

LIFETIME LEARNING

A simple handbook designed to assist you in gaining wisdom

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INTRODUCTION

For more years than I can remember it has been a habit with me to read a chapter of Proverbs each day. Conveniently Proverbs has thirty one chapters, one for each day of the longest month, so I read the chapter that is the day's date. By following this simple system I have become reasonably well acquainted with the contents of the book.

In addition to reading a chapter of Proverbs every day, I read consecutively through the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation, at a rate of a chapter a day. Even at this slow pace I have read through the Bible a sufficient number of times to have gained a grasp of many of the messages it contains.

My main means of learning from Scripture, however, has been by studying subjects it deals with, either for personal edification, or in preparation for speaking at meetings.

By these basic methods of acquiring a rudimentary knowledge of the Word of God, the Lord has enabled me to discover some of His intentions for us. One of the conclusions I have come to is that He intends us to be learning continuously. It is my conclusion that Scripture sets out a program of LIFETIME LEARNING that is suited to each one of us. You may choose to take things at a slow pace, as I have done, or you may be gifted to gain "wisdom" at a more intensive rate, but a program of LIFETIME LEARNING is there for you. It is there waiting for you to embark upon when you are willing.

This little volume is designed to help you embark on that course of learning. It will cost you time and effort, but the benefits you will accrue by taking this course of action are innumerable and immeasurable.

In this booklet, I have concentrated on how you can use the book of Proverbs to help you develop a routine of study that fits easily into your normal day's activities. It can be used as your starting point in developing a routine, or it can be added to any routine you are already using.

If the simple routine I recommend is adopted [refer to the "Recommended Routine" in Part 3] you will be delighted with the results. If it is your starting point in systematic Bible study you will probably find that you will soon wish to let your routine develop into a systematic study of all of Scripture.

PART 1 CHAPTER 1

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM

Reading the book of Proverbs will almost certainly lead you to the conclusion that God intends us to be involved in a lifelong pursuit of wisdom. Verse 7 of chapter 4 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And with all your getting, get understanding. This pursuit of wisdom is to be A LIFETIME OCCUPATION, for Proverbs goes on to tell us that:

- * It is for the YOUNG, for chapter 1 verse 4 tells us that God's purpose is, "To give prudence to the simple and to the YOUNG man knowledge and discretion".

- * It is for THE PERSON IN THE PRIME OF LIFE AND LEARNING, for chapter 1 verse 5 tells us that, "A WISE MAN will hear and increase learning, and a MAN OF UNDERSTANDING will attain wise counsel", and chapter 18 verse 15 says, "The heart of the PRUDENT acquires knowledge, and the ear of the WISE seeks knowledge".

- * It is for THOSE OF MATURE AGE, for chapter 19 verse 20 advises, “Listen to counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise IN YOUR LATTER DAYS”.

And we are left in no doubt as to

HOW WE ARE TO PURSUE WISDOM

Proverbs chapter 2 verses 1 to 8 says, “My son, if you RECEIVE my words, so that you INCLINE YOUR EAR to wisdom, and APPLY YOUR HEART to understanding; yes if you CRY OUT FOR discernment, and LIFT UP YOUR VOICE for understanding, if you SEEK HER AS SILVER, and SEARCH FOR HER AS FOR HIDDEN TREASURES; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly; He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints”.

In other words, if you search diligently for wisdom, God will grant you success in obtaining it.

The epistle of James confirms this, for it says in chapter 1 verse 5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him”.

At this point it would be good for us to ask ourselves a question, namely

WHAT IS WISDOM?

Wisdom is a many sided thing. Proverbs chapter 1 verses 1 to 5 give us an idea of what wisdom encompasses "The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: to know WISDOM and INSTRUCTION, to perceive the words of UNDERSTANDING, to receive the instruction of wisdom, JUSTICE, JUDGEMENT, and EQUITY; to give PRUDENCE to the simple, to the young man KNOWLEDGE and DISCRETION. A wise man will hear and increase LEARNING, and a man of understanding will attain to wise COUNSEL".

So WISDOM involves INSTRUCTION, UNDERSTANDING, JUSTICE, JUDGEMENT, EQUITY, PRUDENCE, KNOWLEDGE, DISCRETION, LEARNING and COUNSEL. Such qualities are not easily attained, and, in my experience, are demonstrated by very few of us. However, rather than being discouraged, we should press on and gain them to the maximum extent of our God-given abilities and opportunities.

Every one of these qualities was displayed in its fullness in Jesus Christ, as was every attribute of The Godhead.....Colossians chapter 2 verse 9 says, "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily " and verse 3 of the same chapter tells us that in Christ are hidden, "All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge".

Wisdom is a characteristic of God, as chapter 8 verse 22 says, "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way ". Wisdom was used to establish the earth, as chapter 3 verse 19 says, "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth". Wisdom is what rulers need to successfully meet their responsibilities, as chapter 8 verse 15 says, "By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice". And wisdom is what every individual requires to enable them to meet the demands of life, as chapter 3 verses 21 to 26 says, "Keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble. When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes, you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet. Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught ".

I will say a little more about what wisdom is, and how we are to pursue it, in chapter two, but for the moment let us encourage ourselves in the knowledge that Jesus Christ is the personification of wisdom, and the more we have of it, the more we will reflect Him. For the moment let us use selected extracts from that portion of the Old Testament we refer to as "The Poetry-Wisdom" section (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon) to show us THAT.....

THE PATH TO WISDOM IS A GLORIOUS ONE

Scripture leaves us in no doubt that Jesus Christ is the personification of wisdom for 1st Corinthians chapter 1 verses 22 to 24 says, "For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God".

The salvation that Jesus Christ provides brings us colossal blessings and spiritual possessions. We are viewed by God as immediately possessing every benefit and every grace that will eventually be fully ours in every sense. As it says in 1st Corinthians chapter 1 verse 30, Jesus has become for us "wisdom from God-and righteousness and sanctification and redemption". Positionally in Christ we are WISE, but the more we make that actual by gaining wisdom in practice, the more we will reflect Jesus in the way we live our lives.

There is no question about it, the greatest challenge for the believer is to be more like Jesus. Peter tells us in his first epistle, chapter 2 verse 21, that Christ suffered for us, "leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps". Paul exhorted believers in 1st Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, "Imitate me, just as I imitate Christ ". In other words, 'Follow me in as far as I follow Christ '. In 1st John chapter 2 verse 6 the apostle says, "He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked".

Facing the challenge of growing in wisdom and, as a result, becoming more

conformed to the image of God's Son, is a glorious path to follow, and as we travel along it we discover.....

- * THE PURPOSE FOR LIFE: Ecclesiastes 12.13-14, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgement, including every secret thing, whether good or evil".

- * WHERE WISDOM BEGINS: Proverbs 9.10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of The Holy One is understanding". Coincidentally, this is where salvation begins, for Jesus said, "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent".

- * THE BEAUTY OF THE SAVIOUR: Song of Solomon 5.16, "... He is altogether lovely".

- * WHAT IT COST THE SAVIOUR TO PURCHASE OUR REDEMPTION: Psalm 22:
 - * verse 1, "My God, My God why have You forsaken Me? Why are you so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning"?
 - * verse 16 ".....They pierced my hands and My feet".

- * THE MOST IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP WE CAN HAVE: Psalm 23.1, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want".

- * THE PATH WE SHOULD FOLLOW: Proverbs 4.7, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding".

- * HOW FAR THIS PATH CAN TAKE US: Psalm 119.97-100, "Oh, how I love your

law! It has been my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts”.

* What a tremendous benefit it is to be wiser than your enemies. You know how to cope with them and you can be one step ahead of them.

* And what a surprising thing to come to a position of knowing more than your teachers. At one time I thought I could never know more than the people who taught me, but, by absorbing God’s wisdom, I can.

* On top of this, how amazing it is to understand more than the ancients [those ancient philosophers who are so revered]. But this also is possible, if I gain enough of God’s wisdom.

* HOW CERTAIN OUR DESTINATION CAN BE: Job 19.25-27, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me”!

* Even if we die before the Lord returns, we will be raised again, and we see Him face to face. What a prospect!

* HOW GOOD THE JOURNEY IS ALONG THE WAY: Psalm 23.6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever”.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS CAN HELP US

In the pursuit of wisdom the book of Proverbs is recommended reading. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon [see Ecclesiastes 1.1], was an exceedingly wise man. He sought both to teach wisdom and to increase his own store of it, and he realised the value of Proverbs. We are told in Ecclesiastes 12.9-12, "And moreover, because the Preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and sought out and set in order many Proverbs. The Preacher sought to find acceptable words; and what was written was upright - words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd. And further, my son, be admonished by these..... "

Let us, then, look at the book of Proverbs to discover how it can help us. As we do so, let's make the prayer Moses prayed in Psalm 90 verse 12 our prayer " So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom".

CHAPTER 2

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

Most of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon (refer to chapter 1 verse 1), but contributions were made by Agur (refer to chapter 30 verse 1), and king Lemuel (refer to chapter 31 verse 1), and work was done in the days of Hezekiah preparing some of Solomon's writings for inclusion.

Solomon was eminently suited to authorship of such a book, but the contents are not limited to the stock of wisdom of any of the human writers, for the book is part of the canon of scripture and comes to us by Divine inspiration.

It is evident from the opening verses of the book that Solomon had a burning

desire to pass on wisdom to others. He was particularly concerned about his son [probably his oldest son] and the book is full of indications of this concern [for example, 1.8..."My son, hear the instruction of your father"; 1.10..." My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent"; 1.15..."My son, do not walk in the way with them", etc.]. God uses this desire to prompt Solomon to set in order a marvellous application of divine wisdom to the practical problems of life, and an extremely useful guidebook for anyone seeking practical righteousness in the everyday affairs of life.

In presenting to you an initial appreciation of the book of Proverbs I would like to draw your attention to six things from it, namely.....

- * TWO PRINCIPLES..... 1. What Wisdom Is
..... 2. How Wisdom Is Gained

- * TWO PICTURES..... 1. Wisdom
..... 2. Folly

- * TWO PROBLEMS..... 1. Bad People
.....2. Bad Habits

TWO PRINCIPLES

There are many principles raised in the book of Proverbs, but , at this stage, I only wish to draw your attention to two.

In referring to these things as 'principles' I am thinking of that meaning of the word that defines a principle as a foundational thing, something that other things depend on. As The Shorter Oxford Dictionary says, "That from which something takes its rise, originates, or is derived". To get full benefit from the book of Proverbs we need to understand the principles on which it is based. One of its principles is its definition of wisdom. We need to understand, in Proverbs' terms

1. What Wisdom Is

KNOWLEDGE is the possession of facts, but WISDOM is the ability to understand facts and use them prudently, with discretion, to arrive at conclusions that enable you to take actions, or give counsel or judgement that is just and equitable. Wisdom does not come to you by chance.

