

APRIL 2013

25th
Anniversary

1988

2013

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE



I instruct you
in the way of
wisdom and
lead you along
straight paths.

Proverbs 4:11

Wisdom from the Book of Proverbs

MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

PASTORS' CONFERENCE

re | FOCUS



May 20–23, 2013

Show appreciation for your pastor by sending him to the re | Focus Pastors' Conference at Moody Bible Institute. Held for more than 30 years, this premiere pastors' conference will refresh and renew your pastor's vigor for ministry through encouraging teaching from God's Word, fellowship with other pastors, and time for spiritual reflection.

Register your pastor today!

Visit www.pastorsconference.com or call 888-824-8246.

At re|Focus, your pastor will

- Hear inspiring messages from respected ministry leaders
- Worship and enjoy fellowship with more than 1,000 servants of Christ
- Spend rejuvenating time in God's Word
- Enjoy visiting Chicago's tourist attractions in the springtime

Conference Speakers



Voddie Baucham
Pastor of Preaching
Grace Family
Baptist Church
Spring, TX



Alistair Begg
Senior Minister
Parkside Church
Cleveland, OH



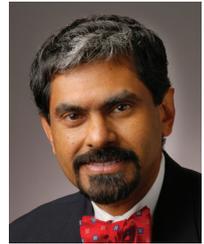
Henry Cloud
*Leadership Consultant,
Psychologist, and Author*
Los Angeles, CA



Michael Easley
Lead Pastor
Fellowship Bible Church
Brentwood, TN



Daniel Henderson
President
Strategic Renewal
Forest, VA



Abe Kuruvilla
Associate Professor
Dallas Theological
Seminary
Dallas, TX



Tommy Nelson
Pastor
Denton Bible Church
Denton, TX



Paul Nyquist
President
Moody Bible Institute
Chicago, IL



Ray Pritchard
President
Keep Believing Ministries
Elmhurst, IL

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

True Wisdom



When Solomon succeeded his father David as king of Israel, the Lord came to him in a dream and said, “Ask for whatever you want me to give you” (1 Kings 3:5). The God

of the universe was inviting this 20-year-old king to ask for whatever he wished!

Solomon responded to the Lord, “Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people” (2 Chron. 1:10). Solomon could have asked for wealth, health, or power. Instead, he asked only for wisdom. The Lord was so pleased with Solomon’s answer that He granted Solomon’s request and also promised him riches, possessions, and honor. In the years that followed, Solomon’s wisdom was made known throughout the world.

In addition to Solomon’s wisdom, he was also known throughout the world for his wealth. In just one year, his merchants and explorers amassed 25 tons of gold. His ivory throne was overlaid with gold, and even his drinking glasses were made of gold. Scripture records, “King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart” (2 Chron. 9:22-23).

But God’s gifts of wisdom, riches, and honor were given to Solomon along with this sober warning: “If you turn away and forsake the

decrees and commands I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will uproot Israel from my land, which I have given them” (2 Chron. 7:19-20).

God blessed Solomon with every treasure under the sun, but near the end of Solomon’s reign, he began to want more. Despite God’s warning, Solomon—the wisest king in the world—made a foolish decision that had grave consequences. He wanted that which God had forbidden.

You see, the Lord had warned the Israelites against marrying foreign wives to protect them from being influenced by idol worship (Deut. 7:3-4). Solomon ignored this warning. He had a weakness for foreign women, and because of their influence in his life, he began worshipping their gods. “As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God” (1 Kings 11:4).

It is hard to believe that the wisest man in the world would make such a foolish decision to ignore the Lord’s warning and disobey His command. But aren’t we all sometimes guilty of picking and choosing which of God’s commands we want to follow—regardless of the consequences? Like Solomon, we know God’s commands but often choose not to obey. Even the wisest among us desperately need God’s grace. I pray that Solomon’s downfall will remind us that true wisdom is not just *knowing* all of God’s truth, but *obeying* all of God’s truth. “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil” (Prov. 3:7).

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler



Wisdom and Common Grace

Many theologians distinguish between two categories of grace. One type is sometimes called the grace of Christ or saving grace. This form of grace is the special possession of believers. They have been made alive through Christ (Eph. 2:5). This sets them apart from those who have not experienced the grace of Christ. Believers belong to God, purchased by the precious blood of Christ (Eph. 1:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19).

The other form of grace is called general or common grace. This grace, which is extended to the world at large, takes many forms. One dimension is a general knowledge of God that stimulates our conscience and reminds us we are sinners. God has revealed His eternal power and divine nature plainly to all through all that He has made (Rom. 1:19). Common grace has also given us a capacity to learn and acquire skills. Whether I am a scientist, artisan, or a factory worker, I ultimately owe my knowledge and skill to the grace of God (Gen. 4:20–22; cf. Ex. 31:2–6).

God's gift of wisdom is reflected in both common and saving grace. The wisdom that God has made available to all humanity enables us to learn and function in society. This wisdom enlightens the minds of those who diligently seek for it. It gives skill to worker's fingers and provides each person with a general knowledge of God. But it cannot save

us from sin. The knowledge of God that comes to us as a result of common grace can be suppressed and distorted (Rom. 1:21–32). The most this kind of wisdom can do is to leave us without excuse (Rom. 1:20).

Salvation from sin requires a special kind of wisdom. This special knowledge is a fruit of repentance and comes from God Himself (2 Tim. 2:25). It is the wisdom to understand "what God has freely given to us" through Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 2:12). According to theologian Abraham Kuyper, through common grace the Holy Spirit kindles and sustains the spark of natural life in all humanity. In saving grace the Holy Spirit gives new life to the believer and kindles the spark of eternal life. The wisdom of common grace endows us with natural abilities that enable us to live in the world. But the wisdom that comes as a result of saving grace provides us with new life from above that enables us to be holy and live for God.

The wisdom of common grace demonstrates God's love for all He has created. The wisdom that results from saving grace is His special love, bestowed upon those who belong to Jesus Christ. It is a wisdom He has promised to give generously to all who ask for it in genuine faith (James 1:5–6).

For Further Study

To learn more about common grace, read *Wisdom & Wonder: Common Grace in Science and Art* by Abraham Kuyper (Russell Media).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Elena Maffei

The Power of “Yes”



On all sides the negative seems to surround us. We swim in the sea of “No.” And we don’t like it. You don’t have to teach a toddler to say this short word. He learns it immediately and repeats it countless times a day—maybe because he hears it from his parents so very often. No wonder, through the years our attitude to “no” becomes . . . well, negative.

But the negative has a tremendous power in our lives and in our language. Many writers tapped into the rhetorical use of negation in their work. Statesmen employed it in their speeches to emphasize their point. It’s enough to remember Kennedy’s famous “Ask not . . .”

The release of Steven Spielberg’s latest film, *Lincoln*, triggered an increased interest in Abraham Lincoln and sparked the publication of many books and articles about him. Some of them mention Lincoln’s use of negation to persuade and to call to action. A recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* points out that Lincoln’s “rhetorical efforts were in the service of resisting both the expansion of slavery and the destruction of the Union,”

and this resistance gave his negative constructions a “moral focus.” Nobody can deny a moral dimension of his striking quote: “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.”

In Scripture, the negative shapes our sense of morality. Many books of the Bible use negation as a rhetorical device: eight out of the Ten Commandments use negative constructions. And of course, the book of Proverbs—our study this month—is full of “no’s,” “don’ts,” and “thou-shall-nots.”

As we read the pages of Proverbs, let us set aside a toddler mentality and see the positive in the negative. As Christians, we have the power and the ability to obey the Word of God. With His Spirit in our hearts, the life of wisdom is possible for us. As followers of Christ, we can say “Yes!” to all the “don’ts” in the book of Proverbs. In his letter to the Corinthian church Paul wrote, “For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘Yes’ in Christ. And so through him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God” (2 Cor. 1:20).

Dear readers, we hope you have already said “Yes” to Christ in your life and have allowed Him to work in your heart. Our prayer is that in our study of the Bible this month, you’ll say “Amen” to all the things God will show you in the book of Proverbs. And all of us at *Today in the Word* want to thank you for saying “Yes” to supporting this ministry.

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 4

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Paul B. Currie

MANAGING EDITOR
Heather Moffitt

ASSOCIATE EDITOR
Elena Mafer

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS
John Koessler
Kim Pickett

WRITER
Brad Baurain

1-800-DL MOODY
(356-6639)
www.moodyministries.net



PRESIDENT
J. Paul Nyquist

PROVOST
Junias Venugopal

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
AND CHIEF OPERATING
OFFICER
Steven Mogck

SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT
Greg R. Thornton

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
Ken Heulitt

VICE PRESIDENTS
Elizabeth Brown
Larry Davidhizar
Lloyd R. Dodson
Jim Elliott
Christine Gorz
John A. Jelinek
Collin G. Lambert
Frank W. Leber Jr.
Thomas A. Shaw
James Spencer

TRUSTEE CHAIRMAN
Jerry B. Jenkins

TRUSTEES
Christopher Denison
T. Randall Fairfax
Thomas S. Fortson
J. Paul Nyquist
Bervin C. Peterson
David Chipper
Paul Von Tobel
Mark Wagner
Richard E. Warren
Richard Yook

TRUSTEE EMERITUS
Paul Johnson

TODAY IN THE **Word**

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The Practical Wisdom of Proverbs

He was the son of David and king of Israel. He delighted in the word of God and lived a life of knowledge and understanding. His name—Solomon—became synonymous with wisdom. This month in our study of the book of Proverbs, we'll read the words of this wise man and we'll learn from him about a life in relationship with God.

Solomon was, and still is, the wisest man who had ever walked on earth. We'll always fail to reach his level if we rely just on our human strength. In this month's Scripture study, we'll see that for Christians, godly wisdom goes even deeper than the practical advice and exhortations of Proverbs. We can reach all the treasures of godly wisdom as we follow the One who came after Solomon—the eternal King of Israel from the line of David, the Word of God: Jesus Christ. By His Holy Spirit He gives us the ability to obtain wisdom and to live a life of communion with God.

