

Be Wise

LIVING THE PROVERBS

The book of Proverbs gives us language for the everyday living of life. It is fitting for this book to directly follow the Psalms. In the Psalms, we fix our eyes on the object of our worship (our good and gracious God). In the Proverbs, we turn our focus to living out that worship.

“Many people think that what’s written in the Bible has mostly to do with getting people into heaven – getting right with God, saving their eternal souls. It does have to do with that, of course, but not mostly. It is equally concerned with living on this earth – living well, living in robust sanity.

Wisdom is the art of living skillfully in whatever actual conditions we find ourselves in.

Wisdom has to do with becoming skillful in honoring our parents and raising our children, handling our money and conducting our sexual lives, going to work, and exercising leadership, using words well and treating friends kindly, eating and drinking healthily, cultivating emotions within ourselves and attitudes toward others that make for peace.

Threaded through all these items is the insistence that the way we think of and respond to God is the most practical thing we do.”

Eugene Peterson

Once we receive the grace of God, the temptation is to assume we are free to coast from this life into the next. But Jesus came not only to die for our sin, but to live for our righteousness. Grace grants us what we do not deserve by covering our sins, empowering us to live more abundantly and growing us in the fruit of God’s spirit: love, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

The purpose of this study is to develop practices for living out our worship of the God who knows, loves, saves, and calls us. Each week, we will practice inviting God’s Spirit to bring wisdom to our moment-by-moment lives. We will search the Scripture and look to Jesus as the perfect fulfillment of all wisdom. We will also invite God to change our hearts and give meaning to the mundane.

Using This Guide

This book is as much a guide to practicing scripture as it is to studying it.
Here's how to get the most out of your time.

Settle on the Intent

The purpose of the Proverbs is to grow in wisdom and understanding (Proverbs 1:2-6). Biblical wisdom involves everything a person says, does and thinks. In this study, we are seeking the path to live our lives in a way that reflects Jesus and brings glory to God each day.

Set a Place and a Time, Five Days a Week

Right now, determine when and where you will meet with God each week. Put it in your calendar. Guard this time like you guard time for your favorite person, event or show. Each week is divided into five days of focus on a particular aspect of wisdom and godly living. Be sure to set aside at least 15-30 minutes each day.

Gather Together

Gather some friends to meet with weekly and discuss how you are being challenged to grow through the Proverbs. Some commentators argue that the book of Proverbs was originally written as a manual to be studied by a community of men in the context of mentorship. Each proverb was to be discussed and considered and compared to the others. Examples from life were to be shared. Proverbs may have been written to be the basis for deep, comprehensive personal growth through mentoring in community. So your group time is important. Make it a safe time by not trying to fix one another. Be sure to be fully present with each other and with God.

Expect Change

Change is not easy, and carrying God's word with us throughout the day amidst all the million other voices vying for our attention can feel near impossible. Here's the good news: it IS possible! God promises to help. Our time in Scripture gives language to the voice of the Holy spirit so that we can know how to obey, grow, and change. God's best is always better.

Practice Makes Progress

When you close your Bible, don't stop praying for God to help you to change and grow. The practices in this study help us become more aware of the presence of God's Spirit throughout the day. Perfect isn't the point, but progress is. God gives grace for our shortcomings, but grace and obedience are not mutually exclusive... they are, in fact, inseparable.

Follow the Teaching

www.womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources

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Using This Guide

Here's a little preview of what to expect from your study each week.

Day One - Check Yourself

Take this day to explore definitions and answer some preliminary questions that provide a jumping-off point for the following days.

Day Two/Three - Study the Scriptures

On these days, we'll consider what Proverbs and other Scripture has to say about this week's topic. We'll also reflect on what God's word reveals about the topic and answer some general application questions.

Day Four - The Perfect Model of Jesus

Knowing Jesus to be the author and perfecter of our faith and the perfect model for godly living, we will look to His life and teachings to reveal how to live the week's topic.

Day Five - Live it Out

Day Five will provide a guided exercise for practicing the week's topic. We will reflect in prayer and take action to grow. Each week, this day will add at least one tool to your arsenal for godly living.

Pray, Pray, Pray

Each day, begin your time with this simple prayer:

God, you are perfect. You are the source of wisdom. I have so much to learn. Open my heart and show me where I need to grow. Amen

At the end of each page on Days 1-4, we provide a simple prayer to close your time.

This prayer is meant to help solidify what you have learned in the Scripture and to remind you that all wisdom is a gift from God.

Group Life

AN INTRODUCTION

Welcome to community. We are made for life together but life together can get messy so here are some suggestions to make the time in your group fun, vulnerable and life-changing.

BE ATTENTIVE

We live in a loud and distracted world full of social media, text messaging and selfies. For the short time in your group, silence your phone and put it away. When someone is sharing, lean in to listen and ask questions. When you share, keep on topic and seek to be concise so that others can also share. Avoid interrupting or dominating the conversation. We want to learn from one another and we learn the most when we listen.

COME PREPARED

The emphasis of this time is to know God and to grow in our life with Him. When everyone does the homework, the discussion promises to be rich and deep. Pray before you come in anticipation of what God will do in and through your group.

WHAT GROUP TIME IS AND IS NOT

We want to create a safe place for everyone to be vulnerable but also confident that what they share will not leave the group. This is a time to grow in love for God and for one another. This is not a time to fix one another or give unsolicited advice.

Give feedback that is: affirming (“thanks for trusting us with your story”), empathetic (“I’ve done the same thing”) and attentive (“can you say more about how that made you feel?”).

