



**Readings, Reflections, Prayers  
July 2021**

# **The Way of Wisdom**

**God's guidance for normal people (like me) 2**

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## Monday, July 5: Proverbs 4:18-27

Martin Luther King, Jr., once said, *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that."*

In Proverbs 4, we read, *"The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like total darkness; they have no idea what they are stumbling over"*(4:18-19). The image of the way of God as light versus the way of the wicked being dark, is common in Scripture.

- In Genesis 1, the creation of light is key to bringing order into chaos.
- *"Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path"*(Psalm 119:105).
- In John 1, the Word – Jesus – *"gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it"*(1:4-5).
- Jesus says, *"I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life"*(John 8:12).
- *"God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants"*(John 3:19-21).

Why is light such a good metaphor God's wisdom? Why is darkness so apt to describe the way of evil?

Solomon continues with some more encouragement to follow God's wisdom. He emphasizes that following God's ways lead to life. They are that important. He talks about how God's wisdom needs to shape:

- our ears (what we hear, v.20) ("Hear no evil"),
- our eyes (what we see, v.21, 25) ("See no evil"),
- our lips (what we say, v.24) ("Speak no evil"),
- our heart (what we know, feel, believe – the core out of which we live and act, v. 21, 23), and
- our feet (how we actually live, the choices we make, vs. 26-27).

What part of this passage challenges you most?

Keeping to the path of righteousness, the path of light, is not always easy. Thus, Solomon encourages us the "stay on the straight and narrow" – don't turn to the right or left. Keep your goal in mind – being filled with God's wisdom, allowing it to shape your mind, aiming to be like Jesus – don't wander off course.

Have you ever wandered away from God? How did it happen? Are you wandering off track now? In what ways? What will you do about it? How can you guard against that in the future? How can you encourage or come alongside others who are struggling to follow God?

*Stay with me, Lord, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine, to be a light to others.  
The light, Jesus, will be all from you. None of it will be mine.  
No merit belongs to me. It will be you who shines through me upon others.  
Let me praise you, in the way which you love best, by shining on all those around me.  
Give light to them as well as to me; bring light to them through me.  
Teach me to show forth your praise, your truth, your will.  
Make me preach you without preaching  
– not by words but by my example and by what I do –  
by the evident fullness of love which my heart bears to you.  
Fill my heart, Lord, with overwhelming love for you.  
Amen.*

John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

## Tuesday, July 6: Proverbs 6:1-11

"So many things to learn; so little time to learn them." Much of Proverbs deals with specific issues. What Solomon has done is gather wisdom – from his own life experience, from his father David, and from other wise teachers. But there is so much to learn.

In today's passage Solomon warns us about:

- Rash promises and unwise financial arrangements – like cosigning a loan for a "friend" (6:1-5). The long and short of it – don't do it. If you are in such an arrangement, get out of it if you can.
- Laziness (6:6-11) – get over it. Learn from the ant.

A famous story in Scottish history involves Robert the Bruce and a spider (not an ant, but still a very small critter). When Scotland was ruled by England in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Bruce was one of the claimants for the Scottish throne. He led a rebellion against England, seeking Scottish independence. Initially the war went very badly. On the run, Bruce hid in a cave. In the dank, dark cave, he observed a spider spinning a web, trying to make a connection from one area of the cave's roof to another. Several times the spider tried and failed to bridge the gap. Each time it failed, the spider simply started again. Eventually it succeeded.

Inspired by this, Bruce persevered in his quest for Scottish independence. Eventually, after a series of defeats and then a few modest victories, Robert the Bruce went on the rout the English at the Battle of Bannockburn. Having learned about stick-to-it-iveness from a spider, Bruce won Scottish independence.

"If at first you don't succeed ... try, try again" is a lesson we all can learn. From ants. From spiders. From Solomon. What is Jesus saying to you?

*Grant to us, O Lord, the royalty of inward happiness,  
and the serenity which comes from living close to you.  
Daily renew in us the sense of joy,  
and let the eternal spirit of the Father dwell in our souls and bodies,  
filling every corner of our hearts with light and grace.  
Bearing about with us the infection of good courage,  
may we be diffusers of life.  
May we meet all ills and accidents with gallant and high-hearted happiness,  
giving you thanks always for all things.  
Amen*

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94)

## Wednesday, July 7: Proverbs 6:12-19

I have always tried to see the best in people. I like to assume that most people are basically good, honest, trustworthy, and kind. Most of the time, this approach works. Most people do seem to be good.

But every now and then I run across someone who is not quite so noble. The rare person I've met really is not kind, not honest, and just not nice. They are selfish, unpleasant, and nasty.

Solomon is brutally honest with us. Not everyone has integrity, is trustworthy, honest, or good. There are evil people in the world. They may be few and far between, but charlatans exist. We need to be wise judges of character. When we do encounter someone who lacks those redeeming qualities of character, we do well to stay away from them.

The short poem in 6:16-19 is the original list of "the seven deadly sins." These are behaviours we should avoid. And they are behaviours we can beware of in others:

- *haughty eyes,*
- *a lying tongue,*
- *hands that kill the innocent,*
- *a heart that plots evil,*
- *feet that race to do wrong,*
- *a false witness who pours out lies,*
- *a person who sows discord in a family.*

I hope none of us are killing the innocent. But some of the other points here may give us pause to think and reflect.

Remember Solomon's warning to stay away from others who live this way – otherwise we might get dragged into their misdeeds. Peer pressure is a reality – for adults, youth, and kids. An anonymous pundit once said, *"A wise man makes his own decisions, an ignorant man follows public opinion."* Be wise.

How can I learn from this passage?

*Creator God,  
Give us a heart for simple things:  
love and laughter.  
Bread and wine.  
Tales and dreams.  
Fill our lives with green and growing hope;  
make us a people of justice.  
Make us people whose song is "Alleluia."  
Make us people whose name breathes love.  
Amen*

South African prayer

### **Thursday, July 8: Proverbs 1:20-33**

*"Wisdom shouts in the streets. She cries out in the public square ..."* (1:20). Solomon's thesis is that wisdom is not some mystery that only really smart, diligent, or well-educated people can find. He believes that it is available to everyone – and it is easy to find. It's all around us. It's built into creation. We just need to open our eyes, listen with our ears, and take notice of what God is saying to us ...

Wisdom comes from God. And God makes Himself known in many ways:

- ***In creation:*** the created world displays the power, wisdom, and glory of God. Yes, we can explain many of its principles scientifically, but those principles were established by God. Astronomer, Johannes Kepler, is credited with saying that through his scientific study of the universe, he was *"thinking God's thoughts after him."* As we look at creation, we see God's wisdom. He created all wonders of creation that science reveals more clearly to us. As we understand creation scientifically, we become more aware of the wisdom, glory, and power of God, the Creator. Science helps us understand God and His creation better. We can learn from His creation how to live well (as the ant can teach us about hard work, the spider to "try, try again," etc.).
- ***In history:*** as we read history, time and again we see how God cares for His people. We can attribute medical breakthroughs, military victories, and other watershed moments to human genius and courage – or we can recognize that many of these heroic acts and great discoveries were done by people who loved God and were empowered and inspired by Him. Some are bona fide miracles; there is no explanation other than divine intervention. We can all look back and see times when God was at work in our lives and in the lives of people we know. God's hand is on my story, your story, and the lives of everyone we know – if we choose to see it and acknowledge it.

- ***In our consciences:*** our hearts know right and wrong – we may not always listen to them or we may become desensitized to their voice, but our souls help us know what God would want us to do. Our innate consciences are gifts of wisdom from God.
- ***In the Bible:*** this is God’s inspired Word for us. We can certainly learn wisdom from Scripture.
- ***In other people:*** our friends and family can help us hear God’s Word to us: *"Dad, you're sure gone a lot."* *"As a friend, I have to tell you that the way you are living is not consistent with God's principles."* *"I want to affirm that you are really using the gifts God has given you."* *"You know that idea you have to start a small group, I think you should go for it."*
- ***In our prayers and times of reflection:*** God can and does speak directly to us – always in accordance with His Word and biblical principles.

How is God speaking to you today? As you think about how God makes himself known, in what ways have you NOT really noticed God? Take some time to hear and see God in new ways this week ...

*Like your disciples on the road to Emmaus,  
we are so often incapable of seeing that you, O Jesus, are our companion on the way.  
Help us to open our eyes and realise you are always walking with us.  
Open our ears so we can hear you are always speaking to us.  
Help us see, hear, and trust you.  
Then the sign of our trust in you is that, in our turn,  
we try to love whom you love and to forgive whom you forgive.  
Your love burns in our heart of hearts, O Lord.  
May your love shine out, through us, to your world.  
Amen.*

Brother Roger Schutz

### **Friday, July 9: Proverbs 8:1-11**

As we noted yesterday, wisdom is not some hidden mystery – God has woven it into the fabric of creation, our own consciences, and our own life experiences. Some of us would even recognize it as “common sense” – many of the short, pithy proverbs in chapters 10-30 are what we would call “common sense” (e.g. *"A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence"*(11:13) or *"A hot-tempered person starts fights; a cool-tempered person stops them"*(15:18)).

