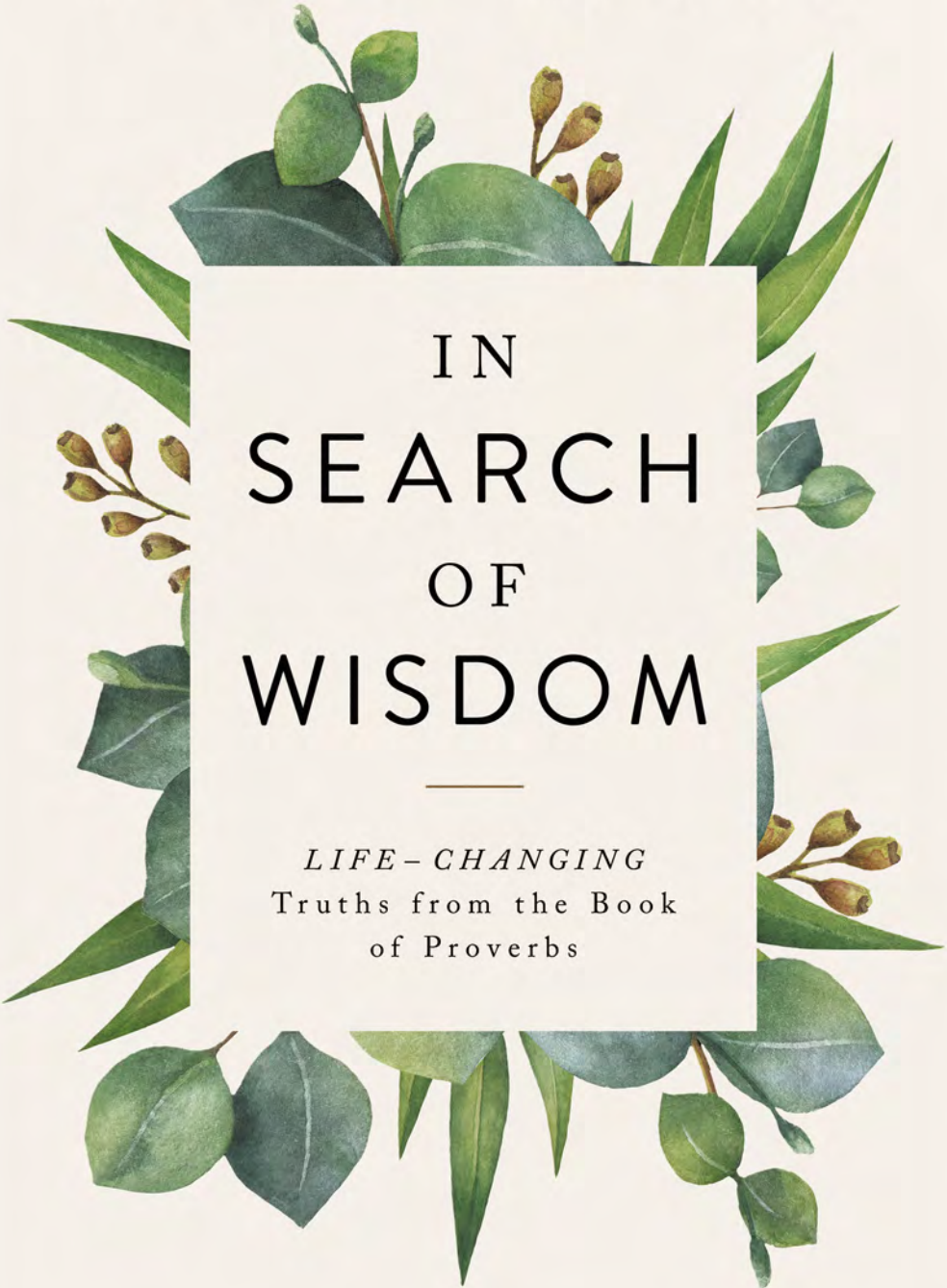


#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Author

JOYCE MEYER



IN
SEARCH
OF
WISDOM

LIFE-CHANGING
Truths from the Book
of Proverbs



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JOYCE MEYER



New York • Nashville



INTRODUCTION

The Book of Proverbs is considered the Bible's book of wisdom, and it deals with both the practical and the spiritual issues of life. Wisdom is one of the greatest assets we can possess, and in order to have it, we must seek it diligently. Wisdom is simply the proper use of knowledge, and I like to define it as "doing now what we will be happy with later in life." If we do as God instructs each day, then our tomorrows will be pleasing to Him and pleasant for us.

