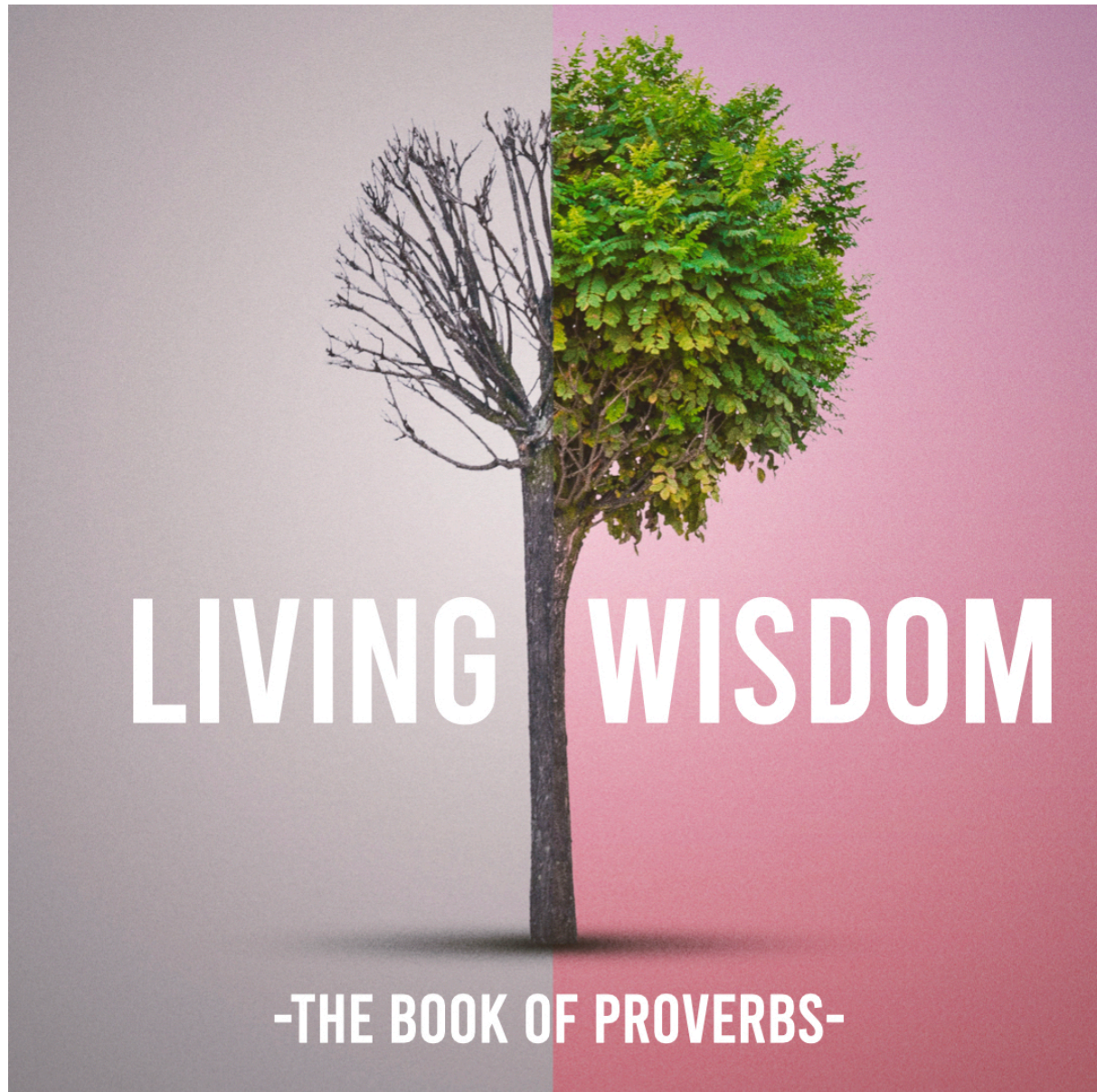


Term 3, 2023



Participant Guide

Introduction

Kicking off in Proverbs

Proverbs is an epic book. It is filled with stacks of short pithy insights into life and how to live it well, in God's world. There's stacks of encouragement to live God's way as well as warnings. Warnings to avoid certain situations and behaviours.

