

Proverbs

FALL 2017 BIBLE STUDY



© 2017 St. John's Vancouver

This book may be used and copied for study purposes only, not for resale.

Table of Contents

4	PATHWAY THROUGH A PASSAGE
5	INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS
7	STRUCTURE – ONE PAGE OVERVIEW
8	STUDY 7 - PROVERBS 16
14	STUDY 8 - PROVERBS 24:1-22
20	STUDY 9 - PROVERBS 26:17-27:22
26	STUDY 10 - PROVERBS 30
34	STUDY 11 - PROVERBS 31:10-31
40	GLOSSARY

The Pathway through a Passage: Proverbs

START WITH PRAYER

STEP 1 TEXT

What does the passage say?

Look at the **words and phrases** for any:

- Repetitions
- Contrasts c α
- Transition words
- Images/metaphors
- Commands or Promises
- Descriptions of God
- Surprises !
- Theme words from the book

Looking at the **whole passage...**

- What kind of writing is this?
- What tone or feeling is the author trying to communicate?
- How are the ideas grouped?
- Where are the changes of thought?
- Divide the passage into its natural sections or themes.
- Create a heading or picture and a one sentence summary for each section.
- What does the structure reveal?
- What does the author want you to understand?

STEP 2 TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does the passage mean?

- **In Proverbs:** read passages before or after (provided in each study).
- Check the structure diagram to see which part of the book you are in.
- Are there any clues about who wrote the passage? To who? When? Why?
- **The Whole Bible:** read the passages provided

So what's the main idea of the passage?

STOP TO PRAY

STEP 3 THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

Ask: What do we learn about...

- Who God is?
- The relationship between God and man?
- The problem of sin?
- What it looks like to be a disciple?

In this passage specifically...

- How does this passage point me to Jesus?
- How does he say he will grow me?
- What is the ministry he is inviting me to participate in with him?

STEP 4 TODAY

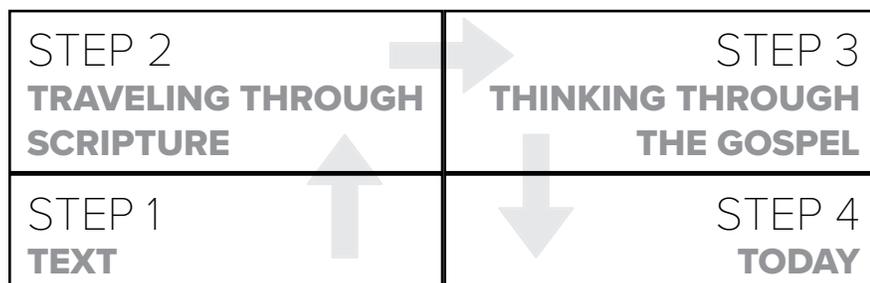
What does this mean for me?

Reflect on the big idea of the passage, and your life in Christ.

Thinking about those things... how has this changed:

- What you know about God?
- What you can praise God for?
- What you want to repent and turn away from?
- Your attitude? How?
- Your desired actions? How?
- What you believe?
- What you want prayer for?

FINISH IN PRAYER



Introduction to Proverbs

Reading the book of Proverbs is like drinking a glass of clear water on a hot day when you did not realize how thirsty you were. It is unexpected, different, and deeply satisfying. The four so called “wisdom” books in the Old Testament (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and The Song of Solomon) are dangerously practical. They deal with the circumstances of normal everyday life: work, family, finance, leisure, alcohol, speech, and exposing our deep motivations.

In Biblical terms, “wisdom” is not just learned through experience. Wisdom begins, grows, and bears fruit in the fear of the Lord. It requires humility and hunger before the person of God and his word. It requires our acknowledgment that we are not wise, so that we turn to God to fear him in all things, with all our hearts, all our days. The wisdom revealed in Proverbs is relational, not intellectual. If we come to know and love God more deeply the book is achieving its purpose.

