

WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT

BIBLE BASIS: Proverbs 25:1-10

BIBLE TRUTH: Godly wisdom helps us purify our lives, relationships, and workplaces.

MEMORY VERSE: Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another (Proverbs 25:9, KJV).

LESSON AIM: By the end of this lesson, we will: **KNOW** the wisdom of following godly advice in dealing with others; **FEEL** what it means to

treat others as we desire to be treated; and **DO** an intentional act that promotes harmony with others.

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Proverbs 25:1–28— Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

TEACHER PREPARATION

MATERIALS NEEDED: Bibles (several different versions), Quarterly Commentary/Teacher Manual, Adult Quarterly, teaching resources such as charts, worksheets/handouts, paper, pens, and pencils.

OTHER MATERIALS NEEDED / TEACHER'S NOTES:

LESSON OVERVIEW

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

To remember that we they can promote harmony with others.

BIBLE LEARNING

To realize that wisdom should build our relationships with others.

BIBLE APPLICATION

To begin to understand that wisdom should purify our relationships with others.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Students will discern how important godly wisdom is.

LESSON SCRIPTURE

PROVERBS 25:1-10, 20, KJV

1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.

Proverbs 25:1-10, AMP

1 These are also the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied:

LESSON 4 • SEPTEMBER 26, 2021

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter.

3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer.

5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men:

7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and discover not a secret to another:

10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

3 As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, So the hearts and minds of kings are unsearchable.

4 Take away the dross from the silver, And there comes out [the pure metal for] a vessel for the silversmith [to shape].

5 Take away the wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.

6 Do not be boastfully ambitious and claim honor in the presence of the king, And do not stand in the place of great men;

7 For it is better that it be said to you, "Come up here," Than for you to be placed lower in the presence of the prince, Whom your eyes have seen.

8 Do not rush out to argue your case [before magistrates or judges]; Otherwise what will you do in the end [when your case is lost and] When your neighbor (opponent) humiliates you?

9 Argue your case with your neighbor himself [before you go to court]; And do not reveal another's secret,

10 Or he who hears it will shame you, And the rumor about you [and your action in court] will have no end.



BIBLICAL DEFINITIONS

A. **Unsearchable (Proverbs 25:3)** *cheqer* (Heb.)—Incomprehensible; beyond human investigation.

B. **Debate (v. 9)** *riyb* (Heb.)—To strive or plead; to contend against, argue or make a complaint against.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Solomon was the third king of Israel and David's son. He reigned for 40 years from around 971 to 931 B.C. Solomon is attributed with 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs. He was David's chosen heir; he built God's Temple in Jerusalem as well as great works that secured the water supply and defended the city of

Jerusalem. After Solomon's death, the Kingdom was divided into two. The Northern Kingdom was Israel; the Southern Kingdom was Judah.

Hezekiah was a descendant of David's bloodline. He was the son and successor of Ahaz. Hezekiah was the 15th king of Judah, the Southern Kingdom He ruled from around 715 to 686 B.C. He began his 29-year reign at the age of 25. Hezekiah was a patron of respect, who removed idolatrous practices and centers, and resumed observance of Passover and temple worship. He prompted civil and religious reform. The "Men of Hezekiah" or "Friends of Hezekiah" were scribes or counselors of that compiled and edited 137 proverbs during the reign of King

Hezekiah in order to reveal the traditional wisdom and sayings while elevating the forgotten wisdom of David and Solomon.

TEACHING THE BIBLE LESSON

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON

AIM: That your students will appreciate that wisdom should guide their relationships with other.

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Proverbs and Solomon's Reign

The Book of Proverbs was primarily written by Solomon with contributions from Agur son of Jakeh and Lemuel, a king that received words of wisdom from his mother about wine, women, and legal rights of the weak and poor. Proverbs gives instruction in wisdom, ways of life in God's world, and the preparation for life. The men of Hezekiah transcribed or copied the proverbs and did not author them.