If you've ever asked the question, "How should I live my life?" take heart because it's a pertinent question not just for Christians but for non-Christians, too. "Which job should I take?", "What should I say to my friend whose mother died recently?", "What's the best thing to do in this situation?", and so on. We often glean our answers from self-help books, podcasts, family, friends, colleagues, church ministers and other people you respect.

However, when it comes to the art of living, the book of Proverbs is really the best authority on how to live, because its wisdom is no less than the wisdom of God—the God who created it all and knows it all. Indeed, the most important lesson on wisdom that Proverbs has to teach can be found in the very first chapter: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7).

Proverbs is filled with rich instruction on how to live—how to spend our money, how to work, what to say (and how to say it) and a whole host of other topics. Because of who God is, certain types of behaviours are good and certain types of behaviours are bad. Because of the way he established the world, we can observe certain patterns about the way it works, reflect on them and then act accordingly. Proverbs offers instruction that will enable us to live stable, good, coherent and effective lives.

But Proverbs also acknowledges that there will always be a voice—the voice of folly—competing for our attention and seeking to lead us astray. The voice of folly comes in many disguises—some of which may not be immediately obvious to us. We must learn to recognize it and reject it for what it is, for the result of heeding it is always death and destruction.

That the message of Proverbs is an unpopular one in our society should be no surprise, for its message ultimately concerns the Lord Jesus Christ. In

fearing the Lord, we are not just to fear any old god but the one “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Jesus, as God’s king, has been endowed with all wisdom and understanding, which makes him the pre-eminent authority on wisdom—the only truly wise man. In fearing him, we come to understand the real purpose of life, and therefore the real goal of wisdom.

In these studies, we’ll examine what the book of Proverbs has to say on wisdom, guidance, alcohol, peace, words, a Fathers love and integrity.

Something worth noting:

As you look at each study bear in mind that Wisdom literature is different to law and prophesy. It is the accumulated insight of God’s people through generations on how to honour God and live in his world (words of course that are inspired by God himself!). Proverbs are by nature about probability. If you fear the Lord and follow his advice life will likely go well for you, if you don’t it likely won’t go so well. But this isn’t always true. Proverbs focuses on the general rules of life and not the exceptions. But in life, there are many exceptions and often things do not always go well for us all the time. It might be worth coming back to this statement each time you start a study (or at least have it in the back of your mind).

Study Timetable

Feel free to use these studies as necessary. I hope they're helpful for guiding your group discussions.

Sunday Sermon Date	Topic	Mid-week (small group)	What?
		Wednesday 19 July	Leader Training – Anglicare. Mental Health
Sun 23 July	Wisdom	24-28 July	Study #1: Gaining Wisdom
Sun 30 July	Special Guest Sunday	31-4 Aug	Study #2: <i>"The Air We Breathe"</i> or optional study on Work
Sun 6 Aug	Integrity	7-11 Aug	Study #3: Integrity
Sun 13 Aug	Guidance	14-18 Aug	Study #4: Guidance
Sun 20 Aug	Alcohol	21-25 Aug	Study #5: Alcohol
Sun 27 Aug	Money	28-1 Sep	Study #6: Money
Sun 3 Sept	Father's love	4-8 Sep	Study #7: Family and Children
Sun 10 Sept	Peace	11-15 Sep	Study #8: Peace
Sun 17 Sept	Words	18-22 Sep	Study #9: Words

Study 1

Living Wisdom – *Gaining Wisdom*

To kick off:

Share a favourite Proverb. Why do you like it? How has it helped you live as a Christian?

What are some examples of good advice you have received from others? What made their advice helpful?

Read Proverbs 1:1-7

1. According to verses 2-5, what is the purpose of the book of Proverbs? How can we apply it?
2. Verses 2-5 mention lots of things. What do you think is meant by the following?
 - wisdom
 - Prudence
 - Guidance

3. Do you think the things mentioned in verses 2-5 are popular or unpopular in today's world? Why?

4. Which of the things listed in the question above would you like to have more of? Why?

5. According to v.7 how does a person start the wisdom journey and what might this mean in an Old Testament context?

6. Who wrote this book, according to verse 1?

Read 1 Kings 4:29-34

7. Why is Solomon a good person to learn about life from?

NOTE: The connection between Solomon and wisdom is the start of an ongoing association in the Old Testament between wisdom and God's king.

