



**Word**

**to the**

**Wise**

**Wisdom from Proverbs**

FOR THE NEW YEAR



**MARINERS**CHURCH

# WORD TO THE WISE

## Group Discussion Guide

If there is anything we should want in this new year, or in this life, it should be wisdom. “Wisdom is supreme—so get wisdom. And whatever else you get, get understanding. Cherish her, and she will exalt you; if you embrace her, she will honor you” (Proverbs 4:7-8). Incredibly insightful and practical, studying Proverbs gives us a picture of a good life.

*New Features for the New Year!*

## SPIRITUAL RHYTHMS

Group members should be familiar with The 7 Rhythms of Rooted: Daily Devotion, Prayer, Repentance, Sacrificial Generosity, Serve the Community, Share Your Story, and Worship. Certain weeks of discussion may naturally lend to practicing or emphasizing one of the rhythms. Leader Notes will draw attention to a spiritual rhythm if it’s especially relevant.

**Daily Devotion** is a great rhythm to remind everyone to practice as we start the new year with a study on biblical wisdom from Proverbs. Mariners Church’s Annual Read for 2021 is ***God’s Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs*** by Timothy and Kathy Keller. Encourage everyone to get a copy and join us in short daily readings and prayer.

## OPTIONAL STUDY TOOLS

The following list includes free resources (videos, podcasts, articles, and online commentary) to help you or members of your group explore matters related to this series. At times, resources may even introduce various ways to think about a particular topic. Feel free to check out anything that looks interesting or helpful.

- The Bible Project: [Wisdom Literature - Proverbs](#) (Video, 5 min)
- The Bible Project: [Book Overview - Proverbs](#) (Video, 8 min)
- Desiring God: [How to Understand Proverbs](#) (Video, 10 min)
- The Bible Project: [Intro to Wisdom Literature](#) (Podcast, 32 min)
- The Bible Project: [Proverbs](#) (Podcast, 49 min)
- RightNow Media: [How to Read Proverbs](#) (Article / Training)
- Core Christianity: [How to Read the Book of Proverbs](#) (Article)
- The Gospel Coalition: [Where’s Jesus in Proverbs?](#) (Article)
- ESV [Global Study Bible](#) (Biblical Commentary)

The *CSB Study Bible* is an excellent resource if you’d prefer a physical copy of the translation used by Mariners Church. It’s available for purchase online or in the bookstore at Mariners Irvine.



Each lesson contains the following sections:

## MAIN POINT

Discussions often take on a life of their own, but they typically lack power when they lack focus. The Discussion Leader ought to use the Main Point to keep everyone on the same page. To do this, you might say something like, *"That is very interesting and a good topic for another discussion, but today's study is about..."* and ask a question that brings people back to the topic of discussion.

There will be times when it makes sense to ignore the Main Point, for example, when someone in your group experiences a significant crisis. If you decide to move away from the lesson's Main Point, you want to do so on purpose and not by accident.

## LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

These questions will help kick start your discussion time. The main goal for this time is to get everyone talking, and prepare them for the more focused conversation to follow.

## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

The goal for this section is to let the passage speak for itself and stand on its own. This isn't easy! During this time, you will read the passage out loud (twice), and answer questions focused on the details of the biblical text.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Transformation comes from renewing your mind (Romans 12:2). The goal for this section is to look inward to allow God's Word to change you from the inside out. Use this time to discuss how your thoughts and feelings are affirmed and/or challenged.

## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

Jesus calls us to love others, just as He loved us. Based on your understanding of the text and how God is transforming your heart, how will you treat others? How will you apply this teaching to all of your relationships, to everyone you will see this week and beyond?

## LEADER NOTES

Where needed, each lesson may have several Leader Notes. This material will provide insight on how to steer the conversation and care for your people. Additionally, these notes will provide greater context to help you understand a difficult word, phrase, or verse.

## RHYTHM REMINDERS

A prompt will be provided when one of the 7 Rhythms of Rooted has a natural point of emphasis. We want to help everyone continue to grow holistically in their spiritual journeys. Obviously, some rhythms always exist, like prayer, but occasionally it will be helpful to draw fresh attention to or spend additional time in one of the rhythms.



