



SESSION 1

*Introduction:
The Beginning of Wisdom*

LAURA MAGNESS, EDITOR

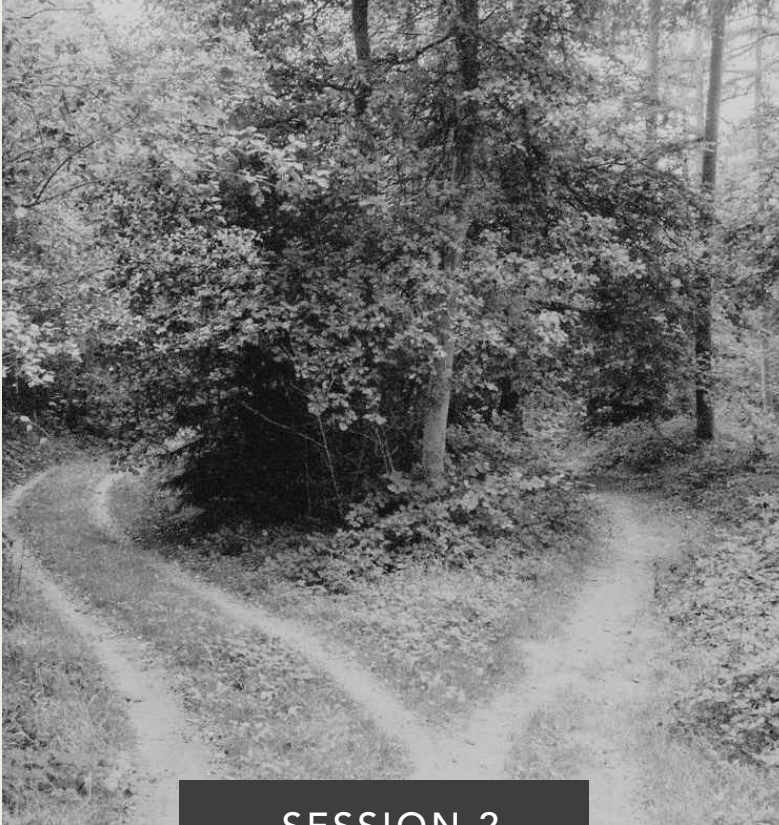


From self-help books to social media influencers to the advice of dear friends, we receive no shortage of “wise” counsel as we move through our days. But for the woman of God, this overwhelming amount of advice can make it hard to discern the only wisdom that truly matters—the wisdom of the Lord. And what’s more, the book of Proverbs warns of the folly of these worldly streams of advice, going so far as to describe them as a path that leads to the grave.

Thankfully, Proverbs also describes godly wisdom as a path that leads to life and flourishing, and over the next eight sessions we’ll learn to walk this path together. We’ll come to understand what it means when Scripture tells us, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). We’ll be taught how to interpret the principles behind the wisdom sayings and

apply them to every area of our lives. We’ll treasure these proverbs in our hearts as we memorize each session’s anchor verse together. (Don’t miss the Scripture memory verse pages on 218-219!) And we’ll see that what is true of all Scripture is true of Proverbs: this is a book of the Bible that points us to Jesus, the true and wise One who *is* the way and shows us how to walk in Him.

Because this study is written by a team of teachers, each author brings her particular teaching and Bible study style. Their approaches combine to make this a Bible study that will open up the words of Scripture to you in new and exciting ways. As you get started, watch the Session 1 video to meet the teaching team as they introduce you to the way of wisdom and give you an idea of what to expect from the study.



SESSION 2

Two Paths, Two Women

JEN WILKIN



Day One

Prologue

1. **READ PROVERBS 1:1-6.** To whom is authorship of the book attributed (1:1)?

Note that Proverbs chapters 1–9 are all one section with one author. What details are given about the purpose or occasion for writing these chapters (1:2-6)?

2. Now **READ THROUGH PROVERBS 1–9** from start to finish. As you read, mark each of the following emphases in your copy of the text. A copy of Proverbs 1–9 is provided for you on page 204.

- › Circle every mention of the *fear of the LORD* in orange.
- › Mark every mention of “way,” “path,” “steps,” and “foot/feet” with a blue underline and a tiny foot.
- › Mark every occurrence of *wisdom/wise* (or synonym for wisdom: *understanding/knowledge/etc.*) with a green underline.
- › Mark every occurrence of *folly/fool* (or synonym for folly: *wicked/sinners/etc.*) with a red underline.