Proverbs 8 instructs us to *"Listen as Wisdom calls out. Hear as understanding raises her voice"*(8:1).

Much wisdom is self-evident – if we choose to notice it and learn from it. For instance, godly wisdom has been incorporated into the best parts of our culture: values like integrity, honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness, loyalty, courage, charity, etc., are godly values. They are honoured by many people, not just those of us who love God. These noble aspects of biblical wisdom are common sense and self-evident in the world around us – if we choose to see them, think about them, and incorporate them into our lives.

This passage highlights that wisdom is a choice ... and choices have consequences. *"Choose my instruction rather than silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with it."*(8:10-11). Choosing God’s wisdom may cost you financially – as you live with integrity and don’t compromise your ethics. But, Solomon assures us, the gifts of God’s joy and peace are worth it.

Paul’s advice is this: *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus ... Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are*

*excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.”* (Philippians 4:6-9)

The peace of God – His joy, love, hope, presence, power – is a treasure worth far more than silver, gold, or rubies. What is Jesus saying to you?

*I thank you for anything that happened to me that made me feel life is really and truly worth living.*

*I thank you for all the laughter that was in today.*

*I thank you, too, for moments when I saw the seriousness and the meaning of life.*

*I thank you very specially for those I love,*

*for those who love me,*

*for all the difference it has made to me to know them,*

*and for all the happiness it brings me to be with them.*

*May I love them as you love me.*

*Amen*

William Barclay (1907-1978)

### **Saturday, July 10: Proverbs 8:12-21**

Mark Noll, an evangelical professor at Wheaton College, wrote a book entitled, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. He states his thesis bluntly in the opening sentence of Chapter One: "*The scandal of the evangelical mind is there is not much of an evangelical mind.*" He goes on, "*To put it most simply, the evangelical ethos is activist, populist, pragmatic, and utilitarian. It allows little space for broader or deeper intellectual effort because it is dominated by the urgencies of the moment.*"

Ouch. As a reasonably well-educated evangelical Christian myself (BA, MA [UBC], M.Div. [Acadia], PhD [U of Alberta], visiting scholar [Cambridge]), I grieve when I read that. Sadly, I know there is some truth to it. As someone who has studied the Bible (and the original languages, Hebrew and Greek), I am saddened by the shallow, simplistic approach some people bring to the Bible. For instance, we ignore the type of literature the authors were writing, and the cultural and historical context of the biblical authors. Instead, misread poetry as history, we yank isolated verses out of context, and then prove any point we want.

As someone with a passion for science (my UBC education was in geography) and theology, I am appalled at the shallowness and poor scholarship in some science and faith literature (especially online). I lament the anti-intellectual distrust of science among some evangelicals. After all, **IF** God is the creator of the universe (and He is), and **IF** science genuinely seeks to understand the workings of the universe (which it does), we can expect that scientific discoveries will dovetail perfectly with our Christian faith. Excellent science leads us deeper and deeper into the mind of God.

Proverbs reminds us that cultivating our minds is essential. Good thinking and good theology go hand in hand. Anti-intellectualism is NOT a Christian virtue, in fact it is the antithesis of godliness. Good scholarship and the conviction that intellectual pursuits can glorify God has been a core tenet through Christian history. The greatest scholars after the fall of the Roman Empire were Christian teachers. Medieval monasteries were centers of learning, giving rise to the first universities. The writings of Isidore of Seville, Robert Grosseteste, and Thomas Aquinas (among many others) aimed to reconcile scriptural truths with scientific knowledge. Intellectuals like Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and Faraday saw their scientific research as integral to their faith in God. More recently, brilliant scholars and writers including C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, John Polkinghorne, Francis Collins, Jennifer Wiseman, and Alister McGrath live out of their faith.

Nicholas Copernicus captures the mood of Proverbs as he writes, "*To know the mighty works of God, to comprehend His wisdom and majesty and power; to appreciate, in degree, the wonderful workings of His laws, surely all this must be a pleasing and acceptable mode of worship to the Most High, to whom ignorance cannot be more grateful than knowledge.*" Good science, good thinking, good theology, and good worship all come together beautifully for people of God. God gave us brains. We have a God-given responsibility to use them.

*Give us, Lord, a steadfast heart,  
which no unworthy affection may drag down.  
Give us an unconquered heart,  
which no difficulty can wear out.  
Give us an upright heart,  
which no unworthy purpose may tempt into moving aside.  
Lord our God, help us understand how to know you,  
diligence to seek you, wisdom to find you,  
and faithfulness to embrace you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

### **Sunday, July 11: Proverbs 8:22-31**

God's wisdom is built into His creation. The natural sciences, which study creation, are no threat to God. Neither is God a threat to the sciences. Science helps us appreciate more of the wisdom, creativity, and genius of God. Knowing and loving God is the best motivation to be a diligent scientist – learning more and more about God and His glory. And the best of science affirms our creator God in all His glory.

Gordon Cooper, an American Astronaut who named his spacecraft "Faith 7," said: *"At an altitude of more than 150 miles over the Indian Ocean, I had faith and thanked God for the privilege of being on the space flight. Our launch team had faith in God, in the hardware we had developed and in each other. As we learn more about the universe, we gain greater faith in the work of the Supreme Architect. Upon contemplating the complex workings of millions of planetary bodies - and the unknown immensity of the universe - we realize what a fantastic miracle it all is, including our little earth."*

John Polkinghorne, professor of mathematical physics and president of Queens' College, Cambridge, says: *"Men of religion can learn from science what the physical world is really like in its structure and long-evolving history. This constrains what religion can say where it speaks of that world as God's creation. He is clearly a patient God who works through process and not by magic. Men of science can receive from religion a deeper understanding than could be obtained from science alone. The physical world's deep mathematical intelligibility (signs of the Mind behind it) and finely tuned fruitfulness (expressive of divine purpose) are reflections of the fact that it is a creation."*

*"And so, my children, listen to me,"* says Solomon, *"for all who follow my ways are joyful. Listen to my instruction and be wise. Don't ignore it. Joyful are those who listen to me ... For whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the LORD. But those who miss me injure themselves. All who hate me love death"*(Proverbs 8:32-36). How is God challenging you to be more wise?

How do you see the glory and wisdom of God in creation? How should that influence how you live in creation and treat God's world?

*Lord, help us to see in your crucifixion and resurrection  
an example of how to endure and seemingly to die,  
so that we may live more fully and creatively.  
You accepted patiently and humbly the rebuffs of human life,  
as well as the tortures of your crucifixion and passion.  
Help us to accept the pains and conflicts that come to us each day  
as opportunities to grow as people and become more like you.  
Enable us to go through them patiently and bravely, trusting that you will support us.  
Make us realize that it is only by frequent deaths of ourselves and our self-centered desires  
that we can come to live more fully.  
It is only by dying with you that we can rise with you.  
Amen.*

Mother Teresa (1910-1997)

## Monday, July 12: Proverbs 8:32-36

When I felt God leading me to attend seminary for theological education, I had choices to make, including where to study. I knew I wanted to stay in Canada (so my education would be contextualized to my culture) and I wanted to stay broadly "Baptist" (theologically, this was a good "fit" for me). I could stay in Vancouver (Regent College/Carey Theological College were excellent). I could go to Hamilton (McMaster), Toronto (Tyndale), or Wolfville, NS (Acadia). After much prayer, research, and conversations with wise friends, I chose to head east to Acadia (the programme was "right" for me and what I needed to learn).

To that point, I had never been east of Winnipeg. So, as a geographer, I got maps. Lots of maps. I investigated the pros and cons of several routes across the continent, particularly for someone driving an old 1972 VW camper van, with a few mechanical "issues."

The value of maps is they give you a bird's eye overview of the entire journey. For instance, when driving across the continent, with a map of all of Canada, you can see two or three days down the road so you make sure you make the right decisions right now so you journey along the correct path.

These days we tend to rely more on our GPS-es and less on maps. If I were to trek back east to Nova Scotia now, my GPS tells me exactly where to turn every time, so I barely have to think. But my problem with my GPS is I don't get the big picture. I have no idea which of the several routes across the continent the GPS is guiding me along, just where the next turn is. I find it very hard to get my GPS to show me the whole 6000 km route, so I know which way the technology is taking me. The little screen only shows me the next few kilometres ahead. If I want to take my preferred route – a longer route – the GPS gets grumpy with me. So I keep going go back to maps. Because maps can give me that big picture.