The book of Proverbs is an amazing and unique combination. It is not “law” but it is full of commands. It is not “story” but it is full of stories. It is not “prophecy” but the God who revealed himself in the covenant with Israel is working his purposes toward the future fulfillment. It is certainly not advice—of the “haste makes waste” variety, though it captures 375 of Solomon’s pithy proverbs (e.g. ‘Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, will be counted as cursing.’ Proverbs 27:14). The book is not a random string of pearls, but a series of collections gathered carefully together, and as such context is important.

As it is not always easy to see the patterns in either the proverbs or through the book, the basic structure of the book is helpful to know.

Chapters 1 – 9	How to read the book of Proverbs: the key is the fear of the Lord
Chapters 10-29	The Proverbs of Solomon (with Sayings of the Wise 22:17-24:34)
Chapter 30	The Sayings of Agur
Chapter 31	The Sayings of Lemuel

Proverbs deepens and develops the basic categories of life and faith, on which the rest of Scripture builds. As such it offers unique paths to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in whom all the wisdom of God dwells.

Structure of Proverbs

(From How to Read the Bible Book by Book by Gordon Fee)

1:1-7	Introduction
1:8-9:18	Prologue: Poems of Instruction Lesson 1 and Interlude 1 - Warning and Rebuke (1:8-33) Lesson 2 - Safeguard against Wisdom (2:1-22) Lesson 3 & 4 - Value of Wisdom (3:1-35) Lessons 5-7 - Supremacy of Wisdom (4:1-27) Lesson 8 - Warnings against adultery, folly, and wickedness (5:1-6:19) Lesson 9 - Further wisdom against adultery (6:20-35) Lesson 10 and Interlude 2 - The unfaithful wife, Wisdom's call (7:1-8:36) Epilogue - The rival banquets of Wisdom and Folly (9:1-18)
10:1-22:16	Proverbs of Solomon 1 Part 1 (10:1-15:29) Part 2 (15:30-22:16)
22:17-24:34	Sayings of the Wise First collection (22:17-24:22) Second collection (24:22-34)
25:1-29:27	Proverbs of Solomon 2 Part 1 (25:1-27:27) Part 2 (28:1-29:27)
30:1-31:31	More Sayings of the Wise Agur (30:1-33) Lemuel (31:1-9)
31:10-31	Epilogue: The Ideal Wife

Study 7: The Plan Proverbs 16

PRAY

Ask God to help you listen to his voice as you read and study.

Read the passage.

- 1 The plans of the heart belong to man,
but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.
- 2 All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes,
but the LORD weighs the spirit.
- 3 Commit your work to the LORD,
and your plans will be established.
- 4 The LORD has made everything for its purpose,
even the wicked for the day of trouble.
- 5 Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the LORD;
be assured, he will not go unpunished.
- 6 By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for,
and by the fear of the LORD one turns away from evil.
- 7 When a man's ways please the LORD,
he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.
- 8 Better is a little with righteousness
than great revenues with injustice.
- 9 The heart of man plans his way,
but the LORD establishes his steps.
- 10 An oracle is on the lips of a king;
his mouth does not sin in judgment.
- 11 A just balance and scales are the LORD's;
all the weights in the bag are his work.
- 12 It is an abomination to kings to do evil,
for the throne is established by righteousness.
- 13 Righteous lips are the delight of a king,
and he loves him who speaks what is right.
- 14 A king's wrath is a messenger of death,
and a wise man will appease it.
- 15 In the light of a king's face there is life,
and his favor is like the clouds that bring the spring rain.

- 16 How much better to get wisdom than gold!
To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.
- 17 The highway of the upright turns aside from evil;
whoever guards his way preserves his life.
- 18 Pride goes before destruction,
and a haughty spirit before a fall.
- 19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
than to divide the spoil with the proud.
- 20 Whoever gives thought to the word will discover good,
and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD.
- 21 The wise of heart is called discerning,
and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.
- 22 Good sense is a fountain of life to him who has it,
but the instruction of fools is folly.
- 23 The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious
and adds persuasiveness to his lips.
- 24 Gracious words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.
- 25 There is a way that seems right to a man,
but its end is the way to death.
- 26 A worker's appetite works for him;
his mouth urges him on.
- 27 A worthless man plots evil,
and his speech is like a scorching fire.
- 28 A dishonest man spreads strife,
and a whisperer separates close friends.
- 29 A man of violence entices his neighbor
and leads him in a way that is not good.
- 30 Whoever winks his eyes plans dishonest things;
he who purses his lips brings evil to pass.
- 31 Gray hair is a crown of glory;
it is gained in a righteous life.
- 32 Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.
- 33 The lot is cast into the lap,
but its every decision is from the LORD.