We hope you enjoy the study, and we pray that through it, God would show you how to walk in wisdom in every season of your life. Your steadfast support helps us send *Today in the Word* to thousands of readers worldwide. It's a joy to study the Word together, growing in knowledge and understanding as part of a community of faith. Thank you!

Moody Bible Institute is the sole publisher of *Today in the Word*, copyright © 2013 by Moody Bible Institute. All rights reserved. Please direct all *Today in the Word* inquiries to Donor Resource Management, 820 N. LaSalle Blvd., Chicago, IL 60610. Scripture taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version®*, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture taken from the *New American Standard Bible®*, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. Printed in the U.S.A. *Today in the Word* is published monthly. Printed on 30% recycled paper.

Purpose of the Book: “For Attaining Wisdom and Discipline”

The well-known “Prayer for His Son” by General Douglas MacArthur includes these words: “Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, brave enough to face himself when he is afraid . . . Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenges. Let him learn to stand in the storm; let him learn compassion for those who fall.”

The opening chapters of the book of Proverbs are framed as a parent’s advice: “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (v. 8). While the purpose of the book is “for attaining wisdom and discipline” (vv. 2–4), and while this journey begins with “the fear of the LORD” (v. 7), it is equally important to understand that the context in which wisdom is learned is relational, starting with the parent-child relationship.

The fear of
the LORD is the
beginning of
knowledge.

Proverbs 1:7

Wisdom literature has been defined as “truth applied to everyday life in practical ways.” As we study Proverbs this month, we’ll do so in ways appropriate to the genre. For the most part this book is a collection of individual proverbs. Proverbs are brief sayings or aphorisms that can observe, compare, contrast, advise, instruct, invite, warn, evaluate, persuade, and poke fun. They often make use of figures of speech such as metaphors and similes, as well as of literary devices including imagery, personification, parallelism, sarcasm, and irony.

In ancient Near Eastern literature, the term *proverb* includes our meaning but is broader and can also indicate parable-like imagery and brief narratives. An example of this is found in verses 20 through 33 of today’s reading, in which personified Wisdom issues an invitation to embrace her along with a warning to shun foolishness.

Apply the Word

Solomon, the main author of Proverbs, was renowned for his God-given wisdom (1 Kings 4:29–34). It is important to remember that the proverbs he originated, while inspired Scripture, are *proverbs* and generally not commands or promises. The practical wisdom in Proverbs is even more valuable and trustworthy when founded in a fear of the Lord.

Pray with Us

Ask God to encourage vice president and dean of the Undergraduate School Larry Davidhizar. His service at Moody reaches many staff and students, and we ask God to encourage his heart and mind.

Wisdom Enables a Righteous Walk

In *Words of Delight*, Leland Ryken says proverbs have “memorable conciseness.” Their brevity is “striking and attention-getting.” They capture “high points of human insight.” They are “more tightly packed” than everyday speech; the “aim of such verbal concentration is to make an insight permanent.”

These literary qualities are on display in today’s reading, in which we learn three lessons about wisdom. The first is that wisdom is worth diligent searching (vv. 1–4). This doesn’t mean that wisdom is hidden or difficult to find, but that it is worth extended and arduous effort to obtain. The language is active and intense—we are to look for wisdom, search for it, call out for it, cry aloud for it, turn our ear toward it, accept it, store it up, and apply our hearts to understanding it.

The second lesson is that God gives wisdom to those who search for it (vv. 5–8). He is the source of all wisdom

and knowledge, so it makes sense that fearing Him is absolutely necessary to gaining wisdom. But what is “fear”? It’s not the emotion felt from thinking about scary things, but rather worship—proper respect, awe, and reverence for the Lord who rules over all. Those who fear the Lord are people who believe and obey, who act with integrity and uprightness.

The third lesson is that wisdom offers numerous benefits (vv. 9–22). Wisdom is associated with a certain kind of pleasure or sweetness that comes from acting responsibly and righteously. A wise person has an ability to understand situations and discern what to do. In this sense, wisdom protects and saves us from foolish and sinful choices, specifically including moral perverseness (vv. 12–15) and sexual immorality (vv. 16–19).

The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Proverbs 2:6

Apply the Word

A number of excellent commentaries are available for supplementing your study of the book of Proverbs. The *Proverbs* volume in Moody’s Everyman’s Bible Commentary series (also available as a Kindle edition) is accessible for most readers, and those looking for a good scholarly treatment might prefer Tremper Longman III’s *Proverbs* (Baker, 2006).

Pray with Us

Larry Davidhizar oversees the Academic Dean’s Office on Moody’s Chicago campus: Claudia Beguin, Julie Henshaw, Linda Pankratz, and Paula Siebold. We thank God for their dedication to Moody’s biblical mission and global vision.

Wisdom Is a Tree of Life

Every culture and period of history has a collection of proverbs. In American history, Benjamin Franklin is often regarded as the quintessential proverb writer. His gems include “No gains without pains”; “Beware of little expenses: a small leak will sink a great ship”; “He that falls in love with himself will have no rivals”; and “What you would seem to be, be really.”

The proverbs in today’s reading extol the value and benefits of wisdom. Along the way we also get a portrait of wise people and how they act in relation to God and others. There is a repeating pattern of imperative verbs, which if done, yield a reward. We are to fear the Lord (v. 7), trust Him completely (v. 5), keep His commands (v. 3), and welcome His discipline (vv. 11–12). In relation to others, we are to seek out opportunities to do good (v. 27), avoid evil and violence (v. 31), and act with humility (v. 34). The rewards include health, safe-

ty, wealth, and long life. Since these are proverbs and not promises, we’re not to take this as some form of prosperity theology, but rather as general maxims. That is, generally speaking, acting in the ways described brings about positive results. The writer simply states the rewards or blessings in ways that people can relate to and understand.

By wisdom
the LORD laid
the earth’s
foundations.

Proverbs 3:19

The chapter’s exhortations to pursue and practice wisdom are accompanied by praise extolling its value (vv. 13–20). “Blessed is the man who finds wisdom” (v. 13) starts a kind of extended beatitude. Since wisdom is a core dimension of God’s character and work (vv. 19–20), this makes it a core dimension of our relationship with Him (v. 18). Thus, the most significant blessing associated with wisdom is approval and blessing from the Lord (vv. 33–35).

Apply the Word

To guide our children in godly wisdom is a high calling and responsibility! Solomon received wisdom as a special gift, but we, too, can call upon God’s wisdom (James 1:5). This wisdom is “first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere” (James 3:17).

Pray with Us

Scott Pinnow in the Records Management department on Moody’s Chicago campus makes sure our students have all the necessary documents before and after graduation. Please uphold his service in prayer today.

Wisdom Is a Way of Life

Raising a child is a costly endeavor. To raise a child to age seventeen, a typical, middle-income American family spends an estimated \$234,900, or about \$14,000 per year. About 16 percent of this total is spent on food, 18 percent on childcare and education, and 30 percent on housing. This total represents, adjusted for inflation, a 23-percent increase since 1960.

More important than any financial challenge, though, is the task of instilling children with godly wisdom (v. 7). Proverbs 4 focuses on several themes to help us do so. One is to teach attentiveness. You've probably already noticed the frequent exhortations to "listen" and "pay attention" (vv. 1, 20). Attentiveness involves more than hearing the words—it requires one to "lay hold" of wisdom, store it up and not to swerve from her commands (vv. 4–5, 23). It's a commitment that involves one's whole being (vv. 6, 21).

Above all else,
guard your heart,
for everything you
do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23

Another focus for training wise children is to teach them that wisdom and righteousness are two sides of the same coin. One of the most important differences between godly wisdom and human wisdom is that God's wisdom never takes us down the path of the wicked (vv. 14–15). Wisdom is righteousness and folly is sinfulness, by definition, in the same way that light and dark are opposites by nature (vv. 18–19).

One more emphasis in godly childrearing is to teach wise decision-making. The spiritual life often confronts us with choices between two paths. One is the path of wisdom and righteousness and obedience; the other is the path of foolishness and evil and disobedience. One is the path of life; the other is the path of death (vv. 4, 13, 22–23). Wisdom reveals which are the crooked ways and which are the "straight paths" (vv. 11–12, 25–27).

Apply the Word

Building a spiritual heritage with our children is one of the most important callings we have as parents and even grandparents (vv. 3–9). Teaching, discussing, and modeling a life of faith for our children is an example of our own obedience to God's Word. When the time comes for them to leave the nest, godly wisdom is the garland of grace they need!

Pray with Us

Residence Life helps our students during their time at Moody. Please lift up in prayer Neal Anderson, Rachel Monfette, and Bruce Norquist as they interact with hundreds of students every day.

Wisdom Urges Faithfulness in Marriage

The state of sexual morality in America is not good. The number of unmarried couples living together has increased at least tenfold since 1960. Casual sex, “hook-ups,” and “friends with benefits” are more popular than ever.

Against this background, the call of Proverbs 5 to faithfulness in marriage is more timely than ever! God has designed the marriage relationship to be exclusive and fulfilling (vv. 15–20). That is, marriage is one man and one woman, for life (Gen. 2:23–24). A man should be satisfied with his own wife and not led astray by the deceiving pleasures of adultery. The imagery in these verses is clearly sexual, as in the Song of Songs. Being satisfied with your wife’s breasts is as erotic as it sounds (v. 19). The sexual intimacy described in these verses is ultimately relational

intimacy, “never to be shared with strangers” (v. 17; cf. 1 Cor. 7:3–5).

The temptation to sexual immorality promises much but is empty in the end (vv. 1–14). “The lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall” (v. 3–4). A person of discretion is not fooled. The seductress’s path is crooked and leads only to ruin and destruction. To chase after her is to abandon wisdom and self-discipline. Self-control and a spirit open to correction are key to resisting this kind of temptation (vv. 12–14, 23).