Read Isaiah 11:1-3

8. These verses describe God's future king (i.e., Messiah or Christ)—the one who will rule Israel. What characteristics of this future king are similar to those in Proverbs 1:2-5?

NOTE: The connection between wisdom and God's king reaches its most profound moment with the coming of Jesus Christ.

Read Matthew 12:38-42

9. if Jesus is even wiser than Solomon, how should we respond to what Jesus says?

10. How should Christians apply Proverbs 1:7

Read Mark 1:15

11. What does this verse teach us about gaining wisdom?

To Finish

- Are there certain things about following Jesus which don't make sense to the world, and which seem a bit silly to do?
- How can we read Proverbs in light of Jesus?
- How are you going bending the knee to Jesus and obeying the wisdom of his word?

Give thanks and pray

Thank God for the wonderful wisdom of our Lord Jesus. Ask him to give you the wisdom to be obedient to him.

Study 2

Special Guest Sunday

To kick off:

Have some chats about the talks on Sunday. Depending on what service you attended, what did you find helpful? Challenging? Share with the group.

Today, we're going to do things differently. It's a little bit of a choose your own adventure day. *Either* do the optional study on **work** or do the study below based on Glen Scrivener's book *The Air We Breathe*.

Optional Study A

The Air We Breathe

As Glen himself says *The Air We Breathe* is a book that takes us from, "Genesis to George Floyd charting the Christian revolution and how it has shaped all of our values". The Jesus revolution really has shaped the world and our culture. In his book Glen talks about seven values: equality, compassion, consent, enlightenment, science, freedom and progress. His argument is that these are the values that shape our world and they come uniquely through Jesus.

On Youtube you'll find nine short (4-5minute) videos that look briefly at each value. At the end of each video Glen provides a few questions for consideration. In your studies, you might like to watch 2 or 3 of the seven (up to you which ones). **Pause** the video at the end and discuss the questions ***on the screen***, as a group. In addition to the onscreen questions, there are a couple of extra questions under each section (which I've added below).

The links can be found below:

Chapter 1: The Night Before Christmas https://youtu.be/pOMY4Dsghls
--

Optional Questions

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

1. How did the message of the cross interact with the Jewish and Gentile world of the 1st century?
2. How did this message (and its messengers) prove to have a greater power and wisdom than the Gentile world of the 1st century?

Chapter 2: Equality || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/5SgGfGTWBq8>

Optional Questions

READ GENESIS 1:1-31

1. How does the Genesis account of creation differ from other creation stories?

2. From Genesis 1, how would you describe God, the world and humanity?
3. How would you describe the relationships between (a) God, (b) the world and (c) humanity?
4. How does Genesis 1 contribute to the idea of equality? How does it set the scene for the rest of the story of the Bible's story?

Chapter 3: Compassion || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/t8C1zHCcepc>

Optional Questions

READ LUKE 10:25-37

1. How do the robbers and priests show the way of nature?
2. How does the Good Samaritan show the supernatural way of Jesus?
3. Most of us spend our lives trying not to be the man beaten by robbers. What would it look like to emulate the Good Samaritan instead?

Chapter 4: Consent || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/ooUwsLNcL48>

Optional Questions

READ MATTHEW 19:4-12

1. What is Jesus' vision for marriage, sex, gender and singleness?
2. Sometimes people say we've moved on from biblical times and so our sexual ethic should also evolve. Given how Jesus' teaching was received at the time, how would you respond?

Chapter 5: Enlightenment || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
https://youtu.be/vK2_1kk3fb0

Optional Questions

READ EPHESIANS 6:10-20

1. These verses speak of armour, weapons, and enemies, but what kind of armour, weapons, and enemies are spoken of?
2. What is the true way for a "soldier of Christ" to advance Christ's kingdom?

Chapter 6: Science || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/zsaitg5t6no>

Optional Questions

READ JOHN 1:1-18

1. What is the relationship between the world, the Word (Jesus Christ) and us?
2. How do these relationships help us to know both God and the world?

