

# Proverbs - God's Wisdom for Skillful Living

## Study 6: Wisdom in Conflicts

As we interact with people throughout our life, we are bound to come into conflict. The book of proverbs has much to teach us about these matters. It shows us how to avoid unnecessary conflict. It shows us that some conflict is good. It teaches us how to respond to some things that could result in conflict but do not need to.

### Wisdom and Anger

When we think of conflict, it is hard not to think of anger. Much conflict is under girded by feelings of anger. If we are going to be wise in conflict situations, we need to know how to handle our anger and how to respond to angry people

- Proverbs 15:1      *A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
- Proverbs 15:18      *A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*
- Proverbs 29:8      *Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.*
- Proverbs 29:11      *A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.*
- Proverbs 29:22      *An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins.*

### Wisdom in Avoiding Conflict

In many situations the wisest course of action is to not stir up conflict, but rather being willing to let things go. This includes being the type of person who is not quick to quarrel, but also being wise in knowing when to drop an issue.

- Proverbs 12:16      *A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.*
- Proverbs 14:9      *Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.*
- Proverbs 17:9      *He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*
- Proverbs 17:14      *Starting a quarrel is like breaching a dam; so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.*

- Proverbs 17:19 *He who loves a quarrel loves sin; he who builds a high gate invites destruction.*
- Proverbs 18:19 *An offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city, and disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel.*
- Proverbs 19:11 *A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.*
- Proverbs 20:1 *Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.*
- Proverbs 20:3 *It is to a man's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.*
- Proverbs 22:10 *Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended.*
- Proverbs 26:17 *Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.*
- Proverbs 26:20-21 *Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down. 21 As charcoal to embers and as wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.*
- Proverbs 30:33 *For as churning the milk produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife."*

### **Wisdom in Confrontation**

While there is certainly wisdom in avoiding some conflicts, there is also a time when it wise to confront a person or an issue. Proverbs speaks much about giving and receiving a rebuke. The path of wisdom is certainly one in which correction is willingly received and appropriately given. Fools turn a rebuke into a fight.

- Proverbs 9:8 *Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.*
- Proverbs 9:7-9 *"Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. 8 Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. 9 Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.*

Proverbs 12:1	<i>Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.</i>
Proverbs 13:1	<i>A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.</i>
Proverbs 13:10	<i>Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.</i>
Proverbs 15:31	<i>He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home among the wise.</i>
Proverbs 17:10	<i>A rebuke impresses a man of discernment more than a hundred lashes a fool.</i>
Proverbs 19:20	<i>Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.</i>
Proverbs 19:25	<i>Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke a discerning man, and he will gain knowledge.</i>
Proverbs 25:12	<i>Like an earring of gold or an ornament of fine gold is a wise man's rebuke to a listening ear.</i>
Proverbs 27:5	<i>Better is open rebuke than hidden love.</i>

### **Questions for Further Study:**

1. What is a mocker? What is the best way to deal with one?
2. Is anger sinful? (See Ephesians 4:26, 31) How can one control his or her anger?
3. How does one know when it is best to drop an issue and when it is better to confront it?
4. How do you respond to criticism? How does this reveal what kind of person you are?
5. Is all criticism or correction positive? How should you respond to misguided criticism?
6. What things should you do if you are going to bring correction to a person. What is the best way to approach such a thing?
7. How can Proverbs help you face future instances of correction and criticism?

## Study 7: Wisdom in Work

### It is Wise to Work

In our previous study we saw that wealth is not the most important thing in life. Yet Proverbs seems to assume that wealth is preferred to poverty, for it gives much advice in how to gain wealth through work. Poverty is a threat given to the lazy and wealth an incentive to the industrious. Proverbs teaches us that it is wise to work.

- Proverbs 6:6-9      *Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! 7 It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, 8 yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest. 9 How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?*
- Proverbs 10:4-5      *Lazy hands make a man poor, but diligent hands bring wealth. 5 He who gathers crops in summer is a wise son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*
- Proverbs 12:24      *Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor.*
- Proverbs 13:4      *The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*
- Proverbs 16:26      *The laborer's appetite works for him; his hunger drives him on.*
- Proverbs 19:24      *The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he will not even bring it back to his mouth!*
- Proverbs 20:4      *A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing.*

### The Danger of Excessive Pleasure

Proverbs also speaks of the dangers of a life given over to excessive pleasure. The pursuit of pleasure, especially if it replaces work will also lead to poverty.