Avoid feedback that is: condemning (“oh my, I have never heard of anyone doing that”), counseling/fixing (“you should . . . have you tried . . . you need to stop . . .”) or all about you (“that reminds me of when I . . .”). Also be careful about encouragement that is “too soon.” When someone has suffered pain or deep loss it is usually not the time to say that it will all be okay, that “God has a plan” or that this has happened to you and that it served an amazing purpose in your life. Usually it’s best to just say, “I’m so sorry. That is so hard.”

GET TO KNOW YOUR GROUP

At the end of this book, you’ll find a page for keeping track of the names and contact information of those in your group. We encourage connection outside your group time! Grab coffee, go for walks, talk, pray, check-in with one another. The work God is doing doesn’t stop once you leave your table, and even a simple text of encouragement can be exactly what someone needs in the middle of a messy week.

The Purpose

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on *Wisdom: Living the Proverbs*.
Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources

In the Bible, wisdom is always God-oriented and practical. It is not entirely coextensive with knowledge, for a knowledgeable person may be very deficient in wisdom. Wisdom is the right use of one's knowledge, insight and skill to the glory of God. It originates in the fear of the Lord. Thus the Bible defines wisdom in terms of one's relationship with God. Worldly wisdom is knowledge apart from divine revelation and is often God-opposing in nature.

True wisdom is the ordering of one's life by God given counsel.

Rubel Shelley

The Purpose

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

What is wisdom? In your words.

What is the difference between having wisdom and living by wisdom? What does wisdom need besides knowledge?

According to Proverbs 1:4-5, who can benefit from the practice and pursuit of wisdom?

In your life, where do you see yourself pursuing wisdom and where do you see yourself embracing complacency?

What stood out to you most in the talk?

Discernment

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Day One - Check Yourself

When people stop believing in God, they don't believe in nothing, they believe in everything.
G.K. Chesterton

Discernment is perhaps the most dynamic, key form of wisdom in the life of a Jesus-follower.

Write your own definition of "discernment" here (don't consult a dictionary yet). Where do you get this definition?

Now, pull out your dictionary or find an online dictionary. Record the definition(s) of discern/discernment here.

Consult a thesaurus to find some words that have similar and opposite meaning to "discernment". Record here and circle any that strike you.

For a Christ-follower, discernment can be defined as the ability to distinguish the voice of God. What methods do you currently use to distinguish God's voice? How are you cultivating an ear that is attuned to God's voice over all the other voices?

On a scale of 1-10 (1 being never and 10 being every single second) how often do you include God in your decision-making process?

God, open my heart to the new thing you have to teach me this week about hearing your voice. Guard me from any cynicism or doubt and give me a fresh perspective from you. Amen

Day Two - Wisdom and Discernment in the Proverbs

NOTE: In many translations, "understanding" is used in place of "discernment".

Read Proverbs 3:1-3 & 21-26

How is discernment depicted? What are some synonyms used here? According to these passages, what is involved/required in practicing discernment?

List the results of wisdom/discernment identified in these passages.

Read Proverbs 2:6-11. What does it say about the source of wisdom and understanding? If this is true, then what do you need to do in order to strengthen your discernment and gain understanding?

Read Proverbs 8:8-9. What does it reveal about God's word?

What are some current practices you have for spending time with and hearing from God? Be specific.

What is one practice you would like to cultivate more?

*God, you are worthy of my time. Help me to discipline myself to make time to hear from you.
Amen*

Day Three - Recognizing the voice of the deceiver

*There are two reasons why I believe the devil exists as a real being: (1) The Bible says so.
(2) I've done business with him.*

D.L. Moody

Consult the following passages and identify the tactics Satan uses to deceive.

Passage	What tactic(s) does Satan use?
Genesis 3:1-4	
Luke 4:1-13	
1 Peter 5:8	
Revelation 2:10	

Consider these tactics of the deceiver and reflect on a time/times in your life when you have been confronted by His voice carrying similar lies.

What is one lie you are tempted to believe:

1. About God -
2. About You -
3. About Your Life -

Lord, you are truth. You hate lies. Give me a keen ear to identify those things that are not true that are clamoring for my attention. Quiet every voice but yours. Amen

Day Four - Discernment Perfected

To recognize a lie, we need to know the truth. Experts in counterfeit money don't spend their time studying counterfeits. They study the real currency. In the same way, to engage in the spiritual battle raging around us, we focus on Jesus. We marinate in the truth of who God is and who He says we are. Then and only then will we be able to quickly recognize a lie.

Read through Luke 4:1-13 once more. This time, focus on the response of Jesus to the lies of the enemy. What strikes you?

Lies will come. Scripture promises that the devil will return at the opportune time. We prepare to face his lies by fixing our eyes and thoughts on what is true: the character of God, the saving work of Jesus, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We seek to become so familiar with the life and teachings of Jesus and the character of God that we can confidently distinguish the voice of the Holy Spirit from the lies of the enemy.

How are you actively fixing your eyes on Jesus and growing your understanding of God's word? Are you cultivating your ability to hear the Holy Spirit? What does this look like for you?

Read Colossians 1:15-23 - Look back at the three lies you wrote yesterday. What are the TRUTHS you can focus on to divert your attention away from what the enemy is trying to do and instead grow in your understanding and faith in the power and kindness of God?