Chapter 7: Freedom || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/P2JevCCqMkg>

Optional Questions

READ GALATIANS 3:26-4:7

1. According to these verses, what kinds of things keep people enslaved and unequal and how does Christ address this?
2. What are the implications of these verses for equality and freedom in the church, and in the world?

Chapter 8: Progress || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study
<https://youtu.be/MUfpHH60yEE>

Optional Questions

READ ISAIAH 9:1-7

1. What does Isaiah teach about the times in which he lived, the incarnation and the far-distant future?
2. How are these verses both realistic and optimistic?

Chapter 9: The Kingdom Without the King || 'The Air We Breathe' Bible Study

<https://youtu.be/2QRsGY9pcLg>

Optional Questions

READ MATTHEW 13:1-34

1. If the seed is the word of God, what effects does the spreading of God's word have?
2. What stands against the growth of God's kingdom, and what tactics are advised to combat this?

Optional Study B

Living Wisdom - *Work*

In this quick little study, we'll be thinking about work and what Proverbs has to say on the topic of work and Idleness.

To kick off:

What do you think about work in general? Do you love it? Loath it? Resent it? See it as blessing? See it as a necessity but annoying?

Do you reckon we'll work in heaven? Why?

1. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the dangers of laziness?

- Proverbs 14:23

- Proverbs 19:15, 24; 20:4

2. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the benefits of hard work?

- Proverbs 10:4-5

- Proverbs 20:13

- Proverbs 27:18

3. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the manner in which we should work?

- Proverbs 10:9

Side Question: What might it look like to work with integrity in your workplace? Do you work with integrity?

- Proverbs 11:1, 18

4. What might it look like to be deceptive in your workplace? Is this something you've witnessed? In what way was it detrimental to the business, employees and clients?

- Proverbs 15:27

To Finish

The Proverbs have much to say about work and our attitudes toward it. Is there anything above that you felt personally challenged by? Is there anything God might be challenging you to repent of, pray for or pray about?

Read John 16:7.

- How is this passage helpful in light of what we've learned today about integrity in our work?

Spend some time praying for each other

Study 3

Living Wisdom - *Integrity*

To kick off:

What does integrity mean to you? Do you think it's important? Why?

When you think about your immediate circle of influence who are the people you'd consider to be folks of integrity? Why?

Let's shift our focus and check out the integrity of God

Read Proverbs 30:5; Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; Num 23:19; Isa 6:3

1. What does each passage teach us about the character of God himself and therefore, his word?
2. Do you find this comforting to know? Why? Do you believe it?
3. Read Matthew 4:1-11 and Hebrews 4:15. What does it teach us about the character of the Lord Jesus?
4. Do you find this comforting to know? Why? Do you believe it?

5. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17, 21; Eph 1:4-8. What does it teach us about those who are in Jesus and how we should live (thinking specifically about integrity)?

6. Do you think people would consider you a person of integrity - a person who lives a distinct new life in keeping with who you are?

We'll just do a quick survey of the Proverbs and look at some specific passages relating to integrity.

7. Read Proverbs 20:25 and Matthew 5:37. What's they key take away in both verses?

8. Read Proverb 17:26. What's the key take away here?

9. Read Proverbs 20:7 (see ESV also. Integrity is translated "blameless" in NIV). What does this passage teach us about the beauty and power of integrity?

Quiet contemplation:

Again - would you say, you're a good example of integrity? What area in your life could you ask the Lord to help you with?

- Read John 16:7. How is this passage helpful in light of what we've learned today about integrity?

Spend some time praying for each other

Study 4

Living Wisdom – *Guidance*

What is God's will for my life? How can I discern what he wants for my life?
Who should I marry? Where should I live?

Our lives are filled with opportunities to make decisions but often we don't have all the information we think we need to make the right decisions and so we blunder along hoping we're pressing forward in the right direction. So, what's the answer? What should we do? The purpose of this bible study is to help you trust in the guidance of God for your life.

This study has four sections in helping us make decisions in life

- The problem we face
- Looking to the God who guides
- Looking to the God who has a plan
- Looking to others for advice

To kick off:

Share a time when God's guidance seemed super clear to you.

Share a time when God's guidance seemed really hard to discern. What did you do to move forward? Were you able to?

Big overarching question: How can we make good decisions in life?

