

# ANCIENT WISDOM, EVERYDAY WORSHIP

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Re-discovering Proverbs

*13-Week Group Devotional*

VOLUME 2: PROVERBS 5-10

# ANCIENT WISDOM, EVERYDAY WORSHIP: Re-discovering Proverbs

WEEK 1 - PROVERBS 5: 1-14

VOL. 2

## STEADY ON

*My son, pay attention to my wisdom, listen well to my words of insight, that you may maintain discretion and your lips may preserve knowledge. (PROVERBS 5:1-2)*

With chapter 5 of Proverbs, we begin to tread some dangerous and deceptive ground. *Dangerous* because we're all aware of the life-shattering consequences of inappropriate relationships, both physical and emotional, and the heartache those relationships have brought on the family and on the Church. *Deceptive* because the enemy's insidious attacks can be subtle, often innocent in the beginning. But they're persistent and they're deadly.

Now, add into the mix a culture like ours that increasingly views immorality as the accepted norm, and you can easily see why what we look at, what we listen to, what we accept and what we believe all are under a constant barrage from the father of lies.

But obviously, this isn't just a 21<sup>st</sup> Century dilemma; it's an ancient problem. It was an ungodly curse in Solomon's era and it continues to be so today. Sadly, there aren't many of us who haven't felt the shockwaves of someone's illicit encounter. Our churches, our social circles and our families bear the scars.

Is it possible that pride is at the root of all this? *I* want what *I* want when *I* want it. *I* deserve this and besides, the rules don't apply to *me*. And so begins the deceptive and dangerous path that leads to death and destruction.

Most likely because of the societal structure in Solomon's day – and the fact that it would have been males receiving formal training and instruction – the initiator, or tempter, in today's passage is depicted as female, while the male is the one being cautioned. But, oh, how painfully aware we are that seduction isn't sexist, and infidelity is not gender specific.

Our best defense is a heart filled with the truth of God, a mind set on the things of God, and eyes turned to the face of God. Steady on, friend. Steady on.

## DISCUSS

What are you doing to ensure that your heart remains pure and your witness remains credible?

Do you have a prayer partner to support and encourage you along the way?



## CAPTIVATED BY WHAT? BY WHOM?

*For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.*  
(PROVERBS 5:21)

As if to drive home the point in no uncertain terms, the next portion of Proverbs 5 states its case by posing a few rhetorical questions, and offering a few metaphorical suggestions. Comparing marital fidelity to pure drinking water from a cistern, Solomon advises, in verses 15 and 17, that his student should drink from his own cistern and should not share this water with strangers. Further, he asks, in verses 16 and 20, why his student would want to share his water, or why he would want to drink from another's cistern.

As we're reminded when we examine the first part of Proverbs 5, there are untold depths of earthly calamity that are left in the wake of marital infidelity. But verses 21 and 22 give us a little heavenly perspective on all this, too.

**Verse 21:** *For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD* (He sees everything we do; we're not exempt from His eyes), *and he examines all his paths* (Unlike human observers, God knows not only the steps we take, but the motivation behind them).

**Verse 22:** *The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him* (It's true – we're often our own worst enemy); *the cords of his sin hold him fast* (Sin is nothing if not enslaving).

By the way, the phrase, “led astray” in verse 23 comes from the root word, *shagah*. It's the same word that's rendered “captivated” in verse 19. You'd probably agree: what captures our heart captures all of us.

## DISCUSS

What would you honestly say has captured your heart at this point in time?  
Is there anyone who could pray with you for release from something holding you in bondage?

# ANCIENT WISDOM, EVERYDAY WORSHIP: Re-discovering Proverbs

WEEK 3 - PROVERBS 6:1-15

VOL. 2

## WATCH OUT!

*Go and humble yourself; press your plea with your neighbor.* (PROVERBS 6:3B)

By now, I think you'd agree that the book of Proverbs is full of warnings; red lights on the road to godliness; caution signs at dangerous intersections. How we obey or ignore them will have a direct impact on the effectiveness of our lives. Proverbs 6 continues this system of teaching with its insight into business and financial agreements, as well as warnings against laziness.

I've discovered that it's really wise to watch out for what agreements I enter into, especially on a business or professional level. And I've learned to be careful about who I interact and associate with. My response is crucial in these situations. I can't always predict, nor can I ever control, what someone else might say or do. I can only control my reaction; my response.

So, I'm learning to employ the fine art of discernment every day:

- Is this a business agreement that's prudent and wise?
- Is it a good use of my time, energy and abilities?
- Is it godly?
- Is this personal relationship one to be nurtured?
- Is it one to be cut off?
- How do I respond to that recent comment, suggestion or criticism?
- Do I respond at all?

The warnings of Proverbs 6 all seem to say, "Watch out!" Watch out for shallow seductions that lead to deeper problems. Watch out for unwise agreements that become financial liabilities. Watch out for unguarded moments that become unfortunate traits or habits. And while it's true that our response in any of these situations is of utmost importance, so is the way we initiate any of these agreements or relationships. Wisdom and discernment walk hand in hand with prayer and reliance on God's guidance.

## DISCUSS

How does your interaction with others affect your ministry?

Do you respond with emotion or with discernment?

## DISSENSION AMONG THE RANKS

*For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way of life. (PROVERBS 6:23)*

Have you ever noticed that some of those around us just seem to enjoy stirring up dissension? Maybe it's because there's a faulty sense of superiority in that. Maybe it's a "Look at me; I'm not like them" mentality. Maybe it's just insecurity, and bringing others down gives us the impression of lifting ourselves up. At any rate, once again, it seems that pride is at the heart of the matter.

This is strong language, but scripture says that God "hates" that (see verse 19). Among seven detestable characteristics, "a man who stirs up dissension among the brothers" is despicable to God. Yet we see it regularly, and beyond that, we tolerate it. We may even have been guilty of initiating it.

Oh, we tend to whitewash it with "concern" over this or that, and to be sure, there are legitimate reasons, on certain occasions, when we must voice an observation or even a complaint. But let's be honest here: what motivates these actions? What are we really trying to accomplish? Is this an essential matter or is it simply a matter of personal preference?

You see, one of the inherent problems (among many) in "stirring up dissension" is that shattering of unity is a poor representation to an already fractured world around us. When the Church can't even get along, how in the world do we expect to be attractive to unbelievers?

I'm not talking about absolutes of the faith here. And I'm not talking about going along just to get along. What I'm suggesting is finding gentle, compassionate, love-soaked ways to settle our differences. That is, of course, after determining if our differences are really worth addressing at all! Responding to each other in grace-filled ways can be a difficult challenge ... but oh, so worth it.

## DISCUSS

Are there any differences among those you minister with that need to be addressed with love, with patience, with grace?

Are there any you simply need to release?