The bottom line is that God sees all and is not deceived (vv. 21–23). Sinful ways are a snare and end in death. Foolishness and a lack of self-discipline lead one away from the path of life.

May you rejoice
in the wife of
your youth.

Proverbs 5:18

Apply the Word

One Christian book on marriage is *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*, by Timothy Keller with Kathy Keller (Dutton, 2011). The introduction states that this book is for both married and unmarried people, because all Christians need to understand what the Bible teaches on this important subject.

Pray with Us

We continue to lift up the Residence Life department, specifically residence supervisors—Min Choi, Jill Doyle, Brenton Smith, and Sarah Youssef—who work with resident assistants during the school year.

Applying Wisdom in Everyday Life

A recent CareerBuilder.com survey found that 29 percent of employees admitted skipping work by using a bogus excuse at least once during the year. Among the more amusing excuses received by employers from workers: One said a chicken had attacked his mom. Another said his hair transplant had gone bad. Still another said his foot was caught in the garbage disposal.

These slackers would do well to heed the advice in Proverbs 6, a chapter concerned with practical applications of wisdom in everyday life. One such application is that hard work is preferable over laziness (vv. 6–11). The writer uses the ant as a natural object lesson of diligence—it works hard to gather and store its food. By contrast, a human sluggard can hardly be bothered to get out of bed and is inevitably headed for poverty. (This does not mean that all poor people are lazy; rather, that the sluggard's habits can lead to poverty.)

For this command
is a lamp, this
teaching is a light.

Proverbs 6:23

Another application of wisdom is the advisability of humility (vv. 1–5). Sooner or later, we're all going to be wrong or make a mistake. When we find ourselves in such a position, at the mercy of someone else, the best thing to do is to go to that person immediately and request forgiveness (v. 3).

Pride will only get us into further trouble!

Finally, wisdom can help us resist the temptation of adultery (vv. 20–35). A thief stealing food might have some excuse, but adultery is a more serious offense, displays more foolishness, and

provokes more divine and human anger.

Wisdom recognizes that people reap what they sow (vv. 12–19). Disaster overtakes the wicked, while the righteous are blessed. (Remember, these sayings describe the moral order of things in general, not a certain observable result in every case.)

Apply the Word

When it comes to temptation, if you play with fire, you will get burned (vv. 27–28)! This is a wise principle. Abstinence isn't always the answer—we cannot resist the temptation to greed by avoiding money, for instance, or the temptation to gluttony by avoiding food. But we should be wise and keep as far away from sources of temptation as possible.

Pray with Us

Millions of people hear of Christ's love because of Moody Radio and Moody Publishers. Your prayers will be an encouragement to Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, who oversees these branches.

Portrait of a Foolish Young Adulterer

To trap an animal, one must know its ways, including what it eats and where its hole or den is likely to be found. A bit of cheese or peanut butter in the right place, for example, and a careless mouse is easily caught. The key is to spotlight the bait and hide the consequences.

The same holds true in the case of sexual purity, including marital faithfulness. The foolish young man in today's reading saw only the bait—a willing, beautiful woman—and not the consequences—sin and death. Wisdom would have showed him the truth, protected him from temptation, and strengthened him for righteous obedience (vv. 1–5).

Most of today's reading is a narrative of how the adulteress lays her trap and how the young man falls into it (vv. 6–23). Dressed to entice, she meets him in the street and invites him home for "dinner."

Say to wisdom,
"You are my
sister," and to
insight, "You are
my relative."

Proverbs 7:4

There's no mistaking her real invitation—her husband is away and she asks the young man to join her for a night of love-making. This is apparently her habit, as her busy feet (v. 11) and fragrant spices (v. 17) may be read as euphemisms for sexual activity. In short, this woman is shameless, immodest, smooth-talking, and immoral. The young man is quite simply a fool. Lacking in judgment and seduced by her promises and his own desires, he follows her "like a deer stepping into a noose" (v. 22). This does not make him a victim, because he bears full responsibility for his choice to be seduced.

Following the narrative, the writer again exhorts readers to embrace wisdom (pictured as a woman in the next chapter) and resist such temptations (vv. 24–27). Walking the adulteress's path leads to death, but walking in the way of Wisdom leads to life.

Apply the Word

One key to resisting temptation is godly relationships. If the young man had a stronger relationship with his wife (see Proverbs 5), he would have been better armed against temptation. If he had better friends, they would have advised him against walking down that street. A close relationship with Christ is our best defense for temptation (Heb. 4:15–16).

Pray with Us

Moody Radio's Satellite Network Operations deliver Christ-centered radio programming to areas without Moody Radio stations via satellators. Please add Bassam Beiruti, Andrew Dhuse, and Tracy Haney to your prayer list.

Wisdom Is from the Lord

Wisdom can be seen in a fresh light since the coming of Christ. God's wisdom is pictured in today's reading as being at His side during the work of creation, and the New Testament affirms Christ's role in creation (John 1:1–3; Col. 1:15–17). Christ is called "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:24), as well as the one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3).

In Proverbs 8, Wisdom is personified as a woman calling out an invitation to all who will hear (vv. 1–11). This supremely valuable treasure isn't locked in a bank vault. She isn't hidden or mysterious—wisdom is out there and available for all who will hear and respond. "Those who seek me find me" (v. 17). Wisdom is described as humble, prudent, zealous for righteousness and truth and justice, and thus opposed to all evil words and actions (vv. 12–21). Wisdom fears the Lord,

which one commentator explains as "that affectionate reverence, by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law."

Wisdom is specifically associated with the order and goodness of God's creation (vv. 22–31). She is pictured as a craftsman at God's side. She has been "delighting in mankind" (v. 31) for the entirety of human history, so her invitation in this chapter has an ancient pedigree. Since the New Testament reveals Christ's participation in the work of creation (see above), it is quite possible

here to see a kinship or even identification between our Savior and the personified Wisdom of Proverbs 8.

Wisdom's invitation concludes: "Those who find me find life and receive favor from the LORD" (v. 35). What will our response be?

When he
marked out the
foundations of the
earth . . . I was
constantly at
his side.

Proverbs 8:29–30

Apply the Word

Wisdom is relevant for every person and every aspect of life, but particularly so for the realm of governance and political power (vv. 14–17). Those who would wield power with discretion and justice need godly wisdom. For this reason, among others, we are exhorted to intercede and to give thanks for all those in authority (1 Tim. 2:1–2).

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Satellite Network Operations, we thank God for the service of Eric Hufford, Philip Shappard, and Thomas Svoboda as they help spread the gospel through the airwaves.

Contrasting Invitations of Wisdom and Foolishness

Imagine you've just received two invitations to dine at different restaurants. The first is from the best restaurant in town—outstanding food, great atmosphere, fantastic service. The second is from a dingy dive almost shut down by the health inspector with a reputation for surly staff. Which invitation will you accept?

Yet between the contrasting invitations of wisdom and foolishness in Proverbs 9, we too often make the wrong choice. As if Wisdom's invitation in chapter 8 wasn't attractive enough, this chapter reiterates the stark contrast between wisdom and folly. Wisdom's invitation comes first (vv. 1–6). Personified as a woman, she invites humanity to a banquet at her house, the seven pillars of which most likely symbolize wholeness or perfection. The dinner has been prepared with the best food and wine, and all are welcome. The ignorant or immature will be transformed at her table.

Instruct the wise
and they will be
wiser still.

Proverbs 9:9

Folly, or foolishness, is also personified as a woman but is characterized as undisciplined and without knowledge (vv. 13–18). Whereas Wisdom had actively presented her invitation from the highest point in the city, Folly lazily calls out to passersby. She invites humanity to a very different kind of meal, “stolen . . . food eaten in secret” (v. 17). Just in case we're still not getting the point, we're then introduced to her other guests—dead people! Wisdom's invitation is to life, while Folly's is to the grave.

The meat of this contrast is found in the middle part of the chapter (vv. 7–12). A wise person fears the Lord, accepts instruction and rebuke, and loves learning. A foolish person, by contrast, does not worship the Lord, mocks and insults his teachers, and responds proudly to correction and rebuke.

Apply the Word

Contrasts between life and death, wisdom and folly, and sin and righteousness are found throughout Scripture. Moses pronounced blessings for those who kept God's covenant and curses for those who broke it (Deuteronomy 28). Jesus used the technique of contrast many times, as in the parable of the wise and foolish builders (Luke 6:47–49).

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of education, leads Moody's education branch. Pray for strength and God's reassuring presence to guide him in today's changing world of learning.

The Wise in Heart Accept Commands

From here on out, the book of Proverbs becomes mostly a collection of individual proverbs. The sayings or aphorisms won't necessarily be related to each other; the reading experience will be somewhat like opening up *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*. Our approach, therefore, will be not to exposit passages (since there are few narrative passages) but rather to hit highlights, explore themes, and trace threads of thought in ways appropriate to this literary genre.

A chattering fool
comes to ruin.

Proverbs 10:8

One of the running themes of Proverbs—one that is prominent in today's chapter—is the power of words and control of the tongue. As today's verse says, "The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin" (v. 8). Put simply, the wise listen more and talk less (v. 19). They are humble and teachable rather than full of hot air. Fools, unable to control

their tongues, are run over by their own words. The wise know when to speak and what to say, whereas "the mouth of the wicked [speaks] only what is perverse" (vv. 31–32). This choice comes with consequences: "Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked" (v. 6).

In addition, the wise use the power of their words for good. "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life" (v. 11). "The tongue of the wise is choice silver" (v. 20). "The lips of the righteous nourish many," in the same sense that a shepherd cares for his sheep (v. 21). The words of a fool, on the other hand, are of little worth because they emerge from a sinful heart. They come to nothing, as if their tongues had been cut out. Those who listen to such words, far from being nourished, are left to starve and die.

Apply the Word

A previous devotional studied the issue of words and the tongue in Scripture. Entitled "God's Word, Our Words: A Practical Theology of Language," it can be found on our website, www.todayintheword.com. In fact, by using the "View Devotion Archives" tool near the bottom of the page, you can read any past issue.