The first few chapters of Proverbs are like a map of the country. They give us the overview of godly wisdom. Wisdom comes when, in reverent awe and worship, we acknowledge and follow God, our Creator and King – when we "fear the Lord." In contrast, the fool says in his heart there is no God – he rejects God and ignores or disobeys His ways. Yes, Proverbs will give us lots of directions for specific situations: like a GPS, it will tell us what lane to be in and where to turn.

But Proverbs also encourages us to step back and see the bigger picture. Proverbs' goal is to form a character and a life that becomes more and more like Jesus in all ways.

Proverbs also highlights that there is a constant tug of war between wisdom and folly for the loyalty of our hearts. Choosing the path of wisdom leads to life. Choosing the path of folly leads to death. How can I journey more wisely today?

*This I know: God is on my side.  
I praise God for what he has promised;  
Yes, I praise the LORD for what he has promised.  
I trust in God, so why should I be afraid?  
What can mere mortals do to me?  
I will fulfill my vows to you, O God, and will offer a sacrifice of thanks for your help.  
For you have rescued me from death; you have kept my feet from slipping.  
So now I can walk in your presence, O God, in your life-giving light.  
Blessed Lord, who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
grant that we may in such wise hear them, read them, mark them,  
learn from them, and inwardly digest them,  
that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word,  
we may embrace, and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer



## **Tuesday, July 13: Proverbs 9:1-12**

When I was on a CBM trip to Turkey a few years ago, one of our challenges was finding a good place to eat. We were walking along streets in downtown Istanbul, checking out posted menus (in Turkish) and peering through the windows of cafes, to get a sense of the atmosphere inside. In some places, the *maitre-d'*, or host, would entice you to enter. They would haggle prices and offer you discounts – right on the street – if you came in and ate right now. Some were quite aggressive, almost pulling you into their establishment. Maybe it was my Canadian-ishness coming out, but I didn't appreciate the pressure tactics. But we had to choose somewhere to eat. Otherwise we would starve ...

In Proverbs 9, two women are inviting people into their establishments: "*Wisdom*" and "*the woman named Folly*" (Remember, "The fool" is the one who "*says in his/her heart, 'There is no God.'*" (Psalm 14:1)). There are two types of "restaurant" in which you might dine. Which will you choose? Why?

Lady Wisdom summarizes the whole message of Proverbs: "*Fear of the LORD is the foundation of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment. Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life. If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.*" (9:10-11)

There is truth that, in general, if we heed the Lord's wisdom, life will go well. We may benefit spiritually – we will know the joy, peace, presence, and power of God. We may benefit relationally – God's wisdom helps us live better with our family and friends. We may benefit physically – there are principles here that can add years to our lives. And we may even benefit materially – God gives us principles to make sound decisions.

And there is a solemn warning that we may suffer – spiritually, relationally, physically, and financially – if we choose to ignore God.

God's wisdom is knit into the very fabric of creation, our bodies, and our souls. If we choose to live in harmony with His Word, His world, and how he made us, it is like running our hands along the grain of a piece of wood; it is smooth and pleasant. If we choose to reject God and revolt against His principles, it is like running our hand back against the grain – it is rough, difficult, and we may get some painful slivers.

None of us are perfect at living in harmony with God's will. In what areas are you doing well – going along the grain. In what areas are you trying to go against the grain – against God? How is that working for you? Spend some time in prayer and reflection with God.

*My heavenly Father, You see all things and know all that there is.  
Your understanding is beyond measure and Your knowledge is perfect.  
Teach me, Lord, that I may walk in Your wisdom.  
Guide my steps so that I do not end up in the wrong path.  
Direct my thoughts so that I do not make the wrong choices.  
Amen*

## **Wednesday, July 14: Proverbs 9:13-18**

Hans Christian Andersen tells the story of the emperor's new clothes. Two charlatans arrive at the palace of an emperor who spends lavishly on clothing for himself at the expense of the public good. Posing as weavers, they offer to supply him with magnificent clothes. These clothes are special. They are invisible to those who are stupid or incompetent. The emperor hires them. They set up looms and go to work.

A succession of officials, and then the emperor himself, visit them to check their progress. Each sees that the looms are empty but pretends otherwise to avoid being thought a fool. Finally, the weavers report that the emperor's suit is finished. They mime dressing him. He sets off in a procession before the whole city.

The townsfolk uncomfortably go along with the pretense, not wanting to appear inept or stupid, until a child blurts out that the emperor is wearing nothing at all. The people then realize that everyone has been fooled. Although startled, the emperor continues his foolish procession, walking more proudly than ever.

Yesterday we read about Lady Wisdom (9:1-12). In contrast, today we read about "the woman named Folly" (9:13-18). In the Wisdom Books of the Bible, "folly" does not mean silliness or ignorance. "Folly" means knowing the right path (to fear, reverence, honour, worship, and obey God), and willfully choosing to reject that wisdom. "Folly" means turning your back on God, thinking you are wiser than He is, and doing your own thing.

One of the saddest comments in Proverbs is this, "*She is ignorant and doesn't know it*" (9:13). Much like the vain emperor with his new "clothes," some people THINK they are so smart, intelligent, brilliant, and essentially know it all. Sadly, if people reject God and His wisdom, they may not recognize it, but they are not being wise at all. Truly wise people can see them for the fools they are.

Albert Einstein once said, "*There is a race between mankind and the universe. Mankind is trying to build bigger, better, faster, and more foolproof machines. The universe is trying to build bigger, better, and faster fools. So far the universe is winning.*" Sigh.

How can I learn wisdom from God, today?

*O God, Giver of Life, Bearer of Pain, Maker of Love,  
You are able to accept in me what I cannot even acknowledge.  
You are able to name in me what I cannot bear to speak of.  
You are able to hold in your memory what I have tried to forget.  
Reconcile me through your cross to yourself,  
and to all that you have created me to be,  
so that I, myself, may be made whole in Christ.  
Amen.*

Janet Morley

#### **Thursday, July 15: Proverbs 30:1-9**

Solomon edited the book of Proverbs and probably wrote most of it – either reflecting on his own experience or writing down the inherited wisdom of his people. He does credit a couple of other sages in Israel with writing some parts of the book. Among these wise teachers is Agur, son of Jakeh.

Note that Agur, like Solomon, begins with a reflection on God, the Creator, as the source of wisdom. When we forget that God is the One who created the heavens and the earth – and wisdom – it is easy to think we can outsmart the world – and God – on our own. When, in humility, we recognize that we are God's creations, living in God's created world, we know we need God's wisdom. Life goes so much better for us.

- What is your response to Agur's teaching?
- Have you ever felt the way Agur does in 30:1-3? Isn't his honesty refreshing. He does not try to make a good impression on God – he is brutally honest with himself and the Lord. What do you need to be honest with God about?
- What does Agur feel is important to affirm about God? Why? What aspects of God, His glory, and His love, do you need to reflect on and think about today?
- How do you react to the two favours Agur asks from the Lord (30:7-9)? Can you make these your prayer? Why? Why not?

*Glorious God, give me grace to change my life.  
 Hel me to see, but not fear, death,  
 which, for those who know you, is only the gateway to eternal life.  
 Give me a humble, quiet,  
 peaceable, patient,  
 charitable, kind,  
 tender, and loving mind.  
 May all my words and all my thoughts, be filled by your Holy Spirit.  
 Good Lord, give me a full faith and a firm hope.  
 I do not want to avoid the misfortunes of this world,  
 I long to be with you.  
 I do not simply want to be in that joyful place called heaven,  
 I long to be with you.  
 Good Lord, I long to be with you simply because I love you.  
 Amen*

Thomas More (1478-1535 [executed by Henry VIII])

### **Friday, July 16: Proverbs 30:24-28**

Feel free to read all of Agur's wisdom in Proverbs 30. I am encouraging you to read shorter bits because there is so much to think about in some of these passages.

These little verses reflect on *"four things on earth that are small but unusually wise"*:

- *Ants – they aren't strong, but they store up food all summer.*
- *Hyraxes – they aren't powerful, but they make their homes among the rocks.* (Hyraxes or rock badgers are mammals about the size of rabbits, with small ears and short legs – like overgrown guinea pigs)
- *Locusts – they have no king, but they march in formation.*
- *Lizards – they are easy to catch, but they are found even in kings' palaces* (Lizards/geckos, like spiders, eat flies and other insects. They were/are valued in the Middle East because they eat so many insects. In Alberta, bats fill a similar niche ... like lizards we may find them a bit "creepy" but they sure help with control the mosquito population).