## **STORIES & CELEBRATION**

A few questions will provide opportunities to follow up on comments, commitments, or applications from previous group discussions. This time is also intended to provide space for sharing stories of how God is at work in people's lives, what the Spirit is showing them, and things they learned or that were timely in the weekend message or Annual Read.

## **PRAYER**

Be sure to close your time together in prayer. You can take requests from the group, invite others to lead, and bring God the needs that stood out to you in your group time.

## **SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND**

Remember that you aren't in this alone! God will help you prepare and lead your group discussion. Make it your goal to keep in step with the Holy Spirit!

Pray and read the passage a few times on your own. Take a few minutes to identify what makes an impression for you and how the passage might impact your group.

Once you've taken some time to read the passage on your own, read through the entire Discussion Guide. Make sure you understand the Main Point. Identify which questions you want to use in your group time and rewrite them in your own words.

Once your group time is over, take a few minutes to evaluate the discussion. What went well? What could have been different? If you had a "bad night," DON'T GIVE UP! Everyone has tough nights. There were times when even the disciples didn't get what Jesus was talking about!





# Week 1: Fear No One But God

Group Discussion Guide for: **WORD TO THE WISE**

*Proverbs 9:10, Proverbs 29:2*

## MAIN POINT

Fearing the Lord is the beginning of wisdom because only when we have a proper view of Him, will we have an accurate understanding of ourselves and the world around us. Living in fear of others will keep us from living the good life the Lord has for us.



**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members of the spiritual rhythm of Daily Devotion. Watch for this icon near the end of the lesson to encourage them to join the Annual Read.

**Daily  
Devotion**

## LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- Looking back at 2020, what was the biggest challenge? What was an unexpected highlight?
- If you could do one thing to make 2021 better than 2020, what would you do?
- What are your personal goals for the New Year?
- How can we help one another with our goals?

**Leader Note:** Share your own challenges, highlights, goals, and needs. Model healthy community with your sincerity. Empathize, affirm, and encourage others as they share.

- This week we'll see how a right view of God puts everything else in perspective. This year we want to get wisdom from God's Word in order to live the good life He desires for us.



## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Choose three people to read the following passages out loud (Proverbs 1:1-9, 9:10, and 29:25).

- 1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:
- 2 For learning wisdom and discipline;  
for understanding insightful sayings;
- 3 for receiving prudent instruction  
in righteousness, justice, and integrity;
- 4 for teaching shrewdness to the inexperienced,  
knowledge and discretion to a young man—
- 5 let a wise person listen and increase learning,  
and let a discerning person obtain guidance—
- 6 for understanding a proverb or a parable,  
the words of the wise, and their riddles.
- 7 The fear of the LORD  
is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and discipline.
- 8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction,  
and don't reject your mother's teaching,
- 9 for they will be a garland of favor on your head  
and pendants around your neck.

### ***Proverbs 1:1-9***

- 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,  
and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

### ***Proverbs 9:10***

- 25 The fear of mankind is a snare,  
but the one who trusts in the LORD is protected.

### ***Proverbs 29:25***

- What is the purpose of proverbs according to King Solomon in verses 1-6? How would you summarize their purpose in a word or phrase?

**Leader Note:** This question will help frame a right understanding of what proverbs are and aren't. Otherwise, we run the risk of misinterpreting and misapplying the rich wisdom contained in this part of the Bible. Possible answers may include things like:

- Growth/Maturity
- Instruction/Training ("discipline" is a word related to a "disciple")
- Wisdom/Righteousness (meaning the right way to live)

Provide background for the incomparable wisdom of Solomon by reading 1 Kings 4:29-34. Explain that his wisdom came as a unique blessing from God in response to a humble request to lead well as the new king, following in the footsteps of his famous father, so that God's people may have a good life (see 1 Kings 3).



Try to instill a sense of awe and reverence for the access we have today to this timeless wisdom. The wisest man to ever live, other than Jesus, has compiled a book to help us grow in every area of our lives.

- What promise does Solomon offer in Proverbs 1:8-9? How does the familial language shape the tone and interpretation of the proverbs?

**Leader Note:** Emphasize that proverbs are not laws or formulas—they're principles pointing to God's best intentions for our lives, like conversations loving parents would have while raising children.

- Compare verse 1:7 to 9:10. What is the core truth Solomon wants to instill in the heart and mind of his son, who is representative of all readers?
- Contrast that wisdom with verse 29:25. What point is Solomon making?

