridge, eventually converted to Christ but not because of any great sermon but because he actually saw Christ in a Christian. He said this – *"It's hard to refute a life well lived!"*

a sacrificial life...

6. Note what Proverbs 11:24 says brings provision, blessing, and refreshing-

This doesn't make sense to the world. Perhaps a tree wanting to grow bigger and bear more fruit would think that its branches should grow taller and longer. When the vinedresser then comes along and prunes the tree so that its branches are both reduced in number and size it may think that its goal to grow and flourish has just been dashed. But the opposite is true.

7. What are the practical implications for Christians of what Christ said in John 15:2?

We allow God to prune us because we know it will ultimately make us more fruitful. We feel the pruning of the Lord every time we feel overlooked, demoted, and even unappreciated. Yet being fruitful means we are willingly and gladly prepared to help in whatever ways we can. While being pruned the righteous don't focus on what they're giving up, missing out on, or being prohibited from doing, they rejoice that the Lord's dealings with them will make them more fruitful!

characteristics of the pious...

The New Testament book of James is often referred to as the New Testament's version of the Book of Proverbs. It opens with the theme of seeking God's Wisdom. It then deals with the practical implications of living wisely.

8. In what ways does James say that living wisely will influence the believer to live righteously in James 2?

what it is not...

The world despises the righteous (Matt. 10:22; 24:9; Lk. 6:22). They have taken the synonym “pious” and made it into an insult. They have also redefined it to mean something other than what it really means. Being pious does not mean:

- Being falsely religious (Matt. 5:20)
- Being a morals policeman, judge and jury (Matt. 7:1)
- Boasting about your alleged spirituality (Matt. 6:1ff)

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*
Matthew 5:6

It takes wisdom to know how to live righteously. It affects how we speak, think, and act. It results in a life lived with integrity, harmony, and respect. This is most evidenced by those who know us best. I have often said that people can tell what kind of person I really am by looking at my wife and children. They know me best. They also love me most. They know I’m not anything other than what I am. They also are willing servants in the cause of Christ. For me, no other reward on earth could be greater than for me to live the kind of life for Christ that others want to follow.

Amen.

WISDOM & Profession

In recent times the word “profession” has come to relate to a person’s paid work. But *profession* is the result of what is professed (said). It is the sum total of what a person says *and* does.

1. According to James 3:2 how can a person reach perfection, and is it possible to do so?

2. How did Jesus say a person's heart is revealed according to Matthew 12:34b?

The fruit of a person's life is what they say and do.

3. What two things are connected with professing in 1Timothy 2:10 (note Titus 1:16)?

Proverbs states that the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life (Proverbs 10:11). When the righteous speak it inspires and uplifts.

4. Note the last part of Proverbs 10:11. What happens when the wicked speak?

5. How does Proverbs 12:14 show the relationship between speaking and acting?

6. Proverbs has a lot wisdom regarding how we speak to others. Note the following references:

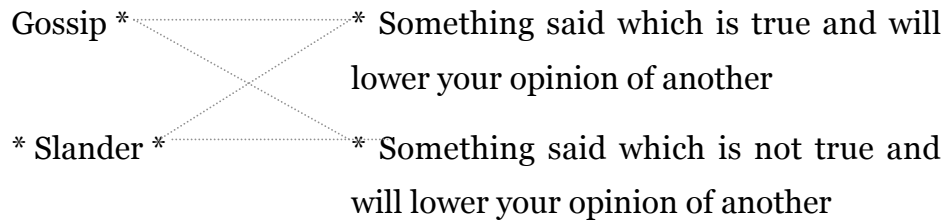
a) 10:19 _____

b) 10:32 _____

- c) 11:9
- d) 11:11
- e) 12:6
- f) 12:14
- g) 12:18
- h) 13:2
- i) 13:3
- j) 14:3
- k) 15:1
- l) 15:2
- m) 15:23
- n) 15:26
- o) 15:28
- p) 16:13
- q) 16:24
- r) 17:24
- s) 18:6
- t) 18:7
- u) 18:20
- v) 23:9
- w) 25:11
- x) 29:20

7. According to James 3:6 how could we describe the potential of our tongue?

8. Match the following term to its corresponding definition:



wisdom at work...

9. How does Proverbs 18:9 form the basis of a godly work ethic?

Christians should have the highest work ethics of any employees or employers. Christian employees should arrive to work early and not be too quick to finish. They should give of their labour to the best of their ability. Like Daniel who served Nebuchadnezzar they should develop a reputation for excellence in their work. Christian employers and entrepreneurs should deal with integrity in a way that makes Christ their highest honour rather than just profit.

10. How does Colossians 3:22-24 motive Christians to have the highest work ethic?

the goal of wisdom is worship...

Profession is what we say *and* do. We might say we love the Lord, but it is our actions complementing our words which sends the real message. A husband may try to assure his sobbing wife that he really does love her but as he then goes out that night with his team-mates for a few quiet drinks his wife understands what he really values. A dad may tell his children that he does love them but just can't make it to their soccer game anymore because the boss has invited him to play a round of golf which might be good for his career. His kids are smart enough to know what he's really professing!

A believer may pray a song of dedication to God but then hold back on paying the full amount of tithes. There's an old Scottish preacher's saying that he liked to use around offering time in a worship service:

*Lord, it doesn't matter what I say or do,
what I now give says what I think of You.*

Jesus said of the generation that He ministered to that they said one thing but did another (Matthew 23). To profess is to say *and* do.