Pray with Us

Please uphold in prayer our Communications department faculty in Chicago: Angela Brown, Rosalie de Rosset, David Fetzer, Karyn Hecht, and Jamie Janosz. Praise God for their dedication in training and mentoring students.

With Humility Comes Wisdom

Augustine said in a sermon: “Thou art thinking to construct some mighty fabric in height; first think of the foundation of humility. And how great soever a mass of building one may wish and design to place above it, the greater the building is to be, the deeper does he dig its foundation. . . . Dig this foundation of lowliness deep in thee, and so wilt thou attain to the crowning top of charity.”

The book of Proverbs consistently groups pride and wickedness with foolishness, and humility and righteousness with wisdom.

This is clearly seen in today’s reading, especially in a series of four proverbs, each of which uses antithesis, a kind of parallelism that pairs contrasting statements (vv. 18–21; cf. vv. 4–8). The first part of the proverb affirms a truth, the second part affirms a contrasting truth, and upon reflection both are seen to be examples of a larger truth.

When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

Proverbs 11:2

For example, verse 18 begins, “A wicked person earns deceptive wages,” meaning that the results of sin, despite sinners’ foolish expectations, are not good. It finishes, “but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward,” meaning that the results of virtue are good. The larger truth here is that we reap what we sow. The next proverb focuses on the same idea and highlights the contrasting results: “Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death” (v. 19).

The next two proverbs shift the emphasis to God’s perspective (vv. 20–21). The Lord “delights in” righteous people but “detests” the wicked. In the end, He will make sure that justice is done and that people reap what they sow. We are all on a road to somewhere—the question is what road, why did we choose it, and where does it lead.

Apply the Word

To learn humility, and with it wisdom and righteousness, we look first to the perfect model (Phil. 2:5–11). For Jesus to become a human being was a big step down! Then “he humbled himself” even further “by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” Yet in the end, just as in the proverbs above, His righteous actions led to a just reward.

Pray with Us

Continuing to pray for the Communications faculty, we support Brian Kammerzelt, Maria Mocuta, Jill White, Curtis Wilkinson, and Kelli Worrall. May God bless them for their ministry to our students, future Christian workers in media.

The House of the Righteous Stands Firm

As you may know, the order of books in our English Old Testament is different from their order in the Hebrew canon. There, the book of Proverbs is followed by the book of Ruth. This fact has led some commentators to see the “wife of noble character” (v. 4, as well as the well-known passage beginning in Prov. 31:10) as pointing to Ruth (see Ruth 3:11). That is, Ruth may be seen as a real-life example of an idealized description. “Noble character” is on display in the faith, choices, and actions of her daily life.

As we’ve seen, biblical proverbs touch on all areas of life. That’s why this book is often considered the most practical book in the Bible. Marriage and family are just two among many daily life topics (vv. 4, 7). Another is the power of words and control of the tongue, which we discussed two days ago and which receives significant emphasis again here (vv. 6, 13, 14, 17–19, 22, 23, 25).

Much of daily life can be framed in terms of relationships. The most important, of course, is our relationship with God (vv. 2, 22). As we move through the routines and interactions of an average day, it’s worth remembering that the Lord is on the side of virtue and honesty. What about our relationships with others? Because not everyone is what they appear to be, Proverbs recommends caution in friendship (v. 26). Because we always learn more by listening, we are advised to

be humble and responsive to others’ advice and correction (vv. 1, 15). Because so much of our time is spent working with others, diligence, hard work, and good stewardship are held up as exemplary qualities (vv. 11, 24, 27). Our characters are on display even in how we treat animals (v. 10).

Good people
obtain favor from
the LORD.

Proverbs 12:2

Apply the Word

A topical notebook can be useful in studying Proverbs. A page might be headed “Marriage” or “Work” or “Words” or “Two Paths.” As you read and encounter verses on these different topics, you can jot them down under the appropriate heading. This can be a helpful way to get a bigger picture about what Proverbs is saying on a given topic.

Pray with Us

Please pray for students across all Moody campuses, and specifically for those attending the Day One event that allows future students to have a taste of what an undergraduate education is like at Moody Bible Institute.

Walk with the Wise and Become Wise

Cultural proverbs are a storehouse of community wisdom. For example, here are several proverbs about friendship: “It is better to be in chains with friends, than to be in a garden with strangers” (Persian). “Hold a true friend with both your hands” (Nigerian). “The death of a friend is equivalent to the loss of a limb” (German). And, “When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends” (Japanese).

Today’s reading likewise advises, “walk with the wise and become wise” (v. 20). Friendship is a key area in which wisdom can be seen. To choose the right friend both shows character and develops it. Another area in which wisdom can be seen is in how a person responds to friendly advice and instruction. To fail to heed correction is proud (v. 1). To take offense or start a quarrel is foolish (v. 10). The wise do not make these mistakes.

The teaching
of the wise is a
fountain of life,
turning a person
from the snares
of death.

Proverbs 13:14

We’ve already mentioned how the content of proverbs covers every area of life. Similarly, the literary form of the proverb is quite broad. A proverb might be a general maxim, such as the comment that righteousness tends to be blessed and wickedness is not (v. 25). It might be explicit moral instruction—a wise person acts one way, a fool another (v. 16). It might be an observation on a psychological or emotional event: “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life” (v. 12).

More than a few proverbs offer practical economic counsel, such as that the best way to save is slowly but surely (v. 11). Many offer consequences-based moral exhortations or warnings, as in verse 3: “Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.”

Apply the Word

Yesterday we suggested keeping a topical notebook in order to sort out all the observations, advice, and moral principles contained in the book of Proverbs. Today here is an idea to help keep the big picture or main theme in mind: In every chapter, every proverb, we need to ask, “What does this tell me about godly wisdom?”

Pray with Us

Ken Heullitt, chief financial officer, would appreciate prayer and praise for God’s faithful provision for Moody. We continue to trust God in these challenging times to meet Moody’s financial needs through our faithful supporters.

Whoever Fears the Lord Walks Uprightly

The ancient philosopher Aristotle divided virtues into two categories—virtues of intellect and virtues of character. Cultivating the first leads to practical wisdom, and cultivating the second leads to moral goodness. These two types of virtue cannot be separated in practice; for either to be developed, they have to be developed together.

In the book of Proverbs, wisdom and foolishness are not morally or spiritually neutral, but are always associated with virtue and vice. To do the wise thing is to do the right thing. Exploring today's chapter (or any chapter of Proverbs, for that matter) for specific examples of virtues and vices can provide us with a substantial portrait of wisdom-in-action.

So, what do we learn from today's reading about virtue and vice? A virtuous person is constructive (v. 1) and content (v. 30). She fears the Lord (vv. 2,

26). He knows how to control his tongue (v. 3). She speaks truth (vv. 5, 25). He reflects carefully before acting (v. 8), thinks critically (v. 15), and demonstrates discernment (vv. 6–7). She works hard (v. 23). He shows prudence (v. 8) and patience (v. 29). She shows care for the future (v.

22), for the needy (vv. 21, 31), and for the created world (v. 4). By contrast, a wicked person is destructive, envious, dishonest, deceptive (vv. 16–17), reckless, unrepentant (v. 9), and proud. The fool is supremely self-centered (v. 12)—oppressing the

poor, caring nothing for others, and despising the Lord.

What's at stake is nothing less than life and death (vv. 11–12, 14, 19, 26–27). Sooner or later, wicked and foolish people reap the consequences of their actions and come to no good end. Wise and virtuous people, on the other hand, are rewarded and flourish. Wisdom is indeed a "fountain of life"!

Whoever fears
the LORD has a
secure fortress.

Proverbs 14:26

Apply the Word

The virtue of prudence might seem old-fashioned today (vv. 8, 15, 18). If we use the term at all these days, it tends to be in reference to finances, but its full meaning is much richer. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "The ability to recognize and follow the most suitable or sensible course of action. . . . In early use: the wisdom to see what is virtuous."

Pray with Us

Lawrence Beach from the Copy Center comes to the top of our prayer requests today. Thank God for his service and pray that he is encouraged in his day-to-day interaction with staff and students.

Question and Answer

By David Rim, Professor of Theology

Q

Can Satan read our minds?

A

In his well-known work, *The Screwtape Letters*, C. S. Lewis warned his readers of two extreme attitudes toward

Satan: to ignore him as if he did not exist, or to be obsessed with him as if he was all-important. Does Satan have power over believers? And what should be our position toward him?

Scripture provides enough information concerning Satan to enable believers to stand against him. We know that Satan's all-consuming desire is to dominate and rule over all of God's creation, especially those who are created in His image. To accomplish this, he is able and willing to tempt (Gen. 3:15), blind our minds (2 Cor. 4:4), cause physical and mental illness (Luke 8:28), possess (Matt. 12:22), lie and murder (John 8:44), torment (2 Cor. 12:7), and place thoughts in people's minds (John 13:2). This last power is especially relevant for the question at hand: if Satan can place thoughts in our minds, can he read them as well?

Since the Bible does not seem to directly address this question, we need to consider the relevant issues. On the one hand, as a created being Satan can never possess power over the minds of individuals to the same degree as God. If Satan knew what was in the heart of man, it must be in a manner distinctly unlike God. Perhaps centuries of observation and study has given him

extensive knowledge of how man thinks. But on the other hand, the degree of control Satan can exercise over an individual is not merely a matter of his powers. There is a subjective element here. A person can hand over areas of his or her life to demonic influence whereby Satan's domain over them increases. For example, anger that leads to sin can become a beachhead for Satan and his forces to invade our lives (Eph. 4:27). One can infer from this that believers who diligently guard their hearts against resentment and unforgiveness do not allow him room to maneuver. Besides bitterness, one can include sexual immorality, an obsession with the occult, and abuse (for both the abuser and the abused) as doorways for satanic influence.