During the early part of Solomon's reign, he wrote and gathered the book of Proverbs. Solomon passed on his practical advice through the short, concise sentences that communicate moral truth. Forty-seven times the book conveys information about wisdom, or essentially, "the skill of living." The wisdom revealed in the book of Proverbs is practical to promote prosperity, productivity, and responsibility in humanity.

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: That your students will desire godly wisdom

I. GODLY WISDOM SHOULD BUILD RELATIONSHIPS (Proverbs 25:1-3)

In **Proverbs 25**, we read that Hezekiah's men transcribed Solomon's wisdom. Solomon and Hezekiah were both patrons of wisdom in Israel. They were scholarly kings who lived during a time when governmental power and academic power were closely associated. **Proverbs 25** through **29** constitute a book within the book of Proverbs. This section gives insight

to relationships with kings, but the information can be used to develop good and equitable relationships. The Scripture gives instruction for leaders and individuals who seek to become leaders.

The Proverbs of Solomon (verses 1-3)

1 These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. 2 It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. 3 The heaven for height, and the earth for depth, and the heart of kings is unsearchable.

Proverbs 25:2 refers to the "glory of God," which is God's overwhelming presence, the display of who God is. God's glory is the ultimate power, perfection, and transcendence. Although God's glory is incomprehensible, Solomon instructs humanity to study and search God's Word (**verses 2–3**). The more believers know God, the more we will reflect God's glory. Although difficult at times, the instruction is to search and study God's Word so that His Word can help us in building relationships. God does not reveal all of who He is to us because we cannot comprehend it. God's being is concealed and we search to know Him better throughout our lives. That is wisdom. That's why a wise king will search out a matter for understanding. As Solomon searched the heart of the true mother when he issued an order to divide a child, a king must seek the truth to rule righteously (refer to **1 Kings 3:24–28**).

This section of the book contains additional proverbs attributed to Solomon that were collected by the men of King Hezekiah (715–687 B.C.). The word "also" connects this portion of the collection with **Proverbs 10:1** and **24:23**. These scribes or scholars "copied out" the sayings (i.e., transcribed them from one book to another). The fact that "men" transcribed these proverbs, instead of referring to a single scribe, most likely refers to the entire process of "writing," "arranging," and the "collation of texts."

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 1

The men of what king copied these proverbs?

“These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out.”

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The Wicked and the Righteous

In Proverbs, one finds numerous examples that contrast the wicked with the righteous. In particular, the wicked represent persons who live outside the confines of a faithful relationship with God and His people. Such persons transgress God’s Law with seeming impunity, show injustice toward others, and, overall, exhibit self-centered living. In our day, persons usually are exalted to lofty positions of influence and power based upon academic credentials, social contacts, or outstanding personality traits. However, notice that the writer focuses on the character of those who surround the king. The need for a king to surround himself with honest servants is frequently emphasized (see **Psalm 101**). This is in agreement with the idea that justice is the foundation of his throne (**Proverbs 16:12; 20:28; 29:14**).

II. PURIFICATION IS A MUST (Proverbs 25:4-5)

As the refiner separates the dross from the silver, which mars its beauty and purity, so should the king exclude from his presence and counsels the reckless and the base. Just as it is impossible to have a sterling silver vessel until the silver has been purified, no nation can have a king who is a public blessing until the wicked—all the bad counselors, wicked and interested ministers, and flatterers—are banished from the cabinet and positions of power. When the wise and good are the king’s only ministers and advisers, then the throne will be established in righteousness, and his administration be a universal blessing. Any court, pure or vicious, has immense influence on the manners and morals of the community. This is also true of individuals. We should be careful to realize this

when seeking advice, choose our company wisely, and be careful whom we allow to speak into our lives.

A Separation (verses 4-5)

4 Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the finer. 5 Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

In **verse 4**, the writer employs the imagery of purification of metals as the basis of his analogy in **verse 5**. The “dross” in **verse 4** is analogous to the wicked or scoundrels in **verse 5** to show the polluting influence of the wicked when allowed into the corridors of power. Thus, the writer compares the scoundrels in the king’s presence to the dross in refining silver. The king must take steps to root out wicked and corrupt officials if he is to lay a solid foundation for a good and just rule. A mark of the wise king or ruler is that he ensures he has surrounded himself with officials and counselors marked by integrity.