In chapter one I raised this subject, but now I would like to take it a step further.

Wisdom is a BROAD thing.....

* It comes from FATHERS, as chapter 1 verse 8 says, "My son, hear the instruction of your father".

* It comes from MOTHERS, as chapter 1 verse 8 goes on to say, "and do not forsake the law of your mother".

* It comes from TEACHERS, as chapter 5 verse 13 says, "I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers".

* It comes from THE WISE and from SCHOLARS as Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 11 says, “The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails”.

The all- encompassing qualification is that each piece of wisdom must be from the only valid original source, THE LORD HIMSELF. Chapter 2 verse 6 says, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding”. This is of critical importance, for Scripture warns us that there is more than one form of ‘wisdom’ abroad. Chapter 3 verse 15 of the epistle of James says, when speaking of a lower form of ‘wisdom’, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic”.

In seeking and receiving wisdom from fathers, mothers, teachers, the wise or scholars we must ensure that it comes, in its origin, from the Lord Himself, or as Ecclesiastes chapter 12 verse 11 says, we must ensure that it is ...” given by one Shepherd”. In this, as in other things, the true child of God can say, “The Lord is my Shepherd“ (Psalm 23.1).

The Lord leaves us in no doubt as to how to test the source of the information we are receiving. He has given us sufficient information to reliably make a judgement. Chapter 3 of James’s epistle gives us seven things by which we can recognise each sort of ‘wisdom’. Verses 13 to 18 read as follows, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace”.

Clearly then, the sort of ‘wisdom’ you would reject is that which is marked by worldliness, sensuality, demonic overtones, envy, self-centredness, confusion and evil. On the other hand, the sort of ‘wisdom’ you receive with open arms is marked by purity, peace, gentleness, reasonableness, mercy, everything that is good, impartiality and genuineness.

The book of Proverbs will assist you in gaining the wisdom, “that is from above”.

2 . How Wisdom is Gained

As I have said before, wisdom does not come to you by mere chance. If we are to gain wisdom we need to use every God-given faculty to make it ours.

Chapter 4 verse 7 says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore GET wisdom. And IN ALL YOUR GETTING, get understanding". Don't miss an opportunity!

LISTEN for it when the wise are speaking.....as 2.2 says, "INCLINE YOUR EAR to wisdom". STUDY scripture and the writings of the wise.....as 2.2 says, "APPLY YOUR HEART to understanding". ASK for it.....as 2.3 says, "CRY OUT for discernment, and LIFT UP YOUR VOICE for understanding". SEARCH for it.....as 2.4 says, "SEEK HER as silver, and SEARCH FOR HER as for hidden treasures". It is only as you do these things that you attain it, for 2.5 says, "THEN you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God", and 2.9 reinforces it by saying, "THEN you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path".

None of these things are beyond us. No certificates, diplomas or degrees are required, nor will they hinder you, unless you let them.

If you were searching for "hidden treasures" as 2.4 says you would be very diligent in your search. You would leave no stone unturned. This is exactly how 8.17 describes the search....." those who seek me diligently will find me".

It is fair to say, then, that the book of Proverbs sets out a process for us to gain wisdom.

TWO PICTURES

The book of proverbs paints a number of word-pictures for us, but two in particular stand out to me. Both are in chapter 9. Verses 1-6 picture.....

1. Wisdom

In these verses wisdom is pictured as a woman. She is an industrious, generous woman who has “built her house“. It is something of a mansion with “seven pillars“ which, by their number, indicate the perfect nature of the structure. In her generosity she has prepared a banquet, having “slaughtered her meat“, “mixed her wine“ and “furnished her table“, and “she has sent out her maidens“ to invite people to the feast. So anxious is she to make her offer known that she “cries out from the highest places of the city“.

Her offer is open to everyone, but she particularly makes her invitation known to those who stand in greatest need of her help. She cries, “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!“. As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding“.

She has much to offer, and everything she has for you will do you good. As 9.11 says, by her “your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you“. Your personal welfare is at stake, as 9.12 says, “If you are wise you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you will bear it alone“.

This picture of wisdom, freely making her gifts available, is seen in other parts of the book of Proverbs, for example,

- * In chapter 1 verses 20 to 23 it says, “Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she speaks her words: “How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity? For scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge. Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you”.

- * In the same chapter we have a graphic description of the calamitous result of rejecting wisdom (verses 24 to 33). It says, “Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you distained all my counsel, and would none of my rebuke, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them; but whoever listens to me will dwell safely, and be secure, without fear of evil”.

- * In chapter 8 verses 1 to 11 where it says, “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors: to you O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men. O you simple ones, understand prudence, and you fools, be of an understanding heart. Listen, for I will speak of excellent things, and from the opening of my lips will come right things; for my mouth will speak truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips. All the words of my mouth are with righteousness; nothing crooked or perverse is in them. They are all plain to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her”.

- * Then, in chapter 8 we have a description of wisdom, examples of its uses and benefits on earth, its history from before the beginning of time (read verses 12 to 31), and the following exhortation to follow her ways..... “Now therefore, listen to me, my children, for blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens

to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favour from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death". [verses 32 to 36].

- * The book of Proverbs has other examples, but these will suffice to reinforce the picture painted of wisdom seeking to win converts.

But back to chapter 9 and its pictures. Verses 13 to 18 picture.....

2. Folly

Folly is also pictured as a woman, but this time it is a boisterous, "clamorous" woman. "She is simple, and knows nothing". This woman is idle, "She sits at the door of her house". Her lack of profitable activity is replaced by a desire to lead people astray. She sits "on a seat by the highest places of the city, to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their way: whoever is simple, let him turn in here".

Wisdom seeks for those who are simple that she might make them wise, but folly seeks for those who are simple that she might take advantage of them. There is no doubt about which of them you should choose as your companion for life. Wisdom should be the choice, but, sadly, most people choose folly.

Folly speaks lies, promising things she cannot deliver, and leading people to destruction..... "as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell".

It is madness to follow this woman, but she is seductive, persuasive, and, in many ways, easy to follow; hence her success.

TWO PROBLEMS

The book of Proverbs teaches true wisdom, and true wisdom is practical. Life is full of problems and proverbs faces squarely up to these problems. There are, however, two categories of problems the book faces that I would like to bring to your attention.

The first category is.....

1. Bad People

Within this category of problems the Lord, through the book of Proverbs, warns us about.....

(a) Bad Men, and,

(b) Bad Women

(a) Bad Men have caused so much trouble. Most of us will meet quite a few of them in the course of our life's journey. The Lord wishes to equip us to recognise them, and to be on our guard to minimise the damage they may do to us.

Chapter 2 verses 12 to 15 tells us that one of the things wisdom will do for you is, "To deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things". The verses go on to describe the 'evil man'. He is one of those who, "leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked: whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths".

Proverbs is exceedingly good at describing different sorts of people, like the 'lazy man' who turns on his bed, "as a door turns on its hinges" (26.14), or the talebearer whose words "are like tasty trifles" that "go down into the inmost body". I will say a little more on this subject in Part 2, but at this stage I am simply making the point that the Lord describes evil men that we might recognise them, and take appropriate action to deliver ourselves from him.

Chapter 1 verses 10 to 16 provides another example of such a warning. It says, in the words of Solomon warning one of his sons, "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them alive like Sheol, and whole like those who go down to the Pit; we shall find all kinds of precious possessions, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse"- my son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path: for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood".

(b) Bad Women have caused just as much trouble, and the Lord is seeking to equip us equally well to recognise them and avoid them. It is worth saying at this point that, when the Lord is equipping us to avoid suffering damage from either evil men or evil women, He makes it more than clear to us that we have to make every effort possible to reach those same people for Him. He wants them to be delivered from their foolish ways and the inevitable consequences those ways bring.

Chapter 2 verses 16 to 19 describe the 'immoral woman' and the dangers of falling into her grasp....." To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words". The attractiveness of this kind of woman cannot be denied. She makes a strong appeal, but we are warned that she is an unfaithful woman. She has been unfaithful to her partner and unfaithful to God, for the passage goes on to say that she "forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God". We are warned that she is a destroyer of lives, for it says, "her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life".

There are many such women abroad and the book of Proverbs speaks often about them.

Chapter 6 verses 23 to 35 repeats the warning in very clear terms. Note as you read it that God warns us about her, telling us something of her way of working, and the dire consequences of falling into her well prepared trap.....” For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life, to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbour’s wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent. People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving. Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house. Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonour he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away. For jealousy is a husband’s fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts“.

Another graphic warning is given in chapter 7 verses 4 to 27. As I quote the passage I will intersperse the quotation with a few comments. ”Say to wisdom, “You are my sister,” and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words”. We are then given the sad story of a young man who fell into this attractive but deadly trap. “For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding, passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house “. He knew he was doing the wrong thing, for we are told that it was, “In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night“.

It was by arrangement, for the passage continues, “And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart“. Anyone could see her attire, designed to provoke lust, but only God could see her heart, and tell us its condition. “She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner “. In the middle of the story the Lord takes time to give us these tell-tale signs of the unstable, immoral woman.....but to return to the story..... “So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she said to him: I have peace offerings with me; to-day I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you“, and with this sort of language she tries to make herself sound virtuous. But her next words reveal the gross wickedness of her intent, “I have spread my bed with tapestry, coloured coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh,

aloes, and cinnamon. Come let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he has taken a bag of money with him, and will come home on the appointed day ". So she has gone to great lengths to make the whole experience as pleasurable as possible and she endeavours to persuade her victim that it will be perfectly safe, without danger of them being discovered or suffering any judgement because of it. The truth, however, is revealed as the story is brought to an end.

"With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him.. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would cost his life".

The story is followed by a reinforcing of the warning....." Now therefore, listen to me, my children; pay attention to the words of my mouth: do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths; for she has cast down many wounded, and all who were slain by her were strong men. Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death".

Few cries are as pitiful as the words of the man spoken about in chapter 5 who had been warned, as a child, that " the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword." (verses 3 to 4). He had failed, in later life, to heed the warning that went on to tell him, "Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life- her ways are unstable; you do not know them. Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labours go to the house of a foreigner; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed " (verses 5 to 11). His rueful words at the end are, "How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised correction! I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!"

In quoting these passages from Proverbs I have by no means exhausted what the book has to say on the subject, but these portions are sufficient to convey the seriousness of the problems caused by evil women.

The second category is.....

Bad Habits

One of the contributors to the book of Proverbs is a wise woman who sought to teach her son, king Lemuel, some practical wisdom for his life. She warns him against two of the worst habits you could ever become involved in, namely.....

(a) Immorality, and

(b) Abuse of Alcohol

Both of her warnings are recorded in chapter 31 verses 1 to 5.