Thus, the answer to this question is specific to an individual. If we are talking about people who have subjugated their lives to Satan through open rebellion against God, then Satan possesses enough control whereby he can read the very thoughts he has placed in their hearts. But a person who submits his mind to the truth of God and resists the evil one (James 4:7) has aligned his spirit with the Spirit of God. For such individuals, the freedom of Satan is constrained by the mystery of divine permission (Job 1–2). As it was for the apostle Paul, demonic “thorns” are allowed only for us to experience more of divine grace.

No discussion of Satan's powers should end without an affirmation of the cross

Continued on next page

Scripture provides enough information concerning Satan to enable believers to stand against him.

Continued from previous page

of Jesus Christ, which has forever broken his greatest power over humanity: death. An empty grave on a Sunday morning signals the triumphant call that death has lost its sting, and with it, Satan's greatest weapon.



Why are there so many differing denominations and theologies within the Christian faith?



Toward the end of His ministry, Jesus prayed that His future followers would exhibit such unity that the world who witnessed it would realize that this harmony could only come from above. Even a cursory glance, however, into Christianity today reveals fragmentation and division.

On the broad level, Christianity consists of three major branches: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. On a more narrow level, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary identifies 41,000 denominations worldwide. The same diversity that exists organizationally also exists theologically. Even within the same movement, such as evangelicalism, there is disagreement on many issues, from our view of God to our understanding of salvation to how we are to perceive the Bible.

The diversity is so pervasive that Catholic apologists like Scott Hahn suggest that this is what happens when Christians forsake an infallible source of

interpretation like the Pope. He argues that what is needed is not merely an infallible text, but an infallible interpreter. Protestant scholars reject the implications of Hahn's reasoning. Kevin Vanhoozer notes that it is one thing to posit the truthfulness of the Bible, but another to say what that truth is. D. A. Carson laments the "disturbing array of mutually incompatible theological options."

Naturally, there is disagreement over how to understand the disagreements. But what if the diversity of our faith is not a sign of a lack of clarity in God's Word nor the inability of God's Spirit to guide us into all truth, but a reflection of the richness of our faith? What if the diversity of faith is a divinely designed means of opening as many kinds of doors for people of all cultures, languages, and socioeconomic status to enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ? What if the diversity of faith is a divinely appointed opportunity for us to accept the differences among us in love as a praise offering to a God who saves both the Jews and the Gentiles (Rom. 15:5-6)?

Perhaps this is the kind of unity that Jesus was praying for, not a uniformity of doctrine and practice, but a kind of love that flourishes precisely because of the disagreements. Just as each differing flower contributes to the beauty of a floral arrangement and just as each section of the orchestra adds to the harmony of the symphony, so perhaps each differing denomination and theology is required to speak of the overflowing grace of God who died on a cross for sinful people like us.

The Path of Life Leads Upward for the Wise

In “The Road Not Taken,” poet Robert Frost reflected on the significance of a choice. Walking in the woods one day, he came to a fork in the path. He could not see what lay ahead in either direction. Which way should he go? In the end, he chose “the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference.”

Two contrasting paths is a common picture in the wisdom literature of Scripture. Just as Proverbs gives us a portrait of the godly person who takes the first path, it also gives us a picture of the sinner who takes the second path. What might that second picture look like, based on today’s chapter? A fool has a poor relationship with his parents (vv. 5, 20). He spurns discipline and correction (vv. 10, 12, 31–32). The things he loves are stupid or evil or both (vv. 14, 21). The words he says are harsh (v. 1), deceitful (v. 4),

ignorant (v. 7), quarrelsome (v. 18), and impetuous (v. 28)—and since “the mouth of the fool gushes” (v. 2), there are a lot of them!

Comparison proverbs make even better sense in light of the two paths (see vv. 16–17). The general form of this type of proverb is, “Better is A with X than B with Y.” A is usually an apparently negative quality, activity, or circumstance, with B as an apparently positive opposite. X is usually a genuinely positive quality, activity, or circumstance, with Y as an opposite, resulting in a reversed perception of A

and B. For example, in verse 16, A is “a little” (materially) and B is “great wealth.” B seems preferable. But add in X as “fear of the Lord” and Y as “turmoil” and the perception flips. A right relationship with God is far more valuable than financial wealth!

The LORD detests
the way of the
wicked, but
he loves those
who pursue
righteousness.

Proverbs 15:9

Apply the Word

Here is another good overall study question for Proverbs: “What does this tell me about God?” He sees and knows all (v. 11). He loves righteousness and hates wickedness (vv. 8–9). He supports the poor, opposes the proud (v. 25), loves the pure-minded (v. 26), and hears the prayers of the righteous (vv. 8, 29).

Pray with Us

Please pray for Lloyd Dodson, vice president of Human Resources. Your prayers are important for him and his team, as they hire and train staff who are committed to bringing the gospel to the world.

The Lord Works Out Everything for His Own Ends

Saparmurat Niyazov was the proud dictator of Turkmenistan from 1985 until he died in 2006. Cities, buildings, and even months and days of the week were named after him and his family. He wrote a spiritual guidebook and required the nation to read it. Statues and portraits of him were everywhere. One gold-plated 50-foot statue rotated 360 degrees every 24 hours so that the sun always shone on his face.

Today's reading has bad news for such people: "The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished" (v. 5). "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (v. 18). "Better to be lowly in spirit and among the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud" (v. 19). Because God is the sovereign ruler of all, His justice always prevails. This doesn't always happen when and how we wish,

but that's because God's thoughts and plans are incomprehensibly above ours.

God's sovereignty is a running theme through the book of Proverbs. We can make plans, but whether or not they happen is up to the Lord (vv. 1, 9). For this reason, we should make our plans in submission to Him (v. 3), especially since He already knows all our thoughts and motives (v. 2). Americans have our own proverb for this: "Man proposes, but God disposes." Since God is the One who sets the standards, He rules

over both ordinary citizens and kings (vv. 10–15). Even the wicked are somehow part of God's plan (v. 4), as we see everywhere in Scripture, from Joseph (Gen. 50:20) to Jesus (Acts 2:23–24). This is why nothing that happens is random chance, even if it appears that way. God is always in control (v. 33).

Commit to the LORD
whatever you do.

Proverbs 16:3

Apply the Word

After reading today's chapter, human planning might appear pointless: "the Lord works everything to its proper end" (v. 4). But there is also advice such as "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans" (v. 3). Wise choices and plans are important, but not as significant as our pride makes them out to be. Humility holds all plans with open hands.

Pray with Us

Again focusing our prayers on Human Resources, set aside some time to pray for Jill Douglas, David Fogal, Mia Gale, and Luci Harris. We appreciate their efforts in providing support for employees and students at Moody in Chicago.

A Discerning Person Keeps Wisdom in View

For thousands of years, gold and silver have been refined through a process called cupellation. Metal ore is placed in specially-designed dishes called cupels and heated in a furnace to temperatures exceeding 1,760 degrees Fahrenheit. Base metals and impurities are oxidized, while the pure gold and silver remain.

Verse 3 in today's reading compares this refining or purifying process to how God works in our hearts. This type of proverb makes use of metaphor, a figure of speech that uses one realm to signify another. In this case, the material realm of metals and furnaces stands in for the spiritual realm and God's testing (cf. 1 Thess. 2:4). Since our hearts are sinful, they need purifying, just as gold and silver need to be separated from baser metals. This purifying process can be painful, but the results are worth it. The Lord is actively working in us to cleanse us from sin.

Even fools are
thought wise if
they keep silent.

Proverbs 17:28

Another type of proverb you've no doubt noticed makes use of simile, which is similar to metaphor but uses "like" or "as" to make the comparison. Verse 14, for example, says, "Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out." The simile speaks for itself, indicating a relatively small action with escalating consequences. The first-half comparison is then the basis for the second-half advice, which amounts to "so don't do it" or "you should know better."

Still another type of saying found in Proverbs 17 is the ironic observation. In this kind of parallelism, both halves of the proverb say essentially the same thing (as opposed to comparing, contrasting, or developing an idea). Irony is a kind of dry humor that notices gaps between expectations and reality. Today's verse is a well-known and amusing example!

Apply the Word

"Drop the matter before a dispute breaks out" (v. 14) is good advice, but what if it's too late? Can the relationship be restored? Yes, because God's love is greater than human foolishness and sin (v. 9; cf. Prov. 10:12). To "cover over an offense" is not to cover it up or just forget about it—this phrase means to blanket the offense with true forgiveness.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers for Human Resources, please remember Jean Jacobsen, Michael Lin, Serene Velasco, and Peter Miller. Thank the Lord for their desire to bring people on board who are excited about serving Christ and His kingdom at Moody.

A Friend Who Sticks Closer Than a Brother

Proverbs from around the world convey wisdom about relationships: “It is better to weep with wise men than to laugh with fools” (Spanish). “Tell me who your friend is, and I will tell you who you are” (Turkish). “A man should choose a friend who is better than himself” (Chinese). “A friend in need is a friend indeed” comes to us in English from Latin.

Relationships and especially friendships are recurring themes in the book of Proverbs (v. 24). So we suggest a third overall question for this month’s study: The first is, “What does this tell me about godly wisdom?” The second is, “What does this tell me about God?” The third is, “What does this tell me about godly relationships?”

Proverbs 18 gives half a dozen negative and positive proverbs on this issue. Negatively, the chapter begins by observing that an “unfriendly person pursues selfish ends” (v. 1). The word “unfriendly” is quite strong, suggest-

ing “antisocial.” To cut oneself off from community leads to self-centeredness. Another proverb warns against gossip (v. 8). Talking behind people’s backs, while pleasurable or addictive in a perverse way, is mean-spirited and harmful to all involved. A third saying describes a “brother wronged” as “more unyielding than a fortified city” (v. 19). The implied advice is to avoid giving offense or to be quick to settle conflicts.

Positively, we’re reminded again that humility is better than pride (v. 12). Wise friends enjoy the freedom to correct and rebuke one another. Another maxim promotes attentive listening (v. 13). It is both wise and respectful to treat people as though their words have value. A final proverb testifies that to find a good spouse is to receive a gift from the Lord (v. 22). “Marriage should be honored by all” (Heb. 13:4).