The “dross” that exists within society and a kingdom are evil individuals, conspirators, and liars who seek to create problems, division, and difficulty. An evil advisor can create chaos in the workplace, home, or social environment. When the “dross” is taken out of a kingdom, a relationship, or a community, the result is a relationship based on righteousness and honor. Wisdom purifies relationships.

QUESTION 2

What happens when the “dross” is taken out of a kingdom, a relationship, or a community?

One can have a relationship based on righteousness and honor.

Answers will vary.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

What Wisdom Teaches

Verses 4 and 5 discuss getting to the best by stripping away anything that is hiding true value. These are

examples of the value of wisdom. Humility and self-denial are important lessons that are taught by wisdom. The message of **verses 6 and 7** is reiterated in **Luke 14:7–11**. Do not seek a place of honor where you will receive attention. Instead, seek to accomplish the purpose that God has given to you. Solomon instructed individuals not to pursue the best or most prominent places in life. Instead, individuals should purposely take the lowest place. On the other hand, society encourages individuals to strive for the most recognizable or viewed position—the place of recognition and believed honor. In **Luke 14**, Jesus taught that individuals should not seek social recognition through relationships, appearance, titles, or material possession. Jesus instructed individuals to seek positions where they can serve and allow God to lift them to places of prominence as God purposes.

III. LET WISDOM GUIDE YOUR RELATIONSHIPS (Proverbs 25:6-7)

Solomon instructed believers to live humbly and modestly in order to be advanced instead of being put “lower in the presence of the prince.” God will lift up and honor believers according to His perfect plan.

Oh, to Have Wisdom (verses 6-7)!

6 Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: 7 For better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither; than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

These verses deal with the actions of those in the court of the king or in the presence of someone who is great. Nothing in conduct is unimportant. Fitting and graceful manners should become our routine. It is wiser to wait to be promoted than to risk demotion by self-promotion. Self-respect is complemented by deference. Promoting yourself while in court may risk public humiliation, but it would be an honor to have everyone in court hear the promotion from the king himself. This is the paradox of Christianity: Humility leads to exaltation, but grasping at more than our due is to lose all and earn condemnation. We must avoid

presumption in any of its forms—it is an offense hateful to humankind and God.

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

QUESTION 3

Why is self-promotion deemed unwise?

It earns condemnation and is an offense to humankind.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Disputes Damage Relationships

There are important lessons to learn from **Proverbs 25:8**. First, disputes are unavoidable. In view of conflict and complicated interests—individual, domestic, social, economic, civic, international—differences and difficulties often arise amongst us. There are always and will be conflicts of opinion—wishes and purposes clash; their divergence may result in dissension, including in Christian congregations. Second, the temptation is to be hasty either in jumping to conclusions or in acting rashly. Using the judicial system to mediate conflicts, including those between neighbors, can be one hastily applied result of struggles. But often these actions do no good other than to permanently damage relationships.

IV. DISPUTES ERECT BARRIERS (Proverbs 25:8-10)

Disputes erect a barrier between us and our neighbors and make it difficult, if not entirely impossible, to ever again live alongside one another in harmony. Instead, disputes handled unwisely sow seeds of bitterness and discord, which will bear fruit throughout our days. Rather than spreading disharmony and friction, Christians must seek to be peacemakers who love God, each other, and our neighbors.

Think Before You Act (verses 8-10)

8 Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbour hath put thee to shame. 9 Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself; and

discover not a secret to another: 10 Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame, and thine infamy turn not away.