A surprising list. No lions, tigers, eagles, or elephants. Size does not count nearly as much as wisdom:

- Ants work together and plan ahead.
- Hyraxes make wise choices – living in rocky places where there is protection.
- Locusts know you "hang together or you'll hang separately."
- Lizards, not the fastest or brightest of creatures, do well because they fulfill a key role, controlling obnoxious insects.

In a world where things seem to be going at light speed, where the strong and swift seem to thrive, where we struggle to even keep up, remember that basic virtues like careful planning, wise choosing, community, and hard work are still of critical importance. In the end, wisdom is still important. People driving race-car-like lives may be flying around the track, but are libel to crash. The strong, steady ants, hyraxes, locusts, and lizards are the ones who finish well.

As we have thought about wisdom this month, what principle or idea has spoken most to you? Why?

How are you living differently today than you did four weeks ago? Why?

What changes do you need to make in the days to come? How are you going to make them? Will you ask a friend to hold you accountable to make sure you keep growing in wisdom?

*Almighty and most merciful Father, in you we live and move and have our being.  
From you we have received tender mercy and compassion.  
To you we owe our safety in days past,  
together with all the comforts of this present life,  
and the hopes of the life to come.*

*We praise you, O God, our Creator;  
to you we give our thanks, for you are our joy and crown.  
You daily pour out your good gifts upon us.  
We humbly pray that Jesus, our Lord, the hope of glory,  
may be more fully formed in us.  
May we grow in humility, meekness, patience,  
contentment, and absolute surrender of our whole lives –  
body, soul, and spirit – to your will and pleasure.*

*Do not leave us or forsake us, our Father, but lead us safely  
through all the changes of this present world,  
with an unchanging love for you,  
and with a holy peace of mind  
which comes from an assurance of your steadfast love for us,  
until we come at last to see you face-to-face, be with you where you are,  
behold your glory and worship you forever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
Amen.*

Simon Patrick (1626-1707)

### **Saturday, July 17: Proverbs 10:1-10**

Proverbs 10 introduces us to several chapters of randomly collected sayings. As you read through them you may find it slow going – they are on many different topics in no apparent order. This is the way much of Proverbs is written. Solomon collected sayings of the wise and put them into this document.

Why are they not ordered?

- First, it would have been difficult to categorize them all.
- Second, as you read through the sayings in Proverbs 10, the fact that they are random means that you cannot “skip” over a specific topic. You have to deal with a bit of everything all the time (rather like real life). You must slow down as a reader. You have to take time to reflect as you read.

Proverbs slows us down to think, reflect – and, hopefully, to act.

Reading the Bible is a bit like eating in a fine restaurant: the food is great, but we have to be careful our diet is balanced. Our diet can become unbalanced if:

- We eat too much and get too little exercise: all study and no action leaves us spiritually bloated and lethargic. Scripture is meant to be put into practice. What proverb do you need to act on?
- We eat too little and do too much: if we are busy all the time and fail to feed on God’s Word, we can be spiritually emaciated and run-down. We do need to spend time with God and Scripture.
- Eating the bits you like and ignoring what’s good for you: skipping over the proverbs or truth that you may not like, while patting yourself on the back with the ones that make you feel good, is dangerous. Read widely in the Bible. Take time with the difficult parts. Allow God’s word to make you restless – in a holy way. Let the Spirit change you.

What verses in Proverbs 10:1-10 speak to you?

What verses bother you? Why?

How can you learn from God, today?

*Oh Lord, give us yourself above all things.  
It is in your coming alone that we are enriched.  
It is in your coming that your true gifts come.  
Come, Lord, that we may share the gifts of your presence:  
come, Lord, with healing of the past, come and calm our memories,  
come with joy for the present, come and give life to our existence,  
come with hope for the future, come and give a sense of eternity,  
come with strength for our wills, come with power for our thoughts,  
come with love for our hearts, come and give passion to our souls.  
Come, Lord, give yourself above all things and help us to give ourselves to you.  
Amen.*

David Adam

### **Sunday, July 18: Proverbs 10:11-21**

Benjamin Franklin (1706-1790) was a writer, printer, philosopher, politician, postmaster, scientist, inventor, humorist, civic activist, statesman, and diplomat. From 1732 to 1758, he wrote and published *Poor Richard's Almanack*, an annual compendium of weather, poems, sayings, and astronomical and astrological information (not unlike the *Farmers' Almanac* today). Using the pseudonym "Poor Richard," Benjamin Franklin shared his own philosophy of life, including many proverbs we know today. Some of these are so familiar we may think they are in the Bible. They're not. These are Benjamin Franklin's:

- "Speak little, do much."
- "A friend in need is a friend indeed!"
- "Search others for their virtues, thyself for thy vices."
- "Eat to live, and not live to eat."
- "Today is Yesterday's Pupil."
- "Take this remark from Richard poor and lame, Whate'er's begun in anger ends in shame."
- "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise."
- "Do not do what you would not have known."
- "Well done is better than well said."
- "Haste makes waste."
- "God helps them that help themselves."

Some of Franklin's/Poor Richard's wisdom is great. But remember this is human wisdom. It's not the Bible.

As you read through Proverbs 10, you are reading **God's** word. What sayings speak to you? Why do these resonate with you? What action do you need to take?

*Lord Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Salvation:  
we praise you and we give you thanks.  
We are unworthy to be your guests, but you invite us to worship.  
May your loving kindness supply for our weakness.  
Before you, Lord our God, all our desires are known.  
If our hearts are pure, that is a result of your grace.  
Help us cultivate a genuine love of you.  
Don't let your grace be unfruitful in us, Lord.  
Perfect that which you have started.  
Help us long for what is right, good, and holy.  
Convert our lukewarm faith to a fervent love of you,  
for the glory of your holy name.  
Amen*

Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109)

## Monday, July 19: Proverbs 10:22-32

One of Benjamin Franklin's proverbs is "*There are lazy Minds as well as lazy Bodies.*" No one could accuse Franklin of having a lazy mind.

Yesterday I shared a bit from Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack*. I quoted some of his more familiar proverbs. Today I want to share some of his more humorous insights. Again, remember these are not in the Bible. These are Benjamin Franklin's thoughts:

- *Three may keep a secret, if two of them are dead.*
- *He's a Fool that makes his Doctor his heir.*
- *He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals.*
- *Fish and visitors stink in 3 days.*
- *Many have quarrel'd about Religion, that never practis'd it.*
- *Don't misinform your Doctor nor your Lawyer.*
- *He that sows thorns, should not go barefoot.*
- *Who has deceiv'd thee so oft as thy self?*
- *Sin is not hurtful because it is forbidden, but it is forbidden because it's hurtful.*

The biblical book of Proverbs wants us to exercise our minds as well. Solomon wants us to think deeply about how to live out our faith in God.

What saying(s) speak to you in today's verses? Why? What do you need to do about it?

*Hands who touched the leper, touch my wounded heart.  
Hands who healed the blind man, heal my aching soul.  
Hands who cured the lame, mend my disjointed life.  
Hands who embraced all life, enfold me in your peace.  
This is my prayer to you, my Lord:  
Give me strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.  
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor  
or bend my knees before insolent might.  
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.  
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to your will with love.  
Amen.*

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

## Tuesday, July 20: Proverbs 17:17, 18:24, 27:6, 9-10, and 17

One of the frustrations we have with Proverbs is that from chapter 10-29 most individual verses are individual sayings – in no particular order. It is difficult to read a chapter because each one contains dozens of random sayings. What we can do is gather some of the sayings on a specific topic together. A concordance is helpful to do this. Or, on [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com), you can do a "keyword search" that lets you search for a specific word or phrase.

Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, observed that, "*Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience.*" It is amazing how great wisdom can be shared in short sayings, like these proverbs.

Here are some proverbs on friendship to ponder today. As an anonymous pundit once said, "*Friends are God's way of taking care of us.*" Take some time with each one, thinking about what the Lord is saying. And what it means to you and your life ...

- "*A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.*" (17:17)
- "*There are 'friends' who destroy each other, but a real friend sticks closer than a brother.*" (18:24)

- "Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy." (27:6)
- "The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense." (27:9)
- "Never abandon a friend – either yours or your father's. When disaster strikes, you won't have to ask your brother for assistance. It's better to go to a neighbor than to a brother who lives far away." (27:10)
- "As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend." (27:17)

How can you be a good friend to someone today?

How can you allow someone else to be your true friend – perhaps risking being hurt or refined as "iron sharpens iron"?