Firstly, be aware of the problem we face

Read Proverbs 14:12; 16:25 and Isaiah 55:8-9

1. What do these passages teach us about humanity and what do you think the implicit advice might be?

So, what's the answer?

Secondly, look to the God who guides

Read Psalm 139:13-14, Psalm 104:10-15 and Psalm 23:2-3

2. What do these Psalms teach us about our God? How is knowing this helpful when navigating life?

Thirdly, look to the God who has a plan

It's super helpful to think about our lives in the grand scheme of things, not simply to focus on the micro details of our everyday lives. God has a much bigger plan for those of us, who are in Christ and it's helpful to remember this each day.

Read Eph 1:3-10

3. According to Eph 1:3-10 where is God *ultimately* guiding us?
4. How can Eph 1:3-10 adjust the focus of our everyday thinking?

Read Rom 8:28-30

5. What does God promise his children in this passage? How is it helpful to know this in the context of our everyday lives and decision making?

Bearing this big picture, good stuff in mind:

Read Proverbs 3:5-6

6. What are we to do when making decisions? (see also 2 Tim 3:14-17). What might this look like in real life?

7. What does God promise to do?

Read Proverbs 2:1-6

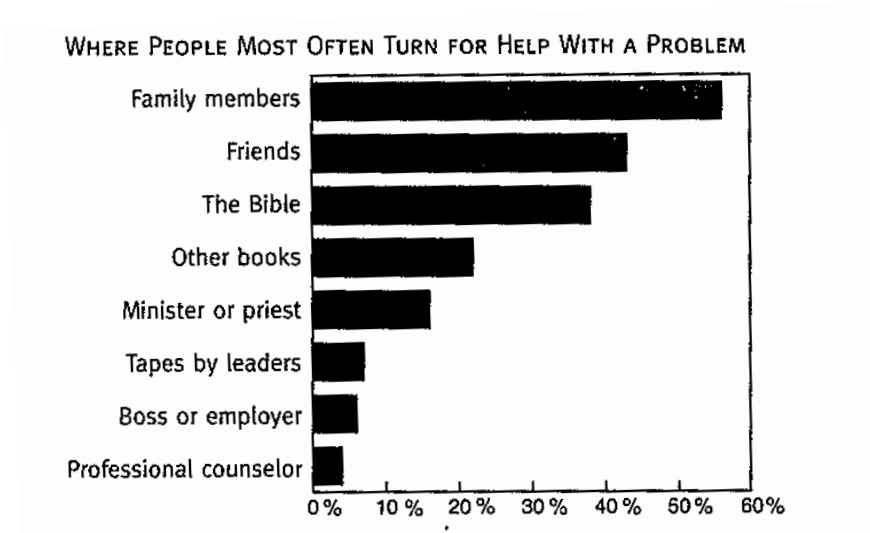
8. What might it look like to apply verses vv.1-2 in daily life?

9. Can you think of a time when you might have applied vv.3-4

When making decisions for life, we are to seek God’s wisdom. But we’re also encouraged to seek the wisdom of others.

Fourthly, look to people for advice

In his book, “developing the leader within you”, John C Maxwell provides this chart of where people go for help to solve problems:



Read Proverbs 11:14; 15:22; 20:18; 24:6

- When seeking guidance, and wise council where do you typically go? What does each Proverb teach us on the value of seeking advice?

To finish

Perhaps you’re looking for guidance today on something specific. Ask around and if people feel comfortable to share, let them share and offer to pray for one another.

Study 5

Living Wisdom – *Alcohol*

Alcohol. Some of us drink it. Some of us don't. For some of us it's a non-issue but for some of us it could be a major issue. Perhaps you grew up with alcohol having a strong presence in your home, or perhaps it wasn't present at all. Wherever each of us might fall on the spectrum of experience, it's fair to say alcohol does have a massive presence in Australian society (and the world!)

Afterall, we live in a society that largely celebrated when one of our most famous Prime Ministers downed a schooner publicly!

The purpose of this bible study is to think about Alcohol not only through our own experience and culture but through the lens of the bible in the hope that we, as Christians, can adopt a biblical mindset on the topic of alcohol.