According to societal standards today, almost all disputes can be handled in the court system. Both parties meet in a courtroom where a judge listens to both sides and makes a decision based on the evidence that is presented. A third party settles the differences that created the disagreement. While some disputes demand court action or outside mediation, Solomon's advice is to discuss differences instead of rushing to court. He instructs that: (1) we should try to handle complaints and disagreements on a private level instead of going to court; (2) we should not complain to others about our neighbor, friend, or coworker; (3) we should not discuss with others what we have discussed with another person in secret because the result will only create trouble and negatively affect our reputations; and (4) after the disagreement has been discussed, end it privately and we will not endure shame.

QUESTION 4

Why shouldn't we rush into disputes?

We should strive to be "peacemakers".

Answers will vary.

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: That your students will begin to understand that just as God has forgiven us of our trespasses, we should forgive others

The Way of Peace

In **Proverbs 25:10**, the writer exposes what is at stake when one goes about with rash, impetuous behavior. Settling matters peaceably and privately can prevent escalation in a public arena, where many times things can be misconstrued, a person's reputation can be slandered, or even violence can result. The example given in this verse is about a person who reveals someone else's secret. When the person learns of the indiscretion, the shame suffered by the guilty party leads to a bad reputation that is difficult to overcome.

In a case such as this reputation and friendship are ruined. Wisdom dictates that we always seek to maintain peace

STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: That your students will desire to use wisdom in their relationships.

Reaching Out in Relationship

Exercising wisdom in handling and building relationships is not easy. Consider this scenario.

Frantically, Brenda knocked at her neighbor's door. When Veronica opened the door, Brenda asked, "Can you please take me to work? My car won't start! If I'm late another day, I will lose my job."

Immediately, Veronica grabbed her jacket and rushed to take Brenda to work. Later that day, Veronica saw Brenda at the local store, but Brenda didn't speak. Veronica had always spoken to Brenda, but she didn't receive the same response in return.

After Brenda and Veronica had been neighbors for 12 years, Veronica was accustomed to being ignored by Brenda. However, Veronica always treated Brenda with love and compassion.

Several weeks later, Brenda called Veronica to drive her to the hospital. Her brother was ill. The entire trip, Veronica spoke but Brenda barely responded. After they arrived at the hospital, Brenda got out of the car without saying anything.

As Veronica drove home, she prayed for Brenda and her family, and decided that she did not want to be treated disrespectfully by Brenda anymore. Veronica asked God to give her instructions on how to deal with Brenda.

How can Veronica continue to reveal God's love to Brenda when her actions are not reciprocated?

PRAYER

Father in heaven; help us to represent You well as

we reach out to others in relationship. Help us to be examples of peacemakers. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

When conflict erupts in our churches or neighborhoods, do we call the church elders, other respected community members, or the police to make peace? In 2020 when violence against unarmed African Americans seemed to crescendo, some suggested that social workers or others trained in conflict resolution should accompany or replace police officers called to the scene. They hoped this would prevent more violence and help restore communities.

Ideally, the church is a community. Nevertheless, even in church unresolved conflict can create major problems (**1 Corinthians 1:11 and James 4:1-4**). Feeling disrespected and disregarded or wanting more influence and power create major conflict inside and outside the church. Theologian Dr. Marva Dawn proposes that to build relationships that promote genuine respect and appreciation for our differences, Christians should apply the twelfth chapter of Romans in our churches. She says "Christian community sets us free from comparing ourselves with others and having to prove our own importance." What do you think? Where would you begin to make this biblical ideal reality?

Marva J. Dawn, *The Hilarity of Community: Romans 12 and How to be the Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 72.

HOW TO SAY IT

Hezekiah. Hez-ay-Kiah.

DAILY HOME BIBLE READINGS

MONDAY

The Creator's Hiddenness
(Isaiah 45:9-17)

TUESDAY

Asking for Wisdom
(2 Kings 3:5-14)

WEDNESDAY

Humbly Seeking God
(2 Chronicles 7:12-18)

THURSDAY

Words Fitly Spoken
(Proverbs 25:11-15)

FRIDAY

Wisdom with Neighbors
(Proverbs 25:16-20)

SATURDAY

The Wisdom of Self-Control
(Proverbs 25:21-28)

SUNDAY

Wisdom and Government
(Proverbs 25:1-10)