1. About God -

2. About You -

3. About Your Life -

God, you are worth thinking about all the time. Everything on earth belongs to you. Help me to fix my focus on you. Help me to believe you. Amen

Day Five - Living Discernment

To be a follower of Jesus means to take on a lifestyle of learning, growth, and change.

"The time has come, "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"
Mark 1:15

The word for "time" in this passage does not refer to our typical chronological view of time (chronos). In fact, the word for time used here (kairos) has a very important meaning in the life of a follower of Jesus.

Take a moment to look up the definition of "kairos" and record it here.

What strikes you about this definition? How does it change the way you read the verse from Mark?

A kairos moment is that moment when God speaks into our life something regarding Himself, His word, our lives, the lives of those around us, etc. In order for the kingdom of God to advance in our hearts at that moment we need to respond to what He is saying. Sometimes it's a new way of thinking about something (a new perspective in alignment with His Word), a lie that we need to reject, something to appreciate – something for which He wants us to give thanks, or a sin we need to confess.

When we speak of time "slowing down," or as if it were "standing still," we are talking about kairos. It is in those moments that you say, "I sense something important is happening here. It is time to pay attention."

Once we can identify the moments where God is presenting an opportunity for repentance and growth...we can ask ourselves two very important questions:

1. What is God saying to me?
2. What am I going to do about it?

Day Five - Living Discernment (continued)

Prayer and Reflection - Kairos Moments

As you prepare to reflect, ask God to show you one kairos moment from the past week...a moment when His spirit broke through with something important to say. This could be a positive moment (great conversation, answered prayer, a success at work) or a negative one (losing a job, a difficult diagnosis, a fight with a friend or spouse, or even oversleeping resulting in added stress). Ask that God would give you eyes to see and a heart ready to listen in response to whatever moment He brings to the surface.

Allow yourself to be silent for 5 minutes. Yes, 5 minutes. This will feel like a long time. Do it anyway. Listen. Recall. Ask God for help. Listen some more.

Write or draw the kairos moment that came to mind here. Be as specific as you'd like. You can include where you were, what you saw, who you were with, what smells were present...whatever helps you solidify the time in your mind.

Now that you have your kairos in mind, quiet yourself for another 5 minutes. Ask God what He is trying to say to you through your honest experience. Then listen. Don't clutter the time with your own thoughts/voice if you can help it. Give God the space to respond.

Write or draw anything that you saw or heard in this time. If all you heard were your distractions, write or draw them. They may reveal something of value or at the very least, they'll be out of your brain for a moment and down on paper.

What is one TANGIBLE thing you will do within the next 5 days in response to what God has revealed to you here? Share this with at least 1 other person (or your group) and pray with them.

**See "Learning Circle" on page 48 for visual reference and more details on this process.

Discernment

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on *Living the Proverbs: Discernment*.
Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

Discernment

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

When you hear someone talk about hearing the voice of God, what is your initial response?
There are no right or wrong answers.

What are the lies you are tempted to believe about God, yourself, and your life? What are the truths you wrote to combat them?

What kairos moment did God bring to mind in your reflection? What was God saying to you?
What are you going to do about it this week?

What stood out to you most in the talk?

Humility

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Day One - Check Yourself

Humility is not thinking less of yourself; It is thinking of yourself less.
C.S. Lewis

Write your own definition of the word humility (Don't consult a dictionary yet).

Now, pull out your dictionary or find an online dictionary. Record the definition(s) of humility here.

Consult a thesaurus to find some words that have similar and opposite meaning to "discernment". Record here and circle any that strike you.

List people in your life who model humility well? What about them marks them as a person of humility?

Read Proverbs 22:4. How does it define Humility? Based on what you learned last week, what can you derive about humility when it comes to wisdom?

God, help me be ready to hear from you this week. Remind me of my position before you. You are the creator of every single thing. You give me my next breath. Help me praise you. Amen

Day Two - The Enemy of Humility

Pride is your greatest enemy, humility is your greatest friend.

John Stott

Search the following Proverbs. Note the three kinds of pride they describe.

Proverbs 16:18, 18:12, 21:4

Proverbs 21:24

Proverbs 17:19, 20:6, 27:2

Look up these three words in the dictionary. Record their meanings here.

Haughty/Haughtiness

Scoff/Scoffing

Boast/Boasting

Take a moment to reflect on which of these three forms of pride you find yourself most inclined toward. Where do you see this in your life?

In this tiny little space, draw a picture of Proverbs 11:2 and next to it, a picture of Proverbs 18:12. Don't worry if you aren't an artist. Look at your drawings and record what strikes you about the wisdom that comes from God.

Lord, you are good and perfect. There is no good thing in me apart from you. Thank you for loving me. Show me the places of pride in my heart and help me surrender them. Amen

Day Three - Humility through the Scriptures

Read 2 Chronicles 26 - The story of Uzziah.

What were the conditions of Uzziah's success?

List the key turning points in Uzziah's story.

What are some key markers of pride and humility in this story?

Search the following Scripture and record what they have to say about humility and pride.

*What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it,
why do you boast as if you had not?*

1 Corinthians 4:7

*God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—
to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.*

1 Corinthians 1:28-29

*Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done
in the humility that comes from wisdom.*

James 3:13

God, you are using me for your glory. Help me not to forget who does great things...that all
glory and honor belong to you forever. Help me be excited about YOU most. Amen

Day Four - Humility Perfected

Read Phillipians 2:1-13

Paul begins this passage with a call for unity. In the church, how do you think unity and humility are connected?

How do Jesus' actions (vs. 6-8) demonstrate humility and a concern for others?