An unfriendly
person pursues
selfish ends.

Proverbs 18:1

Apply the Word

Following up on verse 19 and yesterday’s “Apply the Word,” do you need to be reconciled to any brother or sister in Christ with whom you have unfinished business? Is there a sin that needs forgiving, anger to be repented of, or a wrong to confess? Don’t wait. We all need to do our best to make matters right as soon as possible (Matt. 5:23–24).

Pray with Us

Please be in prayer for Christine Gorz, vice president of Corporate Communications. May the Holy Spirit give guidance and encouragement as she oversees various ministries and dozens of employees at Moody.

The One Who Loves Wisdom Loves Life

Certain stock characters are found throughout many kinds of narratives. No doubt we have all read stories or seen movies with a gallant hero, a damsel in distress, a star-crossed lover, a traitorous friend, a stingy rich man, an evil stepmother, a jolly fat man, or a noble outlaw (think Robin Hood). We know what to expect from these predictable characters.

As you've probably already noticed this month, stock characters are found in Proverbs as well. They include the sluggard, the adulteress, the quarrelsome wife, the noble wife, the disobedient son, and the wise king. These predictable figures are part of how the moral and spiritual lessons are taught.

The *Literary Study Bible* suggests that Proverbs 19 and 20 may be seen as "an extended description of how to fail at life—a composite portrait of the archetypal loser." In today's reading, what

does this portrait include? What qualifies one as a fool? For starters, evil and perverse speech (v. 1). A loser's words are dishonest (vv. 5, 9, 28), pathetic (v. 7), quarrelsome (v. 13), or mocking (vv. 25, 29). He acts hastily rather than considering his ways (v. 2). She doesn't listen to others (vv. 20, 27). He is impatient and takes offense easily (v. 11). She is lazy (vv. 15, 24). If a parent, a fool fails to discipline his children (v. 18); if a child, she fails to respect or obey her parents (v. 26). A loser is unkind to the poor (v. 17). Finally, rather than taking

responsibility, a fool blames God for everything (v. 3).

This portrait includes consequences and contrasts, as seen in today's verse (v. 8). To get wisdom is to love your own life, so by implication to live as a fool is a kind of irrational self-hatred. How much better it is to live in the fear of the Lord (v. 23)!

The one who
cherishes
understanding will
soon prosper.

Proverbs 19:8

Apply the Word

What does it mean to love your own life? The greatest commandment says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37). If we trust Him with all we are and do, and believe that His love and wisdom know what's best, then faith-in-action ends up being love for our own lives.

Pray with Us

Event and Guest Services, under the oversight of Christine Gorz, offer staff, students, and guests excellent service and gracious hospitality. May God bless Brandon Chism, Stacey Craelius, Joy Gruber, Nancy Holec, and Julie Jackson.

Even Small Children Are Known by Their Actions

Naaman, commander of the army of Syria, suffered from leprosy. His cure began with the faithful witness of a captured Israelite slave girl (2 Kings 5). The girl spoke of the prophet Elisha and the power of the one true God to heal her master. That's exactly what happened, and to this day this child's actions are preserved in the witness of Scripture.

Today's verse takes on added significance in light of all the parent-child advice we've already seen in Proverbs (as in chapter 3). But there's more to it than just a direct truth for children—there's an implied truth for adults as well (v. 11).

If "even small children are known by their actions," how much more so adults! That is, what's true for children is even more true for adults, underscoring the importance of pursuing "pure and right" conduct. If they do, their children will be blessed (v. 7).

The righteous
lead blameless
lives; blessed are
their children
after them.

Proverbs 20:7

In ancient Near Eastern culture, the relationship between king and people was not unlike the relationship between parents and children. The responsibilities of kingship or leadership are another running theme in the book of Proverbs. In those days, a king's word was law.

Verse 2 highlights the power of a king and the consequentiality of his choices. To be fair and just, he must be responsible, observant, and alert when using his authority (v. 8). The picture of winnowing wheat from chaff shows what he must do (v. 26). The fate of a nation hangs on his ability to discern

and decide right from wrong. One might think that the king's position depended on strength or dominance, but in fact it depends on his relationship with his people. Ideally this is a relationship of love, loyalty, and trust (v. 28), as in God's covenant relationship with His people.

Apply the Word

While consistently describing and recommending righteousness, Proverbs also acknowledges that the human heart is sinful and cannot claim to be pure (v. 9). Humble self-examination is part of a life of wisdom. But who can truly understand their own heart (v. 24)? Only God can see our depths. Our self-examination must include prayer and confession of sin.

Pray with Us

Continuing our prayers of thanksgiving for Event and Guest Services, please add Brenda McCord, Susan Pineda, Christina Kimball, Carmel Swift, Sonya Valeff, and Traci Wappes to your prayer list.

The Lord Weighs the Heart

People who enjoy puzzles like the challenge of figuring out how things mesh, what goes where, what visual clues or shapes match up, and how details fit together to make a big picture.

There are biblical proverbs especially for these people! The translation might be uncertain or unclear. The social or cultural background might be obscured by history. The reference to everyday life that made sense at one time is now mystifying. Careful study is needed to solve the puzzle. Today, we'll consider three examples of such proverbs.

A first puzzle is one of meaning (v. 18). What does it mean to say, "The wicked become a ransom for the righteous"? Why do the righteous need to be ransomed? Have they done something wrong? Why do they need a substitute? Or is it just a rescue? In the end, this saying may suggest something

like Proverbs 11:8: "The righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead."

A second puzzle is one of interest (v. 9). To say "A quarrelsome spouse is unpleasant" is obvious. What's interesting here is the imagery used to underscore the point about our relationships. A mansion is not a blessing if we have to share it with someone with whom we cannot live in harmony.

There is no
wisdom, no
insight, no plan
that can succeed
against the LORD.

Proverbs 21:30

A final puzzle is one of sinful advice (v. 14). This proverb seems to recommend bribery, yet other proverbs say bribes are bad (17:23). Linguistically and culturally, the differences between a "gift" and a "bribe" aren't altogether clear. In context, the key seems to be whether it perverts justice or not. If not, it may be a legitimate strategy for appeasing someone's anger.

Apply the Word

Author Gary Chapman, in his classic book, *The 5 Love Languages*, has identified "gifts" as one way that people experience love. Emotionally, a person might express love by giving gifts or feel loved in receiving gifts. This is what "fills their love tank." Is this the love language of anyone you know?

Pray with Us

Collin Lambert, vice president of Moody Radio, oversees the operations of Moody Radio stations all over the country. Remember him in your prayers as we come together to lift up Moody's 36 owned and operated radio stations.

Humility and the Fear of the Lord

Today we finish the main collection of Solomon's proverbs (chap. 10–22), so it's a good time to recall how he became so wise. Solomon's wisdom wasn't just a product of natural ability, education, or power, though these factors may have played a role. His wisdom was a special gift from the Lord, given to the young king when he ascended the throne of his father David (see 1 Kings 3–4).

This is also a good time to review the key themes we've encountered so far in the book of Proverbs. One theme we've seen throughout this collection is the stark contrast between virtue and vice. Proverbs have a habit of dividing the world up into two categories—wisdom and folly, righteousness and wickedness, humility and pride, virtue and vice. In today's reading, we again see a number of qualities held up as interrelated virtues, including prudence, humility, fear of the Lord, good parenting, thrift, generosity,

gracious speech, purity, and wisdom. And likewise we again see a number of qualities held up as interrelated vices, including laziness, adultery, injustice, unfaithfulness, mockery, and folly.

A second theme is that the righteous are blessed while the wicked are punished: "whoever sows wickedness reaps trouble" (v. 8), but "The generous will themselves be blessed" (v. 9). As another example, humility and fear of the Lord: "its wages are riches and honor and life" (v. 4). Remember, these bless-

ings may or may not be literal or material; the proverb simply presents a general truth in a way we can understand.

A third theme is the sovereignty of God. He made all (v. 2), sees all (v. 12), rules all, ensures justice, is the source of all wisdom, and deserves our worship. "To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen" (Rom. 16:27).

Rich and poor
have this in
common: The LORD
is the Maker of
them all.

Proverbs 22:2

Apply the Word

What general themes or specific proverbs have meant the most to you this month? What unanswered questions do you still have about godly wisdom? If you were to tell a friend about what matters in Proverbs, what would you say? Today is a good day to reflect on and pray over what God has been teaching you through His Word.

Pray with Us

Scott Curtis, James Haan, and Jack Haveman serve at Moody Radio West Michigan. As listeners turn to them for encouragement, may their hearts also be encouraged while they reach out to their community.

By Wisdom a House Is Built

In his recent book, *Rich, Free, and Miserable: The Failure of Success in America*, author John Brueggemann explores “market thinking,” that is, the tendency to evaluate everything in terms of efficiency, productivity, and profit. It has invaded every aspect of American life, often at the cost of cherished moral values and nonmaterial priorities.

Anyone familiar with the book of Proverbs knows that material success doesn’t lead to happiness (23:4–5). The path of wisdom is the superior choice (24:14). Today’s reading is a

section of Proverbs known as the “Sayings of the Wise.” This is a separate collection by unknown authors, and the form and content has parallels with Egyptian wisdom literature of that day. Following the introduction (22:17–21), and excluding an extra group of proverbs at the end (24:23–34), there are “thirty sayings” (22:20) or proverbs of varying lengths between Proverbs 22:22–24:22.

Pay attention and
turn your ear to
the sayings of
the wise.

Proverbs 22:17

Interestingly, these sayings are mostly framed as negative imperatives, that is, as advice not to do something. This is usually followed by a reason or consequence, making it more likely that the listener or reader will heed the advice. For example, we’re told not to accept a stingy person’s food, because such a person is worried about the cost and not extending true hospitality (23:6–8).