3. Let's get the big picture for the prologue to Proverbs. Below are summary statements for chapters 1–9. Fill in the correct chapter number next to its summary statement. The first one has been done for you.

	Don't forget the teaching of wisdom. It makes your path straight. Wisdom brings happiness and safety to those who embrace her.
	Wisdom calls out. Her ancient value and beauty are attested to all the way back to the beginning. The one who finds her finds life.
	Wisdom is of enormous value, rescuing those who walk in its paths.
1	This book will teach you wisdom. Watch out for bad companions. Wisdom cries out—heed her and live.
	Don't be unwise with money, time, or speech. The Lord hates folly in all its forms. Bind wisdom to your heart so that you won't be lured into sin.
	Don't be seduced by smooth words. Don't commit adultery, which leads to death.
	Get wisdom. She will watch over you and show you the path of life.
	Wisdom calls out, inviting the foolish to her feast, offering length of days. Folly calls out, inviting the foolish to stolen food, which leads to death.
	Call wisdom your sister. She will keep you from being seduced into sin, no matter how aggressive or persistent its call.

Answer Key: 3, 8, 2, 1, 6, 5, 4, 9, 7



SESSION 3

Wisdom in Our Words

RUTH CHOU SIMONS



Day One

Introduction

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

PROVERBS 10:19, ESV

If a 2007 University of Arizona study still holds, you and I will speak, on average, 16,000 words every day.¹ Sixteen thousand words. *Every single day.* That's approximately 480,000 words in any given month. I don't know about you, but when I think about words coming out of my mouth nearly half a million times, I feel their weight differently than when I think about a short conversation with a friend.

Have you ever noticed how it's easy to recall something hurtful said to you in the past, even though you can hardly remember a conversation you had last week? Years ago, my husband, Troy, and I found ourselves in an unexpected conflict that led to an unraveling of our lives as we knew it, professionally and relationally. In the tension of the situation, words were spoken to us that are not easily unheard or forgotten.

Why can I recall, with great accuracy, the exact words spoken in a particular exchange? Because words are not just words; they carry meaning. They reveal. They influence. They get lodged into our minds and hearts.

Because words have real power. The power to build up or tear down. To be conduits of truth, or runways for destructive lies. For better or worse, the words spoken to us, over us, or about us can have great and lasting impact.

Is it any wonder then, that the Bible—especially the book of Proverbs—has so much to say about how we use our words? We need godly wisdom for what to speak, when to speak, and how to speak in such a way that leverages the best of what words can do.

Our Ultimate Example

Because the Bible is a book about God, I want to kick us off by looking to Jesus as our ultimate example for wise speech.

1. **LET'S START BY READING JOHN 1:1-2.** What does this passage say about Jesus?

Jesus is the Word of God *incarnate*, which means “in human form; embodied in flesh.”² Proverbs 3:19 says, “The LORD founded the earth by wisdom and established the heavens by understanding.” And Jesus is wisdom personified, the ultimate standard for speech that glorifies God.

Thanks to God’s written Word, we have example after example of how Jesus interacted with people and how He used His words in a myriad of situations, including:

- When He was tempted (Matt. 4:1-11)
- When He was questioned (Matt. 16:1-4)
- When He was betrayed (Matt. 26:47-50)
- When people wanted something from Him (Mark 5:25-34)
- When He was young (Luke 2:41-51)
- With His closest friends (Luke 12:22-34)
- When He was misunderstood (Luke 14:1-6)
- When He taught (John 3:1-15)
- With people who were different than Him (John 4:1-26)
- When He mourned (John 11:17-44)

2. In which of the situations listed do you personally think it would be difficult to use wise speech? Why?

3. We don't have time to look at every story I just listed, but let's briefly look at a few. Skim the following stories and write down a few phrases you'd use to describe Jesus's speech.

Read	Who is the conversation with?	What words would you use to describe Jesus's speech?
Matthew 16:1-4		
John 3:1-15		
John 4:1-26		

Based on these few passages (and any others you may be familiar with), how would you summarize the way Jesus uses His words?

As we study, let's keep looking to Jesus, friend. And may we wholeheartedly echo David in Psalm 19:14:

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer (ESV).