- Proverbs 20:13      *Do not love sleep or you will grow poor; stay awake and you will have food to spare.*
- Proverbs 21:25      *The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work.*

Proverbs 21:17 *He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.*

Proverbs 23:20-21 *Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, 21 for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags.*

### **Wise in the Way We Work.**

Not only is it important that we work in order to avoid poverty, but God is concerned with the way that we work. He desires honesty, skill etc. It is not only wise that we work, we must work wisely.

Proverbs 11:1 *The LORD abhors dishonest scales, but accurate weights are his delight.*

Proverbs 14:23 *All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.*

Proverbs 16:11 *Honest scales and balances are from the LORD; all the weights in the bag are of his making.*

Proverbs 18:9 *One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.*

Proverbs 21:5 *The plans of the diligent lead to profit as surely as haste leads to poverty.*

Proverbs 22:29 *Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will serve before kings; he will not serve before obscure men.*

Proverbs 24:27 *Finish your outdoor work and get your fields ready; after that, build your house.*

Proverbs 27:23-27 *Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds; 24 for riches do not endure forever, and a crown is not secure for all generations. 25 When the hay is removed and new growth appears and the grass from the hills is gathered in, 26 the lambs will provide you with clothing, and the goats with the price of a field. 27 You will have plenty of goats' milk to feed you and your family and to nourish your servant girls.*

Proverbs 28:19 *He who works his land will have abundant food, but the one who chases fantasies will have his fill of poverty.*

### **Questions for Further Study:**

1. Would you say that it is God's desire that we be wealthy? Why or Why Not?
2. Is it God's desire that we work? Is unemployment sinful?
3. Thinking of this study and the previous study, is it proper for a person to be motivated to work hard in order to gain wealth?
4. Think about the amount of time you spend in leisure / pleasure. Think also about the amount you consume / spend / collect. Do you have any concerns about what you see in your own life?
5. Reviewing some of the scriptures above, what does it mean to work wisely?
6. What is your general attitude towards work? Does your attitude line up with the book of Proverbs?
7. Do any of these proverbs speak into your life? Would you be willing to share with the group?

## Study 8: Wisdom in Parenting

Proverbs seems to assume that parenting is a good thing and that children are a blessing.

Proverbs 17:6        *Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.*

One could easily say that the whole book of Proverbs is a book on parenting. As we have already seen, much of the character of this book is advice given from parent to child. Look no further than the first line after the prologue.

Proverbs 1:8        *Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.*

As such all the advice given in the book would be appropriate material for a parent to teach a child. Of course not all of it would be applicable to young children. However, the role of the parent does not end when the child is grown.

Aside from this, we also see that the book of Proverbs gives some direct instruction to parents. Proverbs gives us insight in how to parent wisely.

### Wise Parents Train their Children

Perhaps most obviously, wise parents spend time instructing their children. In fact, few things in life bring more satisfaction than seeing one's child grow up to be wise and to live well.

Proverbs 10:1        *The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother.*

Proverbs 17:21       *To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool.*

Proverbs 20:11       *Even a child is known by his actions, by whether his conduct is pure and right.*

Proverbs 22:6        *Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*

Proverbs 23:15-16   *My son, if your heart is wise, then my heart will be glad; 16 my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right.*

### Wise Parents Discipline their Children

Proverbs has much to say about the importance of discipline. It makes frequent mention of corporal punishment.

- Proverbs 13:24      *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.*
- Proverbs 19:18      *Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death.*
- Proverbs 22:15      *Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.*
- Proverbs 23:13-14      *Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. 14 Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.*
- Proverbs 29:15      *The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.*
- Proverbs 29:17      *Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul.*

### **Wise Parents Set a Spiritual Example.**

It is the clear teaching of Proverbs that wisdom is found in fearing God. As parents, we should thus set a spiritual example to our children. If we want them to be wise, we in turn must model wisdom. Notice how Proverbs teaches that children benefit from the spirituality of their parents.

- Proverbs 14:26      *He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.*
- Proverbs 20:7      *The righteous man leads a blameless life; blessed are his children after him.*

### **Wise Parents Provide for their Children**

I have found one Proverbs that teaches the obvious truth that parents should provide for their children.

- Proverbs 13:22      *A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.*

### **Wise Children Listen to their Parents**

Proverbs also has advice for children with respect to their parents. As parents are called to train their children, children are called to listen to their parents.