(a). Immorality ruins many lives. Lemuel's mother took her responsibilities seriously. The wording of verse 2 indicates to me that she loved her son and had solemnly vowed to do her utmost to ensure that he would be a righteous person. Verses 2 to 3 say "What, my son? And what, son of my womb? And what, son of my vows? Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings".

She knew his destiny was to be a king and she evidently feared the easy opportunity his position would present to him to indulge himself in immorality. History has shown that many in such positions have fallen into this trap.

When the law was given to Israel, and God foresaw that the nation would one day wish to have a king, like the nations around them, He set as one of the rules for the king that he was not to "multiply wives for himself" (Deuteronomy 17.17). This is clear testimony to the tendency in men's hearts which the Lord wished to counteract.

It would be labouring the point to say a lot on this issue, after having made reference to so much of the book of Proverbs in relation to the immoral woman. Immoral women can only ply their obnoxious trade if they have immoral men to trade with.

It should be sufficient to say that immorality can.....

- * ruin your health....as 5.11 says, “you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed“.
- * ruin your reputation....as 6.33 says, “ Wounds and dishonour will he get, and his reproach will not be wiped away”.
- * deplete your wealth....as 6.26 says, “For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread“.
- * bring your punishment....as 6.34 says, “For jealousy is a husband’s fury; therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance”.
- * waste your life....as 5.9 says, “Lest you give your honour to others, and your years to the cruel one”.
- * shake your life to its core....as 5.14 says, “I was on the verge of total ruin”.
- * damage your inner self....as 6.32 says, “He who does so destroys his own soul.”

Chapter 2 verse 19 says, "None who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life ". I was interested to read The Living Bible's rendering of this verse. It reads "The men who enter them are doomed. None of these men will be the same again".

It is a sad truth that the normally clean living man who strays into the arms of an immoral woman carries a scar for life. He literally is never the same again. He hurts inside for the rest of his life, and many people never fully forgive him. Others forgive but never forget. But let us never lose sight of the forgiveness there is in Jesus Christ, for either the one-time offender or the habitually immoral person, and for both the immoral man and the harlot. This glorious truth is not at variance with the statements we have been looking at in Proverbs. Proverbs is issuing the warnings but other scriptures tell us of the marvellous provisions for forgiveness of this and other sins.

When we think of David and his adultery with Bathsheba (as we read of it in 2nd Samuel chapters 11 and 12) it comes as heartening news to all sinners that when he repented of it and confessed it, God forgave him and "put away" his sin (as it says in 2 Samuel 12.13). David talks about the blessedness of this forgiveness in Psalm 32. In verse 5 he says " I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord", and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.' It is worth reading all of Psalm 32 to get an appreciation of how graciously the Lord dealt with David. Nor was the Lord less gracious in His dealings with the woman taken in adultery (John 8.1 to 11), nor with those to whom Paul refers in 1st Corinthians chapter 6 verses 9 to 11 when he says " Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Paul's statement shows that immorality and all other uncleanness' can be cleansed by repentance and confession to God. And Proverbs agrees with this, for it says in chapter 28 verse 13, "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy".

(b) Abuse of alcohol is another major problem in the world to-day. How many people have been killed by drunken drivers, how many children have been abused or neglected by drunken parents, how many people have lost their self-esteem through abuse of alcohol, or how much has been added to our nation's health bills trying to rehabilitate alcoholics or treat the diseases brought on by excessive use of alcohol?

In my study of scripture I reach the conclusion that the Word Of God does not demand total abstinence from alcohol for the believer. I am, however, of the opinion that the best stand a believer can take is to totally abstain. We have no need to take alcohol to-day. We have a more than adequate supply of non-alcoholic beverages available to us in all seasons.

Partaking of alcoholic drinks, even at the occasional social event, sends the wrong message to young people and to others who seem to be unable to control their intake.

Abuse of alcohol has been a curse for millennia, right from the time Noah planted his vineyard and "...drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent "(Genesis chapter 9 verse 21). It brought humiliation to this otherwise righteous man, and caused problems for his family. It has caused problems for many people since, and Lemuel's mother did well to warn her son against it.

Speaking in clear terms to her son, Lemuel's mother says, "It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted." (chapter 31 verses 4 to 5).

The book of Proverbs, in chapter 20 verse 1 says, " Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise." Solomon, who wrote this Proverb, went on to warn his son, " Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way. Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags". [Chapter 23 verses 19 to 21].

In one very brief statement one portion of Proverbs touches on several of the main problems abuse of alcohol can bring. Chapter 23 verses 29 to 35 reads, "Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has contentions? Who has complaints? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine. Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things. Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who

lies at the top of the mast, saying:” They have struck me but I was not hurt; they have beaten me but I did not feel it. When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?’

This brief passage describes the connoisseur to a tee. There he or she is, seeking new mixtures, holding the wines up to the light, commenting on how it moves. They could talk for hours about it . But what about the person who is taken in by it all and ends up unable to control their drinking habit? That person may end up with.....

- * emotional problems “woe”, and “sorrow”,
- * physical problems “wounds without cause”
- * psychological problems “your eyes will see strange things”
- * personality problems “complaints”
- * relationship problems You cultivate enemies, “they have struck me”
- * problems with addiction “When shall I awake that I may seek another drink”

Every time I read this passage I call to mind a picture etched on my mind from early childhood. We lived in a densely populated area of Belfast, in Northern Ireland. Poverty was rife and one of the few outlets for men was to get drunk on a Saturday night. We lived close to several ‘public houses’ and one Saturday evening there was a noise as someone slumped against our front door. My father, who, to his credit, never joined in the Saturday night revelry, went to the door to see what was going on. Like any three or four year old inquisitive child I followed him. When he opened the door one of my uncles fell through on to our floor. He was covered in blood. In particular I noticed a gash on his forehead from which blood was streaming down his face and dripping from his chin. It was the first time I had seen a person in that condition as a result of drink and what it leads to, but it was not to be the last.

My uncle lived a little further away from the ‘pubs’ and he had stopped off at our house for a clean-up before he went home.

A PRACTICAL BOOK

In this brief introduction to the book of Proverbs I have attempted to show you how practical the book is. In the next chapter I will endeavour to show you how you can use the book to increase your store of wisdom and use it in your everyday life.

CHAPTER 3

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

(i) Many Lessons

Even though I have titled this chapter “A Closer Look At The Book Of Proverbs“, I intend to make it a fairly brief chapter. I do, however, wish to point out several things I have noticed about the book as I have read and re-read it over the years.

a. One of the first things I noticed about Proverbs is that it often teaches truths in small quantities. It gives a little piece of information on a subject, then changes to another subject. This seemed to me to be a strange way of teaching, but then I noticed that the little pieces of information are often presented in a form that makes them easy to remember, like, for example, 16.32 says, “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city”. The verse before it is on another subject, and the one after it is on a different subject again.

I discovered that these little grains of truth registered on my mind, much like the words of a clever advertisement remain in your memory. In times of need I find myself remembering and quoting an appropriate one of these little statements.

b. Another thing I noticed is that numerous little statements are made on the one subject, but they are dispersed throughout the book. As several of these statements began to register on my mind I found myself gaining a significant overall understanding of that subject, for example, 16.32 quoted above is about control of anger, and tells me that if you can control your anger you have considerable advantage over other people who may in other ways lay claim to greatness. When I discovered that Proverbs speaks about anger, temper and self control in at least eight places I began to put all of the statements together to understand more about the subject.

c. One thing I could not help but notice was that some subjects come in for ultra-frequent mention. For example, I have jotted down over forty references to the use of the tongue. Some of them are quite dramatic, like 18.21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit”.

These frequent references show the importance of the subject. It is almost impossible to over-emphasise how important it is to control the use of your tongue, just as it is almost impossible to over-emphasise how difficult it is to exercise that control.

d. Something else I noticed is that Proverbs gives you truths viewed from different angles. Giving you facts in this way prepares you for differing situations you meet in the rough and tumble of life. An example of this is 26.4 to 5, “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes”. At first glance there seems to be a contradiction here, but on a closer look you discover that the sayings are preparing you for situations where either of the pieces of advice may be appropriate. You can be in company when someone makes a very foolish statement. Circumstances may be such that if you take the person up on what they say you will just make the situation worse, and involve yourself in a very foolish debate. In this case, 26.4 applies. However, it may be that the foolish statement is such that it must be answered. If it is left unanswered the person who made it will think he has said the right thing, and others may be led astray by the folly. In this case, 26.5 applies. The value of having been given both pieces of advice is that you know discernment is required when you are in company and a foolish statement is made. It is not a ‘one size fits all’ situation. You have been forewarned that you need to assess the circumstances before you intervene.

e. Time and time again I have been impressed by the way seemingly unrelated thoughts, joined together in Proverbs, have proven to be deeply related in real life. I read 17.6, “Children’s children are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their father“. I understood both statements, but the first one is about children and their grandfather, while the second is about children and their father. One Saturday afternoon, however, I was with my wife watching a cricket match in which two of our sons were playing. Our eldest son’s wife and two little daughters were sitting with us on a rug on the grass. Like any devoted grandfather I was enjoying playing with my granddaughters. I was basking in the truth of the first part of 17.6. At one point I was trying to gain the attention of the youngest of my two granddaughters, Rachel, who was about three years of age at the time. Her attention, however was on what was happening on the pitch. She pointed out to the pitch and said, “That’s my daddy”, and I was seeing the truth of the second part of 17.6. And both parts of the verse had been joined together. At that time I was in the habit of speaking on a Proverb at the Sunday services in our little church. Naturally I spoke on 17.6 the next day.

f. One of the things that impresses me most is the number of subjects covered by the book of Proverbs. On one occasion I was preparing for a series of Bible studies I was due to take on Proverbs and I wrote down, in alphabetical order, a number of subject headings, with references made to them in the book of Proverbs. It amazed me that I ended up with more than one hundred and twenty subject headings. Needless to say I did not speak on all of them, but the exercise certainly highlighted, for me, the wealth of material the book contains.

(ii) How To Learn The Lessons

Preparing for the series of studies made me ask myself what the best way would be of taking advantage of this treasury of wisdom.

Let me say a few things that will, perhaps, place the study of the book of Proverbs into context in relation to other activities in the normal, healthy Christian life.

Undoubtedly the starting point in becoming a Christian, and in making yourself a candidate for acquiring wisdom is to get to know The One who imparts the wisdom, The Lord Himself. Proverbs makes this clear in 9.10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding".

Coming to know the Lord by confessing your sin to God, receiving His forgiveness, and placing your faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, [by accepting Him as your Saviour and the Lord of your life], brings you to the beginning of a new life. It not only settles your destiny for eternity, but it places you on the threshold of a learning experience without equal.

As a born-again believer you enter into communion with God Himself, and you enjoy the fellowship and help of other believers. The Word Of God becomes your spiritual food.