Each chapter of Proverbs is filled with principles that will benefit us if we obey them. I know numerous people whose lives are now falling apart because they have not made wise decisions in the past. Had they lived according to the principles Proverbs teaches, they would have none of their current problems, and their lives would be prosperous, peaceful, happy, and fruitful. When we search for wisdom and apply it to our lives, we will enjoy blessing, peace, joy, and fulfillment. We will be a blessing to others and live a life that is pleasing to God.

Proverbs contains thirty-one chapters. The Old Testament king Solomon wrote the first twenty-nine of them, with the exception of 22:17 through the end of chapter 24, which were written by two sages. A sage was a man, often elderly,

who possessed wisdom beyond that of ordinary people. A man named Agur wrote chapter 30, and King Lemuel wrote chapter 31. It's interesting to note that King Solomon and the other writers of Proverbs did not sit down and write all of these wise sayings in a short time, but that the book was compiled over a period of perhaps as many as two hundred years. This assures us that its wisdom has been tried and proven.

Proverbs includes teaching on how to treat people; wisdom; knowledge; understanding; discretion; discernment; prudence; the fear of the Lord; how to think; the importance of words; how to manage finances and the importance of staying out of debt; how to behave in marriage; cultivating good relationships; how to handle offenses, correction, and discipline; having a happy heart; anger; laziness; attitude; generosity; honesty; work; poverty; greed; and more. I do not intend for this book to address every subject mentioned in all thirty-one chapters of Proverbs. Instead, in each chapter of this book, I will focus and expound on several principles from the corresponding chapter in Proverbs, principles that I believe will greatly help you manage your daily life and obtain and grow in wisdom.

In order to follow the wisdom Proverbs offers, we need to be willing to obey God's Word no matter how we feel, what we think, or what we want. This simply means that walking in wisdom requires spiritual maturity. Proverbs helps us gain that maturity as we learn its principles and secure God's help to practice them. The search for wisdom is a journey, and having its principles worked into our character and become our

natural responses to the issues of life requires time, thought, and practice.

Throughout this book I will ask you some questions about the lessons Proverbs teaches. These are easy yes-or-no questions I've included simply to inspire you to think and to ask yourself how you are living relative to the principle being taught in a specific section of the book. These questions will also help you determine whether you are following wisdom. Reading about and knowing biblical principles is good, but knowledge that does not lead to action will not help you on a practical level. The questions will help keep you from merely reading Proverbs abstractly without applying its teachings to your life. They are not meant to make you feel uncomfortable, but to prompt you to apply what you are reading so that if you need help in the area to which a question pertains, you will allow the truth to make you free.

If you want to incorporate God's Word into your daily life, which is God's desire, this study of Proverbs will be very beneficial to you. In looking at other books written on Proverbs, I found a variety of ways to approach the process of writing this book. I kept feeling drawn to write about this book of the Bible, but I lacked clarity regarding how to go about it because it covers so many different subjects. In addition, many of the same topics are covered in several chapters. I settled on writing one chapter of this book on each chapter of Proverbs. Some chapters are longer than others, and my prayer has been that the Holy Spirit would guide me concerning what to highlight in each one.

As you read this book, I strongly suggest that you read the entire chapter of Proverbs to which each chapter pertains. The text of the Book of Proverbs is included in this book to aid you in this study. I pray you will be enlightened with God's wisdom and His ways as we begin this journey through Proverbs and as we search for wisdom together.

SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES

As we begin our study of Proverbs, I believe that defining and gaining understanding of the seven key words or phrases used frequently throughout its thirty-one chapters is vital. These seven principles are interwoven into many of the principles that Proverbs presents, principles that should guide our actions in everyday life. Knowing what these terms mean is foundational to understanding and applying the whole of the message God wants to teach us through the Book of Proverbs.

The first five verses of Proverbs instruct us to seek and gain wisdom, understanding, prudence, knowledge, discretion, and discernment. We are also to walk in the fear of the Lord. It is easy to skim these opening verses without genuinely understanding the immensity of what the writer communicates. Let me give you some simple definitions of these words to expand your understanding of what they truly mean.