The greatest thing we can profess is worship of God. This is the goal of wisdom. It is one of the four aspects of making life meaningful. When we sing our praises in church on a Sunday it is not necessarily worship unless we are *professing* worship.

The lady pictured to the right was Frances Havergal. She lived during the 19th century. She was a deeply spiritual woman who loved the Lord dearly and wanted nothing other than to serve Him. She penned the following words to this now famous hymn, which was, for her, an act of worship.



*Take my life, and let it be consecrated,
Lord, to Thee.*

*Take my moments and my days;
let them flow in ceaseless praise.*

*Take my hands, and let them move
at the impulse of Thy love.*

*Take my feet, and let them be swift
and beautiful for Thee.*

*Take my voice, and let me sing
always, only, for my King.*

*Take my lips, and let them be filled
with messages from Thee.*

*Take my silver and my gold;
not a mite would I withhold.*

*Take my intellect, and use
every power as Thou shalt choose.*

*Take my will, and make it Thine;
it shall be no longer mine.*

*Take my heart, it is Thine own;
it shall be Thy royal throne.*

*Take my love, my Lord, I pour
at Thy feet its treasure store.*

*Take myself, and I will be ever,
only, all for Thee.*

“Take my life”, Frances Havergal, February 1874

To profess Christ demands a surrendered heart to God. It will accept nothing less than all. A profession of Christ from a believer will cause a person to talk and act differently- as if God has truly been encountered.

Amen.

WISDOM & Pleasure



Monks regarded females as the sources of temptation and sin and consequently withdrew from their companionship. The irony is that sex then tended to become an obsession with them. To dispel his temptation, the monk is burning away his fingers. Nothing remains on his left hand except a stump, and on his right hand only the thumb and forefinger remain.

For a long time Christians believed that pleasure was wrong. This was especially the case during the “Dark Ages” where monks went to extraordinary measures to avoid all forms of pleasure. On the left is a wood carving picture of a monk burning his fingers off every time he had a lustful thought. This shows the amazing lengths that these believers went to avoid even the thought of fleshly pleasure. Can Christians legitimately experience pleasure?

what is pleasure?

Pleasure is *what pleases us*. It is related to another word, *enjoyment*. This is characterised by *satisfaction, happiness, laughter, and joy*.

Many people feel deep guilt about pleasure. Other people may not feel guilty about pleasure yet they rarely experience pleasure. Both groups of people are demonstrating an attitude about pleasure. We will explore whether either of these positions are reasonable.

does God approve of pleasure?

1. What warning did Jesus seem to give about the dangers of pleasure in Luke 8:14?

2. In what light does Paul paint pleasure based on his statements in 2Timothy 3:1-4 (especially verse 4)?

Someone could build a case based on these two Scripture passages that God was opposed to people enjoying pleasure. But as with any doctrine with which we hope to build our lives, we are unwise to build a doctrine based on a glimpse of Scripture rather than a panorama of Scripture. Therefore, we need to ask the question- *Is this all the Scripture says about pleasure?*

3. What does Solomon say about pleasure in Ecclesiastes 2:24?

4. How does Christ's statement in John 10:10 reveal how He regards people enjoying life?

Solomon also said in Proverbs 10:23 that the wise could conduct themselves so that they took pleasure in doing life well.

5. But what warning did Solomon give in Proverbs 21:17?

pleasure makes for a hollow pursuit...



"I can think of nothing less pleasurable than a life devoted to pleasure."

John D. Rockefeller (1839 - 1937)
US industrialist, Standard Oil 1870;
philanthropist

6. How satisfied was Solomon with pleasure based on what he said in Ecclesiastes 2:1?

In Ecclesiastes 9:9 Solomon concludes that people should treasure their spouse and live to enjoy each day- because life was too precarious not to recognise that each day was actually a gift from God.

where we should seek pleasure...

7. Note the following good causes of pleasure:

- a) Ecclesiastes 9:9 _____
- b) 1Timothy 6:17 _____
- c) Romans 15:24 _____
- d) Philippians 2:13 _____
- e) Psalm 20:5 _____
- f) Ecclesiastes 2:24 _____
- g) Psalm 92:4 _____
- h) Philippians 2:29 _____

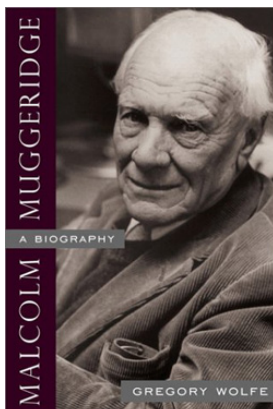
*There are only two kinds
of people
in the end: those who say
to God,
'Thy will be done,'
and those to whom God
says,
in the end,
'Thy will be done.'*

CS Lewis, *"The Great Divorce"*



it is wise to...

- recognise that not all pleasure is good (Prov. 5:3)
- know when to delay gratification (Prov. 24:27)
- know when you've had enough (Prov. 25:16)
- make duty a higher responsibility than pleasure (Prov. 21:17)



*Weariness comes not from
an excess of pain, but from
an excess of pleasure.*

Malcolm Muggeridge

Amen.

If this study has been a blessing to you or others please let us know.

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