

WISDOM: LIVING WELL

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Proverbs 1:1-7

The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

2 For learning about wisdom and instruction,
for understanding words of insight,
3 for gaining instruction in wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity;
4 to teach shrewdness to the simple, knowledge and prudence to the young—
5 let the wise also hear and gain in learning,
and the discerning acquire skill,
6 to understand a proverb and a figure, the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. Proverbs is part of the Bible's "Wisdom Literature." What does wisdom mean to you? How might wisdom be different from knowledge?
3. The "fear of the Lord" mentioned in verse 7 is not *fear of punishment* but something more like "awe" or "wonder." It is a recognition of God's grandeur, immensity, and power beyond anyone's control. In other words, it is an awareness that God is God and we are not. Do you have a memory of this kind of spiritual "awe" or "wonder"?
4. The Proverbs contain little nuggets of practical advice for living well—ie, the good life—that have been passed on from generations, like: "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words cause quarrels" (Proverbs 15:1). What do you think of this wisdom?
5. Reflect on the following proverbs. What do you make of them? Are there limits to these "rules of thumb"?

Proverbs 22:1 If you must choose, take a good name rather than great riches; for to be held in loving

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esteem is better than silver and gold.

Proverbs 14:17 A short-tempered man is a fool. He hates the man who is patient.

Proverbs 20:13 If you love sleep, you will end in poverty. Stay awake, work hard, and there will be plenty to eat!

Proverbs 17:27-28 The man of few words and settled mind is wise; therefore, even a fool is thought to be wise when he is silent. It pays him to keep his mouth shut.

Proverbs 13:11 Wealth from gambling quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.

Proverbs 11:13 A gossip goes around spreading rumors, while a trustworthy man tries to quiet them.

6. Do you have any “rules of thumb” or “guiding principles” that others have tried to teach you, or that you’ve come to find valuable for living well?
7. Proverbs 8 personifies divine wisdom as a woman and exhorts the wise person to listen to her. What does such female imagery have to teach us about God and our faith?
8. Proverbs focuses on the probability that a good life will emerge from wisely practicing virtues like patience, honesty, hard-work, self-control, and fear of the Lord. Why might a good life be probable, but not guaranteed?