What is the Father's response to the Son's humility (vs. 9-11)? How is this a fulfillment of what we learned about humility in Proverbs 18:12?

Paul states that Jesus did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. What do you find yourself grasping for that tempts you away from humility and into pride, competition, and comparison?

If you were to truly embrace having the same mind and attitude as Jesus, how might your life look different? What relationship in your life would be most changed?

Thank you, Jesus, that you were willing to give up the throne, enter the world, suffer on my behalf, and win my salvation. Help me live as a reflection of the humility you've shown. Amen

Day Five - Living Humility

Growth and change require reflection as well as action. Some of the worst adversaries of humility are pride's close companions...

grumbling, comparison, and competition.

Which of these three adversaries do you find yourself confronted with most frequently? Take a few minutes to reflect on your day yesterday. If you are doing this in the evening, think through the day you've just finished. Once you've completed the guided prayer below, use the guide on the following page to move from reflection to action.

Battling Grumbling with Gratitude

Pray, asking God to walk back through your day with you, one interaction at a time. Surrender any moments when you found yourself grumbling or living with a spirit of complaint. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out moments that elicited gratitude in your heart. What are some moments that made your heart swell with joy, love, comfort? Thank God for these moments. It could be something as simple as a really good cup of coffee or the smell of the flowers in your back yard or the fact your children let you get that extra half hour of sleep.

Battling Comparison with Confidence

Pray, asking God to walk back through your day with you, one interaction at a time. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out any moments of comparison. What/who were you tempted to compare yourself with? Was the comparison rooted in a feeling of superiority or inferiority? How did it impact your interaction with the object of your comparison? Take a moment to remind yourself of who YOU are. Thank God for the good things He's created and is continuing to grow in you. Ask Him to help you walk with confidence that you are valuable **because He says so**. Scripture tells us that everything the Father has is ours through Christ. Take a moment to thank God that His store of blessing is unending.

Battling Competition with Celebration

Pray, asking God to walk back through your day with you, one interaction at a time. Ask the Holy Spirit to point out any feelings of competition. Where do those feelings come from? What are you REALLY looking for or wanting? What effect does this competition have on your relationship with the object of your competition? Do you feel less successful when they succeed? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you turn your feelings of competition into celebration of the successes of others. God promises honor beyond anything this world could give to those who are reconciled to Him through Jesus (1 Peter 1:7-9). Ask God to help you remember the promise and immeasurable greatness of what HE has for you when you are tempted to compete for the affections of this world.

Day Five - Living Humility (Continued)

Now that you have spent some time reflecting on the day that's passed, let's look forward to the growth God can bring as you enter this new day! Recall which of the three adversaries you focused on in your reflection and use that same adversary here.

Replacing Grumbling with Gratitude

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

James 1:17

On a post-it or index card, write 1-3 things you are grateful for today. Place the card somewhere it is easily visible to you (your dashboard, purse, back of your phone, etc).

In moments when you are tempted to complain, consult your card and pray this simple prayer: "God, you have been good to me beyond what I deserve. Give me eyes to see your perfect gifts and help me worship you in thanks."

Replacing Comparison with Confidence

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*

Psalms 139:13-14

As you look at your schedule for the day, where do you anticipate comparison might creep in? Is there a certain person you will be interacting with? On an index card or post-it note, write a word that is true of who you are in God's eyes. Place it on your dashboard or the back of your phone (somewhere visible). Consult the card before AND after your interaction with that person. Trust that just as they are valuable and useful in ways that are clear to you, YOU are valuable and useful in ways that are clear to the God who made you AND them!

Replacing Competition with Celebration

Where are you tempted to fall into competition today? Who do you find yourself competing with? Is there someone you will interact with today whose success you struggle to celebrate? First, remember that their success is not your failure! Next, make a plan to celebrate them. Write a note to put in their box at work, think through what you can say to celebrate them in your meeting... PLAN to celebrate them and follow through. Thank God for their success and pray that He would help you be a GIFT to them.

Humility

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on *Humility: Living the Proverbs*.
Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.

Humility

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

What is one thing that struck you from your study this week (from the Proverbs, the story of Uzziah, the Philippians passage, etc)? How has it continued to impact you?

Which of the three “adversaries” did you choose for your humility practice on Day Five? Why?

What did you learn about yourself in the reflection/action exercise? How did you see God bless the action you took to grow?

What stood out to you most in the talk?



LIVING THE PROVERBS

Day One - Check Yourself

Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness.

Mother Teresa

What strikes you most about this quote? Do you agree?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being never and 10 being every single second), how often do you think about your words before you say them? How often do you wish you had? Do you find yourself more thoughtful with some people than others? Why might that be?

Consider your day yesterday. Hone in on one conversation you had. What was the motivation behind the things you said in this conversation? What were you hoping to achieve with what you spoke?

"Words are like eggs dropped from great heights; you can no more call them back than ignore the mess they leave when they fall."

Jodi Picoult

Can you think of a time in the last week when you wished you could call back your words or at least ignore the mess they left when they fell? As you recall it, record it here.

God, help me to be aware of the words I speak. Help me to see whether they are blessing or cursing those in my life. I want my words to bring the light of Christ. Amen

Day Two - Words in the Proverbs

The Proverbs have a LOT to say about words in the context of godly living. Consider the following passages and record what they reveal about our words.

Proverbs 11:12-13	
Proverbs 12:18	
Proverbs 15:1	
Proverbs 15:4	
Proverbs 16:24	
Proverbs 17:27	
Proverbs 18:13	
Proverbs 26:20	
Proverbs 27:2	

Highlight the passage that stood out to you the most. Record why it struck you.