**Leader Note:** A healthy and rightful fear of God brings wisdom and clarity to every area of your life. An unhealthy and wrongful fear of people (their opinions, influence, etc.) will rob us of the good life that our heavenly Father wants to show us and give us. Everyone has to decide who they will listen to and seek to please—the Lord, or other people.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- When have you acted like the “fools” in 1:7, despising wisdom and discipline? What did that look like (or does that still look like) in your life? What happened as a result? What caused you to see the foolishness of your ways?
- How has “the fear of mankind” been a trap that you’ve foolishly been tangled up in? What are some examples of fearing mankind rather than the Lord?
- What has fearing the Lord looked like in your life?
- Name some practical examples of godly wisdom that differ from cultural norms.

**Leader Note:** Affirm that the ultimate step in fearing the Lord is repenting and humbly surrendering to Jesus as Lord of your life—He's all-wise, all-powerful, and always good. Help people think beyond the initial step of faith and identify daily acts of wisdom and discipline putting God first in your life, loving and trusting Him above other people.

## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Do you think more people despise wisdom and discipline from others, or do more people want help? What seems to cause people to reject help? To receive help?



- Reread Proverbs 1:7-9. How might people's posture toward Christians and the Bible change if they saw obedience to God's wisdom as a blessing, honor, joy, and treasure?
- What can we do to help one another grow in joyfully receiving God's wisdom?
- Thinking back to your goal for the new year, how would fearing the Lord, and not mankind, affect your goal? Your year? Your life?
- What will you do this year to grow in your fear of the Lord and to get wisdom?

**Leader Note:** Remind everyone about the Annual Read. Encourage them to pick up a copy of *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Book of Proverbs* by Timothy and Kathy Keller. There's no better way to grow in the fear of the Lord and therefore in wisdom than the rhythm of daily devotion.

- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, thanking God for making wisdom available to us. Ask for hearts of joyful obedience in trusting Him—fearing Him alone and not allowing the fear of mankind to hold us back from the good life He offers as our heavenly Father.





## Week 2: Walk With The Wise

Group Discussion Guide for: WORD TO THE WISE

*Proverbs 13:20, 22:24-25, and 27:6,9,14,17*

### MAIN POINT

You cannot be wise if you walk with fools—the people surrounding you will either help you or harm you, so choose carefully.

### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What habit or influence (good, bad, funny, or strange) have you picked up at different times in your life after hanging around a certain person or group of people?

**Leader Note:** Be prepared to share an example to get the ball rolling. Maybe you went through a “phase” of some sort. Examples can vary widely, including things like:

- Physical behavior like facial expressions or hand motions
  - Speech patterns like accents or phrases
  - Sense of humor and inside jokes
  - Personal appearance like clothing or hair style
  - Lifestyle changes like diet, exercise, or even addictions
  - Taste in music or entertainment
  - Hobbies or interests
- Who has been the most influential person in your life? How have they influenced you?
  - Let’s see what God’s Word has to say about the influence of our closest relationships. Keep in mind that proverbs are intended to be loving instruction, like a parent passing along wisdom and life lessons to a child.



## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Choose three people to read the following passages out loud (Proverbs 13:20, 22:24-25, and 27:6,9,14,17).

20 The one who walks with the wise will become wise,  
but a companion of fools will suffer harm.

**Proverbs 13:20**

24 Don't make friends with an angry person,  
and don't be a companion of a hot-tempered one,

25 or you will learn his ways  
and entangle yourself in a snare.

**Proverbs 22:24-25**

6 The wounds of a friend are trustworthy,  
but the kisses of an enemy are excessive.

9 Oil and incense bring joy to the heart,  
and the sweetness of a friend is better than self-counsel.

14 If one blesses his neighbor  
with a loud voice early in the morning,  
it will be counted as a curse to him.

17 Iron sharpens iron,  
and one person sharpens another.

**Proverbs 27:6,9,14,17**

- Starting with Proverbs 13:20, what life principle is being shared? How do the phrases “walks with” and “companion” provide clarity to the nature of relationships addressed?
- What does it mean to “suffer harm” in this context? How is that principle of harm elaborated on in Proverbs 22:24-25?