Private study of the Scriptures is, of-course, only part of a healthy Christian's program of activities. A full program includes fellowship with other believers, as a member of a local church; regular times of personal prayer; regular times of communal prayer with other believers; regular times of Bible study, both privately, and with other believers; as well as involvement in activities that help in developing personal gifts. In all of this, however, the Scriptures play an exceedingly important role, being the believer's rule for faith and practice.

Systematic study of the Scriptures in general will, in my opinion, be greatly enhanced by an in-depth study of the book of Proverbs.

With regard to how to grow in wisdom, and make use of the treasury of wisdom contained in the book of Proverbs, I would offer a few simple suggestions:-

(i) Read and re-read the book. I can think of no better way to do this than the method I have been using for years, namely, read a chapter a day as the first thing you read each morning.

Take the chapter that is the day's date. You may wish to read each chapter the same number of times. If so, when you come to the last day of any month that has less than thirty one days, read the remaining chapters on this day. Apart from February this will only mean reading one extra chapter on these days.

- * As you read the book, jot down references under subject headings.

- * Take time to study the sayings listed under the subject headings.

This booklet has been prepared to assist you in following these suggestions.

In Part 2 I have set out, in alphabetical order, a selection of subjects with references to them in the book of Proverbs. In each case I have included comments on the references.

CHAPTER 4

GETTING THE BALANCE

Lifetime learning is not a new concept. Some people say we learn something new every day, and I think there would be few people who would seriously think that they have nothing more to learn.

This modern world, with its rapid rate of change, and its fast rate of development, has placed us in a position where we need to be constantly learning, if we are to stay abreast of things.

Most professional associations have introduced some form of Continuing Professional Development requirements for their members. These provisions require practising members to devote a stated number of hours, in a given period, to the study of new developments within their profession.

More and more people are devoting increasing amounts of time to study these days. More and more job advertisements require applicants to have a degree. In some instances this may have resulted in people spending more time than is really necessary on academic study. To be admitted to Professional Associate level in the Institution that governed the profession I worked in for over forty years required me to pass examinations to the equivalent of a Bachelors degree. However, some years after qualifying, I was working for a Government Department, and as part of the monthly round of events, I was reading the gazette that advertised jobs in the Department. I noticed several positions that had the same level of classification as the job I was doing, and, to my amazement, the academic level required was a PH D. I could scarcely believe it. It made, me think I should be paid more!

The access to higher levels of education for almost everyone, and the requirement of higher and higher levels of academic qualification for many jobs has led to some people spending extraordinary portions of their lives in pursuit of one degree after another.

This attitude has invaded Christian circles too. Where a minister, in the past, would have completed his studies to enter his calling, and then been content to get on with his work, there seems to be pressure these days to return to studies until a Doctorate is obtained.

In saying this I do not in any way mean to decry study. To write a booklet advocating lifetime learning and belittle serious study of any sort would be foolish.

What I am working towards saying is that, in pursuing lifetime learning, we need to be careful to get a balance of head knowledge, heart understanding, and hands-on experience. In our profession we used to say, "There is no substitute for experience".

Apparently, there is a brand of 'righteousness', and a brand of 'wisdom' that does harm to people, for Ecclesiastes 7.16 says, "Do not be overly righteous, nor be overly wise; why should you destroy yourself" ? The Amplified Version suggests this verse is saying "Be not morbidly, exacting, and externally righteous overmuch, neither strive to make yourself pretentiously appear overwise; why should you get puffed up and destroy yourself with presumptuous self-sufficiency"?

Solomon said, as it is recorded in Ecclesiastes 12.12, "... Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh".

Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them". (John 13.17). In other words, head knowledge needs to be translated into practical action before the potential blessing it can bring is realised.

Agur did not have much in the way of formal education, but he was an exceedingly wise man. He says of himself in Proverbs chapter 30 verses 2 to 3, "Surely I am more stupid than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One". Yet he was inspired to write a chapter of Scripture. When you read chapter 30 of Proverbs you discover that he was sound in his theology, and sensible in his philosophy for life. He was balanced in what he knew and in how he applied it. We do not know who Ithiel and Ucal were (Proverbs 30.1), but they obviously thought Agur was worth listening to.

In all of this, what I am saying is, pursue a path of learning for your entire lifetime, and make it a path that leads you to true wisdom. Let the study of the book of Proverbs be a part of your study program, and work your way through it in the way I have suggested in this booklet. If you do, I trust you will find the thoughts in these chapters, and in the list of subjects in Part 2, to be of help to you.

CHAPTER FIVE

TAKING IT FURTHER

When you have been following the simple routine of study I recommend in Part 3 for a while, I feel sure you will be so pleased with your progress in gaining wisdom that you will wish to explore the whole Canon of Scripture.

God intends us to be continually growing in wisdom and immersing ourselves in His truth. This is confirmed in both the Old and the New Testaments of the Word of God.

In verse 2 of Psalm 1 the truly blessed man is described as one whose “delight is in the law of the Lord”. It says he “meditates day and night” in God’s law.

In Deuteronomy chapter 6 we read some of God’s instructions for the nation of Israel:-

- * In verse 1 we are told they were to be “taught” God’s “commandments, statutes and judgements”. They were not just for head knowledge but were to be ‘observed’.
- * In verse 2 we are told that God intended this to be part of their manner of life from generation to generation, for He said it is for “you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life”. And it was for their benefit, for it was, “that your days may be prolonged”.
- * In verses 6 and 7 we find that this lifetime learning and applying of truth was to be a key feature of family life, for it says, “these words which I command you to

day shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up”.

- * So continuous were the learning and the reminders to be that they were told to “bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” [verses 8 and 9].

Living in this attitude of constant learning, and in constant communion with God was designed to bring the children of Israel constant blessings.

When we come to the New Testament order of things we find the Lord, in his final instructions to His disciples, setting up a system of continuous learning. He had taught His disciples over the period of His public ministry, and now, as He leaves them to return to Heaven, He tells them to go “and make disciples of all the nations”. He told them to “teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you” [Matthew 28.19 to 20],

Paul in obedience to this concept, taught Timothy and then told him, “the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also”.

As Christians we follow in a tradition where lifetime learning is supposed to be the norm, and practical application of what is learnt is the ideal.

Scripture is the measure of things for the believer. It is our rule and guide for faith and practice. As it says in 2nd Timothy chapter 3, verses 16 to 17, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work”.

As in Old Testament times the Israelites tested things by the Scriptures [Isaiah 8.20, "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them"], so in New Testament times the Bereans tested what Paul and Silas said by reference to the Scriptures [Acts 17.11. "they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"].

If we are to expand our wisdom to make ourselves useful in being obedient to Christ's command to make disciples for Him, we will want to take things further than just the study of Proverbs. We will want to systematically study all the Scriptures.

Paul advised Timothy, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" [2 Timothy 2.15].

Commencing a study of all of Scripture can be as simple as the routine of studying Proverbs. A chapter a day is a start.

All sorts of plans and systems are available for reading right through the Bible in one year, or studying subjects through Scripture, or studying the different divisions of Scripture. Many Bible study groups exist and schools and colleges do correspondence and attendance courses. No end of opportunities exist.

As you grow in wisdom, and profit from it, you will be encouraged to take things further, continuously progressing through lifetime learning.

LIFETIME LEARNING

PART TWO

SUBJECTS AND COMMENTS

[101 Things To Consider]

Notes:

- [i] Unless otherwise noted, references are to chapters and verses in the book of Proverbs.

- [ii] Throughout this booklet quotations have been from the New King James Version. Comments in this Part of the booklet are based on the New King James wording.

- [iii] Subjects have been arranged alphabetically and references have been grouped in chronological order for each comment.

- [iv] The list of subjects and the sets of references are by no means exhaustive. I have selected those that appeal to me. They will give you a basic set of references and give you a start in preparing your own list.

- [v] Much more could be said on each of these subjects if we were to include comments on what other scriptures say about them, but the booklet would, then, lose its focus. The focus is on the book of Proverbs. The intention is to encourage study of that book. Each of us then, in our own way, can add to what Proverbs says on the various subjects, by studying what other Scriptures say.
- [vi] My comments are not limited to what the references say. I have included thoughts that occur to me when I read the references. Most of my comments are very straightforward and simple.
- [vii] Some references are used under more than one subject.

SUBJECT 1 - ABOMINATIONS

When mention is made of 'abominations', my mind turns to things like murder, homosexuality or oppression of the poor. It is interesting to see the range of items classified as abominations in the book of Proverbs.

3.32, 11.20 - Perverse people are an abomination to God. There are many forms of perversity. Avoid them!

6.16 -19 - Five things and two people are abominations to God. Each of the two people displays at least one, and probably several, of the five things.

8.7, 15.9, 15.26, 16.12 - Wickedness is an abomination to God, as are the ways and the thoughts of the wicked. Rulers come in for special mention in this regard.

11.1, 20.10, 20.23 - Dishonest scales are an abomination to God. Always give fair measure!

12.22 - Lying lips are an abomination to God. Tell the truth!

13.19 - To a fool, it is an abomination to leave his evil ways.

15.8, 21.27 - If we are wicked, even our sacrificial offerings to God are an abomination to Him. Never substitute sacrifice for obedience!

16.5 - Pride of heart is an abomination to God.

17.15 - Anyone who justifies the wicked, or condemns the just, is an abomination to God.

24.9 - A scoffer is an abomination to men.

26.24-26 - A person motivated by hate has abominations in his heart.

28.9 - The prayer of the rebel is an abomination to God.

28.27 - The unjust and the righteous are an abomination to each other.

SUBJECT 2 - ACCUSATIONS

10.18, 14.5, 19.5, 25.8-10, 30.10 - If you are making an accusation be sure of your facts. Otherwise the action could backfire.

SUBJECT 3 - ALCOHOL

20.1 - If you let it lead you astray you are not wise.

21.17, 23.19-21 - It can devour your capital.

23.29-35 - It can bring emotional, physical, psychological and personality problems as well as addiction and problems with your relationships.

31.4-7 - It temporarily distorts or blocks out reality, and there are few who benefit from that!

SUBJECT 4 - APPETITE

23.1-3 + 6-8 - If uncontrolled it can lead you into positions of compromise.

23.19-21 - Gluttony can bring you to poverty.

28.7 - Gluttony can bring you to shame.

SUBJECT 5 - BACKSLIDING

14.14 - Even though I have only seen one reference to backsliding in Proverbs I have included it because of its importance. We all have backsliding tendencies, as Hosea 11.7 says, "My people are bent on backsliding from Me". The believer who is living in fellowship with the Lord has his eyes on the Lord, and is blessed as a result, but the backsliders heart has his eyes on himself and his own ways and misses out on blessing as a result.

SUBJECT 6 - BENEFITS FLOWING FROM THE POSSESSION OF WISDOM

2.10-21, 3.19-26, 7.1-5, 14.16, 22.3, 27.12, 28.26 - Wisdom brings deliverance from the most common perils of life, and it brings peace as a consequence.