God, let the truth of YOUR word govern how I use my words today. Help me to trust that the words I say matter...bring healing through my words and not destruction. Amen

Day Three - Words through the Scriptures

Read James 3:1-12 and record your initial response. What strikes you about the passage? What confuses you? What makes you uncomfortable?

What are the metaphors/pictures used to describe the tongue in this passage? Which one resonates the most with you and why?

What are the two direct instructions James gives in this passage?

If you were going to teach the main point of this passage to a 4th grader, what would you say?

How much of a handle do you have on your tongue? What is one MEASURABLE step you can take this week to bring God glory with your words? Maybe this is as simple as not talking so much, taking a breath before you respond, always answering positively first...whatever it is, is it DO-ABLE?

Lord, I confess I have not blessed others with my words. I have spoken impulsively and lost control of my tongue. Help me today to seize opportunities to build others up. Amen

Day Four - Word Perfect

No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

Luke 6:43-45

What strikes you about what Jesus says here?

What is meant by the statement, "People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars"? What is Jesus getting at?

How do you consciously "store up" good in your heart? Conversely, how do you consciously NOT "store up" evil?

The truth is, our words are the clearest and most public representation of us and what rules our hearts. If you could play a recording of every conversation you had over the past week for a person who's never met you, what would that person say fills your heart?

God, you are the source of every good fruit in my life. Help me to see the thorny places in my heart and surrender them to you, so that my words would be evidence of the fruit in my heart. Amen

Day Five - Living Wisdom with our Words

Read Ephesians 4:25-32.

Just as our tongues are capable of bringing all kinds of trouble, we've learned from Proverbs as well as from this Ephesians passage that we can bring life and healing with our words.

Can you recall a time recently when someone blessed you specifically with their words? What did it feel like to you? What was it about their words that affected you? How were you feeling before and how did you feel afterward?

Pray

Quiet yourself for a few minutes and think through the past week. Ask God to reveal to you a moment when someone blessed you by speaking truth to you. **A blessing is timely and helpful speaking of truth. It is not lip service.** Take a moment to thank God for the truth contained in what this person spoke to you. Thank Him for prompting them to share it.

Now ask God to reveal to you any moments when YOU followed his prompting to bless someone with your words. Take a few minutes for this. Thank Him for prompting you and for helping you to follow through. Ask Him to help you do that more tomorrow.

Finally, think through your day one more time, inviting God to bring to mind any moments when you fell short with your words. Was there an interaction where you were judgemental? Did you gossip? Were you negative, bitter, or cutting? Take a few minutes to consider your heart in these moments. What were you seeking? Confess this to God and ask him to set your heart right and help you do better tomorrow. Consider whether you need to seek forgiveness for your words from those they were directed toward or spoken against. Ask God to help you be obedient to confess and seek their forgiveness.

Close by thanking God that words are a gift from Him. Ask Him to fill your heart once again so that when you speak, it is He who spills out.

Act

On the following page is a guide to put blessing into action as you practice wisdom with your words.

Day Five - Living Wisdom with our Words

Sit down with your calendar for today (if you are doing this in the morning) or for tomorrow (if you are doing this in the afternoon or evening).

Write a list of people you know you will interact with (a co-worker, a friend, a spouse, your child, your doctor, etc.). Then, write down one beautiful thing about them. Then write down one way they add value to your life.

Today, make it a point to stop, make eye contact, and communicate with each of the people you've identified either what's beautiful about them or how they add value to your life... or go really crazy and share BOTH!

At the end of the day, spend a few minutes reflecting on what this was like. Record it here so you can share with your group.

Words

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Page: Use this page to take notes on *Words: Living the Proverbs*
Find this talk at womensbiblestudyLA.com/resources.



LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

Which of the proverbs about words did you choose to memorize this week and why? Share your memorized verse with the group.

On page 23, you recorded an actionable step to take this week to bring God more glory with your words. What did you do? How's it going and what are you learning?

How was the blessing/encouragement exercise? What did you learn about yourself? Was it a comfortable or uncomfortable exercise for you? Were you surprised by anything?

What stood out to you most in the talk?

Diligence

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Day One - Check Yourself

Emma has been meaning to read more ever since she was twelve years old. I have seen a great many lists of her drawing-up at various times of books that she meant to read regularly through—and very good lists they were—very well chosen, and very neatly arranged—sometimes alphabetically, and sometimes by some other rule. The list she drew up when only fourteen—I remember thinking it did her judgment so much credit, that I preserved it some time; and I dare say she may have made out a very good list now. But I have done with expecting any course of steady reading from Emma. She will never submit to any thing requiring industry and patience, and a subjection of the fancy to the understanding.

Jane Austen - Emma

In your own words, how would you define diligence?

Now, consult a dictionary and thesaurus. Record the definition, synonyms and antonyms for “diligence/diligent” here.

What is a time you remember working particularly hard? What situation and circumstances brought that about?

During that time, did you enjoy working hard? What motivated you?

God, you gave work as a gift in the beginning. This week, open my heart to receive what you want me to learn about honoring you with the way I work AND the way I rest. Amen

Day Two - Diligence vs. Laziness

Read Proverbs 6:6-11 and Proverbs 24:30-34. For each passage, identify characteristics of laziness vs. diligence.

What major difference between a slothful person and a diligent one is highlighted in these passages?