**Leader Note:** Be sure to clarify that this is not intended to discourage evangelism nor even friendship with those who don't share our faith or values. It does, however, offer wisdom and warning about the people with whom we spend the most time—our inner circle of confidants. This will be elaborated upon later in discussion. For now, see the point that our closest relationships will have an influence on us for better or worse.

- Continuing to examine unhealthy relationships, what is the warning in Proverbs 27:6? How do “the kisses of an enemy” relate to the dangerous nature of foolish companions?
- Proverbs 27:14 uses a bit of humor to provide a serious warning. How could blessing someone be considered a curse? How does this keep us from being foolish?



**Leader Note:** Point out the lack of self-awareness and consideration for others in the tone and timing of a loud greeting in the early morning. While this is not deceptive, like flattering manipulation, it can be just as off-putting. Don't be ignorant to how and when interactions are helpful or hurtful.

- Now look at the benefits of walking with the wise. What happens when we spend time following the examples of good influences according to Proverbs 13:20?
- What does Proverbs 27:6 say is part of a healthy and beneficial relationship? How can “wounds” be a good thing in contrast to the negative use of “kisses”?
- How does Proverbs 27:17 help us understand the “wounds” of verse 6? According to verses 17 and 9, what benefit is gained from trustworthy relationships?

**Leader Note:** A true friend helps us grow. They strengthen and “sharpen” us by telling us what we need to hear—even if it's uncomfortable. We're conformed further into the image and likeness of Christ as a result of shared wisdom in godly relationships.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- Summing up these verses, Proverbs 13:20 has been referred to as “education by friendship.”<sup>1</sup> How have you experienced this reality in your own life?
- Look at the character traits for “wise” companions. Are you spending time with the right people? Would others consider you to be a wise companion or friend?
  - Peaceful (22:24)
  - Honest (27:6)
  - Sensitive (27:14)
  - Sharpening (27:17)
  - Enjoyable (27:9)
- What needs to change if you're going to walk with the wise? Is there someone that you should be intentional to spend more time with this year? Less time?

**Leader Note:** Help group members take a moment to self-reflect. Don't be afraid of a moment of “awkward” silence. Assure people that there is no pressure to share aloud but invite people to share any personal conviction from the Spirit if they're willing (and if appropriate).

---

<sup>1</sup>The phrase is attributed to Derek Kidner in the CSB Study Bible: Notes.



## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Reread Proverbs 27:6. The following formula has been offered to determine whether or not something is helpful as trustworthy wisdom from a friend, even if uncomfortable. Why are each of these things necessary? What happens if any of these are missing? How have you experienced positive or negative examples of confrontation?

### ***The Right Word***

- + *FROM the Right Person*
- + *IN the Right Way*
- + *AT the Right Time*
- + *TO the Right Person*
- = *Loving Confrontation*<sup>2</sup>

- How would life be better if we had loving confrontation and trustworthy relationships?

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Was anyone more aware of fearing God or treasuring His wisdom this week? Were you aware of the impact it may have had on other people around you?
- Have you been able to get into a rhythm of daily devotion with the Annual Read, *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life*? Did any of the daily devotions encourage or challenge you this week?
- Any updates on your goals discussed last time? What can we celebrate?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to soften each person's heart to receive godly wisdom that will help each of us grow in maturity and love.

---

*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.*

<sup>2</sup>The phrase is attributed to Derek Kidner in the CSB Study Bible: Notes.



# Week 3: Guard Your Heart Above All Else

Group Discussion Guide for: WORD TO THE WISE

**Proverbs 4:23-27**

## MAIN POINT

Since your heart impacts how you live, you must guard its health by watching your gaze, your words, and your direction.

## LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- If you were stranded alone on a desert island with only one thing, what would it be and why?
- Knowing that you have that single item, what is the first thing you would do for survival?
- As a group, can you come to a consensus on three steps that would need to be taken to ensure survival? What are they?

**Leader Note:** This opening illustration can be as fun or literal as your group dynamic wants it to be. If people are familiar with The Office's "Desert Island Game" (Season 2, Episode 4), they'll know that some people have fun with the scenario while others take it seriously or bend the rules to win. You could spark creativity with a fun item rather than a practical one like, "I'd bring a guitar and find food, water, and shelter because bananas grow everywhere."