Wisdom

One word for *wisdom* is the Hebrew word *chokmah*, which is used often in Proverbs and refers to the knowledge and

ability to make the right choice at the right time. The prerequisite for this wisdom is the fear of the Lord.

Wisdom is both an Old Testament and a New Testament principle. Two primary New Testament Greek words translated as *wisdom* are *sophia* and *phronesis*. *Sophia* is true insight into the nature of things, and *phronesis* is wise action “derived from learning,” according to the Oxford Review. *Sophia* is theoretical, and *phronesis* is practical. In my opinion, we look at far too many things in theory without applying them practically in our daily lives. Everything God says is good and worth hearing, but if we do not apply it to our lives, it does not benefit us or anyone else.

We are instructed to *do* God’s Word, not merely to hear it (James 1:22). The fact that so many people hear the Word without acting on it is probably one of the biggest problems in Christianity today. We are often proud of what we know, yet we fail to act on it, which causes our witness to the world to be impotent and meaningless.

Understanding

Understanding refers to the rational rather than the emotional, and it is closely linked to *knowledge*. Understanding something means we “get it” or grasp its meaning deeply enough to cause us to realize the importance of taking action according to what we know. Understanding is to be acquired, sought after, and learned. It requires not only meditation on a subject, but an examination of actions taken in order to fully comprehend the result of those actions. For example, we may understand the impact of our words only after we

ruin a relationship through being excessively critical of someone. Or, we may understand the benefit of encouragement and compliments only after watching them heal a broken relationship.

Prudence

Prudence is forethought (thinking ahead) and foresight (seeing ahead). It is also the ability to use reason to govern and discipline ourselves. To be prudent is to live with the mindset of managing our resources and life's affairs well. Although prudence itself does not perform any action and is related to knowledge and the way we think, the virtue of prudence controls all other virtues.

Just think about how many people do not manage their resources or other issues of life well. They often do what feels good at the moment without any forethought about how a current action will affect them in the future. Have you ever seen a person who eats mostly unhealthy, nutritionally deficient food; eats excessively; gets no exercise; and wakes up one day skinny? Or have you ever seen someone who buys everything they want, has multiple credit cards that all carry maximum balances, is wasteful, won't work, and doesn't pay their debts and then wakes up one morning as a multimillionaire? Of course we have not seen these things, because they cannot occur.

Only through prudence and good management of our resources will we prosper and then reach results we can enjoy. This holds true for every area of life.

Knowledge

The Hebrew word for knowledge is *yada*, which appears approximately 950 times in Scripture and conveys a much broader meaning than our English word *knowledge*. It includes perceiving, learning, understanding, willing, performing, and experiencing. To *know* is not to be intellectually informed about some abstract principle, but to apprehend and experience its reality. It is not the possession of information, but rather its exercise or realization.

An example of this would be what it means to *know* God's love. This refers to knowing His love deeply, intimately, and experientially in a deeply personal way. It is much more than mere mental ascent.

Discretion

Discretion is the quality of behaving or speaking in such a way as to avoid causing offense or revealing private information. A discreet person can be counted on to keep another's secrets. Those who use discretion concerning their words are effective at communicating clearly and meaningfully with others. Even when they need to correct someone, they bring correction in a way that enables the other person to accept what is being said. Some synonyms for *discretion* are *circumspection*, *delicacy*, *discernment*, and *prudence*.

A discreet friend is very valuable. At Joyce Meyer Ministries, our staff pastor is excellent at conflict resolution because he uses discretion as he arbitrates disagreements between individuals.

Discernment

To discern means to distinguish or separate so as to investigate; to examine, scrutinize, or question. People with discernment can judge between good and evil and between right and wrong. They take time to see beyond the surface of people and situations into the true nature of someone or something. Discerning between good and evil spirits is one of the nine gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:10).

I think discernment is one of the most valuable character traits we can develop and one of the most beneficial gifts that God gives us. The world today is filled with deception, and many things are not as they seem on the surface. Through God's grace and goodness, we can learn not to judge according to what we see with our natural eyes or hear with our natural ears, but we can spiritually discern the true nature of a person or set of circumstances.

The Fear of the Lord

This is perhaps one of the most misunderstood phrases in the Bible. We are not to be afraid of the Lord, as the word *fear* would indicate in today's usage, for He is good and would never harm us. However, we should have a reverential fear and worshipful awe of the mighty God we serve. Moses told the Israelites that the fear of God would keep them from sinning (Exodus 20:20), and I wholeheartedly agree. One minister said, "It is a sovereign respect for God that makes us dread above all other things to offend Him."