What to Expect from Your Study

We'll spend a good bit of this session digging deeper into the warnings and instructions associated with various types of unwise speech. We'll explore what Proverbs says about things like deception, perverse speech, gossip, slander, contentious speech, bragging, and flattery and then explore solutions and specific applications to each problem. We'll focus on what they are, but more importantly, we'll explore the antidote to the folly of these types of speech and find what wise speech involves.

As we navigate the various proverbs this session, I'll ask you to make two types of observations: *explicit* observations and *implicit* observations.

EXPLICIT observations are observations based on what the passage says directly.

IMPLICIT observations are observations you can infer based on what the passage is saying.

For example, let's look at Proverbs 10:19.

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent (ESV).

Explicit (direct) Observations	Implicit (indirect) Observations
Many words bring transgression	Fewer words may help avoid transgression
Restrained lips are prudent/wise	Unrestrained lips are unwise

You won't necessarily be able to make both types of observations about every proverb we look at, and the two types may not always be opposites, but identifying both is an important step in observing and interpreting the proverbs. Sometimes, what is left unsaid is just as important and applicable to a life of wisdom as what is directly stated.

Make It Personal

At the end of each day, I'll provide a prompt for you to reflect on how the Scripture we've read and the thoughts we've explored apply to your life. You may be tempted to skip this part, but I'd encourage you to approach each day's prompt with a posture of curiosity and humility.

Remember, friend—conviction brings *repentance* (acknowledging your sin before God, asking for forgiveness), which is a normal part of *sanctification* (the process of being made incrementally more like Jesus). There is no shame involved, only the love of God to correct you and draw you to Himself.

I already mentioned that we'll explore several different types of unwise speech highlighted in Proverbs. Here are some basic definitions.

Bragging	Words designed to draw attention to yourself, your accomplishments, your possessions, or your status
Contentious or quarrelsome speech	Stirring up conflict or argument
Deception	Telling lies, including exaggeration, embellishment, half-truths, or lies of omission
Flattery	Smooth talking, motivated by manipulation to get what you want
Gossip	Bearing bad news behind someone's back out of a bad heart; revealing a secret ³
Perverse speech	Distorting truth or reality ⁴
Slander	Words that make fun of, defame, or malign another person's character or reputation

4. As you read this list, are there any definitions that jump out? If so, note which ones and why.

Which, if any, of these types of speech do you personally struggle with? How so? In what situations or circumstances?

If you're anything like me, today's self-evaluation has stirred up a little bit (or a lot) of conviction from the Holy Spirit about your words and how you use them. Take a moment to pray, confessing any sin that came to mind and asking God to use your study to make you more like Jesus, specifically related to your words.



SESSION 4

*Wisdom in Friendship
and Neighborliness*

KELLY MINTER



Day One

True

I used to think having deep friendships mattered most to people who were single, like myself, until I realized how many of my married friends long for deep friendships the same way I do. Even my introverted friends, who claim to prefer a book to a dinner party, all want at least one or two good friends. We want friends we can confide in. Those we can trust. Ones who will tell us what's what, even when we don't want to hear it. We want friends who are *true*, and that's the type of friend others want us to be.

Before you read further, begin by asking yourself, *Am I a true friend?* Am I trustworthy, or do I share confidences when I think it will benefit me? Am I loyal, or do I dip in and out of friendships because I don't like the constraints of commitment? Am I impartial, or do I side with whomever I stand to gain from the most? Is being the center of attention my aim, or is my disposition loving and kind?

Let's examine what Proverbs tells us about being a *true* friend.

The Way of Folly

The first several passages we'll consider have to do with showing partiality and offering flattery, two actions that highlight insincere and selfish motives in friendship and neighborliness. In other words, characteristics which are *not* true. Notice how these verses offer *observations* about reality. Like you learned in the previous session on wise words, these proverbs don't explicitly tell us whether these realities are good, bad, or indifferent. Nor do they tell us how we are to respond. Instead, we are invited to reflect.

- 1. Read the proverbs on the next page and write down your *explicit* observations. Then reread each passage and write down your *implicit* observations. (Remember, explicit observations are based on what the passage says. Implicit observations are what you can infer from the passage.)**

Read	Explicit Observations	Implicit Observations
Proverbs 19:4		
Proverbs 19:6		
Proverbs 28:21		

PROVERBS 19:4 AND 6 state what is generally true to our life experience: we are drawn to those with wealth, we curry favor with those who can offer us something, and we don't usually pursue the poor and struggling. These are general truths about human nature when not in step with God's law and Spirit. In other words, this is how we act apart from Christ.