STEP 1

TEXT

What does it say?

1. Look at the words and phrases. Use the [bookmark page provided](#) to help you mark (underline, circle, highlight, etc.) what you notice.

Are there any words you don't understand? Check the glossary on page 40 or try reading another translation.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share something you noticed, and how it impacts what is being said in the text.

2. Look at the whole passage.

a. In this section of Proverbs gather themes together instead of trying to break the text into sections. Marking them in different colours might help you do this.

** In this passage take particular notice of the first and last lines for a hint of a main theme. (vv. 1-3 and v. 33)*

b. Are there key verses that help us see the main idea of this passage? What is the author really wanting the reader to understand?

c. Create a heading or picture and a one sentence summary for each theme.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Have a couple of people share the themes they've noticed, any key verses, and their headings.

STEP 2

TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does it mean?

Use the passages below and the bookmark questions to help you travel through scripture. This will help you deepen your understanding of what this passage means.

3. In Proverbs: Read 15:30-33, 21:2-3, 26:12 for further teaching on the 'plans of man' theme and our tendency towards self-deception.

4. The whole Bible: Read Solomon's request of the LORD for his kingship in 1 Kings 3:3-12, 28; Deut. 17:14-20 gives a description of the job of a king. Read James 4:13-16 regarding planning.

Do you still have any questions about the passage? Write them down to ask your group. If you'd like to use a commentary now is the time to do so.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share one way traveling through scripture has helped you understand the meaning of this passage.

5. So what's the BIG IDEA? What is this passage all about? Write it down in your own words in 1-2 sentences.

BIG IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share your big idea. Work together on it!

PRAY

Pause for prayer. Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see him more clearly, and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3

THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Discuss these questions together.

6. What do vv. 10-15 teach us about the character and work of a king? Keeping in mind the verses from 1 Kings and Deuteronomy, how does Jesus' kingship impact your understanding of these verses? (Read Hebrews 1:8-9)

7. In Christ (God's chosen King), we have the full and perfect example of humble willingness to submit to the plans of the LORD. (Read Phil. 2:5-11). How does his example help you to trust and obey what the LORD is teaching you in this chapter of Proverbs?

STEP 4

TODAY

What does this mean for me?

Reflecting on the big idea of the passage, and your life in Christ:

8. The book of Proverbs has already taught us much about our capacity for self-deception in trusting our own plans. What is at the heart of our 'high opinion' of ourselves? Why is it such a struggle to trust the Lord with our plans and commit them fully to him?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share how the passage has shaped your perspective on what it looks like to live for Christ.

9. What are you going to remember from this passage? Ask for prayer for?
This should be practical and personal.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you are able, share your prayer point and ask for prayer. Remember to check in with one another in subsequent weeks for ongoing encouragement and prayer.

Study 8: The Mission and the Future

Proverbs 24:1-22

PRAY

Ask God to help you listen to his voice as you read and study.

Read the passage.

- 1 Be not envious of evil men,
nor desire to be with them,
- 2 for their hearts devise violence,
and their lips talk of trouble.
- 3 By wisdom a house is built,
and by understanding it is established;
- 4 by knowledge the rooms are filled
with all precious and pleasant riches.
- 5 A wise man is full of strength,
and a man of knowledge enhances his might,
- 6 for by wise guidance you can wage your war,
and in abundance of counselors there is victory.
- 7 Wisdom is too high for a fool;
in the gate he does not open his mouth.
- 8 Whoever plans to do evil
will be called a schemer.
- 9 The devising of folly is sin,
and the scoffer is an abomination to mankind.
- 10 If you faint in the day of adversity,
your strength is small.
- 11 Rescue those who are being taken away to death;
hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter.
- 12 If you say, "Behold, we did not know this,"
does not he who weighs the heart perceive it?

Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it,
and will he not repay man according to his work?

13 My son, eat honey, for it is good,
and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste.

14 Know that wisdom is such to your soul;
if you find it, there will be a future,
and your hope will not be cut off.

15 Lie not in wait as a wicked man against the dwelling of the righteous;
do no violence to his home;

16 for the righteous falls seven times and rises again,
but the wicked stumble in times of calamity.

17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls,
and let not your heart be glad when he stumbles,

18 lest the Lord see it and be displeased,
and turn away his anger from him.

19 Fret not yourself because of evildoers,
and be not envious of the wicked,

20 for the evil man has no future;
the lamp of the wicked will be put out.

21 My son, fear the Lord and the king,
and do not join with those who do otherwise,

22 for disaster will arise suddenly from them,
and who knows the ruin that will come from them both?

STEP 1

TEXT

What does it say?

1. Look at the words and phrases. Use the bookmark page provided to help you mark (underline, circle, highlight, etc.) what you notice.

Are there any words you don't understand? Check the glossary on page 40 or try reading another translation.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share something you noticed, and how it impacts what is being said in the text.

2. Look at the whole passage.

a. In this section of Proverbs gather themes together instead of trying to break the text into sections. Marking them in different colours might help you do this.

Here are some things to look for in this passage:

- Who are the different types of characters that are named?
- What are the plans that they make?
- What informs those plans?
- What are the consequences?

b. Are there key verses that help us see the main idea of this passage? What is the author really wanting the reader to understand?

c. Create a heading or picture and a one sentence summary for each theme.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Have a couple of people share the themes they've noticed, any key verses, and their headings.

STEP 2

TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does it mean?

Use the passages below and the bookmark questions to help you travel through scripture. This will help you deepen your understanding of what this passage means.

3. In Proverbs: The themes of this chapter were originally introduced in Proverbs 1:10-16. Read Chapter 1:1-19 again to remind yourself of how this section fits into the big picture of Proverbs.

4. The whole Bible: Read Psalm 37 (an acrostic wisdom Psalm!) How does this Psalm develop the themes we see here in Proverbs 24?

Do you still have any questions about the passage? Write them down to ask your group. If you'd like to use a commentary now is the time to do so.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share one way traveling through scripture has helped you understand the meaning of this passage.

5. So what's the BIG IDEA? What is this passage all about? Write it down in your own words in 1-2 sentences.

BIG IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share your big idea. Work together on it!

PRAY

Pause for prayer. Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see him more clearly, and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3

THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Discuss these questions together.

Read Romans 7:21-8:11

6. Why do we fail to choose wisdom even when we've been told the future consequence of our actions, and the mission that God has given us? (See verses 10-12 of this chapter in Proverbs if you're still unsure of what that mission is.)

7. How has Christ enabled us to choose wisdom? How does this make it possible for us to enact the mission he has for us?

STEP 4

TODAY

What does this mean for me?

8. What does this passage teach us about our choices?

9. How do these truths challenge you as you seek to follow Jesus?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share how the passage has shaped your perspective on what it looks like to live for Christ.

10. What are you going to remember from this passage? Ask for prayer for?
This should be practical and personal.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you are able, share your prayer point and ask for prayer. Remember to check in with one another in subsequent weeks for ongoing encouragement and prayer.

Study 9: Wisdom in Relationships

Proverbs 26:17-27:22

PRAY

Ask God to help you listen to his voice as you read and study.

Read the passage.