The fear of the Lord is the "beginning of knowledge"

(Proverbs 1:7). In other words, we cannot learn anything else He wants to teach us unless we first walk in and understand the reverential fear of God.

God is our friend, but we must never forget that He is Almighty God. He is the God whose presence causes people to lie prostrate, and to fall to the ground face down in abject humility. In the Bible, people such as Moses, Aaron, Abram, Joshua, the disciples, wise men from the East at Christ's birth (called Magi in the NIV), and even Jesus Himself fell before the Lord in reverential fear (Numbers 20:6; Genesis 17:3; Joshua 5:14; Matthew 17:6; 2:11; 26:39). Even angels and the idol named Dagon fall before God (Revelation 7:11; 1 Samuel 5:3). The Bible speaks of the "kindness and sternness of God" (Romans 11:22). He is a just God who makes wrong things right, and He is a merciful and forgiving God, but He is also a God who, in His love, corrects us for our own good when we need to be corrected.

* * *

Understanding the meanings of these seven words and phrases is vital to making the most of our study of Proverbs. Each requires an investment of time. Wisdom waits, discretion and discernment must wait and listen before taking action, and the type of understanding and knowledge spoken of in Proverbs requires waiting and searching. If we desire these qualities to operate in our lives, we must commit to slowing down. We will need to stop multitasking and learn

to enjoy times of solitude and blessed quiet to think sincerely and thoroughly about actions we will take, remembering that each action produces a result.

As you go through this book, let me encourage you to look for the seven foundational principles I have mentioned, learning all you can learn about each one and about the other topics addressed in Proverbs. May God bless you in your search for wisdom.



PROVERBS 1

Proverbs 1 begins by mentioning the seven foundational principles listed in the introduction to this book. Then, verse 7 ends with the statement “but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” The NIV footnote for Proverbs 1:7 says, “The Hebrew words rendered *fool* in Proverbs, and often elsewhere in the Old Testament, denote *a person who is morally deficient*” (emphasis mine). Proverbs includes many references to foolish people, so I encourage you to keep this definition in mind as you read through this book.

If I were to write my own definition of a fool, it would be this: A fool is morally deficient, hasty in making decisions, and too quick to speak without thinking. He is probably not prudent with finances and makes poor decisions in all areas of life. He thinks more highly of himself than he should. He is probably lazy and does not exercise self-control. He has an attitude of entitlement, thinking he should be given what he has not worked for or earned. I am sure he lacks appreciation and is ungrateful. He most likely murmurs and complains regularly. He gossips, falls in with bad company, and has no reverential fear and awe of God.

PARENTS CAN BE SOURCES OF WISDOM

Proverbs 1 continues by urging children to listen to the instructions of their fathers and not to forsake the teaching of their mothers (v. 8). Many of us would not have been wise to heed the advice we received from our parents if they were walking in the ways of the world and were ungodly. That was the case with me, but thankfully my real Father—my heavenly Father—has taught and continues to teach me how to live. I am learning more and more all the time about the wisdom of listening to Him.

If you had good parents who truly loved you and the Lord, I hope you will rejoice, because you had a gift that many people don't have the opportunity to benefit from or enjoy. Young people commonly go through a phase when they feel certain their parents are totally out of touch with reality and know absolutely nothing of relevance. Of course,

Do you listen intently when those who are older and have more life experience than you do offer advice, or do you merely assume they cannot relate to you because of their age?

this is wrong thinking that hopefully will be corrected in a short period of time, because a wise person learns everything possible from wise, godly people, especially older ones. The longer we live, the more experiences we have; therefore, the more we know experientially.

Experiential knowledge is not the same as factual knowledge, and it leads to wisdom, not simply to information.

Most parents have done certain things right and certain things wrong. They have experienced the results of wise and unwise decisions, and they deeply desire to help their children avoid the mistakes they have made. Solomon says the teaching of our parents can be viewed as a fine piece of jewelry to adorn our necks (v. 9). Or, if you prefer, a prized possession for which we should be thankful.