PROVERBS 28:21 comes right out and says what I imagine you're feeling: *This is not good!* We aren't to show partiality to people. The author warns that even the "courageous"—those with integrity and resolve—can compromise when they really need something. While this verse specifically refers to what takes place in a court of law, its wisdom applies to us. Just as it is wrong for a judge to show unjust favor in a courtroom for a bribe, it's wrong for us to show partiality among our friends and neighbors in a way that disadvantages others.¹

2. **REFLECT** Think about a time when you were tempted to be unfaithful to a friend or neighbor because of what you stood to gain. What was the result?

Living in Nashville, it's not uncommon to be in close proximity to celebrities, influencers, and the unusually wealthy. We share churches, school systems, and sometimes neighborhoods. The Holy Spirit often reminds me to not chase favor from those who have something to offer me, and to conversely make sure I'm attentive to those who don't have excess resources to give, if anything at all. To show partiality is the antithesis of what it means to be a true friend or neighbor. Partiality is based on what we can gain instead of what we can give, and it does not honor God.

One of partiality's closest companions is *flattery*, which means "to be smooth, or make slippery."² Or, as Ruth defined it in the previous session, "smooth talking motivated by manipulation to get what you want."

3. LOOK UP PROVERBS 29:5-6. The writer compares flattery to:

- a land mine a cliff a net an evil spirit

You looked at this verse last session as you studied wise words, but now let's consider the specific danger flattery poses to our relationships. Nets are used to trap prey. Flattery, in a similar sense, can be used to trap a neighbor so as to gain advantage over him or her. This may be an extreme analogy, but consider how many friendships you know of that have dissolved because one or both of the people in the friendship were fake or false. Also, notice how verse 6 flows out of verse 5. When we flatter others, we end up being ensnared by our own sin. We become trapped by the consequences of flattery.

4. REFLECT How do the above verses convict, challenge, or encourage you in your current relationships?

The Wise Way

One of the hallmarks of Proverbs is the way it juxtaposes what *not* to do with what *to* do. The wisdom writers knew we could better understand what a good friend looks like when held up against a bad one. Now that we've looked at the downsides of showing partiality, flattering others, and sidling up to people for what they can do for us, we'll turn to the virtuous disposition of a true friend.

5. **READ PROVERBS 27:9.** What two metaphors does the sage use to describe the sweetness of a friend’s heartfelt advice? Why do you think he uses these images?

Why is a good friend’s counsel or advice superior to what we can give ourselves?

Both oil and incense were expensive luxuries and sources of enjoyment for the people of Israel.³ To put oil on one’s face and fragrant incense on one’s garments were delightful practices. Here, the sage compares the sensuous enjoyment of oil and incense with the richness of a friend’s interested and passionate counsel.⁴ As oil and incense were precious commodities, so the wisdom of godly counsel is a valuable treasure. We are not meant to walk through life alone. We need the advice of other Christ followers who help us make godly decisions, correct us when we need it, and encourage us along the way.

The New Testament has a lot to say about what it looks like to be part of the body of Christ, the church. As Christ followers, this is to be our closest group of friends. We’re to gently approach one another and give good instruction (Gal. 6:1,6), encourage one another (Heb. 10:24-25), and offer advice to those coming behind us, like Paul did with Timothy (1 Tim. 1:1-2).

6. **REFLECT** Write the name of a person you turn to for meaningful counsel. _____ What is it about them that makes you to want to hear from them?

Now write the name of someone who looks to you to be this for them. _____ What is one way you need to choose the path of wisdom in that relationship?

7. Read the following proverbs and write down your *explicit* observations. Then reread each passage and write down your *implicit* observations.

Read	Explicit Observations	Implicit Observations
Proverbs 27:5-7		
Proverbs 28:23		

Why would correcting (rebuking) someone instead of showing them flattery bring favor in the long run?

In **PROVERBS 27:5**, the wisdom writer juxtaposes open correction with love that is of no use because it is concealed. And in verse 6, where we would expect *wounds* to be paired with *enemies* and *kisses* with *friends*, the sage swaps these. It is actually far better to be “wounded” by a trusted friend’s correction or rebuke than it is to be “kissed” or flattered by someone who doesn’t truly care about us. Remember, the goal is for each of us to look more and more like Christ. We need the faithful “wounds” of a friend to accomplish this.