4.7-9 - Wisdom brings promotion, honour, grace and glory.

4.10-12 - Wisdom can bring long life and a smooth path of life.

8.12-21, 9.10-11, 15.21, 16.16 - Wisdom can bring true riches, honour and righteousness.

8.35 - Wisdom brings favour from the Lord.

15.24 - Wisdom leads to heaven itself!

24.3-7 - Wisdom brings strength and safety.

24.13-14 - Wisdom brings hope.

28.2 - Wisdom promotes and prolongs what is right.

SUBJECT 7 - BLESSINGS

3.33, 10.6, 12.2 - The blessing of the Lord is assured for the just.

10.22 - The Lord's blessing is unique. It enriches you and it has no ill effects.

SUBJECT 8 - BORROWING [AND LENDING]

I saw just one reference to borrowing in Proverbs, and only two to lending, so included both under the one heading. Even though there are few references in Proverbs, these are important subjects. They are of-course discussed more fully in other scriptures, but my concentration, in the booklet, is on Proverbs.

19.17- Lending for good reasons [for example, to help the needy], as opposed to lending for profit, is to be commended. The Lord acknowledges this, repaying the lender.

22.7 - Avoid borrowing if you can. The lender has the upper hand.

SUBJECT 9 - BRIBES [Sometimes referred to as 'gifts' or 'presents']

6.35 - Read 6.28-35 for the context [adultery]. A bribe will not appease jealousy in this case.

15.27 - Avoid bribery from every angle.

17.8, 17.23, 29.4 - Bribes corrupt the mind and pervert justice.

18.16 - Bribes open doors.

19.6, 28.21 - Most people are influenced by bribes.

21.14 - Bribes are effective in many circumstances [but this does not imply that they are recommended].

SUBJECT 10 - CAUTION

5.8 - Keep well clear of trouble. There are no prizes for being close to it.

SUBJECT 11 - CHARACTER JUDGEMENT

Proverbs gives information that assists us in recognising certain types of people, for example:-

2.11-15 - The evil man [see also 1.10-19 and 6.12-16].

2.16-19 - The immoral woman [see also 5.36 and 7.10-27]

9.13-18 - The foolish woman.

23.29-35 - The alcoholic.

24.30-34 - The layabout.

31.10-31 - The ideal wife.

Look for others, there are many more!

SUBJECT 12 - CHILDREN

10.1, 13.1, 15.20, 17.25, 19.13, 23.15-28, 27.11, 28.7, 29.3 - A foolish child brings sorrow to its parents but a wise one brings joy.

17.6 - I commented on this verse in Chapter 3 [e] of Part 1. Children can bring joy to their parents and their grandparents.

19.26, 28.24, 30.17 - Children who mistreat their parents are deservedly despised.

20.11 - Actions speak louder than words, even in the case of children.

22.15, 23.13-14 - Children need correction and training. Failing to give it invites disaster [with eternal implications].

SUBJECT 13 - CONDENSED DESCRIPTIONS

3.13-18 - Proverbs gives some marvellous condensed descriptions, like:-

6.16-19 - The condition of the man who finds wisdom.

7.6-27 - The seduction of a young man, and its results.

9.1-6 - The offer of wisdom.

26.1-12 - The fool and his ways.

SUBJECT 14 - CONTRADICTIONS

3.3-4 - Truth on its own and judgement according to truth can be unmerciful - but

mercy and truth can be combined by grace. God has done it and He wishes us to do it too.

26.4-5 - These instructions seem to contradict each other, but, when you look closely, they each apply to differing circumstances [refer to chapter 3, d]. Many such things exist.

SUBJECT 15 - CORRECTION

3.11-12 - We should welcome correction from the Lord. It is an indication of His love and care for us.

12.1, 15.5, 15.10, 15.31-32 - We should welcome needed correction from anyone.

16.22, 17.10 - Trying to correct foolish people can be a waste of time.

19.18, 29.15, 29.17 - Correction of children is a critically important parental duty.

19.25, 29.19 - Correction needs to be appropriate to the circumstances.

25.12 - Wise people welcome correction.

SUBJECT 16 - COUNSEL

11.14, 15.22 - The value of good counsel, and counsel drawn from many sources, cannot be overestimated.

12.20 - Counsel that leads to peace is to be favoured.

20.5 - Exercise patience in seeking counsel.

20.18 - All planning should be preceded by the taking of counsel. The more serious the action planned, the wiser the counsel that is required.

SUBJECT 17 - CREATION

3.19-20, 8.22-31 - The Lord possessed wisdom before the earth was created. This passage takes you from that state through to the creation of the world and the placing of mankind on it.

SUBJECT 18 - CUNNING

9.13-18 - People who seek to lead others astray are often cunning in their presentation of things.

11.1, 20.14 - Much cunning is used in buying and selling.

21.14 - People often use cunning methods to achieve their ends.

21.30-31 - No cunning works against God.

SUBJECT 19 - CURSES

3.33 - Few things could be further apart than to be under God's curse, or to be the recipient of His blessings. Which it is to be is determined by God and the individual. God never changes and He is always right.

11.26, 24.24, 27.14, 28.27, 30.10 - What we say and do influences people's reactions to us.

20.20 - How you treat your parents helps determine your own fate.

26.2 - Every curse has a cause.

SUBJECT 20 - DECEIT

14.8 - Don't deceive yourself and try to avoid being deceived.

20.17, 21.6 - Deceit brings no lasting benefit. On the contrary, the ultimate outcome is bad.

27.6, 31.30 - Many things are deceitful, even inconsistent favour or charm.

SUBJECT 21 - DECISION MAKING

Successful living depends on good decision making. Make good decisions, then follow through on your chosen line of action. For example:

1.8, 2.1-9, 6.1-5, 14.7, 22.17-21 - Decide on a wise course of action [learning] and follow through.

1.10, 1.15, 4.14-17, 4.24-27, 5.8 - Reject foolish invitations, and stick to your decisions.

SUBJECT 22 - DEPRESSION

12.25, 13.12 - There are many causes of depression, but some are relatively easily dealt with.

17.22, 18.14 - Some causes require longer term help.

SUBJECT 23 - DESIRE

2.3-5, 3.13-18, 8.1-11 - Fulfilling the desire for true wisdom is of supreme importance [see 4.7].

6.23-25, 24.1-2 - Don't feed your heart with evil desires.

13.4 - You need to work to be able to fulfil your desires.

21.10 - Your nature determines your desires.

23.3, 23.6 - Desires often need to be curbed.

SUBJECT 24 - DIFFICULT PEOPLE

6.12-15 - This is a key scripture for helping to recognise “worthless” people.

6.16-19 - False witnesses and troublemakers are dangerous people.

9.7-9 - Scoffers are difficult to deal with [refer to comments under “Scoffers”].

16.28, 17.4, 17.9 - People who misuse their tongue cause endless trouble.

18.9, 19.24 - Slothful people are a burden.

18.13 - Hasty people cause problems.

19.19 - Quick tempered people repeatedly cause trouble.

30.20 - Immoral people often lack understanding.

30.21-23 - Agur groups four troublesome people together in these verses.

SUBJECT 25 - DILIGENCE

4.23, 23.12 - Diligence is a great asset. Not least when it is employed to keep your heart.

8.17, 10.4, 12.24, 12.27, 13.4, 22.5 - Diligence brings many blessings.

27.23 - 24 - Diligence is a necessity in a changing world.

SUBJECT 26 - EFFORT

2.1-5, 4.7, 8.12-17, 8.32-35 - Few things worth having are obtained without effort.

SUBJECT 27 - ENTICEMENT

1.10-19, 16.29-30 - Wickedness has its salespeople. They are to be resisted at all costs.

6.23-26 - Obedience to God's commandments keeps you from yielding to enticement.

SUBJECT 28 - FAIRNESS

3.27 - 35 - There are many forms of unfairness to be avoided. Being fair to everyone is the second greatest commandment in action [Refer to Matt 22.35-40].

17.15, 17.26, 18.5, 20.10 - Unfairness should never be applauded or supported.

18.17 - Let everyone have their say when testing fairness.

22.28, 23.10-11 - Do not tamper with long established rights and privileges.

28.21 - Unfair people are easily influenced.

SUBJECT 29 - FAITHFULNESS

11.13 - A faithful person can be trusted to keep secrets.

25.13, 27.6 - Faithfulness brings a blessing, even in rebuke.

25.19 - Unfaithfulness brings pain.

27.10 - Be faithful to family, friends and family friends.

SUBJECT 30 - FALSE WITNESS

6.16 - 19 - A false witness is included in the list of seven things the Lord hates.

12.17, 14.5, 14.25, 19.5 - False witnesses are ultimately on the wrong side. They are on the side opposed to God. As such their judgement is certain.

19.28 - False witnesses naturally seek to pervert justice.

24.28-29, 25.18 - Don't be a false witness.

SUBJECT 31 - FAVOUR

3.3-4 - It is possible in some cases, to find favour with God and man at the same time.

8.33-35, 12.2 - Wisdom brings God's favour.

11.27, 13.15, 14.9, 14.35, 28.23 - Favour comes for a reason.

16.15, 19.12, 22.1 - Favour is worth having.

18.22 - God favours marriage.

29.26 - God's favour is to be preferred to man's.

SUBJECT 32 - FEAR

1.24-33 - Ultimately those who reject wisdom will end up in a state of terror, too late to avail themselves of its benefits.

3.19-26 - Wisdom allays fear.

10.24 - All people have fears. The godly can be [now], and will be [later], delivered from fear [Ps 34.4, Rev 21.4], but the worst fears of the ungodly will ultimately be realised.

14.16 - Some fears are a blessing in disguise, leading you away from evil and its consequences.

14.21-22 - Fear in the form of respect and submission to authority is a healthy attitude.

29.25 - Trust in, and committal to, God delivers from unhealthy fears.

SUBJECT 33 - FEAR OF GOD

1.7, 9.10, 15.33 - True knowledge and wisdom begin with the fear of God.

3.7, 8.13, 16.6, 24.21-22 - True fear of God leads you to love what God loves, and hate what God hates.

9.11, 10.27, 13.13, 14.2, 14.26-27, 19.23, 22.4, 31.30-31 - Fear of God produces results and provides benefits.

15.16 - The fear of the Lord is worth more than this present world can offer.

SUBJECT 34 - FLATTERY

2.16, 6.24, 7.5, 29.5 - Flattery is often used to lead people astray.

20.19, 26.28 - Be cautious of anyone who uses flattery.

28.23 - Never use flattery.

SUBJECT 35- FOOLISH PEOPLE

1.7, 15.5, 17.24, 18.2 - Foolish people don't wish to learn.

1.22, 10.23, 13.19, 15.2, 15.14, 26.11, 27.22 - Foolish people love their foolish ways.