- 26:17 Whoever meddles in a quarrel not his own
is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears.
- 18 Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death
19 is the man who deceives his neighbor
and says, "I am only joking!"
- 20 For lack of wood the fire goes out,
and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases.
- 21 As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire,
so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife.
- 22 The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body.
- 23 Like the glaze covering an earthen vessel
are fervent lips with an evil heart.
- 24 Whoever hates disguises himself with his lips
and harbors deceit in his heart;
- 25 when he speaks graciously, believe him not,
for there are seven abominations in his heart;
- 26 though his hatred be covered with deception,
his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly.
- 27 Whoever digs a pit will fall into it,
and a stone will come back on him who starts it rolling.
- 28 A lying tongue hates its victims,
and a flattering mouth works ruin.
- 27:1 Do not boast about tomorrow,
for you do not know what a day may bring.
- 2 Let another praise you, and not your own mouth;
a stranger, and not your own lips.
- 3 A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty,
but a fool's provocation is heavier than both.
- 4 Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming,
but who can stand before jealousy?

5 Better is open rebuke
than hidden love.

6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend;
profuse are the kisses of an enemy.

7 One who is full loathes honey,
but to one who is hungry everything bitter is sweet.

8 Like a bird that strays from its nest
is a man who strays from his home.

9 Oil and perfume make the heart glad,
and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel.

10 Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend,
and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity.

Better is a neighbor who is near
than a brother who is far away.

11 Be wise, my son, and make my heart glad,
that I may answer him who reproaches me.

12 The prudent sees danger and hides himself,
but the simple go on and suffer for it.

13 Take a man's garment when he has put up security for a stranger,
and hold it in pledge when he puts up security for an adulteress.

14 Whoever blesses his neighbor with a loud voice,
rising early in the morning,
will be counted as cursing.

15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a quarrelsome wife are alike;

16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp] oil in one's right hand.

17 Iron sharpens iron,
and one man sharpens another.

18 Whoever tends a fig tree will eat its fruit,
and he who guards his master will be honored.

19 As in water face reflects face,
so the heart of man reflects the man.

20 Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied,
and never satisfied are the eyes of man.

21 The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold,
and a man is tested by his praise.

22 Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle
along with crushed grain,
yet his folly will not depart from him.

STEP 1

TEXT

What does it say?

1. Look at the **words and phrases.** Use the [bookmark page provided](#) to help you mark (underline, circle, highlight, etc.) what you notice.

Are there any words you don't understand? Check the glossary on page 40 or try reading another translation.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share something you noticed, and how it impacts what is being said in the text.

2. Look at the **whole passage.**

a. In this section of Proverbs gather themes together instead of trying to break the text into sections. Marking them in different colours might help you do this.

b. Are there key verses that help us see the main idea of this passage? What is the author really wanting the reader to understand?

c. Create a heading or picture and a one sentence summary for each theme.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Have a couple of people share the themes they've noticed, any key verses, and their headings.

STEP 2

TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does it mean?

Use the passages below and the bookmark questions to help you travel through scripture. This will help you deepen your understanding of what this passage means.

3. In Proverbs: Read Proverbs 3:28-29; 17:9,17; 25:17-28

4. The whole Bible: Colossians 3:12-16; Romans 12:9-21

Do you still have any questions about the passage? Write them down to ask your group. If you'd like to use a commentary now is the time to do so.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share one way traveling through scripture has helped you understand the meaning of this passage.

5. So what's the BIG IDEA? What is this passage all about? Write it down in your own words in 1-2 sentences.

BIG IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share your big idea. Work together on it!

PRAY

Pause for prayer. Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see him more clearly, and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3

THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Discuss these questions together.

6. How do the NT readings from Romans and Colossians shape the way you think about relationships now that we are “in Christ”?

7. How does the gospel give you hope that things can change in your relationships?

STEP 4

TODAY

What does this mean for me?

Reflecting on the big idea of the passage, and your life in Christ:

8. Proverbs has shown us the wisdom that comes from the LORD is deeply relational. What relationships has the LORD revealed to you need to change in the light of this passage?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share how the passage has shaped your perspective on what it looks like to live for Christ.

9. What are you going to remember from this passage? Ask for prayer for? This should be practical and personal.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you are able, share your prayer point and ask for prayer. Remember to check in with one another in subsequent weeks for ongoing encouragement and prayer.

Study 10: Desperate Prayer: Dependable Word Proverbs 30

PRAY

Ask God to help you listen to his voice as you read and study.