8. **REFLECT** Do you find it hard to offer loving correction to friends?

Yes No

Do you find it hard to receive loving correction?

Yes No

What do your answers tell you about yourself?

In verse 7, the author reminds us that timing is also important. If someone doesn't want to hear our advice or correction (the full person who doesn't even want honey), we may want to refrain. But when a person is hungry for true friendship, even "bitter" words of correction can taste sweet when the person knows they are coming from a place of love.

My friends and I have a pact with each other: if one of us ever strays from the wise path, the rest of us are coming for her. We are not afraid to tell one another the truth because we don't always see our own circumstances or hearts clearly. We need others to reflect back to us God's character and wisdom, to gently lead us home when we've gotten off course. The wounds of a friend really are better than the kisses of an enemy because a friend's wounds are only meant to eliminate that which seeks to harm us.

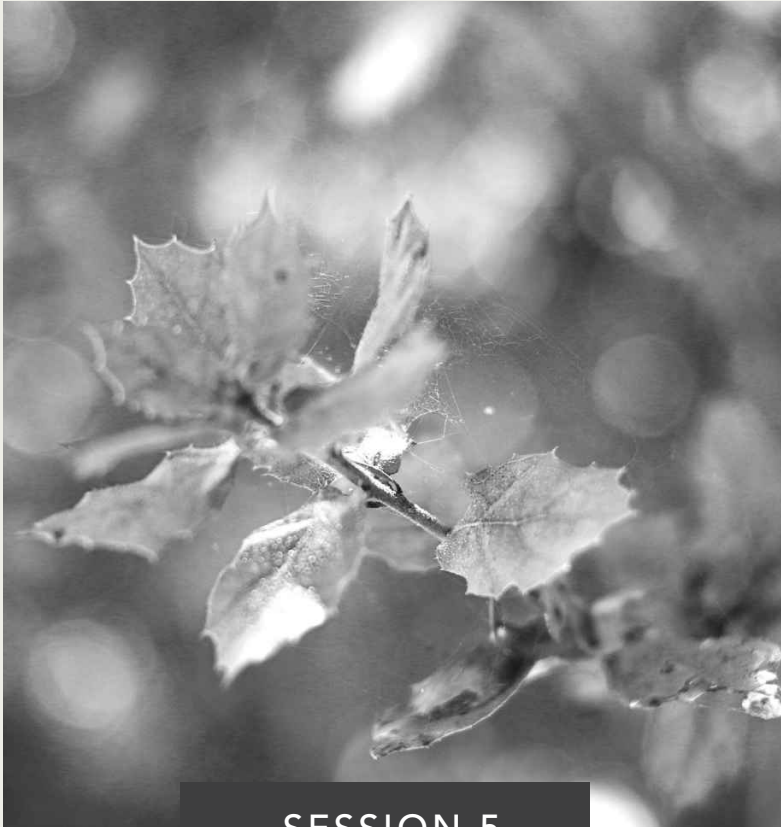
When I think about the beautiful counsel of a true and trusted friend, I can't help but think of Jesus's friendship with the disciples.

9. READ JOHN 15:14-15. Why did Jesus move from calling His disciples servants to friends? How does this passage inform the type of counsel a wise friend will give others?

Jesus shares with us everything the Father has shared with Him. The very counsel of God is ours in Christ. As I reflect on the kind of friend I am to others, I see that I am only as good as the counsel I'm listening to. As we abide in Christ and His words, we will have treasure to share with those around us.

10. Based on everything you've read today, summarize what *the way of folly* looks like when it comes to being a true friend and neighbor.

Summarize what *the way of wisdom* looks like when it comes to being a true friend and neighbor.



SESSION 5

Wisdom at Home

ADRIENNE CAMP



Day One

A Strong Foundation

Before you begin today's study, take a few minutes to quiet your heart and mind. Surrender your will and your thoughts to the Lord, and ask Him to help you grow in humility. If any relationships in your life have you heavy hearted or distracted, come to Jesus now and ask Him to help you put them aside for the moment as you learn to look to Him above all else.

1. **LOOK UP PROVERBS 24:3-4** and write it in the space below. What point is being made about wisdom in these verses?