Proverbs 1:8-9	<i>Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. 9 They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.</i>
Proverbs 3:1-2	<i>My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, 2 for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity.</i>
Proverbs 5:12-14	<i>You will say, "How I hated discipline! How my heart spurned correction! 13 I would not obey my teachers or listen to my instructors. 14 I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the whole assembly."</i>
Proverbs 13:1	<i>A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.</i>

### **Questions for Further Study:**

1. Few people like to be told how to raise their children. Why do you think this is true?
2. What are the top 10 things that you would like to teach your children and or grandchildren. Make a list and rank them in order. How has the book of Proverbs helped you in developing this list.
3. Can you share some examples of how your children have blessed you by acting in a certain way? How have you been a blessing to your parents?
4. Spanking is a very hot topic. Would you say that proverbs indicates that spanking is the preferred form of discipline? Could these proverbs be more generally applied to other forms of discipline?
5. Is there a danger in physical discipline? What could be done to limit or remove such dangers.
6. From your own experiences, what forms of discipline worked best for you as a child and as a parent.
7. What is the overall point of discipline?
8. Thinking back to the top 10 things you would like to teach your children, can you say that you are making an effort to model those things to your children.
9. What is something that you are modeling to your children that you desire to change?
10. Do you believe that as adults we are still responsible to listen to our parents?

## Study 9: Wisdom in Speech

One of the most significant powers we exercise in our life is the power of our words. If there is ever a place where we need wisdom, it is in our speech.

Proverbs 16:23      *A wise man's heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.*

Perhaps one of the best ways to identify the wise and the foolish is in the way they speak.

Proverbs 15:2      *The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.*

Sadly, wisdom is so very often absent when it comes to the way we use our words.

Proverbs 20:15      *Gold there is, and rubies in abundance, but lips that speak knowledge are a rare jewel.*

Proverbs gives us much direction in this area. Perhaps much of what is taught is straight forward, yet often it is difficult to apply.

### The Power of our Words

The book of Proverbs has much to say about power of our words. It shows us that our tongue has the ability to do much good or much harm. Although we are told that “sticks and stones can break bones and that names never hurt”, I think we know that this is not true. Words can bless and words can harm. Our words not only affect other, but they also affect ourselves.

Proverbs 10:20      *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.*

Proverbs 10:31      *The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be cut out.*

Proverbs 11:9      *With his mouth the godless destroys his neighbor, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

Proverbs 12:6      *The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them.*

Proverbs 12:14      *From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.*

Proverbs 12:18      *Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*

- Proverbs 12:25 *An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up.*
- Proverbs 15:23 *A man finds joy in giving an apt reply— and how good is a timely word!*
- Proverbs 16:24 *Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*
- Proverbs 18:21 *The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.*
- Proverbs 21:23 *He who guards his mouth and his tongue keeps himself from calamity.*
- Proverbs 25:11 *A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*
- Proverbs 25:15 *Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.*

### **Truth and Falsehood**

Proverbs clearly teaches that wisdom is associated with truth and honesty and that liars are foolish. We might think this is obvious, but do we share this conviction with the same passion we see in Proverbs?

- Proverbs 6:16-19 *There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, 19 a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.*
- Proverbs 10:18 *He who conceals his hatred has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.*
- Proverbs 12:19 *Truthful lips endure forever, but a lying tongue lasts only a moment.*
- Proverbs 14:25 *A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful.*
- Proverbs 15:4 *The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.*
- Proverbs 16:13 *Kings take pleasure in honest lips; they value a man who speaks the truth.*
- Proverbs 17:20 *A man of perverse heart does not prosper; he whose tongue is deceitful falls into trouble.*

- Proverbs 21:28 *A false witness will perish, and whoever listens to him will be destroyed forever.*
- Proverbs 26:28 *A lying tongue hates those it hurts, and a flattering mouth works ruin.*
- Proverbs 24:26 *An honest answer is like a kiss on the lips.*
- Proverbs 25:18 *Like a club or a sword or a sharp arrow is the man who gives false testimony against his neighbor.*

### **Flattery and Boasting**

Proverbs also cautions us about false praise for ourselves and others.

- Proverbs 27:1 *Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.*
- Proverbs 27:2 *Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips.*
- Proverbs 28:23 *He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue.*

### **The Danger of Gossip**

Many of us have probably experienced the damage and disappointment that comes with people talking behind our back.