*This morning, as I kindle the fire upon my hearth,  
I pray that the flame of God's love may burn in my heart,  
and in the hearts of all I meet today.  
I pray that no envy or malice, hatred or fear may smother the flame.  
I pray that indifference and apathy, contempt and pride,  
may not pour like cold water on the fire.  
Instead, may the spark of God's love light the love in my heart,  
that it may burn brightly through the day.  
And may I warm those that are lonely, whose hearts are cold and lifeless,  
so that all may know the comfort of God's love.  
Burn in me, glorious Father;  
burn in me, beautiful Jesus;  
burn in me, Holy Spirit of power.  
Amen.*

Celtic prayer

### **Wednesday, July 21: Making Plans – Proverbs 16:1-9**

Much of Proverbs is a "Bathroom-Reader"–type compendium of wise sayings. Reading these sorts of proverbs is VERY different from reading the story of the exodus, one of Jesus' parables, or one of Paul's letters, all of which we can take in large chunks. These are "sound-bites" of deep wisdom.

Most of the time there is no logical order to them. Adjoining verses are snippets of wisdom on very different themes. This is intentional – it forces us to slow down and think about each verse independently. Much like life, things don't come at us one theme at a time. We are always wrestling with several issues at once. Similarly, Proverbs forces us to "multi-task" our minds around many different subjects.

However – occasionally – a series of verses do follow a theme. These verses in Proverbs 16:1-9 are such an example. Here are several bits of wisdom on a common topic – in this case how we make plans. One of Benjamin Franklin's insights is this: *"By Failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."* John F. Kennedy said, *"The time to repair the roof is when the sun is shining."* I like J.R.R. Tolkien's advice in *The Hobbit*: *"It does not do to leave a live dragon out of your calculations, if you live near one."*

While the verses are on the theme of planning, each verse is also a complete thought in itself.

Each proverb needs to be read slowly. Each needs to be considered on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?

*Sweet Saviour Christ, in your undeserved love for us  
 you were prepared to suffer the painful death of the cross.  
 Let me not be cold or even lukewarm in my love for you.  
 Lord, help me to face the truth about myself.  
 Help me to hear my words as others hear them,  
 to see my face as others see me.  
 Let me be honest enough to recognize my impatience and conceit.  
 Let me recognize my anger and selfishness.  
 Give me sufficient humility to accept my own weaknesses for what they are.  
 Give me the grace – at least in your presence – to say, "I was wrong – forgive me."  
 God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, increase in us faith and truth and gentleness.  
 Amen.*

Polycarp (69-martyred 155)

### Thursday, July 22: Selected Proverbs on Planning *and* Colossians 3:1-11

Here are some other proverbs from popular culture related to planning.

- *"Always plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark."* (Richard Cushing)
- *"It takes as much energy to wish as it does to plan."* (Eleanor Roosevelt)
- *"Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree a long time ago."* (Warren Buffett)

God is concerned about the decisions we make. Take some time with these gems of wisdom on planning from Proverbs:

- *"The LORD approves of those who are good, but he condemns those who plan wickedness."* (12:2)
- *"The plans of the godly are just; the advice of the wicked is treacherous."* (12:5)
- *"If you plan to do evil, you will be lost; if you plan to do good, you will receive unfailing love and faithfulness."* (14:22)
- *"No human wisdom or understanding or plan can stand against the LORD."* (21:30)
- *"Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success."* (15:22)
- *"The LORD detests evil plans, but he delights in pure words."* (15:26)

Again, each proverb needs to be read and considered on its own. Reread each proverb above. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?

Read Colossians 3:1-11. How do these verses complement the wisdom of these proverbs?

*Lord, I am selfish,  
 but you are all about serving others in the name of your Father.  
 I am doubtful,  
 but you trusted your heavenly Father to the very point of dying for him.  
 When it comes to temptation, I am weak,  
 but you were a perfect picture of strength when the devil came to tempt you.  
 I am prone to anger when I feel someone is misjudging me,  
 but you were our example of "turning the other cheek."  
 In all these things and others, Lord, make me more and more like you every day.  
 Amen.*

Tracy Macon Sumner



## Friday, July 23: Proverbs on Learning *and* Colossians 3:12-17

One of the qualities of a wise person is **teachability**. A wise person does not think she knows it all. She is open to learning. A fool – on the other hand – thinks she has all the answers ... Benjamin Franklin says, "*Fools need Advice most, but wise men only are the better for it.*"

That's great. But here is some of God's wisdom:

- "*Enthusiasm without knowledge is no good; haste makes mistakes.*" (19:2)
- "*Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life. You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail.*" (19:20-21)
- "*To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction.*" (12:1)
- "*The wicked bluff their way through, but the virtuous think before they act.*" (21:29)
- "*Correct the wise, and they will love you. Instruct the wise, and they will be even wiser. Teach the righteous, and they will learn even more.*" (9:8-9)

Again, each proverb needs to be read and considered on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?

Read Colossians 3:12-17. How do these verses complement the proverbs above?

*Come, Lord Jesus, and remain in my heart.  
How grateful I am that the answer to my prayer does not depend on me at all.  
You are the one who hears and answers prayer.  
As I quietly remain in you and let your life flow in me,  
Thank you that the Father does not see my frayed patience or insufficient trust.  
Help me to be patient, trusting you, Lord,  
Give me confidence that the Father has everything in hand.  
I thank for a more glorious answer to my prayer that I can imagine.  
Amen*

Catharine Marshall (1914-1983)

## Saturday, July 24: Proverbs on Learning (continued)

The proverbs in the Bible have a lot to say about life-long learning. A teachable spirit comes from a humble heart: I recognize that I can always benefit from good – godly – advice, and the knowledge of those who know more than I do. In humility, I always choose to look for new insight and knowledge ...

A fool, in contrast, is quite sure he knows it all and that others (especially those older than himself) have nothing to teach him.

- "*People who despise advice are asking for trouble; those who respect a command will succeed.*" (13:13)
- "*The instruction of the wise is like a life-giving fountain; those who accept it avoid the snares of death.*" (13:14)
- "*Intelligent people are always ready to learn. Their ears are open for knowledge.*" (18:15)
- "*If you ignore criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace; if you accept correction, you will be honored.*" (13:18)
- "*If you punish a mocker, the simple-minded become wise; if you instruct the wise, they will be all the wiser.*" (21:11)

- *"Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish."*(18:13)
- *The LORD says, "I will guide you along the best pathway for your life. I will advise you and watch over you. Do not be like a senseless horse or mule that needs a bit and bridle to keep it under control."* (Psalm 32:8-9)

Again, each proverb needs to be read and considered on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?

Are you a teachable person? What wisdom do you need to learn? What wise person do you need to learn from? What can you do about it – today?

*Lord God, you are my all in all.  
You are Life of my life and Spirit of my spirit.  
Have mercy on me and fill me with your Holy Spirit.  
Fill me with love so there may be no room for anything else in my heart.  
I do not ask for the world and its pomp and glory – I need you.  
I do not ask for heaven on its own – I need you –  
for where you are, there is heaven.  
In you alone is satisfaction and abundance for my heart.  
My heart cannot find rest in anything but you:  
only in you, Father, who has made this longing for peace in my soul.  
So now take out of my heart whatever is opposed to you.  
Come into my heart. Abide in me. Reign in me.  
Amen.*

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929)

### **Sunday, July 25: Proverbs on Conflict**

We believe we are to *"love our neighbour as ourselves"* and to *"do unto others as we would have them do unto us"* ... so we will always get along, right? Wouldn't it be wonderful if everyone got along all the time? Unfortunately, the ideal of a community where everyone always is in agreement is not reality.

Have you ever noticed that in our homes, community – even our church – people can disagree with one another from time to time? People are people – and people disagree. Depending on how we handle our disagreements, they are not necessarily a problem. In fact, conflict can help us better understand ourselves and our situation. If we are willing to pray, be open-minded, learn, and change, we can improve our lives and difficulties. "Conflict" can be positive and creative – if we deal with it wisely and well.

Where does conflict come from? How do we handle it when conflict happens?

Read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
  - What does it mean?
  - How does it apply in my life?
  - How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- *"Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise."*(13:10)
  - *"Better a dry crust eaten in peace than a house filled with feasting – and conflict."*(17:1)
  - *"Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so stop before a dispute breaks out."*(17:14)
  - *"Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin; anyone who trusts in high walls invites disaster."*(17:19)

- *"Interfering in someone else's argument is as foolish as yanking a dog's ears."* (26:17)
- *"Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling."* (20:3)
- *"An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars."* (18:19)
- *"It's better to live alone in the corner of an attic than with a quarrelsome wife in a lovely home."* (21:9) ("Wife" or husband, or kids, or parents, or friends. The principle goes for all relationships. Solomon, of course, with all his wives, may have been reflecting on his own personal experience.

Have you ever experienced a situation where a difference of opinion created positive change? Where different ideas generated new possibilities? Where creative problem solving occurred? What were the key features of that constructive change?

Are there ways you can prayerfully, creatively, and constructively move forward in a relationship today?