The moral order that was created by the Lord is quite logical. Wisdom = obedience = God’s idea of what’s best for us. For instance, we’re told not to exploit the poor because God is their advocate (22:23–24; cf. 23:10–11). Because the poor are vulnerable, we might be tempted to think we could get away with injustice. The reminder that we’re accountable to God gives us additional motivation to do the right thing.

Apply the Word

The verses in Proverbs on the value of wisdom would make a good study of their own! Meditating on Proverbs 24:3–7, 13–14 from today’s reading reveals several benefits. “By wisdom a house is built” is sound advice for any endeavor. “Wisdom is like honey for you” points to its internal benefits for our souls.

Pray with Us

Moody Radio Cleveland is operated by Mark Zimmerman, Richard Lee, and Douglas Hainer. Let’s ask God to give them strength and perseverance as they help their listeners to take the next step in their relationship with Christ.

Apples of Gold in Settings of Silver

Hezekiah led a spiritual revival as king of Judah in the years 715 to 686 B.C. "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done." He removed high places, destroyed idols, and worshiped God. "He held fast to the LORD and did not cease to follow him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses" (2 Kings 18–20).

One of the projects Hezekiah must have organized during this revival, though we don't know exactly when or how, was the fresh collection of Solomon's sayings (v. 1) found in Proverbs 25–29. These proverbs continue to be characterized by memorable phrasing, concrete images, striking language, and a focus on everyday human experience.

Proverbs 25 features a number of particularly vivid similes. As you'll recall, similes are comparisons between one domain and another that use "like" or

"as." The purpose of the comparison is to help us see a familiar activity or principle in a new light or with new insight. An example is the picture of "clouds and wind without rain" compared to a "one who boasts of gifts never given" (v. 14). This image draws its power from everyday life. Empty promises are unfortunately as common—and usually disappointing—as clouds without rain.

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.

Proverbs 25:28

Another example is the striking picture of "a city whose walls are broken through" compared to a "person who lacks self-control" (v. 28). Such a person is spiritually weak and vulnerable to attack. A final example is the picture of "apples of gold in settings of silver," a beautiful image for a "ruling rightly given" (v. 11; compare v. 23). Wise words are "apples of gold," but they don't truly sparkle until they're said to the right person in the right place at the right time. Context is everything.

Apply the Word

What "apples of gold in settings of silver" are part of your spiritual history? What wise words have people said to you at just the right time that made a real difference? We need to remember and give thanks for these. Another question for prayerful reflection: What "apples of gold in settings of silver" have you spoken into the lives of others?

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for Moody Radio Cleveland, let's support Alice Andrews, Gary Bittner, and Paul Carter in prayer as they inspire listeners to deepen their walk with God on a daily basis.

As a Door Turns on Its Hinges

“Laughter is the best medicine,” they say, and it’s true. Humor and laughter decrease pain, improve heart function, and boost the immune system. According to one source, even a simple thing like “a good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.”

Many biblical proverbs are humorous—we hope you’ve laughed out loud more than once this month! Today’s chapter, like yesterday’s, features memorable similes that are also quite funny. One example is today’s verse comparing “a proverb in the mouth of a fool” to “a thornbush in a drunkard’s hand” (v. 9; compare v. 10). The image is vivid and ridiculous, and it gets the point across clearly. A drunk stumbling around with a thornbush in his hands would be pointless, out of control, dangerous to himself and others, and rather pathetic. So also is a fool trying to appear wise.

Like a thornbush in
a drunkard’s hand
is a proverb in the
mouth of a fool.

Proverbs 26:9

Another example is, “As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly” (v. 11). Did you feel uncomfortable with the picture but still smile at the second part? That’s the general idea. This proverb makes use of what we might call “gross humor” from everyday life to make the point that foolish people don’t learn from experience. They repeat their mistakes in the same disgusting way that a dog returns to its vomit. Peter used this image to criticize false teachers (2 Peter 2:21–22).

A final example is the sarcastic observation, “As a door turns on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed” (v. 14; cf. vv. 13–16). Just as doors and hinges are closely attached, so also are lazy people to their beds. They might roll over—like a door opens—but they’re not getting up or going anywhere! The modern idiom would be “couch potato.”

Apply the Word

Humor is a big part of American culture, from comedies on television to jokes during political speeches. But even as we enjoy the humor of Proverbs, we should also be careful. Not every time or context is the right place for a joke. “Like a maniac shooting flaming arrows of death is one who deceives their neighbor and says, ‘I was only joking!’” (vv. 18–19).

Pray with Us

Would you remember Moody’s president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, in prayer? May God give him resolve, assurance, guidance, and grace in his numerous leadership responsibilities at Moody.

Wounds from a Friend Can Be Trusted

Christian musician Glenn Kaiser wrote a memorable blues song about “Self-Control” that includes these lyrics: “It’s the thing I lack most and it puts me in a bind / The wise possess it, it brings them peace of mind / Down in my soul, I need self-control / Without it my mouth says terrible things / Without it my hands work selfishness . . . Down in our soul, we need self-control.”

It takes self-control to resist provocation by a fool (v. 3; cf. Prov. 26:4–5). If we answer seriously, we give too much weight to their words.

But if we respond angrily or scornfully, we’ve sunk to their level. That’s why this proverb pictures the decision as a heavy burden. Its parallelism compares the physical burden of sand or stone to the emotional and spiritual burden of answering a fool.

Parallelism can also make its point via reversed expectations. An example is, “Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but

an enemy multiplies kisses” (v. 6; cf. v. 17). To match negative with positive, and vice versa, makes us stop and think. We realize things may not be as they appear. It depends on the identity of the giver. Something that feels like a wound, if from a friend, is ultimately for our good and can be trusted; but kisses, if from an enemy, should be doubted.

As iron sharpens
iron, so one
person sharpens
another.

Proverbs 27:17

Another way parallelism can work is by developing in unexpected or surprising directions. Verse 21, for example, begins with a picture we’ve seen

before, that of a blazing furnace for refining precious metals. So we expect it will be about something that is painful but has a positive result—and indeed, it’s about testing. The surprise is the content of the test, something pleasant. This spurs reflection, upon which we realize that praise from others is indeed a test of character and a temptation to pride.

Apply the Word

As we’ve been learning this month, wisdom is flexible, depending on the situation, context, and audience to determine whether something is wise or foolish. Notice the apparently well-intentioned blessing in verse 14. The timing is terrible—it’s too early in the morning! May our pursuit of wisdom include a godly sense of context and relationships.

Pray with Us

Timothy Arens, dean of students, and his assistant Melissa King in Student Development welcome your prayers today. We thank God for all the support and help our undergraduate students in Chicago receive from the Student Development Office.

A Driving Rain That Leaves No Crops

Arloa Sutter understood the biblical mandate of the gospel to address spiritual and physical needs. She founded Breakthrough Urban Ministries in 1992 by opening up a room in a church to offer hot coffee and a meal to homeless people in the area. Today, Breakthrough operates two homeless shelters, a youth development program, and a food pantry in a needy neighborhood in Chicago. In 2007, Arloa was given the Moody Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award.

The book of Proverbs reveals a strong, practical connection between wisdom and social justice. What does today's chapter teach us about this? First, it mandates a kind attitude to the poor (v. 8). Oppressing or exploiting the poor is obviously unjust (v. 3), but stinginess is also unjust. True justice counsels those with resources to be not only fair but generous (v. 27).

Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.

Proverbs 28:5

Second, a just leader understands that power is not a tool for domination (v. 3). It is a gift with a purpose. A wise leader is responsible to keep order for the benefit of all. To use power for personal gain is obviously unjust (v. 16), but even using power to keep power is unjust. In that situation, things are unstable—the whole country is filled with little “rulers,” doing as they please (v. 2). A tyrant is like an aggressive wild animal (v. 15), whereas a wise king is the shepherd of his people.

Third, wisdom and justice are part of a panoply of virtues (vv. 12, 28). That is, they are not isolated qualities but are linked with many other virtues. Just as one cannot be both wise and wicked, so also one cannot be truly just and immoral at the same time. Justice, like wisdom, begins with the fear of the Lord (vv. 14, 26). That's why only “those who seek the Lord understand it fully” (v. 5).

Apply the Word

“Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe” (v. 26). Where is your trust today? Is it in your savings and retirement accounts? In your good health or good job? Is it simply trusting your gut instincts? Pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit to walk in wisdom—trusting in God alone.

Pray with Us

Would you add executive vice president and chief operating officer Steven Mogck to your prayers today? Ask the Lord to sustain Steven and give him energy in all that he does overseeing day-to-day operations of Moody's many ministries.

Wise People Keep Themselves Under Control

In the 1960s, a Stanford University psychology professor conducted a famous experiment known as the “marshmallow test” with a group of four-year-old children. Each child was given a marshmallow and told he could either eat the one marshmallow immediately or wait several minutes and be given a second marshmallow. Only about one third of the children exercised self-control and waited for the second treat. Interestingly, showing self-control on this test correlated in some ways with the children’s success later in life.

Fear of man
will prove to
be a snare, but
whoever trusts
in the LORD is
kept safe.

Proverbs 29:25

Self-control is a crucial ingredient of godly wisdom. This chapter provides an excellent opportunity to recap or review many of the ingredients of wisdom as seen in Proverbs. We’ve seen that wisdom is closely associated with righteousness, trust in God, sexual faithfulness or purity, justice, order, good leadership, acting for others’ benefit, joy, blessing, care for the poor,

being slow to anger, integrity, honesty, fairness, being diligent in parenting, obedience, peacemaking, humility, attentive listening, an openness to rebuke or correction, and the fear of the Lord. We’ve also seen that foolishness is associated with wickedness, tyranny, disorder, trust in self, adultery or sexual immorality, injustice, oppression, stubbornness, tyranny, exploiting the poor, being hot-tempered, deceit, dishonesty, disobedience, pride, ears closed to rebuke or correction, greed, destruction, insincerity, self-centeredness, rebelliousness, anger, violence, a lack of self-control, and no fear

of the Lord.