You could also show a movie clip, like [Tom Hanks in Castaway](#) desperately trying to make fire and triumphantly celebrating the eventual success or the [panic he feels as Wilson floats away](#), the volleyball that had become a source of humanity and hope while alone.

- Now let's see what the book of Proverbs says about an urgent need in our own lives and the related steps for averting disaster.

## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Choose someone to read Proverbs 4:23-27 out loud.

- 23 Guard your heart above all else,  
for it is the source of life.
- 24 Don't let your mouth speak dishonestly,  
and don't let your lips talk deviously.
- 25 Let your eyes look forward;  
fix your gaze straight ahead.
- 26 Carefully consider the path for your feet,  
and all your ways will be established.
- 27 Don't turn to the right or to the left;  
keep your feet away from evil.

**Proverbs 4:23-27**





- How would you summarize the main point being made in this passage?
- Reread verse 23 in the following translations, keeping an ancient civilization in mind. What mental pictures do you see? How do they add to your understanding of this verse?

*Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. (ESV)*

*Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (NIV)*

*Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life. (NKJV)*

*Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life. (CSB)*

**Leader Note:** Engage the imaginations of your group members, helping them visualize the idyllic wellspring of fresh water vital for any society—especially before modern technology. Have them consider how shepherds and travelers would view a water source. Next, have them consider a kingdom like that of Solomon’s—the wisest, wealthiest, and most powerful king the world had ever known. How strategic and valuable is a water supply in battle and in daily life?

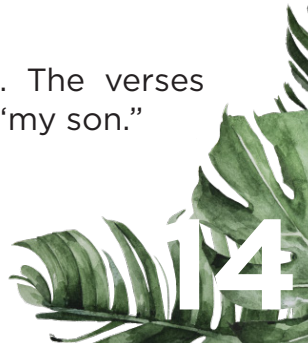
- Solomon uses bodily imagery to represent behaviors in our lives. What part is mentioned in each verse and what does it represent? How do they all relate?

**Leader Note:** Going verse-by-verse, walk people through the text, keeping the discussion focused on the literal instructions. The next section will turn attention to personal implications and applications.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD’S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

- Solomon said that you guard your heart by guarding your mouth, eyes, and feet. What did he mean? Why is it important to remember that we cannot compartmentalize our spiritual, emotional, physical, and intellectual lives—everything is interconnected?
- On a scale of 1-10 (1 = never think about it, 10 = constantly vigilant) how would you rate yourself in each of the following categories?
  - Heart
  - Mouth
  - Eyes
  - Feet
- Knowing how vital this is to the good life that God wants for you as your all-wise and loving Father, what is one step you can take to increase each of your scores?
  - What you value as essential
  - What you say / how you say it
  - What you look at / focus on
  - How you make decisions about the direction of your life

**Leader Note:** Remind everyone of the context and tone of Proverbs. The verses immediately before and after the ones we’re discussing are addressed to “my son.”



## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Have two people read Matthew 5:19 and Mark 7:18-23. How do Jesus's words help us understand this concept of the heart as the source for people's lives?
- How do Jesus's lists of "bad things" that affect our culture change the way we see the real problem? How does it change the way we see, treat, and pray for people who either annoy us or who have sinned against us?
- What change might you see in the world if your heart was guarded above all else? If the things you talk about and look at focused attention on your heavenly Father? Where might the Spirit lead you?

**Leader Note:** Remember to follow up on comments, commitments, or applications from previous group discussions. This is an important rhythm in the Christian life and meaningful community.

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Any updates on your goals from the first week? What can we celebrate?
- Did you become aware of healthy or unhealthy influences or relationships? Did you make any changes to walk with the wise?
- Have you been able to get into a rhythm of daily devotion with the Annual Read, *God's Wisdom for Navigating Life*? Did any of the daily devotions encourage or challenge you this week?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close by praying Proverbs 3:5-6 for your Life Group. (The daily devotions for January 22 and 23 focus on these verses and the theme of our hearts.)

Heavenly Father, help us trust you with all our hearts,  
and not to rely on our own understanding.  
Holy Spirit, we want to be aware of you in all that we do,  
Knowing that you will make paths straight for our feet.  
LORD, guard our mouths and our eyes this week.  
In Jesus' name we ask these things. Amen.