Rarely does anyone other than the engineer or builder consider the foundation of a house, but we all know it is the most essential part, upon which everything else is built. Just like a physical home, the quality of the relational foundation within the home informs everything built upon it. Throughout this study we've been learning about choosing the way of wisdom—principles that guide how we live God's way in this world. In the same way that the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom to use wise words and be wise friends, He also empowers us to build a strong, sturdy “house” that can withstand storms of many kinds.

None of us desire our relationships to fall apart, yet we live in a world filled with immense brokenness and relational pain. Through the wisdom of the Lord, we can forge bonds that endure and bring deep joy and enrichment to our lives. We can learn to cultivate relationships that will grow stronger over time and bring joy and fulfillment to all involved. But to do this, we must prioritize our relationship with the Lord above all else.

Consider Your Home's Foundation

2. **READ MATTHEW 7:24-27.** Write down the three actions that are repeated in verses 24 and 26.

What does Jesus's parable reveal about how the wise person interacts with God's Word?

Matthew 7 is a teaching from Jesus's Sermon on the Mount which emphasizes the importance of hearing and acting on the Word of God. We'll consider this teaching further in Session 7, but for now I want you to notice that the wise builder is the one who hears and obeys God's Word. This person is actively following God's instructions to build the foundation of her life. She has counted the cost of ignoring His words and trusts that His way is better.

3. **Think about the foundation of your family relationships.** (Remember, this doesn't have to be limited to the people you live with. This could be your parents, grown children, roommates, or even the spiritual family God has given you.) Think through the following questions, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you evaluate your foundations.

What character traits are present?

What activities do you enjoy doing together?

What are the things you talk about most often?

How do you handle conflict?

As you process these questions, consider whether your household's foundation is solid or cracking. Is it sturdy enough to support everything built upon it?

4. Fill in the words from Matthew 7:25 (CSB).

"Yet it _____, because its _____
was on _____."

5. If the Holy Spirit is highlighting areas of growth, write them here.

I'd dare say none of us would score a perfect ten in the area of family relationships. We all have something we can grow in, even in a home where peace and love are prominent. It's good to name these areas, as our posture should always be that of wanting to learn and grow.

Solomon claims that, by virtue, a house is filled with all sorts of precious wealth and furnished with the revealed wisdom upheld by the Lord.² When he speaks of building a house with wisdom, he emphasizes the importance of thoughtful, deliberate actions and making decisions that reflect godly principles. It has been said that every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become.³ The seeds we sow today will be the harvest we reap tomorrow.

The Transforming Power of God's Word

6. READ PROVERBS 1:5, and fill in the chart.

Who She Is	What She Does
The Wise Person	
The Discerning Person	

The way of wisdom in family relationships begins in our hearts, which is why the fear of the Lord and dependence on His Word are essential. We need the Holy Spirit's guidance, advice, and strategies. And like Proverbs 1:5 says, we can't walk the way of wisdom unless we're willing to learn and grow. Spiritual growth is a life-long pursuit.

7. Read the following proverbs. Next to each reference, list the characteristics and actions that describe wisdom in our relationships.

Read	Characteristics	Actions
Proverbs 3:3-4		
Proverbs 3:32-34		
Proverbs 14:26		

Here are a few key insights I gathered from these proverbs:

- Wisdom deepens and directs relationships, while righteousness provides a secure foundation for the family.
- Trust in the Lord frees us from fear and the need to control.
- Reverence for God influences how we relate to others because we don't hold others to a higher standard than we hold ourselves.

Our willingness to let the Lord change our perspective is evident in how we interact with Scripture—we must approach the Bible with the intention of allowing it to shape and transform us. A fitting response is to let it challenge our preferences and refine our character. This is how wisdom will become evident in our lives and how we position ourselves to pass that wisdom on.

John Maxwell writes, “Your kids will catch your lifestyle . . . We teach what we know, but we reproduce what we are.”⁴ This is just as true in our relationships with parents, siblings, or roommates as it is with children.

8. What are you teaching from the way you behave in your home or among family?

When my oldest daughter, Bella, was younger, she was a bridesmaid in her friend's wedding and was nervous to walk down the aisle in heels. We decided to have a few practice runs before the big day and were chiming in on what she had to do: "Pull your shoulders back! Have fun! Walk confidently!" We were laughing at our commentary when finally, she blurted out, "I have to see myself to fix myself!"

I have to see myself to fix myself.