A pastoral note: Let's try and be super sensitive with this one. Allow people to share without judgment and encourage one another to do likewise. Some folks may have had terribly traumatic experiences (past or perhaps even present!) with alcohol. So, let's be super loving and considerate toward each other.

To kick off . . .

Alcohol in the bible. It's a thing! Off the top of your head what passages (if any) or situations in the bible come to mind immediately?

1. Split the group into groups of two or three (or just work through the passages as a whole). Give each group one of the following groups of passages to read and think about. Then come back to the group and:
 - a. Read the passage out loud
 - b. Share with the group what these passages teach us about alcohol

First Group

Proverbs 31:6-7; 1 Timothy 5:23; Luke 10:34

Second Group

Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5 and Romans 14:21

Third Group

Ecc 9:7; Psalm 104:15; Amos 9:14; John 2:1-11; Matthew 26:27-29

Fourth Group

Isaiah 5:11, 5:22; 1 Peter 4:3; Eph 5:18; Gal 5:21

2. In light of our short bible survey - do you think it's ok for Christians to drink alcohol? Why?

3. Read each of the following passages and ask the group what does Wisdom teach us and how might it be helpful when dealing with the issue of alcohol?

- Proverbs 6:27-28

- Romans 13:13-14

- Jer 29:7 and Philippians 2:3-4

4. What should I do if someone has a strongly different opinion to me on this issue of alcohol? Can you think of any passages in the scriptures that might be helpful?

5. Read John 16:7. How is this passage helpful in light of what we've learned today about alcohol?

To finish

Spend some time praying together

- It's always good to pray for wisdom (James 1:5), especially when dealing with tough topics
- Perhaps consider praying for healing for each other. Especially, if anything has been raised that's been difficult.

Remind each other that they're loved and that support is always available, if needed.

Study 6

Living Wisdom - *Money*

In this little study we'll focus on Wisdom's advice on earning, using and thinking about dosh (mulla, money).

To kick off . . .

How do you believe a Christian's perspective on money should differ from the world's view on money?

1. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about how we should earn money? It might help to split the group up and get them to read and try and explain the wisdom of the proverb.
 - Proverbs 12:11

 - Proverbs 13:11

 - Proverbs 28:20-22

2. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about how we should use our money?
 - Proverbs 11:24-26

- Proverbs 19:17

- Proverbs 22:9

3. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about how we should think about money?

- Proverbs 11:4, 28

- Proverbs 16:8, 16

- Proverbs 23:4-5

An alternative god

While the Bible gladly affirms that money and wealth are part of God's good creation, and that they come to us as his blessing, it also warns us with deadly earnestness of the dangers of money. Money, it seems, is an alternative god. We can be seduced by money into apostasy—that is, we can find ourselves serving Money rather than God. Money exerts a strange power over us. It ignites our greed. In our fallen world, it prompts us to forsake the Creator and to worship part of his creation instead. It is worthy of the title 'false god'.

For many Western Christians, this is something of a spiritual blind spot. There are some sins that we are very aware of—and sexual sins would be high on the list—but greed and financial idolatry do not often concern us as much. Ponder this: how many of Jesus' parables can you think of that are about sex? And how many can you think of that are about money or greed? The end result is that too many Western Christians are almost indistinguishable from their non-Christian neighbours when it comes to the way they use their money. They buy the same consumer goods, live in the same well-appointed houses and go on the same expensive holidays. To all outward appearances, it would seem that whatever effect the gospel has had in their lives, it has not penetrated as far as their wallets.

There is a warning here for all of us. Money is seductive. It is dangerous. It can lure us away from a single-minded devotion to God.

Let's look at some of the many verses in Scripture that warn of the dangers of money.

After you have read each of the following verses, write down what they teach us about the danger of money, the attitudes we should avoid, and the godly attitudes we should adopt (if any).

- Deuteronomy 8:6-18
- Psalm 49:16-20
- Matthew 13:18-23
- Luke 12:16-31
- 1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19
- Revelation 3:14-18

Implications

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- What key attitudes towards money have come out in this study?
- How are these attitudes going to be worked out in your own life:
 - in general terms?
 - in relationship to a specific decision, you are facing at present?
- In what areas are you tempted to be discontent?
- Read this quote. Do you think the author is right? What changes would such an attitude mean in your life?