*How poorly we repay you, my Lord, for all the good things you have given us.  
You find all kinds of ways by which to show us your love you for us.  
Yet we miss these because we are so inexperienced in loving you.  
We take things for granted and don't see your blessings as your gifts of love.  
We fail to see all the ways your Holy Spirit cares for and speaks to us.*

*Majestic King, forever wise,  
you melt my heart, which once was cold.  
When your beauty fills my eyes,  
it makes them young, which once were old.  
Christ, my Creator, hear my cry; I am yours, you can I hear.  
My Savior, Master, yours am I; my heart, to yours, be ever near.  
Whether in life or death's last hour, if sickness, pain or health you give,  
or shame, or honor, weakness, power – thankful is the life I live.  
Amen.*

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

### **Monday, July 26: Proverbs on Walking with God *and* Matthew 7:13-27**

We often use the metaphor of a journey to describe our lives. As we travel on the path of life, we can choose to "walk with God" or not. "Walking with God" describes a way of travelling through all the circumstances in life in which we recognize that God is with us. He never leaves us. "Walking with God" also implies we are carrying on a conversation with God. We are sharing our lives with Him. And we are listening to Him. More than just listening to God, we actively **follow** God's way of wisdom for our lives.

Read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- *"The guilty walk a crooked path; the innocent travel a straight road."* (21:8)
- *"Those who follow the right path fear the LORD; those who take the wrong path despise him."* (14:2)
- *"There is a path before each person that seems right, but it ends in death."* (14:12, 16:25)
- *"Whoever abandons the right path will be severely disciplined; whoever hates correction will die."* (15:10)
- *"A lazy person's way is blocked with briars, but the path of the upright is an open highway."* (15:19)
- *"Corrupt people walk a thorny, treacherous road; whoever values life will avoid it."* (22:5)
- *"Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it."* (22:6)

Now read Matthew 7:13-27. How do Jesus' words reinforce the wisdom of the proverbs? What does the "narrow road" (Matthew 7:14) look like? What does it mean to "build your house on the rock"? How can you live these verses today?

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands:  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do with me, I thank you.  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures –  
I wish no more than this, Lord.  
Into your hands I entrust my soul.  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord,  
and so I need to give myself and to surrender myself into your hands,  
without reserve, and with unlimited confidence, for you are my Father.  
Amen.*

Charles de Foucauld (1856-1916)

## **Tuesday, July 27: Proverbs on Wisdom and Philippians 4:4-9**

Slow down. "Be still in the presence of the Lord and wait patiently for him ..." (Psalm 37:7). Try being still in God's presence. Right now, He is far more eager to be with you than you are to be with Him.

Take a deep breathe. Bring yourself into the Lord's presence. Are you aware of His presence with you? His promise is that He is with you always (Matthew 28:20).

Read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
  - What does it mean?
  - How does it apply in my life?
  - How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- 
- "A person with good sense is respected; a treacherous person is headed for destruction." (13:15)
  - "Wise people think before they act; fools don't – and even brag about their foolishness." (13: 16)
  - "Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble." (13:20)
  - "Trouble chases sinners, while blessings reward the righteous." (13:21)
  - "The wise are cautious and avoid danger; fools plunge ahead with reckless confidence." (14:16)
  - "A wise person is hungry for knowledge, while the fool feeds on trash." (15:14)

Now read Philippians 4:4-9. How will you live differently today?

*Lord, I don't know who or what will cross my path today.  
But I do know that You are my Rock and my Fortress.  
You are my Shield and my Strong Tower.  
Help me to anchor myself to You today.  
Teach me how to stand strong in You and choose only Your way today.  
Help me walk by Your truth and not my feelings.  
Help me to embrace anything that comes my way as an opportunity to see You at work  
and as an opportunity to point others to You.  
Thank You that You love me and nothing can ever take that away from me!  
Even if I fail today and fall short, You whisper Your unconditional love deep into my soul  
and remind me that Your mercies are new every morning.  
That truly amazes me, Lord.  
Amen.*

Wendy Blight

### **Wednesday, July 28: James 3:1-12 and Proverbs on Wise Speech**

For the next few days we're thinking about wise speech. What comes out of our mouths matters. Begin by reading James 3:1-12.

- How have you seen these verses ring true in your experience?
- What do you need to learn from them today?
- How do you have to watch your speech today?

Now read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
  - What does it mean?
  - How does it apply in my life?
  - How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- 
- *"From a wise mind comes wise speech; the words of the wise are persuasive."* (16:23)
  - *"Kind words are like honey – sweet to the soul and healthy for the body."* (16:24)
  - *"Whoever loves a pure heart and gracious speech will have the king as a friend."* (22:11)
  - *"Patience can persuade a prince, and soft speech can break bones."* (25:15)

How can you speak wisely and well, today?

*I praise you for the life that stirs within me.  
I praise you for the bright and beautiful world into which I go.  
I praise you for earth and sea and sky, for scudding cloud and singing bird.  
I praise you for the work you have given me to do.  
I praise you for all that you have given me to fill my leisure hours.  
I praise you for family.  
I praise you for my friends.  
I praise you for music and books and good company and all pure pleasures.  
I praise you for the mission you give me to be good news in the world.  
Amen.*

John Baillie (1886-1960)

### **Thursday, July 29: James 3:13-18 and Proverbs on Gossip**

*Definition of a Gossip: Someone whose mouth is in forward when their brain is in neutral* (Unknown).

James follows up his teaching on "taming the tongue" with a reflection on "wisdom." Read James 3:1-17. Isn't this appropriate given our study of wisdom in Proverbs.?

Remember that *"The instruction of the wise is like a life-giving fountain; those who accept it avoid the snares of death"* (Proverbs 13:14) and, *"Intelligent people are always ready to learn; their ears are open for knowledge"* (Proverbs 18:15). What insights on wisdom does James give you?

Now read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
  - What does it mean?
  - How does it apply in my life?
  - How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- 
- *"A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don't hang around with chatterers."* (20:19)
  - *"A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence"* (11:13)

- "A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends." (16:28)
- "Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander." (17:4)
- "Don't betray another person's secret. Others may accuse you of gossip, and you will never regain your good reputation." (25:9-10)
- "Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops." (26:20)

What wisdom are James and Solomon giving you, today? How can you live these principles?

*O God listen to my prayer.  
 I know that you are hearing me  
 as surely as though I saw you with my own eyes.  
 Anything that is amiss in my soul,  
 anything that is wrong in my life  
 may you, O God, sweep it from me.  
 May you shield me in your love.  
 Let no thought come to my heart,  
 let no sound come to my ear,  
 let no temptation come to my eye,  
 let no fragrance come to my nose,  
 let no fancy come to my mind,  
 let no ruffle come to my spirit,  
 that is hurtful to my body or my soul this day or this night.  
 May you, yourself, O God of life,  
 be in front of me, and behind me.  
 May you be my guiding-star.  
 May you be my Lord,  
 from my life's beginning to my life's end.  
 Amen*

Celtic prayer

### **Friday, July 30: Ephesians 4:17-32 and Proverbs on our Speech**

Each one of Paul's letters includes some very practical instructions on wise living. The topic of wise speech (and not-wise speech) is a recurring theme – it shows up in each of Paul's letters.

What is Paul saying about our speech (and other issues, of course) in Ephesians 4:17-32?

Now read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
- "The lips of the godly speak helpful words, but the mouth of the wicked speaks perverse words." (10:32)
- "The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth." (12:22)
- "The lips of the wise give good advice; the heart of a fool has none to give." (15:7)
- "Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth – a stranger, not your own lips." (27:2)

"If you instruct the wise," writes Solomon, "they will be all the wiser" (21:11). You can grow in wisdom as you learn from Paul and these proverbs.

How is God speaking to you today? What do you need to learn? How do you need to live differently?

*You, eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are a deep sea.  
 The more I enter into you, the more I find,  
 and the more I find, the more I seek.  
 My soul cannot be satisfied without you.  
 I continually hunger for you, the eternal Trinity,  
 As the heart desires springs of living water,  
 so my soul desires to see you in truth.  
 Eternal God, what more could you give me than yourself?  
 You are the fire that burns without being consumed.  
 You consume in your heart all my soul's self-love and sin.  
 You are the fire that takes away the cold and darkness in my soul.  
 With your light, I pray that you might illuminate me so I may know your truth.  
 Clothe me with yourself, with your eternal truth,  
 so I may run this mortal life in true obedience.  
 May I be guided by the light of your most holy love and truth.  
 Amen.*

Catherine of Siena (1347-1386)

### **Saturday, July 31: Ephesians 5:1-7 and Proverbs on Wise Speech (or Wise Silence)**

Plato once said, "*Wise men speak because they have something to say; fools because they have to say something.*" Sometimes keeping my mouth shut is good counsel.

Paul, in Ephesians 5:1-7 reminds me that a lot of unholy, unhelpful, and unpleasant things can come out of my mouth.