That is such a true statement. As we evaluate ourselves, we can see where we're walking the path of folly and where we're walking the path of wisdom. Before we can influence those around us with the wisdom of the Lord, we have to look at ourselves and ask God to show us where we need Him to grow and change our own hearts and lives.

9. As you gaze inward today, consider these points regarding the foundational aspects of family life. Go through them prayerfully.

What influences have weakened or strengthened your relationships, and what are you cultivating now that you hope will continue to flourish?

What intentional routines or practices can you implement that will foster wisdom, health, and the love of God in your home or family relationships?

Take a moment to pray for insight and clarity, asking God to guide you in creating and maintaining a home that mirrors His loving nature. As you pray, remember that the true treasures of life are found in relationships marked by love, wisdom, and, above all, God's presence. Ask the Lord to help you embrace His words, so that both your ears and heart are attuned to His voice.



SESSION 6

*Wisdom in Work, Wealth,
and Leadership*

ELIZABETH WOODSON



Day One

A Wise Perspective of Wealth

If we are honest, conversations about wealth in church can sometimes make us uncomfortable. Whether it's because we believe our spending and earning habits are personal matters, we are in a season of financial hardship, or we distrust our church's financial management practices, sermons about money tend not to be popular or plentiful. However, in Proverbs, King Solomon takes a different approach.

In 1 Kings 10, we learn that Solomon “surpassed all the kings of the world in riches and in wisdom” (v. 23). God had blessed Solomon with so much wisdom that people from all around the world would come to learn from him. They would then express their gratitude by sharing an overflow of their riches with him. As you read through 1 Kings 10, it becomes clear that wealth is something Solomon had a lot of, and so it makes sense that Proverbs is full of wisdom about how to handle it.

In fact, wealth is one of the topics he discusses the most, and the wisdom he provides frames wealth as a positive blessing from God that is the fruit of diligent work. However, he also emphasizes that we should remember to whom our wealth truly belongs. Throughout the book, Solomon warns about how easy it is to make wealth an idol, trusting in it for our sense of security and identity. And make no mistake: idols always take more from us than they will ever give.

As we read through these proverbs, it's important for us to remember that while we tend to associate wealth with financial extravagance or abundance, this was not necessarily the meaning during Solomon's day. Many of the proverbs on wealth contrast it with poverty, so a more accurate interpretation is not the idea of extravagance but sufficiency.¹ In Proverbs, the wealthy person is one who has more than enough to meet her needs.

Today, we will examine how we should view our wealth, learning how a wise perspective of wealth begins by acknowledging the One from whom it comes.

1. According to **PROVERBS 10:22**, who is the ultimate source of our wealth?

2. What request is made in **PROVERBS 30:8-9**, specifically related to wealth? What reason is given for this request?

3. Look up the following verses to consider what our wealth is not able to do.

Wealth cannot _____. **PROVERBS 11:4**

Wealth cannot _____. **PROVERBS 11:7**

Wealth cannot _____. **PROVERBS 27:24**

4. What is better than obtaining wealth in an unwise way? Look up the following passages and then place a check next to all the words that apply.

Proverbs 15:16

Proverbs 16:19

Proverbs 16:8

Proverbs 28:6

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living with integrity | <input type="checkbox"/> Prestige | <input type="checkbox"/> Righteousness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Success | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial security | <input type="checkbox"/> Influence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Humility | <input type="checkbox"/> Fearing the LORD | <input type="checkbox"/> Power |

5. **REFLECT** In what ways have you been tempted to find your identity in material possessions? Give one or two examples.

What is the danger of this type of perspective?

6. **REFLECT** We each have a different relationship with wealth. Some of us are consumed with obtaining an overabundance of it, while others of us can be concerned by the lack of it. Which end of the spectrum do you lean toward?

What does our relationship with wealth reveal about who we consider to be the source of our wealth?

What biblical truth can we hold onto to bring us back to a wise perspective? **LOOK UP MATTHEW 6:25-33** to help you with your response.

A wise perspective of wealth leads us to remember that we are not the ultimate owners of our material possessions. All of what we have belongs to God, and while He is limitless, the power and reach of our wealth is not. Wisdom invites us to rightly value our money, not using it to provide what only God can—things like our identity, purpose, and sense of security. So whether we, like the apostle Paul, are “in abundance or in need” (Phil. 4:12), our limitless God will help us have a contentment that overflows into transformational generosity.