- Proverbs 11:13 *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret.*
- Proverbs 16:28 *A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*
- Proverbs 18:8 *The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts.*
- Proverbs 20:19 *A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid a man who talks too much.*
- Proverbs 26:20 *Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down.*

## **Wisdom Knows when Not to Speak.**

One interesting piece of advice that is prevalent in Proverbs is to keep our mouths shut.

- Proverbs 10:8      *The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.*
- Proverbs 10:19-20      *When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.*
- Proverbs 11:12      *A man who lacks judgment derides his neighbor, but a man of understanding holds his tongue.*
- Proverbs 13:3      *He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.*
- Proverbs 15:28      *The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.*
- Proverbs 17:27-28      *A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered. 28 Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue.*
- Proverbs 18:13      *He who answers before listening— that is his folly and his shame.*
- Proverbs 29:20      *Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him.*

## **Questions for Further Study:**

1. Why do you think that wisdom in speech is so rare? (Refer to James 3:2-12 for some insight) How should this knowledge affect our life?
2. Referring to Proverbs 11:9 and 12:6, what is it that the righteous is escaping from and from what is the upright escaping from?
3. What is the meaning of Proverbs 18:21
4. What does it mean in Proverbs 25:15 that a “ *gentle tongue can break a bone.*”
5. Proverbs 10:18 seems to indicate that it is wrong to conceal our hatred. Does this seem true to you? Is this proverb always true? How could you apply this proverb? Do you consider it lying to withhold criticism?
6. Do you think that it is possible to gossip by making a prayer request?

7. Is gossip wrong if you are telling the truth? What would make it wrong? What makes a statement gossip?
8. Is it always wiser to say very little. In what contexts do these proverbs on holding one's tongue seem most appropriate. In what situations would holding your tongue be foolish or wrong?
9. Do you think you talk too much or too little?

## Study 10: Wisdom in Friendship

Proverbs has given us insight into family relationships, but it also gives us insight into relationships with friends and neighbors.

### Choosing the Right Friends

Perhaps the greatest need for wisdom in friendship, is deciding who to trust as a friend.

- Proverbs 12:26      *A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.*
- Proverbs 13:20      *He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.*
- Proverbs 18:24      *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*
- Proverbs 22:24-25      *Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, 25 or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared.*
- Proverbs 24:1-2      *Do not envy wicked men, do not desire their company; 2 for their hearts plot violence, and their lips talk about making trouble.*
- Proverbs 28:7      *He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.*

### False Friendship

Sometimes, what passes as friendship is only really a relationship where you are being used or are using someone else. Proverbs helps us become aware of these situations.

- Proverbs 14:20      *The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends.*
- Proverbs 19:4      *Wealth brings many friends, but a poor man's friend deserts him.*
- Proverbs 19:6      *Many curry favor with a ruler, and everyone is the friend of a man who gives gifts*

Proverbs 19:7      *A poor man is shunned by all his relatives— how much more do his friends avoid him! Though he pursues them with pleading, they are nowhere to be found.*

### **How to be a Friend**

Proverbs also teaches us how we can be a good friend and avoid situations that ruin friendships.

Proverbs 16:28      *A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.*

Proverbs 17:9      *He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.*

Proverbs 17:17      *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*

Proverbs 22:11      *He who loves a pure heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king for his friend.*

Proverbs 25:17      *Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house— too much of you, and he will hate you.*

Proverbs 27:10      *Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you— better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.*

Proverbs 27:14      *If a man loudly blesses his neighbor early in the morning, it will be taken as a curse.*

### **The Counsel of a Friend**

One of the most important benefits of friendship is that it provides an opportunity to increase wisdom and mature spiritually. The best types of friendships are friendships which lead to the betterment of each friend.

Proverbs 27:6      *Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*

Proverbs 27:9      *Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.*

Proverbs 27:17      *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

### Questions for Further Study.

1. Why is it important to be cautious in friendship? How does one do this? Should you test the character of potential friends?
2. Should a Christian ever be in close friendship with a non believer?
3. As Christians, are we obligated to be friends with every believer we meet?
4. What does Proverbs 18:24 mean? *“A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”*
5. Do you find it difficult or easy to make friends with others? What can you take away from proverbs that can help you make and keep friends?
6. Do you see in yourself any tendencies to develop friendships for what you can get out of the relationship?
7. Do you have a friendship in which you have freedom to give and receive counsel, even counsel that is challenging? What can you do to develop and preserve such friendships.
8. Is this small group a place where earnest counsel can be given and received? How could this be developed in the group.