Wisdom makes more sense! An evil person falls into his own trap, but the righteous “shout for joy and are glad” (v. 6). That trap is defined as “fear of man”—it’s fear of the Lord that is the true key to wisdom, safety, and blessing (v. 25).

Apply the Word

It’s never too early to start teaching self-control and other character virtues to children, including fruitful spiritual habits such as daily prayer and Bible reading. One helpful book is *Shepherding a Child’s Heart*, by Tedd Tripp (Shepherd Press, 1995). He and his wife, Margy, have also written *Instructing a Child’s Heart* (Shepherd Press, 2008).

Pray with Us

Frank Leber heads the Information Systems team as vice president. Join him in thanking God for his team and the dedication they have to keep Moody’s computer and Internet technology running smoothly.

Every Word of God Is Flawless

Rhetorical questions are questions with obvious answers, asked to make a point. For example, the answer to, “Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand?” (Isa. 40:12) is “God.” The point is His power and rule over creation. The answer to, “Who is this that obscures my plans with words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2) is “Job.” The point is Job’s lack of understanding of God. The answer to, “Whom did the LORD consult to enlighten him?” (Isa. 40:14) is “no one.” The point is the greatness of God’s wisdom compared to ours.

Who has
established all the
ends of the earth?

Proverbs 30:4

In verse 4 of today’s reading, the answer to all the rhetorical questions is similarly “no one” or “no person.” The author of Proverbs 30 was an otherwise unknown wise man named Agur. If “an oracle” should be translated “of Massa” (v. 1, see NIV text note), then Agur was likely an Ishmaelite. Although his authorship of

the numerical or list proverbs in verses 15 through 33 is uncertain, he definitely wrote the first fourteen verses.

Verse 1 sets the tone for this first section: “I am weary, God, but I can prevail.” This fits with verses 1 through 6 as an expression of fatigued humility. Agur is weary because understanding God is an impossibly huge task. Compared to the Holy One, even a wise man feels like a dullard. He exaggerates his emotions for effect, but the point is God’s greatness and how far He is above

our thoughts and ways. His every word is perfect!

In light of this, Agur first prays that God would keep him honest. Second, he asks that God would provide for him in moderation, because poverty and wealth both present greater temptations (vv. 7–9).

Apply the Word

Agur’s second prayer goes against the grain of our materialist society. Yet there’s a great deal of wisdom in what he says—too little, and there’s a temptation to steal, but too much, and there’s a temptation to self-sufficiency. We can certainly trust God to provide for us (Matt. 6:25–31).

Pray with Us

Today our prayers go to God for Stephen Brasel, Gayla Gates, and Holly Porter in Counseling Services. May their service of godly counsel give students reassurance of the grace and love of Christ.

A Woman Who Feels the LORD

The city of Chicago hired the country's first known female police officer. Detective sergeant Marie Owens was born to Irish immigrants, grew up in Ottawa, and moved to Chicago with her husband. After he died of typhoid fever, she worked for the Chicago Police Department enforcing child labor laws. "I like to do police work," she said. "It gives me a chance to help women and children who need help."

The famous "wife of noble character" in Proverbs 31:10–31 is also a strong woman (v. 25). This praise

poem of an ideal character type is also an acrostic, in which each verse begins with the next letter in the Hebrew alphabet. It is structured in ever-widening spheres, beginning with marriage (vv. 11–12), expanding to the home (vv. 13–19) and then to the larger community (vv. 20–26), before returning to the home (vv. 27–29). Verses 30 and 31 are concluding words of praise for the wife's true beauty.

She speaks with
wisdom, and
faithful instruction
is on her tongue.

Proverbs 31:26

What characterizes this noble woman? In marriage, she brings good to her husband and has earned his complete trust. Domestically, she works hard and is an incredible household manager. Her activities show she's highly energetic, competent, confident, strong, and organized. She plans ahead and is an excellent provider. In the community, she cares for the poor, supports her husband, and demonstrates keen business and financial skills. Her husband and children recognize her abilities and praise her key role in their

family. It's not her physical beauty that matters (no matter what secular magazine covers say), but rather her spiritual wisdom (v. 26).

Does such an amazing, perfect woman actually exist? Not really—this is an ideal. (Men, a similar ideal for you is found in Psalm 112!)

Apply the Word

Lemuel, another otherwise unknown sage, gave his mother much of the credit for his wisdom (vv. 1–9). She advised him to avoid sexual immorality and drunkenness and to be an advocate for social justice. What godly wisdom have you inherited from your parents? What godly wisdom do you wish to leave your children as a heritage?

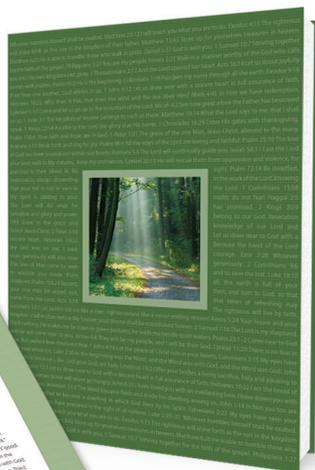
Pray with Us

Thank you for joining us in the study of wisdom in the book of Proverbs. Let us thank God that He does give wisdom to those who ask and grants understanding to those who seek Him wholeheartedly.

A Special Offer for Our Readers



TODAY IN THE **Word** Notebook



25th
Anniversary

1988

2013

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we'd like to offer you, our readers, this special gift. We hope it encourages you in your walk with Christ. The *Today in the Word* Notebook includes some of our favorite devotionals and cover photos from recent years.

Thank you for reading *Today in the Word!*

Request your notebook with your gift to *Today in the Word*. Tear out and return the reply card in this issue. Or visit us online at www.todayintheword.com.

VISIT THE TODAY IN THE **Word** WEBSITE!



Home Education **Broadcasting** Publishing Conferences Today in the Word

Today's Devotion This Month's Issue Archives About Resources Giving Manage Subscriptions Contact Us

TODAY IN THE **Word**

Search Today in the Word:

Manage Subscription

[Subscribe](#)

[Update My Subscription](#)

[Report a Problem](#)

SUPPORT
TODAY IN THE WORD with YOUR GIFT TODAY

SUBSCRIBE
to TODAY IN THE WORD DAILY DEVOTIONS

View Devotion Archives

◀ November ▶		◀ 2012 ▶				
Su	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10



Today's Devotion A Stewardship of Grace

For those who love detective novels, a mystery means that there's a puzzle that needs to be solved. Those who figure out the clues can solve the mystery. But in today's passage, Paul uses the term mystery in a different sense. This mystery was a matter of revelation. The mystery that Paul wrote about was something "which was not made..."

This Month

For many of us, the first word that comes to mind when we think about our relationship with the church is complicated. The critic in us looks around on Sunday morning and notices flawed people, the judge in us notes the lack of spiritual zeal in fellow-parishioners, the theologian in us suspects insufficient depth in the pastor's sermon. The list goes on and on, and too often we get mired in the...

Looking For More



This Month's Study at a Glance

[A look at this month's devotions.](#)



Today with Paul Nyquist

[Because of His Great Love for Us](#)



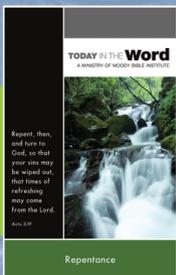
Theology Matters

[The Submission of Christ](#)

- See devotional topics at a glance
- Read this month's or a previous issue
- Manage your e-mail or mail delivery preferences
- Support *Today in the Word* with a gift

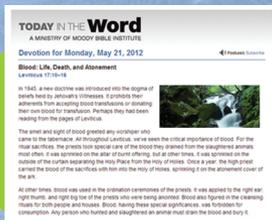
www.todayintheword.com

TODAY IN THE **Word** FAMILY



Today in the Word

Today in the Word E-mail



Today in the Word Online



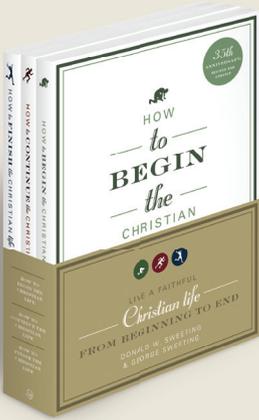
Today in the Word
Devotional (podcast)
on Moody Radio
with Mike Kellogg



Learn more at www.todayintheword.com.



GUIDING THE READER THROUGH
THE ENTIRE CHRISTIAN LIFE



a 3-book set by
GEORGE SWEETING:

HOW TO BEGIN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Following Jesus As a New Believer

HOW TO CONTINUE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Following Jesus in All You Do

HOW TO FINISH THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

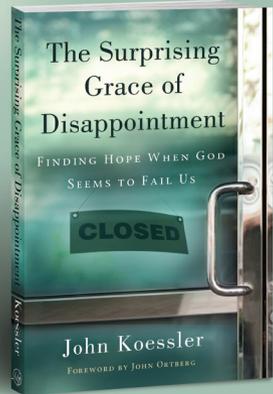
Following Jesus in the Second Half

moodypublishers.com



We have all
 experienced
 disappointment,
**EVEN WITH
 GOD**

HOW IS GOD USING
 THAT IN OUR LIVES?



moodypublishers.com



AVAILABLE AT YOUR FAVORITE LOCAL OR ONLINE BOOKSTORE OR CALL 1-800-678-6928

INVEST IN GOD'S WORK GET A RETURN FOR YOUR FAMILY



Through a charitable gift annuity, you can invest in the ministries of Moody Bible Institute as you earn an income and save on taxes.

A Moody gift annuity allows you to:

- Earn a **lifetime income** with an attractive rate based on your age
- Take an **income tax deduction**
- Enjoy **peace of mind** knowing that Moody hasn't missed an annuity payment in over 100 years
- Partner in **Moody's mission** of preparing students to serve Christ worldwide

Find out more! Ask for the free brochure, *A Giving Partnership*.

Simply check the box on the enclosed tear-out card. Our Stewardship team can help you decide if a charitable gift annuity is best for you. Call 800-801-2171 or e-mail stewardship@moody.edu.