SESSION 7

Training a Wise Heart

COURTNEY DOCTOR



Day One

Look in the Mirror

I'm not usually a fan of beginning a session of Bible study by directing our gaze to a mirror. But there is a time for everything. Even John Calvin began his magnum opus *Institutes of the Christian Religion* with these words:

Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Nearly all the wisdom we possess . . . consists of two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves . . . [and] the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him.¹

In other words, self-awareness is a good thing because true self-awareness does not lead to self-absorption, but away from it. As we take an honest look and see our insufficiency, we're compelled to turn to God's complete sufficiency. As we see the ugliness and unholiness that resides in us, we're meant to be drawn to His beauty and perfection.

1. **READ PROVERBS 27:19.** What is the comparison being made? What do you think it means?

2. **READ JAMES 1:22-24.** To what does James compare looking in a mirror? What do hearing God's Word and looking in a mirror have in common (what is the intended result of both)?

James describes the person who hears the Word of God and fails to obey it as being like the person who sees himself in a mirror and then immediately

forgets what he looks like. What good is a mirror if that is the result? If you were to look in a mirror and see a big piece of lettuce stuck in your teeth, you wouldn't ignore it and do nothing. You would do something to remedy the problem the mirror revealed—you would remove the lettuce. You may not like seeing a piece of lettuce in your teeth, but you're probably grateful the mirror revealed the problem so that you could address it. The Word of God is meant to play a similar role; it will reveal the things in us that need correction. It's not always pleasant to see what the Word reveals, but let's take a good look in the mirror of Scripture and rejoice that God loves us enough to reveal what we need to see.

3. READ 2 TIMOTHY 3:16, then fill in the chart.

All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness.

Scripture is profitable for	That means (define the word)	An example from a time in my life when God's Word did this

The first thing we see in the mirror of God's Word is that we're not okay the way we are. We are people who need to be taught, rebuked, corrected, and trained in righteousness. Meaning, we will not live rightly without God's Word. We need it to correct our paths, to set our feet back, time and again, on the path of wisdom.

But it's not just the direction our feet go that needs correction. Scripture also has a lot to say about our hearts. Most of us like to think of ourselves as "good" people with "good" hearts. When we like someone, we might say, "She is a sweetheart." But are our hearts good and sweet? That's not what God's Word tells us.

The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9

4. What two ways does Jeremiah describe the heart?

5. **NOW LOOK UP AND READ MATTHEW 15:18-20.** Where are we able to best observe the wickedness that resides in our hearts?

REFLECT When was the last time you heard something come out of your mouth that revealed one of the things listed in verse 19?

Does this sound familiar to you? In Session 3 (“Wisdom in Our Words,” p. 53), we looked at another place in Matthew’s Gospel where Jesus told His listeners that our hearts—not our actions—are the source of our folly. Biblical self-awareness is quite different than the self-awareness commended by most self-help books and social media influencers. Contrary to the popular messages surrounding this topic, we don’t gaze into the mirror to see how powerful, good, intuitive, amazing, and strong we are. What we see in the mirror of God’s Word is that we’re desperately wicked and without hope. We’re not a bunch of sweethearts—but this is the beginning of really good news.

6. **READ EZEKIEL 36:25-27.** What did God promise to do?

God told Ezekiel what would happen when He sent Jesus to save us. He would make us clean, give us new hearts, and enable us, by the Holy Spirit, to obey God's Word. In other words, God Himself would fix the problems we see when we look in the mirror. Through Christ, God removes our wicked, rebellious, stony hearts and replaces them with clean, responsive, new ones. We aren't the ones who will remedy the problems we see when we look in the mirror, God is!

7. **READ 2 CORINTHIANS 5:17.** In light of what you've studied today, what do you think this verse means? Write your own paraphrase of it.

Look at the quote from Calvin's *Institutes* one more time:

Without knowledge of self, there is no knowledge of God. Nearly all the wisdom we possess . . . consists of two parts: knowledge of God and of ourselves . . . [and] the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him.²

8. **REFLECT** What have you seen as you peered into the mirror today? Did anything surprise you? In what ways has knowledge of yourself shifted your gaze toward God?

If looking in the mirror of God's Word caused you to see something in your own heart that made you cry out to, run to, or praise God today, then you are already increasing in wisdom.