1.32, 3.35, 10.8, 10.21, 18.7 - Foolish people reap a bitter harvest.

10.18, 12.16, 12.23, 13.16, 14.33, 29.11 - Foolish people are known by their words and actions.

12.15 - Foolish people think they are right even when advised otherwise.

13.20, 14.7 - Avoid the company of foolish people.

14.9 - Foolish people make light of serious matters.

16.22, 23.9 - it can be a waste of time trying to teach a foolish person.

17.10, 29.9 - Correcting a foolish person is difficult.

17.12, 18.6 - Foolish people are dangerous.

17.21, 17.25, 19.1 - Foolish people are a burden, to themselves and others.

17.28 - Under certain circumstances even foolish people can appear to be wise.

19.10, 21.20, 26.1, 26.8-9 - Foolish people cannot handle wealth, knowledge or honour.

26.3-7 - Great wisdom is needed for dealing with foolish people.

26.12 - Pride and hastiness can do more damage than foolishness.

27.3 - The anger of a foolish person is hard to take.

28.26 - People who trust their own heart are foolish.

SUBJECT 36 - FRIVOLITY

12.11 - Frivolity is for the foolish.

SUBJECT 37 - GENEROSITY

11.24-26, 19.17, 22.9, 28.27 - The generous reap some amazing gains.

31.20 - Generosity is a lovely characteristic in a goodly woman.

SUBJECT 38 - GIVING

3.9-10 - Your giving to God is the most important giving you will ever do. He is no ones debtor.

19.17 - Your second most important giving is to those who cannot repay you. God takes account of it.

SUBJECT 39 - GOD

2.6-8, 3.19-20, 8.22 - God is the possessor and giver of wisdom. He acts in wisdom.

3.3-4 - We should seek His favour.

3.5-6 - We should trust Him totally.

3.9-10 - We should honour Him above all else.

3.11-12 - He loves and corrects His children.

3.33 - We should seek His blessing and avoid His curse.

14.26, 18.10, 19.23 - He is a sure refuge.

16.1, 16.3, 16.7, 16.33 - He guides His people in thought, word and deed.

16.4, 19.21, 21.1, 21.2, 21.30-31, 22.2, 22.12 - He is Lord of all and judge of all.

19.17, 21.3 - He rewards those who do good.

30.4 - He is beyond knowledge, yet He has condescended to reveal much about Himself.

30.5-6 - He has given us His Word. Treasure it. Obey it. Do not tamper with it.

SUBJECT 40 - GOD'S OVERSEEING AND PROVIDENCE

5.21, 15.3 - God sees everything that happens everywhere, at all times [16.1-5].

15.11, 17.3, 21.2 - God knows everything that happens, even in our hearts and minds [16.1-5].

15.25, 16.7, 21.12, 22.12, 22.22-23, 23.10-11 - God acts on the basis of what He sees and knows [16.1-5].

16.9, 16.33, 19.21, 20.24, 21.1, 21.30-31, 29.26 - God overrules at will.

18.10 - We are safe under God's protection.

20.12, 22.2 - God gives us our abilities and has control over all circumstances.

20.22 - Be patient. God will take up your case.

SUBJECT 41 - GOING GUARANTOR

6.1-5, 11.15, 17.18, 22.26-27 - Going guarantor, even for a friend, but especially for a stranger, is foolish. Don't do it. If you have already done it, do your utmost to be released from it.

20.16, 27.13 - You could lose the coat off your back [or your bed from under you].

SUBJECT 42 - GOODNESS

11.27, 13.22, 14.22 - Genuine good-hearted people generally reap a good reward, and affect other people for the better.

SUBJECT 43 - GOOD NEWS

12.25, 13.12, 15.30, 25.25 - Good news does the heart good. It reinvigorates you every way.

SUBJECT 44 - HAPPINESS AND HEALTH

3.7-8, 3.13-18, 4.20-22, 16.20, 28.14, 29.18 - The fear of the Lord, and the wisdom it brings, are keys to happiness and health.

12.18, 16.24 - Use of the tongue affects health.

14.21 - Attitude of heart affects health.

SUBJECT 45 - HASTINESS

7.22-23 - Many have entered hastily into a sexual experience to their peril.

14.29 - Quick tempered people are inclined to make foolish moves hastily.

18.13, 29.20 - Being hasty with comments or advice [before you know all the facts] can make you look foolish.

19.2, 21.5 - Don't do anything hastily.

20.21, 28.20, 28.22 - Love of money can lead to hasty, ill-considered action.

20.25 - Haste in the spiritual/devotional realm can cause problems.

25.8-10 - Haste in persuing your rights can lead to disaster.

SUBJECT 46 - HATRED

1.22, 1.29-32, 5.11-13, 8.36 - Foolish people hate knowledge, wisdom and instruction, and suffer the consequences.

6.16-19, 8.13, 11.15, 13.5, 15.27, 28.16 - It is good to hate what God hates, and things that bring you harm.

9.8, 12.1, 15.10 - Scoffers hate you for trying to set them right, and again, they suffer the consequences.

13.24, 29.24 - True love, and effective hatred, show through in what a person does, or fails to do.

14.17, 25.17 - People are hated for reasons.

14.20, 19.7 - Sometimes the reason why a person is hated is something that person can do nothing about.

26.24-26 - People sometimes try to disguise hatred, but it usually shows through.

26.28, 29.10 - Hatred is usually accompanied by other undesirable characteristics.

SUBJECT 47 - HEART (THE)

4.20-23, 6.25, 17.20, 18.15, 27.19 - Your condition of heart determines the direction of your life.

12.8, 16.21 - Your condition of heart determines how others react to you.

14.10, 14.30, 15.13-15 - You suffer or benefit from the condition of your heart.

14.33 - The condition of the heart of a foolish person is usually exposed.

16.1, 16.9 - You are responsible for preparing your own heart, but God can overrule in the outworking of things.

20.27 - God knows our hearts.

20.30, 23.15-18 - Hearts can be changed, sometimes by instruction, and sometimes by just punishment.

24.1-2 - Avoid the company of people whose condition of heart is not right.

SUBJECT 48 - HONESTY AND INTEGRITY

11.1, 16.11, 20.23 - Honest in business pleases God.

11.3, 20.7 - Integrity guides a person correctly and passes a blessing to descendants.

19.1, 22.1, 28.6 - Integrity does not depend on wealth, and it is of more value than riches.

20.6 - People of integrity are hard to find.

SUBJECT 49 - HUMAN JUDGEMENT

1.24-26 - Human judgement often runs contrary to wisdom.

11.14, 27.9 - Seek advice to assist you in making a judgement. The wider the advice, and the closer the friend who gives it, the better.

12.15, 14.12 - The wiser the person the better the judgement, but always remember that your judgement could be wrong.

20.5 - It can be difficult to draw advice out of some people

SUBJECT 50 - HUMILITY

11.2, 12.9 - Humility is a component of wisdom.

17.19 - Lack of humility invites destruction.

20.6 - We all have a tendency to portray ourselves in a good light.

25.6-7 - It is wise to underestimate your status.

30.1-3 - Agur was a wise man. He had a humble opinion of himself.

SUBJECT 51 - HUNGER

6.30 - Hunger can lead people to do things they would not do under normal circumstances.

19.15 - Lazy people can end up suffering from hunger.

25.21-22 - Do not use hunger as a weapon against your enemies, but rather give them food.

27.7 - Hunger can make you appreciate meagre and even poor tasting supplies.

SUBJECT 52 - IMMORALITY AND INFIDELITY

5.3-14, 6.23-35, Ch 7, 22.14, 23.26-28, 31.3 - Immorality has ruined many lives.

5.15-23 - Be faithful to your partner. It makes sense.

SUBJECT 53 - ISOLATION

18.1 - The Lord did not intend us to isolate ourselves.

SUBJECT 54 - JEALOUSY

6.34, 27.4 - Jealousy is a very strong emotion.

SUBJECT 55 - JUSTICE

1.3, 8.15, 24.23-25, 28.5 - True justice is only understood by the wise.

21.15 - The wise delight in justice.

25.2 - Rulers should be diligent to ensure that justice is done.

25.4-5 - The wicked are a barrier to justice.

28.4 - If you wish to support justice, obey God's law and man's law.

28.7 - Lawbreakers bring shame to themselves and their family.

28.10 - Ultimately we will experience justice - at God's hands, if not sooner [refer to 16,4].

SUBJECT 56 - KINDNESS

19.22 - Kindness is a highly desirable characteristic.

20.28, 29.21 - People respond well to kindness.

21.13, 24.17-18, 25.21-22 - People tend to treat you the way you treat them and others. God will treat you that way too.

24.11-12 - We all have an obligation to do our utmost to help others less fortunate, or those in peril.

31.26 - A good woman shows kindness.

SUBJECT 57 - LAUGHTER

1.26 - God will have the last laugh. We need never fear God's smile, but His laughter is terrifying.

14.13 - Laughter is often shallow.

SUBJECT 58 - LAZINESS

6.6-11, 10.4-5, 15.19, 19.15, 20.4, 24.30-34 - If you lack self-motivation you are heading for trouble.

10.26 - If you are depending on a lazy person you are heading for trouble.

12.24 - Force is the only answer for the inherently lazy.

12.27, 18.9 - The lazy man is a waster.

13.4, 19.24, 21.25-26 - It is not that the lazy person does not want anything, but that he or she will not make the effort to earn what they want.

22.13, 26.13-16 - Any excuse is good enough for the lazy man. He even thinks he is wise.

SUBJECT 59 - LEARNING FROM THE ANIMALS

God has given instinctive wisdom to animals and we can learn from them, for example, the value of:

6.6-8, 30.25 - Industry from the ant.

30.26 - Security from the rock badger.

30.27 - Order from the locusts.

30.28 - Skill from the spider.

SUBJECT 60 - MEMORISING THE WORD OF GOD

2.1, 2.10-11, 4.4, 7.3, 22.17-21 - It is good to memorise what you are taught. If your heart retains it, it will come to the forefront of your mind when you need it.

SUBJECT 61 - MERCY

3.3, 14.22, 16.6 - Mercy is a good characteristic.

11.17, 21.21 - It is good for your own health and well-being to be merciful.

14.31 - A person who honours God is merciful.

20.28 - Mercy in a ruler promotes his rule.

SUBJECT 62 - MISTAKES

1.10 - To become a lawbreaker is a mistake.

1.22 - To reject wisdom is a mistake.

2.16 - To become sexually immoral is a mistake.

16.25 - If you try to work things out for yourself without advice you will not always be right. In particular, if you try to work out a way of salvation, ignoring God's plan, you will most definitely be wrong.

18.1 - We were not meant to be hermits. To be one is foolish. We are social beings by nature and intent.