THE ENTICEMENT OF SINFUL PEOPLE

Many good people have been ruined by the influence of sinful people around them, and Proverbs urges and warns us to not fall into their trap. The writer says, “If sinful men entice you, do not give in to them” (v. 10). Verses 10–15 teach us that the ungodly don’t give up easily. They keep enticing by telling lies and promising rewards that actually are a myth. They try to make us believe that if we take advantage of others to serve ourselves, we will gain all sorts of valuable things. Those of us who have experience with sin know for certain that wrongdoing does not bring anything valuable. We can hear the father’s pleading heart in verse 15 when he says, “My son, do not go along with them, do not set your foot on their paths.”

How good are you at saying no to things that look exciting and enjoyable when you know that God does not approve of them? These are sinful enticements, and Satan works through sinful people to draw godly men and women

away from the right (godly) path onto the wrong (ungodly) path. These people may be such experts in convincing others to follow them that even the godliest individual may drift onto the wrong path in life and not even know how it happened. This is the reason 1 Peter 5:9 instructs us to resist the devil at “his onset,” meaning when he first begins to lead us astray (AMPC).

Jesus says that if our eye causes us to sin, we should pluck it out of our head. And if our arm causes us to sin, we should remove it from our body because “It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell” (Matthew 5:29–30). In this current, so-called modern age, do we deal harshly enough with sin, or do we compromise and assume casual attitudes toward sin, believing that God’s grace will cover us because He is good?

Sometimes, out of loneliness, Christians become involved with certain people and realize they simply don’t have peace about those relationships. Many times this is because those people want to tempt us to sin or to draw us away from God. It is easy to make excuses and justify wrong behavior, but there is no true justification for doing what we know God would have us not do.

Sinful people rush to evil, and “they are swift to shed blood” (v. 16) but “they ambush only themselves!” (v. 18). This is a powerful thought. It emphasizes the biblical principle that people reap what they sow (Galatians 6:7). No one can sow evil and reap good.

Sinful people pursue “ill-gotten gain” (things they obtain through dishonesty), whether they steal possessions, money

or investments, or ideas or intellectual property. Any kind of illegal gain eventually “takes away” their lives (v. 19). Just think about it. If people steal, they will probably go to prison, or at least feel crushed under the burden of guilt they carry in their hearts while pretending to be happy. They forfeit the life God wants them to have through their own foolishness. Material goods gained from sinful actions may seem appealing in the beginning but are ultimately empty and unfulfilling.

It’s important to realize that stealing is not limited to money, property, or possessions. People have also had their ideas or intellectual property stolen, and when someone commits plagiarism, they are stealing someone else’s writings.

Some inventors have even had their ideas stolen before they could apply for patents. For example, when you think of a sewing machine, the first brand name that probably comes to mind is Singer. This company has long been associated with sewing machines, and remains probably the most recognizable name in sewing today. But Isaac Singer actually stole the idea for the sewing machine from a man named Elias Howe. In 1854, Howe sued the company for royalties—and won.

WISDOM CALLS OUT

As we continue in Proverbs 1, wisdom begins to take on the qualities of an actual living entity, speaking and expounding on the benefits of listening to her. Of course, wisdom is God or God’s Word, but I like that it is presented as a person who

is teaching us how to live. You will notice that wisdom is referred to as “she.” Throughout Scripture, aspects and attributes of God are described using both masculine and feminine terms. Here, wisdom is personified in a feminine way.

When I read Proverbs 1:20–33, I see in my mind’s eye a picture of wisdom at the intersections of our lives, crying out, “Listen to me!” She “calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square” (v. 20). Then comes the question, “How long will you who are simple love your simple ways?” (v. 22). Today we might urge people to “simplify” their lives, but the Hebrew word used for *simple* in Proverbs carries a different meaning than the contemporary English word *simple*. To the writer of Proverbs, a simple person was “gullible, without moral direction and inclined to evil.”

These people did not listen to wisdom, and I am sure they were very dissatisfied with their lives. After beseeching the simple to listen to her, wisdom instructs people to “repent at my rebuke!” (v. 23).

How easy it is to quickly glide over those four words, but they speak volumes to us if we truly listen. Thank God for the gift of repentance. How marvelous it is that we may repent, which means to turn and go in the opposite direction and receive forgiveness and a new beginning. Wisdom does not rebuke us to make us feel guilty, but to urge us to make a positive change in God’s direction.

If we are willing to repent when we are rebuked (scolded or reprimanded), we will gain more wisdom and understand how to follow it. Wisdom reflects God’s thoughts and teachings, and it is something we should all desire because without

God's thoughts and understanding we will make many painful mistakes.

