

DON'T JUST SURVIVE

FLOURISH

SHEPHERD CHURCH



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LESSON 1: FAITHFULLY LISTEN & ACCEPT GOD'S WISDOM

WELCOME

Choose one of the following to answer:

- Who is the wisest person you know personally, and what makes them stand out?
- If your phone sent you a daily “wisdom notification,” what kind of reminder would you actually need to see every morning?

WORSHIP

Ask someone to read ***Proverbs 1:1-7***, and spend some time in prayer. Dedicate your time in this series to seeking God's wisdom and ask Him to open your hearts to what He might have to say to you.

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Welcome to our new series, “Don’t Just Survive, Flourish” During this 6-week series, we’ll study Proverbs 1, 3, 4, 6, and 10. As such, you might want a brief introduction to the Book of Proverbs, its author, and its connection to Jesus. Feel free to read the following introduction, or skip it and proceed to the first question/prompt!

Proverbs opens by introducing its author: King Solomon, the second king in Israel’s history and a son of David. Solomon wrote Proverbs from Jerusalem during his reign around 970–930 B.C. (1 Kings 1–11; 2 Chronicles 1–9). When Solomon first became king, he asked God for wisdom instead of wealth or power (1 Kings 3:4–14; 2 Chronicles 1:7–12). God generously granted his request, saying, “I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be” (1 Kings 3:12).

Scripture gives many examples of how Solomon used his wisdom, with perhaps the most well-known story being that of how he resolved the argument between two women claiming the same baby (1 Kings 3:16–28). Wisdom allowed Solomon to serve God and people in many ways, such as overseeing the construction of the temple in Jerusalem, organizing large-scale building projects, and leading Israel into a period of relative peace. His wisdom even impressed leaders from every corner of the world (1 Kings 3:28; 4:29–34; 10:1–13).

Still, even the wisest man who ever lived wasn’t perfect. Solomon wandered from his faith (1 Kings 11:4–10). An example of this that he had 300 concubines and married 700 wives who “turned his ears after other gods” (1 Kings 11:3–4). He also imposed both heavy taxes and forced labor, which caused people to resent him and was a factor in the kingdom’s split (1 Kings 12:1–15). Many scholars, rabbis, and pastors believe that Solomon eventually found his way back to God (after which, he probably wrote most of Proverbs, as well as the Books of Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs). The Book of Ecclesiastes reads like a poetic autobiography, written by an older man who tried to fulfill his desires with everything under the sun only to come to the following conclusion in Ecclesiastes 12:13, “Now that all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the duty of all mankind.”

Written against the backdrop of Solomon’s successes and failures, the Book of Proverbs is God’s way of inviting us to embrace His wisdom without repeating the same mistakes. This is why when you read Proverbs, you immediately sense that you’re stepping into something timeless. The Book of Proverbs applies to anyone anywhere at any time. And as a divinely inspired book from God, Solomon writes in Proverbs 1:2–4 that the Book of Proverbs is:

for gaining wisdom and instruction;
for understanding words of insight;
for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,
doing what is right and just and fair;
for giving prudence to those who are simple,
knowledge and discretion to the young

Right from the start, Proverbs 1 sets the tone: wisdom is living a surrendered life for God's glory. To begin making this point, Proverbs 1 introduces us to two competing voices: the wise and the foolish, meaning those who walk with God's wisdom and those who don't. As the true Source of wisdom, God wants us to listen to Him so we know how to live holy lives. In the New Testament, this theme comes into full focus through Jesus Himself, a descendant of Solomon. Jesus openly declared that His words are wise, that He is the Light of the World, and that He is greater than Solomon (Matthew 7:24; 12:42; Luke 11:31; John 8:12). He also taught that He is the truth, His words are truth, and that anyone on the side of truth listens to Him (John 8:31-32; 14:6; 18:37). If we refuse this kind of wisdom, consequences will follow. However, God promises that if we fear Him enough to listen to Him, then His wisdom will reshape our desires, choices, and everyday relationships for the better.

*****Below are seven discussion questions/prompts. There's no pressure to cover every question. As a Life Group, feel free to choose the questions/prompts that you want to cover and use the rest for personal reflection and deeper study during the week.**

WORD

1. In one sentence, write what you think is the main message of *Proverbs 1:7-33* and share with your Life Group.

2. From ***Proverbs 1:7-33***, list the qualities of the wise and foolish. What stands out to you, and how does it relate to your own life?

3. What does the phrase, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (***Proverbs 1:7***) mean, and how does it shape our worldview?

4. Read ***Proverbs 1:8–15, 23–33***. What do these verses reveal about human nature and susceptibility to temptation? What are some ways to recognize temptation before we give into sin?

5. In ***Proverbs 1:20–21***, where are the 4 places that wisdom speaks, and what is significant about each of these locations?

6. **Proverbs 1:33** promises that people who listen to wisdom “will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.” What fears are you carrying and how can you begin to surrender them to God?

7. According to **1 Corinthians 2:9-16**, how does the Holy Spirit help us understand God’s wisdom?

WITNESS

Often, sharing Jesus with others begins with our actions and attitudes before we ever speak: people watch what we do before they trust what we say. With this in mind, what's one area of your life where you need to intentionally ask God for wisdom? Share with your Life Group and then pray that each member would ask God for wisdom and actually begin to live with wisdom.

PERSONAL REFLECTION & DEEPER STUDY FOR THIS WEEK

This section is designed to help you continue reflecting on what you discussed in your Life Group. Hopefully, these questions and prompts will inspire you to listen to God, apply Scripture, and take your next step with Jesus. Work through them at your own pace, and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you draw closer to Him.

- Review any questions/prompts in the WORD section that your Life Group didn't get to, or ones you'd like to explore more deeply on your own.
- Memorize *Proverbs 1:7*.
- Read Ecclesiastes this week, and after you have finished, reflect on the following questions:
 - How does Ecclesiastes distinguish between godly wisdom and worldly wisdom?
 - Currently, how might I rely more on my own understanding rather than wisdom from God's Word? What's one step I can take this week to rely more on wisdom from God's Word?
 - How can Ecclesiastes help me recognize and own my human limitations without becoming hopeless?
 - How can I better invest my time and energy in eternal matters instead of things that will fade?
 - What does joy have to do with wisdom and holy living?

• The Fear of the Lord

Read *Deuteronomy 6:1-3; 10:12; Joshua 24:14; 1 Samuel 12:24; Job 28:28; Psalm 19:9; 40:3; 110:10; Proverbs 1:7; 16:6; 22:4; 2 Corinthians 5:11*; and answer the following questions:

- What does the word "fear" mean in the context of these passages?
- What do these passages teach us about "the fear of the Lord" in our thoughts, emotions, attitudes, and actions?
- How does "the fear of the Lord" bless our lives?
- How can "the fear of the Lord" protect us from sin?
- How does "the fear of the Lord" motivate us to live faithfully for Jesus and share Him with others?
- How does Jesus embody "the fear of the Lord" described in *Proverbs 1:7 & Isaiah 11:1-3*? What does His example of "fearing the Lord" teach us about the connection between wisdom and honor for God?