19.3 - We are born with a fallen nature. By that nature we oppose God. Only God, through the re-birth of the Spirit, by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, holds the answer to our salvation and the setting right of our hearts.

20.1 - To become a drunkard is a serious mistake.

20.16 - To become a guarantor is a mistake.

21.16 - To backslide, or leave the path of wisdom is a mistake.

22.16 - To be lover of money is a mistake.

25.20, 27.14 - To be insensitive is a mistake.

Ch 26 - Here is a whole bundle of mistakes. I can see about 20. How many can you see? How many have you made? [Recently?].

27.8 - There is a right place for you. When you find it, stay in it [for as long as it continues to be the right place!].

27.20 - It is a mistake to always be looking for more.

28.10 - Crime does not pay [ultimately].

28.13-14 - It is a mistake to carry your sins. God has the answer [forgiveness through Jesus Christ and His redemptive work].

29.24 - It is a mistake to tie yourself with a wrongdoer.

[*** This subject could have been extended considerably].

SUBJECT 63 - MODERATION

23.1-3, 23.4-6, 25.16, 25.17 - Be moderate in your appetites and your pursuits.

SUBJECT 64 - MYSTERIES

5.6 - You cannot predict what unstable people will do.

20.5, 25.3 - You cannot tell what people are thinking, especially rulers.

24.21-22 - You cannot tell what trouble radicals will get you into - both with God and with human authorities.

SUBJECT 65 - NOT NEGOTIABLE

30.5-6 - The word of God and the truth of God is not negotiable. Take God's word as it is. Do not add to it; do not take away from it; alter it in no way. Above all, obey it.

SUBJECT 66 - OBEDIENCE

5.11-14, 10.17, 19.16 - The only way to benefit from correct teaching is to obey it.

25.12 - Be thankful for correct teaching.

SUBJECT 67 - OLD AGE

16.31, 20.29 - To reach old age is a gift from God, but it is only a blessing if it is lived in the paths of righteousness.

17.6 - Grandchildren are a major blessing.

SUBJECT 68 - OPPRESSION

3.31 - The world is full of oppression. It is evil. Never support an oppressor and never adopt any of his ways.

14.31 - Oppression is an insult to God, who made the person you are oppressing. God loves mercy.

22.16, 22.22-23, 28.9 - Oppressors will ultimately reap the harvest they deserve.

28.3 - Oppressing those who are in the same circumstances as yourself has no redeeming features.

28.16 - Poor rulers permit oppression to increase.

SUBJECT 69 - PASSING ON YOUR FAITH

1.8-9, 3.1-2, 4.1-9, [note 4.1, 10 and 20], 5.1-2, 6.20-23, 31.1 - Parents should teach their children the ways of God [which they can only effectively do if they walk these ways themselves].

22.17-21, 23.15-25 - Teach the truth by spoken word, by written word and by example.

SUBJECT 70 - PATIENCE

18.13, 19.2, 20.22, 21.5, 25.8-10, 28.20 - Let patience govern what you say and do and let it determine how you commit yourself to God.

SUBJECT 71 - POVERTY

6.6-11, 10.4, 24.30-34 - Laziness leads to poverty.

10.15 - Poverty destroys people.

11.24 - Stinginess leads to poverty.

13.8 - People do not try to get a ransom from the poor.

13.18 - People who reject advice or refuse to be corrected, can come to poverty.

13.23, 22.22 - People often take advantage of the poor, robbing them of the resources they have.

14.20, 19.4, 19.7 - Poverty does not attract friends.

14.21, 19.17, 22.9, 28.27 - Showing mercy on the poor does you good as well as them, and God rewards you.

14.31, 17.5, 21.13, 22.16, 29.7, 29.14, 30.14, 31.9 - Your attitude to the poor is linked to your attitude to God. God takes note of it and rewards you accordingly.

18.23, 22.7 - Poverty affects a persons approach and relationship to other people.

19.1, 19.22, 28.6, 28.11 - The poor can show a good example in matters not determined by wealth.

22.2, 29.13 - Many things link rich and poor [and others].

28.3 - Poverty does not always give people a soft spot for others in poverty.

28.8 - God can providentially direct help to the poor.

28.19 - Frivolity leads to poverty.

28.22 - Greed can lead to poverty.

30.8 - The wise do not wish to be either rich or poor but rather to live at a level God determines to be appropriate to them.

SUBJECT 72 - PRAYER

15.8, 15.29, 28.9 - Not all sacrifices are acceptable to God, nor are all prayers. Doing the right thing is better than sacrifice [21.3].

30.7-9 - We have much to learn from the prayers of the wise.

SUBJECT 73 - PRESUMPTION

27.1 - We do not know what the future holds so we should not be presumptuous.

SUBJECT 74 - PRIDE

6.16-19 - Pride can show on a person's face.

11.2, 16.5, 16.18-19, 18.12, 27.2, 29.23 - Pride brings shame, strife and ultimately judgement. Humility is the best course to follow.

14.3 - Pride shows in a person's speech.

21.4, 28.25 - Pride gets into a person's heart.

25.6-7, 25.8-10 - Do not form nor act upon inflated views of your own importance, or your rights. You may get a shock [to say nothing of being disgraced]. There is a better way.

25.27 - Pride shows in a person's desires and ambitions.

30.32-33 - If you have started on a path of self exaltation and you realise it, stop, and change direction.

SUBJECT 75 - PROPHECY

30.11-14 - It might seem strange to place any portion of the book of Proverbs into the category of Prophecy, but this portion seems to me to be linked with descriptions of the last generation before Christ returns [compare with Matthew 24.34, 2nd Timothy 3.1 to 5 etc].

SUBJECT 76- REBUKE

9.7, 9.8, 24.23-25 - Be careful who you rebuke and how you rebuke them.

13.1, 13.18 - Some people pay no attention to rebuke, but wise people do!

27.5, 28.23 - Rebuke can be a good policy, where it is deserved.

29.1 - If you need to be rebuked often for something, there must be good reason for it and you do well to heed the rebuke.

SUBJECT 77 - REPUTATION

20.11, 31.31 - Your actions will ultimately determine your reputation.

22.1 - A good reputation is better than money.

27.2, 27.21, 31.28 - Don't praise yourself. Praise from others will help establish your reputation.

SUBJECT 78 - REWARDS WISDOM BRINGS

1.8-9, 1.33, 2.10-12, 2.16, 3.1-8, 3.13-18, 3.21-26, 4.5-13, 4.18, 4.20-22, 5.1-13, 7.4-5, 8.1-11, 8.32-36, 9.10-12, 13.14, 14.18, 17.2, 19.8 etc. - The rewards of following wisdom are almost limitless.

SUBJECT 79 - RICHES

3.13-16, 8.18, 14.24, 22.4, 24.3-4 - Real riches come by wisdom.

10.4, 27.23-24 - Diligence facilitates the gathering of riches and the keeping of them.

10.15, 11.4, 11.28, 18.11 - Rich people tend to depend on their riches but ultimately earthly riches do not provide a refuge.

13.7 - Riches can be empty.

13.8 - A persons riches may be demanded to save his or her life.

13.11 - Riches gained dishonestly seldom last.

14.20, 19.4 - Riches make a difference to the number of people you attract.

18.23 - Rich people are often rough in their approach to others.

19.14 - Riches are usually passed on from one generation to another.

22.1 - A good reputation is better than riches.

22.2 - God made the rich and the poor.

22.7 - Riches bring privileges and responsibilities.

23.4-5 - Do not devote undue time and effort to gaining riches. They don't last.

28.11 - Riches give people an inflated and false view of their wisdom.

28.20 - Don't try to get rich quickly.

30.7-9 - It is good to be neither rich nor poor.

SUBJECT 80 - RIGHTEOUSNESS

2.6-9, 8.8, 8.18 - Righteousness is understood by the wise, for wisdom produces it.

10.6-7, 13.21, 15.6, 21.21, 29.6 - Blessing attends righteousness, and blessings are produced by the memory of the righteous.

10.16, 12.12 - Blessings attend the work of the righteous.

10.24, 13.25 - The righteous enjoy fulfilment.

10.25, 11.28, 11.30-31, 12.3, 12.7, 12.28, 13.6, 13.9, 14.11, 14.32.- The righteous endure.

11.4-6, 11.8-11, 12.6, 12.13, 12.21 - The righteous enjoy deliverance.

12.5, 13.5, 14.2, 15.28, 16.17, 20.7 - Righteousness keeps your thoughts, words and deeds right.

12.10, 29.7 - The righteous are merciful.

14.19 - Eventually the righteous will rule.

14.34, 16.12, 28.1 - Righteousness exalts, establishes and strengthens.

15.9, 15.29 - God loves the righteous and answers their prayers.

16.8 - Righteousness is of great value.

16.31 - Righteousness is a glorious thing for the aged.

25.26 - Never surrender your righteousness.

28.12, 29.2 - Times are good when the righteous rule and rejoice.

29.27 - Evil people hate the righteous.

SUBJECT 81 - RULERS

6.6-8 - If you are industrious of yourself you will not need a ruler to make your work.

8.15-16, 17.2 - Good rulers rule by wisdom.

12.24 - Diligence facilitates gaining a place of rule.

16.10, 29.14, 31.8-9 - Rulers need to have sound judgement.

16.12, 19.10, 28.15-16, 29.12 - Some rulers are inappropriate, even abominable.

16.13, 22.11 - Rulers should love truth.

16.14-15, 20.2, 23.1-3, 25.6-7, 25.15 - Be careful how you provoke a ruler and how you act in his presence.

16.32 - Those who have rule over their own spirits are better than the mighty.

20.8, 20.26, 25.2, 28.2, 29.2, 31.4-5 - Rule is necessary in this evil world. The more just the rule, the better.

21.1, 29.26 - The Lord rules over all other rulers.

22.7 - Riches bring leadership opportunities.

SUBJECT 82 - SCOFFERS

9.7-9 - Be careful how you deal with scoffers.

9.12, 19.29 - Scoffers get their dues.

13.1, 14.6, 15.12 - Scoffers ignore instruction and rebuke making their search for wisdom vain!

17.21, 29.8 - Scoffers bring sorrow to their parents and trouble to the world.

21.11 - The wise learn lessons from what happens to a scoffer.

21.24 - Scoffers are often proud and arrogant.

22.10 - Get rid of scoffers and you will have peace.

24.9 - A scoffer is an abomination.

SUBJECT 83 - SLEEP

3.21-26 - Restful sleep can be a by-product and result of wisdom.

6.1-5, 10.5 - There are times when it is not appropriate to sleep.

6.9-11, 20.13, 24.30-34 - Too much sleep is not good.

6.20-23 - The word of God leads you when you are moving, guards your thought processes when you are sleeping, and is God's communication to you when you awake.

SUBJECT 84 - SOUL WINNING

11.30 - This is an activity for the wise.