Read the
passage.

The words of Agur son of Jakeh. The oracle.

1 The man declares, I am weary, O God;

I am weary, O God, and worn out.

2 Surely I am too stupid to be a man.

I have not the understanding of a man.

3 I have not learned wisdom,

nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.

4 Who has ascended to heaven and come down?

Who has gathered the wind in his fists?

Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment?

Who has established all the ends of the earth?

What is his name, and what is his son's name?

Surely you know!

5 Every word of God proves true;

he is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

6 Do not add to his words,

lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.

7 Two things I ask of you;

deny them not to me before I die:

8 Remove far from me falsehood and lying;

give me neither poverty nor riches;

feed me with the food that is needful for me,

9 lest I be full and deny you

and say, "Who is the Lord?"

or lest I be poor and steal

and profane the name of my God.

10 Do not slander a servant to his master,

lest he curse you, and you be held guilty.

11 There are those who curse their fathers
and do not bless their mothers.

12 There are those who are clean in their own eyes
but are not washed of their filth.

13 There are those—how lofty are their eyes,
how high their eyelids lift!

14 There are those whose teeth are swords,
whose fangs are knives,
to devour the poor from off the earth,
the needy from among mankind.

15 The leech has two daughters:
Give and Give.

Three things are never satisfied;
four never say, “Enough”:

16 Sheol, the barren womb,
the land never satisfied with water,
and the fire that never says, “Enough.”

17 The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be picked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.

18 Three things are too wonderful for me;
four I do not understand:

19 the way of an eagle in the sky,
the way of a serpent on a rock,
the way of a ship on the high seas,
and the way of a man with a virgin.

20 This is the way of an adulteress:
she eats and wipes her mouth
and says, “I have done no wrong.”

21 Under three things the earth trembles;
under four it cannot bear up:
22 a slave when he becomes king,
and a fool when he is filled with food;
23 an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress.
24 Four things on earth are small,
but they are exceedingly wise:
25 the ants are a people not strong,
yet they provide their food in the summer;
26 the rock badgers are a people not mighty,
yet they make their homes in the cliffs;
27 the locusts have no king,
yet all of them march in rank;
28 the lizard you can take in your hands,
yet it is in kings' palaces.
29 Three things are stately in their tread;
four are stately in their stride:
30 the lion, which is mightiest among beasts
and does not turn back before any;
31 the strutting rooster, the he-goat,
and a king whose army is with him.
32 If you have been foolish, exalting yourself,
or if you have been devising evil,
put your hand on your mouth.
33 For pressing milk produces curds,
pressing the nose produces blood,
and pressing anger produces strife.

STEP 1

TEXT

What does it say?

1. Look at the words and phrases. Use the bookmark page provided to help you mark (underline, circle, highlight, etc.) what you notice.

Are there any words you don't understand? Check the glossary on page 40 or try reading another translation.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share something you noticed, and how it impacts what is being said in the text.

2. Look at the whole passage.

Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought. Create a heading or picture for each section and a one sentence summary in your own words.

What does the structure reveal? What is the author's flow of thought?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Have a couple of people share the themes they've noticed, any key verses, and their headings.

STEP 2

TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does it mean?

Use the passages below and the bookmark questions to help you travel through scripture. This will help you deepen your understanding of what this passage means.

3. In Proverbs: Read 31:1-9

4. The whole Bible: Read Deuteronomy 4:2, 8:10-19 and Luke 12:16-21 for further understanding on Agur's prayer in vv. 7-9.

Read Deuteronomy 30:11-14; and 2 Samuel 22:31 to shed light on verse 5.

Do you still have any questions about the passage? Write them down to ask your group. If you'd like to use a commentary now is the time to do so.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share one way traveling through scripture has helped you understand the meaning of this passage.

5. So what's the BIG IDEA? What is this passage all about? Write it down in your own words in 1-2 sentences.

BIG IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share your big idea. Work together on it!

PRAY

Pause for prayer. Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see him more clearly, and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3

THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Discuss these questions together.