Read the following proverbs, noting the examples they give for diligence. What distinguishes each of these? How is each different than the sluggard?

The Ant (Proverbs 6:6-8)

The Farmer (Proverbs 10:4-5, 12:10-11, 28:19)

The Hunter (Proverbs 12:27)

The Servant (Proverbs 22:29)

The Judicious Wife (Proverbs 31:27)

God, help me to desire diligence. Help me to believe that you reward diligence. Teach me to

Day Three - Diligence & Pursuing God

In Matthew 25:14-30, Jesus shares the parable of the three servants. Take a few minutes to read this passage completely, circling all words that stand out.

What strikes you about this passage? What is disturbing? What is convicting?

The master is pleased with the work of the first two servants, calling them "good and faithful" and giving them a reward. What is the reward for their faithfulness/diligence?

Name a time that you were faithful with a job entrusted to you and it resulted in being given more responsibility? What was your reaction?

Consider the third servant's explanation in vs. 25. What stands out to you? Do you relate?

In vs. 26, the master refers to the third servant as "wicked and slothful"? What about his behavior is slothful?

Do you ever find yourself stuck in laziness or just not moving because you are afraid? What are you afraid of? Failure? Success?

What does it look like to trust God to bless your efforts? Is this difficult for you? Why?

God, you have given me unique work to do. Help me to trust you with that work. Help me to overcome my fear of failure. Help me not to be a slave to expectation, but to offer my efforts as worship to you. Amen

Day Four - Diligence Perfected

We know that diligence is good and laziness is bad, but in the midst of life's complexity we are tempted to believe the lie: "Striving is good, and rest is bad."

Consider John 15:1-5

According to Jesus, what is required of His disciples in order to bear fruit?

What does it mean to abide (some translations use "remain") in Jesus? Look up "abide" in a dictionary.

How is Jesus' picture of abiding/remaining different than the world's understanding of rest?

Read Luke 6:12-19

In this passage, rest comes before work. What is the typical rhythm of your life? Do you find yourself resting to work or working for rest? Why?

How do you know the difference between diligence and striving?

God, you are the source of the best rest. Help change my view of rest so I can trust that time spent aware of you and your presence will fill me more than anything else. Amen

Day Five - Living Diligence

Since we've learned the proper order of things is rest, THEN work, let's focus on that as we put diligence into practice.

Go ahead and get out your calendar for the next five days (starting to feel like a routine yet?). Take a minute to identify an event, meeting or conversation that will require effort. Record what you choose.

Once you have identified your *diligence moment*, set a time PRIOR to this that you can focus on God for at least 15-20 minutes. Use this time to abide with God in preparation for the *diligence moment*. Write it in your calendar.

Make a plan for your rest. What? Plan my rest?? Does this sound counter-intuitive to you? It is helpful to have a plan for your time so that it doesn't quickly become distracted and shift from abiding in God to abiding in Netflix. Remember that the rest Jesus models involves intentional time spent with the Father. This does NOT have to be Bible Study or an intense time of prayer, but set a plan to spend time consciously aware of the presence of God (could be a hike, cooking a meal, coffee with a really good friend). The key is to be intentional about receiving from the Father.

Once you've completed your rest time, take a few moments to reflect on your experience. How did it go? Was this different from your standard default "rest"? How so? What did you learn about and/or receive from God?

Did this time have any effect on the *diligence moment* you chose? How so?

Day Five - Living Diligence (Continued)

Now let's get practical with diligence.

Consider the past few weeks. What's one thing you KNOW needs to get done but you have been putting off?

Why have you been dragging your feet? What about it are you dreading?

Look at your calendar for this week. When can you do this one thing? Write it in your calendar and record it here.

It may be a tiny thing, but take a few minutes to ask God for help. Ask Him to help you follow through and do what needs to be done in a way that would please Him. Even if this seems like something you shouldn't need help with, it's much less about the task itself and more about the things that are getting in the way of you doing it.

Now, go DO IT! And do it well, remembering the definition of diligence you learned on day one of this week.

Consider the experience of doing this task. Was it as awful as you thought it would be? It's ok if it was, but often the tasks we dread don't end up being as bad as we anticipated.

How did it feel to complete the task well?

Diligence

LIVING THE PROVERBS

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Diligence

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

Would you consider yourself lazy or diligent? Why?

When you are being lazy, what keeps you stuck there?

How do you differentiate diligence and striving in your life?

How was the rest/work exercise? What did you do to rest and abide with God? What did you learn about yourself and about God? What did you learn through completing the task you had been putting off?

What stood out to you most in the talk?

Relationship

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Day One - Check Yourself

*What would you think if I sang out of tune,
Would you stand up and walk out on me.
Lend me your ear and I'll sing you a song,
And I'll try not to sing out of key.
I get by with a little help from my friends.*

The Beatles

Think about the 3 closest human relationships you have. Write the names of each below. What do you most value about those relationships?

Can you recall a time in your life when you felt isolated, without meaningful relationship? What were the circumstances surrounding that time? What did it feel like? How did you cope?

Can you recall a time in your life when it felt like God was carrying you through the relationships you had with those around you? What were the circumstances surrounding that? What did it feel like?

Lord, you created me for relationship. You know how my relationships should look. Help me to work at them and not to shrink back. Help me to be hopeful. Amen

Day Two - Relationship in the Proverbs

We know relationships are important, because the Bible has a LOT to say about them. Especially in the book of Proverbs. Consider what the following proverbs reveal about relationships.