These proverbs echo the same sentiments.

- "*Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.*" (10:19)
- "*The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.*" (18:21)
- "*A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even-tempered.*" (17:27)
- "*Even fools are thought wise when they keep silent; with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.*" (17:28)

Reread each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?

*Loving heavenly Father, thank you for your Holy Spirit  
 who fills our hearts with a serene assurance that we belong to you forever.  
 How wonderful to be a child of the great King over all the earth,  
 a God of love who does not desire that any should perish.  
 Take away doubts and fears when we become estranged from you,  
 or experience a dark night of the soul.  
 When suffering strikes or injustice happens, let us not blame you,  
 but understand that all things inevitably work for the good  
 for those who love God and are called according to his purpose.  
 Grant us the things that lead to assurance – greater faith, greater trust, and greater hope.  
 As we grow in assurance, then lead us to endurance,  
 knowing that we can overcome any obstacle, even death itself.  
 Amen.*

James S. Bell Jr.

## Sunday, August 1: Ephesians 5:8-21 *and* Wise Words Are Like ...

Henri Nouwen, after nearly two decades of teaching at the University of Notre Dame, Yale Divinity School, and Harvard Divinity School, moved to Richmond Hill, Ontario. He devoted his life to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the L'Arche Daybreak community. Nouwen reflects on his priorities: "*Did I offer peace today? Did I bring a smile to someone's face? Did I say words of healing? Did I let go of my anger and resentment? Did I forgive? Did I love? These are the real questions. I must trust that the little bit of love that I sow now will bear many fruits, here in this world and the life to come.*"

In contrast to some unhealthy things we can say (listed in Ephesians 5:1-7), Paul encourages us to "*live as children of light*" and speak as children of light, "*filled with the Spirit*" (5:18). What does that look like – or, more properly, what does that **sound** like? (5:19-20). How does that remind you of Nouwen's perspective?

Reflect on each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
  
- "*The words of the godly are like sterling silver; the heart of a fool is worthless.*" (10:20)
- "*The words of the godly encourage many, but fools are destroyed by their lack of common sense.*" (10:21)
- "*The heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking; the mouth of the wicked overflows with evil words.*" (15:28)
- "*Wise words are like deep waters; wisdom flows from the wise like a bubbling brook.*" (18:4)
- "*Wise words satisfy like a good meal; the right words bring satisfaction.*" (18:20)
- "*Wise words are more valuable than much gold and many rubies.*" (20:15)

Where do you hear wise words? Do you need to read Scripture more (a great source of wisdom.)? Do you just spend time with your peers or people who think just like you, or do you seek out people who challenge you to think deeper? Which person do you **need** to spend time with? Who pushes you to think in deeper ways?

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy;  
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen*

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

## Monday, August 2 (Heritage Day): Galatians 5:16-26 *and* Tell the Truth.

Laurence Peter, author of *The Peter Principle*, advises, "*Speak when you are angry – and you'll make the best speech you'll ever regret.*" That's a gem of wisdom.



Paul also gives the Galatians some practical teaching on how to live wisely, similar to that which he wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians. What wisdom do you glean from this passage? What is God saying to you?

Now read each proverb below. Consider each on its own. Pause after EACH verse and think about:

- What is the author saying?
- What does it mean?
- How does it apply in my life?
- How can I integrate this into my life – this instant?
  
- *"Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed."*(12:19)
- *"The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth."*(12:22)
- *"The crooked heart will not prosper; the lying tongue tumbles into trouble."*(17:20)
- *"Get the truth and never sell it; also get wisdom, discipline, and good judgment."*(23:23)
- *"Better to be poor and honest than to be dishonest and rich."*(28:6)
- *"An honest answer is like a kiss of friendship."*(24:26)

Paul's challenge is this: *"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit"*(Galatians 5:25 NIV). An alternative translation reads this way: *"Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives"*(Eugene Peterson's translation, *The Message*).

God cares about our speech. How can work out the implications of the Spirit's love for us in terms of how we speak with one another?

*Lord, when I read your Word,  
I see how unable I am to live out what it says.  
In my own power, living and talking the way you call me to live and talk is utterly impossible.  
It is only through the power of your Holy Spirit  
that I can even come close to being all that I can be in you.  
Show me every day areas in my life that I haven't given over to you,  
areas where I am not relying on you.  
Help me to do through me what I can't do for myself.  
Amen.*

Tracy Macon Sumner

### **Tuesday, August 3: Galatians 6:1-10 and Words of Healing**

When I was young, I fell out of a tree onto a rusty barbed wire fence. At the time, the pain was excruciating. The gash on my leg was ugly. The blood was ... substantial. With time, antibiotic cream, band aids, and lots of motherly love, the wound healed. But the scar remains. It always will.

Words can wound. They can leave scars. But words can also bring healing.

Yesterday we read, *"Since this is the kind of life we have chosen, the life of the Spirit, let us make sure that we do not just hold it as an idea in our heads or a sentiment in our hearts, but work out its implications in every detail of our lives"*(Galatians 5:25, *The Message*). Galatians 6:1-10 carries on with a few of the ramifications of what it means to live by the Spirit of God. Take time to reflect on what God is saying ...

As Paul urges you to *"carry one another's burdens"* and to *"never become weary in doing good,"* our (wise) speech is one resource we have to bless other people. We can encourage one another, share with one another, teach one another, and bless one another.

- *"A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare."*(15:1)

- "Gentle words are a tree of life; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit." (15:4)
- "The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives." (12:6)
- "Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing." (12:18)

What wisdom do you glean from these proverbs? How can you integrate Paul's instruction and these proverbs into your life, today?

*A Workday Prayer (adapt to your own circumstances ...)*

*Lord Jesus, as I enter this workplace, I bring your presence with me.  
I speak your peace, your grace, and your perfect order into the atmosphere of this workplace.  
I acknowledge your lordship over all that will be  
spoken, thought, decided and accomplished within these walls.  
Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gifts you have deposited in me.  
I do not take them lightly but commit to use them responsibly and well.  
Give me a fresh supply of truth and love on which to draw as I do my job.  
Anoint my creativity, my ideas, my energy so that even my smallest task may bring you honor.  
Lord, when I am confused, guide me.  
When I am weary, energize me.  
Lord, when I am burned out, infuse me with the light of your Holy Spirit.  
May the work I do and the way I do it bring hope, life, and courage to all I meet today.  
And, Lord, even in this day's most stressful moment, may I rest in you.  
Amen.*

Author unknown

### **Wednesday, August 4: Psalm 128 and God's encouragement to families**

- "Those who fear the LORD are secure; he will be a refuge for their children." (Proverbs 14:26)

This week we are looking at God's wisdom for relationships (in general) and families (in particular). These principles work well, whether we are in a Mom-Dad-and-kids-at-home type of family or one of the other 27 types of families that sociologists identify (including singles, single-parents, empty-nesters, widow(er)s, caring-for-aging-parents, etc.).

Many of the psalms are prayers for help in times of trouble, laments in times of loss, celebrations of deliverance, and so forth. Psalm 128 is special in that it gives us a glimpse of God's will for all of us –

- a peaceful life (married or not is not the point),
- a sufficient life (our basic *needs* – not our *wants* – are met),
- in harmonious relationships with others (family and/or friends),
- and in healthy relationship with the greater community (in the case of Jews, Jerusalem; in our case, in our neighbourhood and city).

It's a beautiful vision. Indeed it is a glimpse of heaven. It is also a glimpse of the kinds of relationships God challenges us to live in our lives and in our church community.

Is it your reality? Probably not ... So what do you do? Do you give up? Or do you persevere, "*walking in step with the Spirit*" (Galatians 5:25) and do the best you can to make this a reality in your family, circle of friends, and community? Do you keep striving to make your relationships the best they can be?

We are called to be "missional people" – people who share the good news of Jesus through our words – and our lives. We are challenged to work towards living these kinds of relationships in our homes and small groups. But we don't keep it all to ourselves. Our love spills over so that others see the difference Jesus makes in our lives and are drawn to Him ...

We will NEVER be perfect. But our challenge is to continue to aim to live more and more like this ...

*Lord, for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray;  
keep me, my God, from the stain of sin, just for today.  
Let me both diligently work, and duly pray;  
let me be kind in word and deed, just for today.  
Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey;  
help me to sacrifice myself, just for today.  
And if today, my tide of life should ebb away,  
give me the assurance of your presence divine, sweet Lord, today.  
So for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray;  
but keep me, guide me, love me, Lord, just for today.  
Amen.*

Augustine (354-430)

### Thursday, August 5: Proverbs on Love and 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

- "A bowl of vegetables with someone you love is better than steak with someone you hate." (15:17)
- "Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses." (10:12)
- "Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends." (17:9)

1 Corinthians is a letter Paul wrote to a church with problems – lots of problems. The key to dealing with their problems is **love** – the kind of love Jesus taught us to have for one another. 1 Corinthians 13 is often read at weddings – that is a good place to read these great words. But it was not written for that purpose. These verses are not really about romantic love, although they certainly are inspirational and instructive.