6. Agur confesses his lack of wisdom (v3), but moves to understanding that true wisdom is revealed in knowing the LORD, and more specifically his son, through his word (v. 4b-5).

How does this shape your understanding of what it means to know and follow Jesus, the word made flesh?

STEP 4

TODAY

What does this mean for me?

Reflecting on the big idea of the passage, and your life in Christ:

7. Agur's prayer in vv. 7-9 is the only prayer in the book of Proverbs. Notice the similarities between it and the Lord's Prayer. Why are Agur's two particular petitions such wise requests?

8. In verse 32, he sums up the folly illustrated by several of the numerical riddles in this passage, as 'exalting yourself' (pride). Proverbs has reminded us that humility is the antidote to pride. How has the Lord been speaking to you about your own issues of pride as we've been studying Proverbs? How do you understand both humility and pride in relation to the fear of the LORD?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share how the passage has shaped your perspective on what it looks like to live for Christ.

9. What are you going to remember from this passage? Ask for prayer for? This should be practical and personal.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you are able, share your prayer point and ask for prayer. Remember to check in with one another in subsequent weeks for ongoing encouragement and prayer.

Study 11: Laughing at the Future

Proverbs 31: 10-31

PRAY

Ask God to help you listen to his voice as you read and study.

Read the passage.

- 10 An excellent wife who can find?
She is far more precious than jewels.
- 11 The heart of her husband trusts in her,
and he will have no lack of gain.
- 12 She does him good, and not harm,
all the days of her life.
- 13 She seeks wool and flax,
and works with willing hands.
- 14 She is like the ships of the merchant;
she brings her food from afar.
- 15 She rises while it is yet night
and provides food for her household
and portions for her maidens.
- 16 She considers a field and buys it;
with the fruit of her hands she plants a vineyard.
- 17 She dresses herself with strength
and makes her arms strong.
- 18 She perceives that her merchandise is profitable.
Her lamp does not go out at night.
- 19 She puts her hands to the distaff,
and her hands hold the spindle.
- 20 She opens her hand to the poor
and reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household,
for all her household are clothed in scarlet.

22 She makes bed coverings for herself;
her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates
when he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them;
she delivers sashes to the merchant.

25 Strength and dignity are her clothing,
and she laughs at the time to come.

26 She opens her mouth with wisdom,
and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue.

27 She looks well to the ways of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.

28 Her children rise up and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:

29 “Many women have done excellently,
but you surpass them all.”

30 Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain,
but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.

31 Give her of the fruit of her hands,
and let her works praise her in the gates.

STEP 1

TEXT

What does it say?

Note: This section 31:10-31, in Hebrew, is a poem where each line starts with a letter of the alphabet. The word “excellent” could also be translated “noble” “worthy” or “valiant.”

1. Look at the **words and phrases**. Use the [bookmark page provided](#) to help you mark (underline, circle, highlight, etc.) what you notice.

Are there any words you don't understand? Check the glossary on page 40 or try reading another translation.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share something you noticed, and how it impacts what is being said in the text.

2. Look at the **whole passage**.

Divide the passage into its natural sections, one for each major thought. Create a heading or picture for each section and a one sentence summary in your own words this.

What does the structure reveal? What is the author's flow of thought?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Have a couple of people share the themes they've noticed, any key verses, and their headings.

STEP 2

TRAVELING THROUGH SCRIPTURE

What does it mean?

Use the passages below and the bookmark questions to help you travel through scripture. This will help you deepen your understanding of what this passage means.

3. In Proverbs: Read ch 3:13-18; On women/wives ch 12:4, 14:1, 18:22

What do you find surprising and/or significant about the placement of this poem at the end of the book of Proverbs?

4. The whole Bible: Read Ruth 3:10-13. From what you know of the story of Ruth, how does Boaz calling her this enlarge your understanding of Proverbs 31?

Note: In the Hebrew Bible the book of Ruth follows the book of Proverbs - Ruth is held up as an example of the “worthy” or “valiant” woman)

Do you still have any questions about the passage? Write them down to ask your group. If you'd like to use a commentary now is the time to do so.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share one way traveling through scripture has helped you understand the meaning of this passage.