1. Write the proverb in your own words
2. Write how you've experienced this in your own life

Proverbs 17:17

Proverbs 28:13

Proverbs 16:28

Proverbs 27:6

Proverbs 17:9

Proverbs 25:20

Proverbs 20:5

Lord, you are the giver of friendship. Thank you that I don't have to do my life alone. God help me love others the way you love me. Help me be a gift to my friends. Amen

Day Three - Our perfect friend

Read and consider the following passages:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? [...] No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:35-39

[Jesus said:] Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:20

Cast all your anxiety on God because he cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7

For the sake of his great name the LORD will not reject his people, because the LORD was pleased to make you his own.

1 Samuel 12:22

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.

Deuteronomy 31:6

What strikes you about these passages?

Relationships with other people are really important. But the Bible is clear that it's only God who will never disappoint. When we hang all of our hope on human relationships, we will find ourselves disappointed, lonely, and isolated. Is there someone in your life that you are giving God-type friendship status (expecting them to never disappoint and always get it right)? How can you let go of this expectation and allow them the freedom of being in their proper place as an imperfect but delightful human friend?

God, help me not to seek more fulfillment from the other relationships in my life than I do from my relationship with you. I want to want you most. Thank you that you never leave. Amen

Day Four - Relationship Perfected

Consider the following passages and record what they reveal about Jesus' relationships. What did He share with the different groups, etc?

John 10:30 Matthew 3:16-17	
Matthew 17:1-3 Matthew 26:37-38	
Luke 6:12-16	
Mark 6:34	

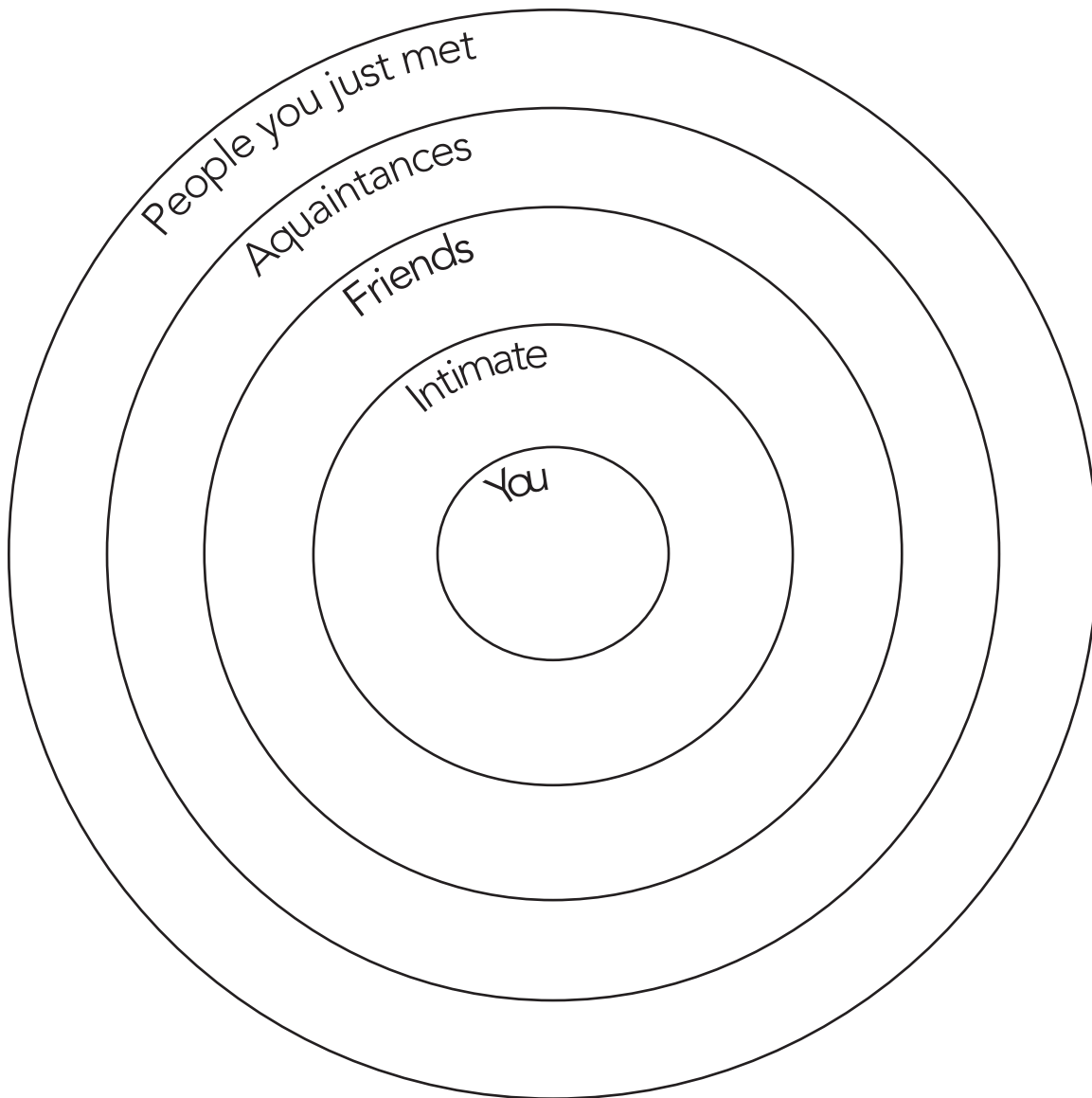
As you consider your own life and relationships, what can you learn from the model of Jesus?