To finish

Is there is anything in the above study, you're struggling with (maybe an attitude to money, or something they've done to gain money). If you feel comfortable, feel free to share with the group.

Ask each other how you can pray for one another.

Study 7

Living Wisdom – *Family and Children*

Just a quick acknowledgment. Not all of us are parents. Not all of us will be parents. Perhaps that's because we don't want to be or perhaps it because we can't be. Some of us have parents we're close with, some of us don't. I just want to acknowledge you and acknowledge that this topic can be a topic of great sadness for some folks. It's my prayer that this will be helpful for you, wherever you are.

The book of Proverbs has some super specific wisdom for different situations in life. Which is really helpful because we're all in different places in life. Some situations in Proverbs may be a bit foreign to us, or seemingly unrelated (maybe like this one). However, God can find ways to apply his word to our lives in ways we never imagined. So, if you're like me and you don't fall into the category of a biological parent (many of us are spiritual mothers and fathers!) – just have a crack at the questions anyway and try and be open to God applying this wisdom to your heart in some way.

The bible posits parenting as a wonderful privilege and children are a gift from the Lord.

Behold, children are a heritage of the LORD,
the fruit of the womb a reward.
Like arrows in the hand of a warrior
are children of one's youth.
Blessed is the man
who fills his quiver with them!
He shall not be put to shame
when he speaks with his enemies in the gate (Ps 127:3-5)

To kick off . . .

What biblical principals, values and routines do you try and instil in your home and in the lives of your children? Why?

If you don't have kids, what principles, values and routines did mum and dad try and instil at home growing up? Was it helpful? How?

1. Read Proverbs 13:24, 22:15, and 29:15. What is the overall message of these sayings?
2. Proverbs regards the 'rod' as an effective means of discipline. What aspects of physical discipline do you think make it effective?

Side note:

Using the 'rod' as a means of disciplining children was commonplace and unremarkable in the ancient world but is controversial in many Western societies today (and even illegal in some places). Like many of the sayings in Proverbs, the verses that commend the use of physical discipline are not commands that require us to smack our children, but wise observations about how to live well in God's world.

As we reflect on these proverbs and consider how to discipline our own children, consideration of the following questions could be helpful:

- If physical discipline is not inherently evil (and it can't be if Proverbs commends it), in what circumstances would it be useful as a means of disciplining children?

- Should physical discipline be the first resort every time a child does something wrong? What other methods should also be used?
 - How should the 'rod' be administered? (In what manner, with what attitude, with what safeguards?)
 - How would the age and/or personality of the child affect the way we use the 'rod'?
3. Regarding practical application: what might it look like to discipline your children in a helpful and safe way? If you're not a parent, what kind of discipline was helpful for you? Why?
 4. Have one group read Proverbs 3:1-2, 5:1-2 and Ephesians 6:4. What is the role of the parent according to these verses? Do you think the wisdom here is gender specific (i.e., a special role for dad in discipline and instruction)?
 5. Have a second group read Proverbs 31:10-31. What is the special role of the mother in raising her children according to these verses? Do you think this is time/gender specific or do you think mum always has a special role here?

6. What difference do you see between the role of parents (both mum and dad) in Proverbs and the modern-day parent who can often be focused on career and have little time or energy for teaching/disciplining and leading the kiddies and household?

To finish

It's interesting but in today's society rather than seeing their work simply as a means to provide for their families and contribute to the good of society, many modern-day mothers and fathers seek riches, success and significance in their 'careers', and so neglect their responsibilities to their husbands/wives and children—especially the responsibility to teach their children about life and about the Lord.

Fathers and Mothers: is providing instruction, teaching and discipline for your children high on your priority list? Or do your children get the dregs of your time and mental energy after you have finished trying to advance your career?

Is the paid work you do necessary to provide for your family and contribute to others, or is it merely a vehicle for personal fulfilment or prosperity?

What is actually best for our children? What values are we modelling to them?

Implications

(Choose one or more of the following to think about further or to discuss in your group.)