Wisdom also speaks to the mockers and asks how long they will delight in their mockery (v. 22). To mock is to make light of, to disregard, or to laugh at. We should never take any of God's commands or principles lightly, disregarding them or joking about them. People who walk in the reverential fear of God will refrain from any kind of mockery.

I'm sure you can see as we begin our study of Proverbs that the seven key principles I mentioned in the introduction are indeed intermingled throughout this book. We learned that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and that it prevents us from sinning. Now we see that those who "delight in mockery" will only cease their ridicule if they have the reverential fear of God.

WISDOM'S RESPONSE TO THOSE WHO REFUSE TO LISTEN

Wisdom declares the future for those who refuse to listen to her, saying, "Since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you" (vv. 25–26). I realize this sounds stern, but it is what God's Word says, and we cannot blame Him when troubles come because we have refused to listen to wise counsel. Many people who are not making good choices and living in obedience to God are not very interested in hearing about what the outcome of their current actions will be. In Proverbs

1:25–29, wisdom speaks plainly about what will happen to the simple who refuse to listen to her. She says that disaster will sweep over them, calamity will overtake them, and trouble will overwhelm them. Then, when they call on God for help, He won't answer! He says He will not respond because "they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord" (v. 29).

This scenario describes what will happen to the unrepentant, but the person who listens to wisdom's rebuke and repents has the opportunity for a new beginning. Thank God we can always begin again. No matter how we have behaved

Is listening to and following wisdom a priority in your life?

in the past, if we are sincerely sorry for our misdeeds and repent of them, God instantly forgives us and even forgets our sins completely (Isaiah 43:25; Hebrews 8:12). Even though God promises us total forgiveness and new beginnings, it is always better to do what is right to begin with. If we do, we avoid much guilt, confusion, failure, and misery.

Everything God tells us is only for our good. I urge you to believe that and decide to start really listening to His voice with the intention of acting on what you learn from His Word.

According to Proverbs, those who "eat the fruit of their ways" are warned once again that the "waywardness of the simple will kill them," but whoever listens to wisdom (God's Word) "will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm" (vv. 31–33). Wow! This is what we all want, and Proverbs 1 gives us the roadmap that will lead us straight to it.



PROVERBS 2

Proverbs 2 speaks about the moral benefits of wisdom. Of course, as I mentioned in chapter 1, wisdom is God or God’s Word, and it is presented as a person who is trying to teach and help us. In Proverbs 2:1–5, we see several of the seven foundational principles mentioned again—wisdom (v. 2), understanding (v. 2), the fear of the Lord (v. 5), and knowledge (v. 5). We read that if we will listen to wisdom and search for insight and understanding, as we would search for silver and hidden treasure, that we “will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (v. 5). God seems to like to hide things to see if we are interested enough to do the work of finding them. Think about it like this: God provides gold, silver, and precious stones for beautiful jewelry and many other things. He provides iron, copper, and other metals for us to use in building and producing other products we use, but someone has to dig for them. They are hidden in hills and mountains, and they are deep within the ground. God provides the treasure, but we have to do the digging.

In many undeveloped countries, people walk miles each day just to get filthy, disease-ridden water from a river or pond. According to the World Health Organization, water-borne illness kills 3.4 million people each year, including four

thousand children each day. What's tragic is that the villages in which these people live have clean, healthy water in the ground beneath them, but no one knows how to dig it out. Joyce Meyer Ministries has been privileged to provide the equipment and technology to dig more than 1,500 clean water wells in some of the most remote places on earth. This brings people to Jesus because they see His love being extended to them, and that changes their lives. God had already provided what they needed, but they didn't dig for it. Wisdom wants us to dig, seek, search, cry out, and listen to her. As we are diligent to find wisdom, we will enjoy a blessed life and will have the opportunity to bless those around us.

Let me encourage you to be diligent in all endeavors, not complacent or passive. Passive people want something good to happen to them, thinking they will sit and do nothing while waiting to see if it does. But that is not the way to a successful and enjoyable life. We are partners with God. He has a part to play, and we cannot do His part no matter how hard we try. We also have a part to play, and God won't do our part no matter how much we would like Him to. He gives us the knowledge and strength to do what we need to do, but we must choose to take action and do it.