What does Jesus model regarding boundaries?

*God, give me discernment in my relationships. Help me to know who you want me to invest in.
Help me to live with integrity and draw healthy boundaries. Amen*

Day Five - Living in Relationship

Take a moment to fill in the following circle of relationships in your life.



Once you've filled in the circles, prayerfully consider if there is anyone you might want to move from one circle to another. This could mean growing your closeness or drawing a boundary.

Day Five - Living in Relationship (Continued)

Now that you've identified the relationships in your life and their level of intimacy...

Pray

Take a few minutes to quiet your heart before God. Thank Him for the relationships you have. Thank Him for His everlasting, unfailing love.

After you thank God for blessing you with these relationships, ask Him to bring to mind the one relationship that might need greater attention this week. Perhaps this is a relationship you'd like to grow from acquaintance to friend or from friend to a deeper level of intimacy. Perhaps it is a relationship that needs some healthier boundaries. Still yourself and be silent for a few minutes and allow God to bring someone to mind.

Thank God for guiding you to this person. Thank him for equipping you to grow in healthy relationship. Take a minute to ask His help as you reach out to this person. Pray that He will bless you both through one another.

Act

Now, reach out! Whatever prompting it is that you got from the Lord, follow through in obedience!

This week, arrange a time to give some energy and care to this relationship. Prioritize it. Cancel something if you have to. God told you to give this relationship attention, so just do what He says and trust that He knows what He's doing. :)

If you feel led to establish or draw new boundaries with someone, you may need to seek wise counsel. **Be sure it's counsel you seek and not gossip. Ideally, you will FIRST talk with someone who does not know the person and you trust to give Biblical, God-saturated wisdom. This person will be able to help you discern the best approach (phone call, face-to-face, etc.). This one is complicated. If boundaries are a struggle for you, you might consider reading *Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend, or committing to seek further consistent guidance in this area.

After you've completed this exercise, reflect and record your experience so you can share it with your group.

Relationship

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Relationship

LIVING THE PROVERBS

Notes Continued.

Dig In with your Group

Do relationships energize or exhaust you?

Which of the proverbs on page 40 stood out the most to you? Why?

Who are you tempted to expect the God-type friendship from? How has that affected your relationship with this person?

Share your reflections on the Day Five exercise.

What stood out to you most in the talk?

Keep Going

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Want to make reading the Proverbs a regular part of your routine? Try reading one chapter per day! Check them off as you read them. You can do this monthly.

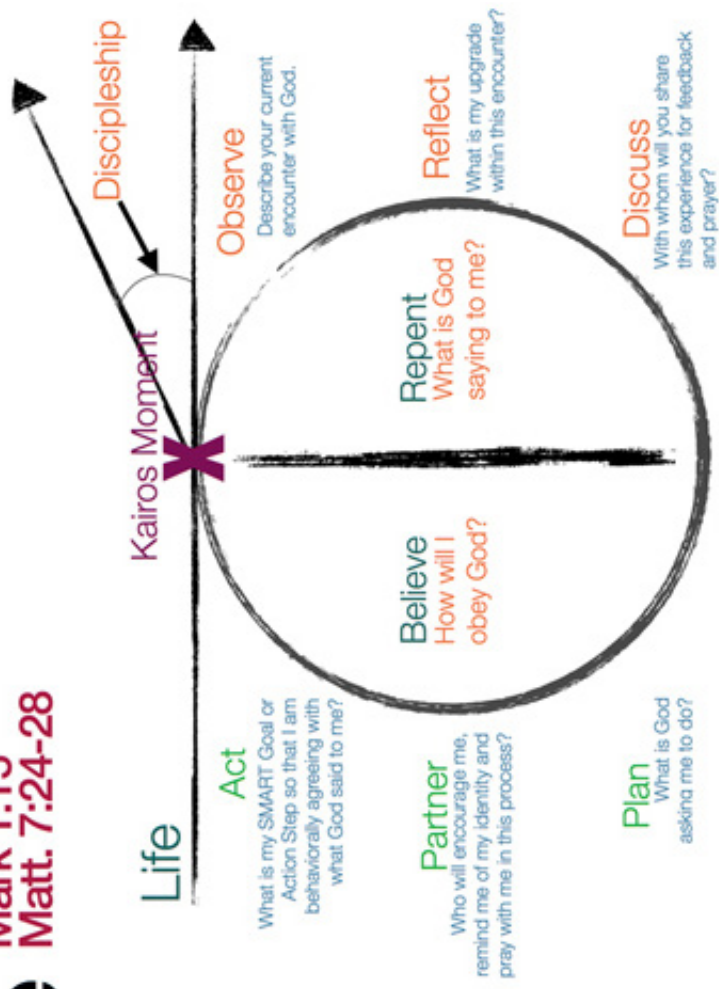
1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 31

Learning Circle

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Learning Circle

Mark 1:15
Matt. 7:24-28



The learning circle is a LifeShe by Mike Breen and 3D

Good Reads

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On Discernment

Hearing God by Dallas Willard
The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

On Humility

Humility by Andrew Murray
Mere Christianity, Chapter 8 by C.S. Lewis

On Words

The War of Words by Paul David Tripp

On Diligence

Every Good Endeavor by Timothy Keller

On Relationship

Connecting by Larry Crab
Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Boundaries by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

My Group

CONTACTS & IMPORTANT INFO

Use this page to keep track of the names and contact info of your group members. You can also keep track of prayer requests or other fun details (birthdays, how many kiddos, hobbies, etc).