- How can a husband encourage and praise his wife for her tireless work on behalf of the family?
- How can a wife encourage her husband to take the lead in the discipline and instruction of the children?
- What are the most important years for both parents to be spending with their children? Why (Prov 22:6)?
- Discuss or reflect on the following statements:
 - “It’s very hard to have quality time without quantity time.”
 - “To afford a decent home in our area we need a double income.”
 - “What the world views as success for our children is not necessarily what God thinks is success.”
- What are some things you have been challenged about in this study?
- What are the areas in which you are tempted to trust your views rather than God’s on these matters?

Spend some time praying

- Thank God for the care and training we receive from our parents. Thank him for giving us a guide in his word for raising healthy families.
- Pray specifically about the issues you may find difficult to accept or put into practice from this study, asking your heavenly Father to help you to trust him rather than be wise in your own eyes.

Study 8

Living Wisdom - *Peace*

To kick off:

Peace to you! Peace. It's a word we all know and are familiar with. It's something we often pray for - peace in our world etc. Off the top of your head though, how would you define peace?

What steps do you take in life to cultivate a life of peace? How do you think that impacts your relationships with others?

In this study we'll take a brief look at the benefits of walking in peace and how we might cultivate it in our lives. We'll also take a look at the consequences of choosing not to.

Read Proverbs 3:1-2; 3:17

1. What are we promised in these verses? What are we called to do?

NOTE: It's always good to remember that these are in principal blessings. Remember from our intro that Proverbs are by nature about probability. If you fear the Lord and follow his advice life will **likely** go well for you, if you don't it **likely won't** go so well. But this isn't always true. Proverbs focuses on the general rules of life and not the exceptions.

2. Read the following Proverbs and after each share an insight into the types of behaviours discussed and what is considered helpful and unhelpful for God's people.

Read Proverbs 30:32-33

Read Proverbs 26:20-21

Side Question: In your own experience how has gossip being relationally detrimental?

Read Proverbs 26:17 (Still on question 2!)

Read Proverbs 17:9

Read Proverbs 20:22; 24:28-29

3. Read Proverbs 14:30. What is envy and how does it affect our peace? What is a healthy mindset for God's people?

Read Proverbs 29:11

4. How can controlling our anger contribute to peace?

Let's jump quickly to the New Testament!

Read Romans 5:1 and Colossians 1:20

5. According to these epic passages what is fundamentally true for the Christian and how might that affect our everyday lives?

6. Off the top of your head: "the fruit of the Spirit is . . ." How might this be helpful for us, when thinking about peace?

To finish . . .

- Do you feel you have peace in your spirit? What does that look like for you? Is it evidenced in your life?
- How are you going with anger? Is this something you struggle with?
- How are you going with envy? Is this something you struggle with?
- Would you consider yourself a peacemaker or troublemaker?

Spend some time considering and praying for one another.

Finish by reading Romans 12:18 and praying for God's help.

Study 9

Living Wisdom - *Words*

In this little study we'll focus on wisdom's advice on the power of words and the ways we should and shouldn't use them.

Quick one to start:

"Words have tremendous power!"

Do you agree or disagree with that sentiment? Explain what you mean (maybe even from personal experience).

1. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the power of our words? It might be worth giving each proverb to a different person/group to read and explain.

- Proverbs 11:9

- Proverbs 12:18

- Proverbs 15:4

Side Question: How do you use your words? To build up, or tear down?

4. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the way we should speak?

- Proverbs 10:19

Side Question: Do you have control over your mouth and the words you speak? Are you able to restrain yourself?

- Proverbs 15:1, 2

Side Questions: Are your words, hard or soft?
Are your words, careful or careless?

- Proverbs 16:23-24

Side Question: How sweet and weighty are your words?

5. Read the following proverbs. What do you discover about the way we shouldn't speak?

- Proverbs 16:28

- Proverbs 17:4

- Proverbs 26:28

To finish . . .

The Proverbs have much to say about the power of our words. Is there anything above that you felt personally challenged by? Is there anything God might be challenging you to repent of/pray for?

Each time we encounter God's word, He can radically work in our hearts by the power of God the Holy Spirit. How are you going to live a changed life in response to his word today?

Read John 16:7. How is this passage helpful in light of what we've learned today about words?

Spend some time in prayer for each other.

- Perhaps you could pray for everything we've looked at over the last nine weeks and ask God to continually apply those things to our hearts and minds so we might live changed lives for Jesus.