SUBJECT 85 - STRENGTH

8.12-14, 21.22, 24.5-6 - Wisdom has strength, and its strength exceeds physical power.

10.15, 11.16, 18.11 - Riches provide temporal strength, and the temporally strong hold riches.

10.29, 14.26, 18.10 - Our real strength is the Lord.

14.4 - Strength is necessary for work.

24.10 - Strength is tested by adversity.

31.3 - Strength can be wasted by immorality.

31.17, 31.25 - The strength of a good woman is notable.

SUBJECT 86 - STRIFE

3.30, 26.17 - Don't seek or start needless strife.

10.12, 15.18, 16.28, 26.20, 28.25, 29.22, 30.33 - There are many causes of strife [like hatred, anger, behind back activities, pride and other sorts of perversity].

17.1 - Strife spoils things.

17.14, 20.3 - It is easy to cause strife.

17.19, 26.21 - Troublemakers love strife.

SUBJECT 87 - TEMPER

14.17, 14.29, 16.32 - A slow temper is a sign of a wise person, but a quick temper leads to foolish actions.

15.18 - A slow tempered person helps to calm a situation.

19.19 - Bad tempered people get into trouble repeatedly.

22.24-25 - Don't keep company with bad tempered people. Their ways can be infectious.

25.28 - Lack of self-control destroys a person.

29.11 - Foolish people lack control and end up exposing all their emotions.

SUBJECT 88 - THIEVES

1.10-19 - Some thieves will stop at nothing.

6.30-33 - Under certain circumstances, stealing is less despicable than other crimes.

9.17 - Crime has attractions.

29.24 - Never take a thief as a partner.

30.9 - Poverty can induce stealing.

SUBJECT 89 - THE TONGUE AND ITS USES

[Keeping the statements of James chapter 3 in mind helps us put some of these Proverbs into context].

10.8, 10.10 - Foolish use of the tongue leads many to destruction.

10.11, 10.13-14, 10.20-21, 12.6, 12.13-14, 12.17-19, 13.2-3, 14.3, 15.2, 15.4, 15.7, 15.26, 16.21, 16.27-28, 17.20, 18.6-8, 19.5, 19.9, 20.15, 25.23, 26.18-19, 26.21-26 - Good things result from the words of the righteous, but evil often results from the words of the wicked or foolish.

10.18 - Lies come from foolish people.

10.19, 17.27-28, 21.23 - Don't talk any more than you need, then you will have less to answer for.

11.13, 18.4 - A person's character is revealed by how they use their tongue.

12.22 - God takes note of our words.

12.25 - Good news is like medicine.

15.1 - Words can inflame emotion, or quell it.

15.23, 16.24, 18.20, 24.26, 25.11 - Words used well bring joy.

16.1 - If we do our part in preparing our hearts, God will help us with our words.

16.13, 16.23, 22.11 - Truth helps good government.

17.4 - Evil people enjoy evil reports.

17.7 - Words do not sit well if they are inconsistent with a person's character or office.

17.9 - Words often convey desires or intentions that are not expressed by the words themselves.

18.21 - Amazing power is given to the tongue.

20.19, 26.28 - Avoid flatterers.

23.9 - Don't waste your words.

25.15 - Words, correctly used, can accomplish much.

26.20 - Try to reduce trouble by silencing dangerous tongues.

31.8-9, 31.26 - Try to use your tongue well.

SUBJECT 90 - TROUBLE AND TROUBLEMAKERS

11.8, 11.17, 15.6, 26.27 - Trouble comes to troublemakers.

11.29 - Avoid troubling your own household.

12.13 - Righteous people get into trouble, but also come out of it.

15.16 - Better to have a little without trouble, than a lot with it.

15.27 - Greed brings trouble.

21.23 - Your mouth can get you into trouble.

25.19 - When you are in trouble you need dependable people to help you get out of it.

SUBJECT 91 - TRUE HUMAN LOVE

5.15-20 - The Lord made "male and female" [Gen 1.27]. He has blessed that human union as man and wife. No perverted substitute has his blessing.

13.24 - The love between parent and child shows in many ways.

17.17 - Love between family members helps you through hard times.

17.17, 18.24 - The love of a true friend is of great value.

SUBJECT 92 - TRUST

3.5-6, 16.3, 16.20, 28.25, 29.25, 30.5 - There is no safer or more rewarding thing to do than to trust in the Lord.

11.28 - To trust in riches is foolish.

25.19 - Never place trust in unfaithful people.

28.26 - Do not trust your own heart. Seek God's wisdom.

31.11 - It is a great thing to be able to trust your wife.

SUBJECT 93 - UNJUST GAIN

10.2, 28.3, 28.20 - Ultimately unjust gain will be no gain at all, rather, it will be a loss.

SUBJECT 94 - VISITING

18.1, 27.10 - Don't lose contact with people.

25.17 - An over frequent visitor becomes unwelcome.

27.10 - Don't use contact with your friends to burden them with your troubles.

SUBJECT 95 - WIFE [BAD]

6.29 - An unfaithful wife or husband destroys more than her own life and marriage.

12.4, 19.13, 21.9, 21.19, 25.24, 27.15-16 - A bad wife is a continual burden.

14.1 - A bad wife destroys her own home.

SUBJECT 96 - WIFE [GOOD]

5.18 - A faithful wife is a joy from youth to old age.

14.1 - A good wife is a home builder.

18.22, 19.14 - The Lord's blessing accompanies a good wife.

31.10-31 - A description of the perfect wife.

SUBJECT 97 - WICKED(THE) AND THEIR WICKEDNESS

2.22, 10.28-30, 11.7, 12.7, 12.21, 13.9, 14.11, 24.19-20, 28.18 - The wicked have no future worth having, either in this world or the next.

3.25-26 - The Lord is the protector of the wise [against the wicked]. Nothing happens outside of His will.

4.14, 12.26 - Do not join with the wicked.

4.19 - The wicked travel in darkness.

5.22, 10.6, 10.16, 13.17, 15.6, 17.11, 17.13, 21.7, 22.8 - The wicked destroy themselves by their own wickedness.

9.7 - Be careful how you rebuke the wicked.

10.3, 10.30, 11.23, 11.31, 16.4, 21.12 - The Lord will deal with the wicked.

10.7, 15.9 - The wicked are hated by men and God.

10.20 - The heart of their trouble is the trouble of their heart.

10.24 - The wicked have fears, and those fears will be realised.

10.31-32, 11.11, 12.6, 12.8, 12.10, 13.5, 15.28, 16.29-30, 19.28, 21.10, 24.8 - - Evil is in the heart, the actions, and the words of the wicked.

11.10 - People rejoice when the wicked are destroyed.

11.18, 12.5, 17.23, 21.29 - The wicked deal in deceit and bribery.

12.12 - There is no honour among wicked. They covet each others possessions.

15.8, 15.29, 21.27 - God rejects what the wicked seek to bring to Him.

17.15, 18.5, 24.24, 25.26, 28.4 - Never seek to justify the wicked and never compromise with them.

18.3, 21.4, 21.8, 28.12, 28.28, 29.7, 29.16 - The wicked bring nothing good with them.

20.26, 25.5 - While it is always preferable for the wicked to turn from their wickedness [by God's grace and power], the only answer for those who remain in wickedness is removal.

21.18, 24.15-16 - The righteous will eventually come out better than the wicked.

28.1 -the righteous are braver than the wicked.

28.15, 29.2, 29.12 - Wicked rulers are a curse.

29.27 - The wicked hate the upright.

SUBJECT 98 - WONDERS

30.18-19 - Four wonderful techniques exceeded Agur's understanding.

30.21-23 - Four things are identified as bringing trouble with amazing regularity.

30.24-28 - Four things are amazing for their wisdom.

30.29-31 - Four things are amazing in how they travel.

SUBJECT 99 - WORD OF GOD (THE)

1.8-9, 2.1-9, 3.1-6, 4.1-9, 4.10-12, 7.1-5 - It is a colossal privilege to have parents who know the word of God, live in the light of it and teach it to you.

6.20-24 - When you hide God's work in your heart it provides guidance as you take your way through life; it keeps you at peace as you sleep; it talks with you when you wake.

13.13, 19.16 - Obedience to the word of God is a top priority.

30.5-6 - Do not tamper with the word of God. Accept it the way it is and obey it.

SUBJECT 100 - WORK AND WORKERS

14.4 - To get the produce from work you need to accept the problems it presents.

14.23, 28.19 - Cease working and income ceases.

16.26 - Work is necessary.

22.29 - A good worker becomes well-known for his work.

23.4-5 - Don't be a workaholic.

24.27 - Work is a high priority. Settle it before you settle other matters.

27.18, 27.25-27 - If you work you will be the one to benefit from it.

31.13 - A good wife is a good worker.

SUBJECT 101 - YOUTH

1.4 - Youth is a prime time for learning.

5.18 - The true partner, found in your youth, is the one to keep for your whole life.

7.6-8 - Youth can be easily led astray if they do not have wisdom.

20.29 - Young men glory in strength and fitness.

PART 3

CONCLUSIONS

Let me, by way of reinforcing the message, draw a few conclusions from the material I have set out in this little book.

1. We should be learning continuously throughout our lives.
2. Regardless of whether or not we have, to date, followed a path of continuous learning, we can start now.
3. We can take things at our own pace.

4. It is best to follow a daily routine.
5. The book of Proverbs can be a key component of our study.
6. One chapter a day is a good idea.
7. Taking the chapter that is the day's date helps us to remember where we are in the book.
8. Making notes under subject headings is an aid to committing the Proverbs to memory.
9. As the Proverbs sink into our minds and hearts they begin to influence our way of life.
10. The more we study Proverbs the more we will profit from it.
11. As the Lord enables us, we can widen our area of study to all the books of the Bible, and other good literature, but we should always continue the daily and repeated study of Proverbs.
12. Much knowledge can be absorbed by the mind but true wisdom only starts when we come to know the Lord as our personal Saviour.
13. We advance from the beginning of wisdom and start to mature as we get to know the Lord and to follow His will for our lives.

14. We will not know everything until, in the resurrection [or the transformation, if we live until the Lord returns] we see the Lord, face to face, in glory.

I pray that this little book will be of help to you. May the Lord richly bless you as you walk with Him.

RECOMMENDED ROUTINE

The routine I recommend is ultra-simple, consisting of only three actions, namely:

1. Read a chapter of the Proverbs every day. Take the chapter that is the day's date. Read it at a pace that lets you think about what it is saying. If you don't fully understand a verse, don't worry. Perhaps you will understand it better next time you read it.
2. Keep a notebook, similar to the "Subjects and Comments" part of this booklet, and make notes of things that occur to you on the different subjects.
3. Put what you learn into action in your life. You will be amazed at how quickly your knowledge increases. If you know Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord you will be delighted at the progress you make in gaining wisdom.

Yours in Jesus Christ,

Ray Ewart