1 Corinthians 13 is actually written to difficult people in a tempest of a church. It's about how they should relate to one another – in church. It is a description of the kind of love that ought to exist in every relationship among Christians – in marriages, in families, in schools, and in the church.

How well do these verses describe your relationships? With your family? Friends? At church?

Put **your name** in this translation of 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (The Message). How do you measure up?

\_\_\_\_\_ *never gives up.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *cares more for others than for self.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't want what he/she doesn't have.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't strut,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *have a swelled head,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't force him/herself on others,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *isn't always "me first,"*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't fly off the handle,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't keep score of the sins of others,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *doesn't revel when others grovel,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *takes pleasure in the flowering of truth,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *puts up with anything,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *trusts God always,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *always looks for the best,*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *never looks back, but keeps going to the end.*  
\_\_\_\_\_ *'s love never dies.*

How can you learn from the proverbs (above) and 1 Corinthians 13, today? What do you need to change in your life, this moment? Pray for God's help to help you live the life of love to which He has called you.

*Forgive them all, Lord:  
 our sins of omission and our sins of commission,  
 the sins of our youth, and the sins of our riper years,  
 the sins of our souls and the sins of our bodies,  
 our secret and our more open sins,  
 our sins of ignorance and surprise,  
 and our more deliberate and presumptuous sins.  
 Forgive the sins we have done to please ourselves,  
 and the sins we have done to please others,  
 the sins we know and remember,  
 and the sins we have forgotten.  
 Forgive the sins we have tried to hide from others  
 and the sins by which we have made others offend.  
 Forgive them, Lord, forgive them all for the sake of the one who died for our sins,  
 rose for our justification,  
 and now stands at your right hand to make intercession for us,  
 Jesus Christ, our Saviour.  
 Amen.*

John Wesley (1707-1788)

### **Friday, August 6: Hebrews 12:1-11 *and* the Lord's Discipline**

One topic that inevitably comes up in discussions with parents is discipline. How do I discipline my children? We'll think about that tomorrow ...

Before tackling *that* subject, we should remember that we are ALL children of our Heavenly Father. Might it be possible that sometimes we need His parent-ly discipline? We may think we're the ones who need to discipline others and forget that we may be wayward sons (and daughters) ourselves. So – if we are God's children – it is good to ask: Does God ever need to discipline us? Why? How?

Read Hebrews 12:1-11.

- Why is discipline important? What benefits come from it?
- Why does God discipline us? What motive/attitude lies behind His discipline?
- How does God discipline us? What values underlie His discipline?
- What is God saying to you? In what way might you need the Lord's discipline?
- How does the Lord's discipline affect your relationship with Him? Can His discipline actually help you draw closer in your relationship?

What can you learn from this passage, today? How can you live these words?

Read these proverbs, slowly, one at a time:

- *"My child, don't reject the LORD's discipline, and don't be upset when he corrects you. For the LORD corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights."* (3:11-12)
- *"People who accept discipline are on the pathway to life, but those who ignore correction will go astray."* (10:17)
- *"To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction."* (12:1)

How can you learn to "love" – ok, "value" – the Lord's discipline in your life?

What correction do you need to hear from Him today? What are you going to do about it?

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
you told your disciples, "My peace I give to you.  
Not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Do not let your heart be troubled,  
and do not let it be afraid."  
Give us peace,  
peace that surpasses all understanding,  
peace and goodwill from you,  
peace that guards our hearts and minds  
and keeps them focused on you.  
Move us to be at peace,  
to reflect your peace,  
to maintain peace with everyone  
as far as it depends on us.  
Teach us to reflect your love,  
to not be overcome by evil,  
but to overcome evil with good.  
Stir our hearts to be joyful in hope,  
to endure trials patiently,  
to persist in prayer  
as we wait for you.  
Amen.*

Paul Stratman

### **Saturday, August 7: Proverbs on Discipline *and* Ephesians 6:1-4**

Discipline. We don't like it ourselves (remember yesterday's reading in Hebrews and Proverbs). And disciplining our children is one of the most difficult tasks of parenthood. Reflect on these proverbs:

- *"A wise child accepts a parent's discipline; a mocker refuses to listen to correction."* (13:1)
- *"Those who spare the rod of discipline hate their children. Those who love their children care enough to discipline them."* (13:24)
- *"Discipline your children while there is hope. Otherwise you will ruin their lives."* (19:18)
- *"Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it."* (22:6)

There is great wisdom in these proverbs. Just as we ALL need God's discipline in our lives (recall yesterday's reading), children need discipline, too. Thinking back to yesterday:

- Why is discipline important? What benefits come from it?
- Why does God discipline us? What motive/attitude lies behind His discipline?
  - Why should we discipline our children? What motive/attitude must lie behind our discipline?
- How does God discipline us? What values underlie His discipline?
  - How should we discipline our children? What values underlie our discipline?

Proverbs does not wade into the specifics of which **form** of discipline is best. It emphasizes that discipline for children – like God's discipline of us – must be done in love with the sole goal of helping the child become the best person of God that he or she can be. And like God's discipline of us, it is never done in anger, it is never done out of selfish motives, and it will never scar the child emotionally, physically, socially, or spiritually in any way. In fact, loving discipline helps us draw closer to those we care for.

These verses have been used to justify corporal punishment and physical abuse. That is not their intent. The Bible cannot be used to endorse corporal punishment. The intent of Proverbs is to show that correction, guidance, and discipline are essential to everyone's social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth and well-being. Their goal is to emphasize that this is always done in love, with the person's best interests in mind. To use proverbs as a rationale specifically for physical discipline (like spanking) over against other forms of

discipline is to misconstrue the intent of what the author is saying: loving parents help their children become all they can be in the Lord. That's the point.

Ephesians 6:1-4 echoes similar themes. Parents have often quoted 6:1-3, but neatly omitted 6:4. Being a parent is a difficult, difficult task in today's world.

Pray for parents you know. Come alongside parents you know. Parenting is a tough, tough task.

*Thanks be to you, our Lord Jesus Christ,  
for all the benefits which you have given us,  
for all the pains and insults which you have borne for us.  
Most merciful Redeemer, Friend and Brother,  
may we know you more clearly,  
love you more dearly,  
and follow you more nearly, day by day.  
Amen.*

Richard of Chichester (1197-1253)

### **Sunday, August 8: Proverbs 3:1-6 and Deuteronomy 6:4-25**

Gavin Wakefield, author and Director of Training for Missional Ministry for the Diocese of York, UK, writes, "*Here is a key element in the total task of evangelism: the passing on of the good news to the young, not as brainwashing, but aware that we have a responsibility to tell the story ... The story is that our active, transformative, wonder-working God is big enough to enable the next generation to live faithful, committed lives.*" We want to pass on our faith to our kids/grandkids/younger generations at church.

Alan Hoare adds, "*In Hebrew times, a child first received instruction from their mother, and then that role was passed on to the father. A devout father would take this responsibility very seriously. For him, wisdom was more valuable than silver or fine gold (see Proverbs 8:11,19), and the thought of having a foolish child would be too hard to bear (see Proverbs 10:1; 17:25). In the father's view, the 'household treasures' were not so much financial, but spiritual and ethical. It was these values that were to be passed on to the attentive child. Riches without wisdom will make a brat, but wisdom without riches can still flourish.*"

The primary place where children learn faith is in their homes. Moms, Dads, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings ... these are key people in a child's spiritual formation. The church and its ministries – wonderful though they may be – are much less important than the way kids see faith lived out, talked about, and expressed in their homes. Pray for our families.

You may not have children – or not have children at home – but you know people who do. Make a huge difference in the Kingdom of God by sharing God's love – and being the love of God – in the life of a child. You can do this by praying for our parents and families. By praying for Angela and our teachers. And by praying for kids you know. Encourage kids and parents, too. They need it!

*Lord, help us not to forget that we are in a battle with enemies in the heavenly places.  
We don't wage war with human weapons but with the weapons of the Spirit.  
Let us put on the armor of light,  
depending on your mighty power to make the enemy flee from us.  
We thank you that you have given us this authority through the precious blood of the Lamb.  
In the powerful name of Jesus, we can overcome all spiritual opposition.  
We have your promise that if we resist the devil, he will flee from us.  
Keep us from opening ourselves to his influence by allowing temptation to turn into sin.  
Help us to repent of any sinful habits that create strongholds for the enemy.  
May we examine our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

James S. Bell Jr.