5. So what's the BIG IDEA? What is this passage all about? Write it down in your own words in 1-2 sentences.

BIG IDEA

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share your big idea. Work together on it!

PRAY

Pause for prayer. Thank God for all he has already revealed to you, and ask him to help you see him more clearly, and love him more deeply through the next steps of your study.

STEP 3

THINKING THROUGH THE GOSPEL

How is the gospel, and our need for Christ, foreshadowed?

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Discuss these questions together.

6. The Proverbs 31 woman embodies a life which “fears the LORD” v. 30 (1:7)
In what ways does this portrait collect so much of what we have learnt about the shape and fruit of a life lived “fearing the LORD”?

7. Christ alone fully embodied the wise and obedient life, fearing and trusting the way of the LORD, even to death. How does the knowledge that He did this so we’d be free to share in His abundant life now, shape the way you respond to what you have learnt in Proverbs?

STEP 4

TODAY

What does this mean for me?

Reflecting on the big idea of the passage, and your life in Christ:

8. How has reading and meditating on Proverbs changed you? Choose one example to share with your group

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

Share how the passage has shaped your perspective on what it looks like to live for Christ.

9. In the light of this fleshed out picture of wisdom in ch 31, what area of your life do you need God's grace for ongoing change?

What are you going to remember from this passage? Ask for prayer for? This should be practical and personal.

IN YOUR SMALL GROUP

As you are able, share your prayer point and ask for prayer. Remember to check in with one another in subsequent weeks for ongoing encouragement and prayer.

Glossary For Proverbs

Abomination	Revulsion. The LORD is personally grieved and stirred to action in response to things that are evil and wicked, particularly in our relationships with others. See 6:16-19 (7 things the Lord hates that are repeated and explored throughout all of Proverbs).
Blessing	Blessing is God's original creation intention for all the good he wanted to share with all people - living life inside the boundaries He spoke and shaped into creation (Genesis 1 and 2) but was lost in Genesis 3 ("curse"). The story of the bible is how God restores us to his blessing, ultimately by his son becoming a curse for us. 3:3-18, 8:32-36, 16:20, 28:14.
Fear of the LORD	Describes the appropriate response of humankind to the God who has created and redeemed his people. It carries the idea of reverent awe and submissive faith, in an encounter with the LORD God of Israel. It is responding to God's revelation and turning from all evil.
Reproof	Correction, rebuke. Proverbs speaks often of the wise person taking reproof with an attitude of humility and the fear of the LORD, which Proverbs tells us leads to life. (15:31-33)
Righteousness	The righteous person is in right relationship with God. This does not mean sinless or perfect, but faithful to the covenant God made with his people Israel. In God's plan, Christ offers covenant membership to all who believe the gospel. (Romans 10:3-4)
Sheol	The place of the dead, the grave: not the same as "hell". Common in the OT is the idea of 'going down to Sheol' (Gen. 37:35, Ps. 6:5, 9:17). God is the one who raises one up from Sheol (Ps. 30:3), demonstrating his authority over the dead as well as the living.
Steadfast love	Refers to the unchanging, faithful love for his people that the LORD God demonstrates in fulfilling his covenant promises. He declared it to be a central part of his character when revealing his glory to Moses (Exodus 34:6).
Transgression	A violation of a law, command or duty.
Wickedness	The quality of being evil or morally wrong. In Proverbs, the benefits of the righteous (the wise) are often contrasted with the misfortunes of the wicked (fools)...righteousness leading to life, wickedness leading to death (10:16).
Wisdom	The agent by which God creates and sustains his world. The New Testament speaks of Christ as 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' (1 Corin. 1:24), underlying the idea that the power and wisdom of God find their fullest expression in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
Wealth, work and generosity	3:9-10, 10:4-5, 11:24-28, 12:27, 13:11,22-23, 14:23, 20:13-17, 21:5-6,13, 22:1-2,16, 22:22-28, 23:4-8, 27:23-27, 28:19-27, 31:13-25