God does certain things for us with no effort on our part. For example, salvation is available to us by His grace, not because of works we have done to deserve it (Ephesians 2:8–9). Mercy cannot be earned or deserved, and forgiveness of our sins is a gift from God. But we still need to ask, and ask in faith, in order to receive them. God wants us to avoid *works of the flesh* (things we try to do in our own strength that

only He can do). He does not want us to avoid work itself, but that is different than engaging in works of the flesh.

God has gifted me to teach His Word. I couldn't do it without Him, but He doesn't do all of the work for me. I still study, develop messages, and go over them many times, making sure I have done my part before I step onto a platform expecting God to do His part. I work, but I don't get into works of the flesh (self-effort apart from God's leading and grace) and become frustrated about the work I am doing. I do my part and trust God to do His part.

The idea that God provides but that we still need to be active and do what He gives us to do started in the Garden of Eden and runs throughout His Word:

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

Genesis 2:15

God provided the garden, and He gave Adam the ability to take care of it. But Adam had to choose to follow God's instructions:

All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.

Proverbs 14:23

Throughout Proverbs we find that passivity, laziness, and an unwillingness to work hard cause problems. We are to be committed, diligent, and willing to work. Every effort we

sow according to God's purpose and plan for us will bring an abundant harvest into our lives.

SUCCESS AND PROTECTION

Proverbs teaches us that God “holds success in store for the upright” (v. 7). Let's be clear about what being successful means. It is not primarily about having a lot of money or a high position at work or in the community. Success is first having a close, intimate relationship with God through Christ. Then it entails an abundance of peace and joy, regardless of our circumstances.

The Oxford dictionary says that the definition of *success* is the attainment of popularity or profit, but God defines *success* differently. Although successful people will have their needs met and have enough left over to bless others, not all people who are successful will be millionaires or CEOs. I believe that to be successful in God's eyes, we need pure hearts, an intense love for Him and for people, a desire to serve, and an eagerness to learn and grow spiritually.

Yes, God promises success to the upright, but being upright does not mean we are perfect. It does mean that we *want* to be perfect because of our love for Jesus, and that we are willing to press toward that goal as long as we live.

Wisdom also promises to shield “those whose walk is blameless,” whose course in life is just, and whose way is faithful (vv. 7–8). The promise of God's protection is often repeated in Scripture and is very comforting. The world today

is extremely violent, and I would much rather know that God is protecting me than to think I had to be on guard, constantly trying to protect myself. We read in Proverbs 2:11–12 that wisdom saves us, and discretion will protect and guard us. It especially says that wisdom will save us from people whose “words are perverse” and who “walk in dark ways” and “delight in doing wrong” (vv. 12–14).

The people we choose as our friends and companions in life are very important because they influence us more than we may realize. However, if we operate in wisdom, which is the proper use of knowledge or doing now what we will be satisfied with later, it will protect us from people who will influence us negatively by guiding us to avoid them.

UNFAITHFULNESS

“You shall not commit adultery” is one of the Ten Commandments God gave Moses to give to the Israelites (Exodus 20:14).

Proverbs 2:16 is Proverbs’ first mention of adultery, but not the last, as the writer of Proverbs issues many warnings against sexual immorality. In Proverbs 2:16–19, the adulterous woman speaks seductive words, she has ignored the covenant she made before God when she married, and her house leads to death.

Do you have friends who build you up and make you better, or ones who tear you down and have no good influence on you?

Sexual sin is probably ranked high on the scale of sins

most often committed. This tells me that temptation in this area is very strong, at least for many people. Every sin does not yield the same degree of destruction. Adultery brings a special kind of misery because it hurts many people and is said to be a sin against one's own body (1 Corinthians 6:18). When a man and a woman enter into a sexual relationship, it creates a bond between them, because in that relationship, the two become one. In addition, our bodies belong to the Lord and we are to glorify and honor Him through them (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

If we follow wisdom, it will cause us to keep to the right path in life. Faithful people “walk in the ways of good,” but “the unfaithful will be torn from” the land (vv. 20, 22). Sexual temptation can be very compelling, but the momentary pleasure it may bring is not worth the destruction and trouble it causes.

Many people think about wisdom in terms of how they spend their time or money, or in regard to practical decisions regarding their future. But wisdom is also vitally important in relationships and in personal matters, as we see in the comments Proverbs 2 makes about adultery. In every area of your life, be wise and do now what you will be happy with later.