*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.*



# Week 4: Let Integrity Be Your Guide

Group Discussion Guide for: WORD TO THE WISE

Proverbs 11:1-8

## MAIN POINT

- You won't find a formula for discovering God's will in the Bible, but you will see that integrity and character will guide you along the right paths.



**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity for repentance. Look for the icon later in the lesson for instructions on leading a time of reflection and repentance. Breaking strongholds in the lives of group

**Repentance** members.

## LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What do you think of when you hear the word: *integration*? What images or examples come to mind? Do you feel any emotions? How would you define it?

**Leader Note:** The point here is not to get one right answer, but to begin thinking about the concept. Depending on the people in your group a variety of answers could be given, including social, racial, mathematical, scientific, legal, professional, or psychological definitions and [examples](#).

- What basic idea or common meaning exists whether someone is talking about integration of ethnicities, cultures, technologies, parties, entities, etc.?
- With that in mind, how does being personally integrated help you better understand a familiar topic: personal integrity?

**Leader Note:** Highlight the obvious similarity in the words that often gets overlooked—integration, integrated, and integrity. A new unified whole is comprised of different parts.

- Integrity is most simply and most often understood as honesty. But it's deeper than simply telling the truth—it's being truly unified or whole. Wisdom is the integration of knowledge and action. A person can know what's right but not do what's right. The book of Proverbs will demonstrate how a wise person will act according to the truth.



## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Choose someone to read Proverbs 11:1-8 out loud.

- 1 Dishonest scales are detestable to the LORD,  
but an accurate weight is his delight.
- 2 When arrogance comes, disgrace follows,  
but with humility comes wisdom.
- 3 The integrity of the upright guides them,  
but the perversity of the treacherous destroys them.
- 4 Wealth is not profitable on a day of wrath,  
but righteousness rescues from death.
- 5 The righteousness of the blameless clears his path,  
but the wicked person will fall because of his wickedness.
- 6 The righteousness of the upright rescues them,  
but the treacherous are trapped by their own desires.
- 7 When the wicked person dies,  
his expectation comes to nothing,  
and hope placed in wealth, vanishes.
- 8 The righteous one is rescued from trouble;  
in his place, the wicked one goes in.

### **Proverbs 11:1-8**

- Verse 3 is a summary for this passage of Scripture. What chief characteristic guides people toward good lives pleasing to the Lord? What attributes are detailed in the other verses to provide a more vivid picture of *integrity*?
- What results and rewards are promised to those who live with integrity? What characteristics and consequences describe the person's life not led by integrity?
- Scales and weights in verse 1 refer to financial transactions in the marketplace. Why might such strong language be used for God's reaction—both positive and negative? What does it reveal about His character? About our relationship with Him?

**Leader Note:** Don't dwell on this point for long, but let people know that the next three weeks will flow out of God's "delight" for us, our work, our resources, and our treatment of one another. As the all-wise, all-powerful, and all-benevolent Father, it's "detestable" to abuse our work, our resources, and one other.

- Is it a fair assessment to see both the honest and dishonest person know the truth in verse 1? What, then, is the difference between the two lifestyles contrasted throughout the passage? Since all people eventually die—whether righteous or unrighteous—where do you see glimpses of the gospel in this passage, especially in verses 7-8?



**Leader Note:** In this series, walking has represented an intentional way of life. Last week's text introduced the theme of walking a clear path, keeping our feet on the straight and narrow due to a heart overflowing righteous desires (see Proverbs 4:23-27). Today we see the person on the clear path being rescued and the wicked being ensnared in their own traps, facing wrath and destruction (see Proverbs 22:25 from Week 2). Though the material hope of the wicked vanishes, the text suggests that the person of righteous integrity is rescued with a hope and expectations that extend beyond the grave.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Read Romans 3:10-26. What does this say about our ability to walk righteously enough to be rescued from the just wrath due the wicked? (See verses 10-12.) Whose mouth, eyes, and feet are guarded in the fear of God? (See verses 13-18.) What is our only hope for rescue and righteousness? (See verses 19-26.)

**Leader Note:** Allow a moment for people to feel the tension—the full weight of their sin and the total freedom of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus.

- Reread Proverbs 11:5 followed by the quote below from Clement of Alexandria, a highly educated Christian convert from paganism just over 100 years after the death and resurrection of Jesus:

*To be repeatedly requesting forgiveness for offenses repeatedly committed is not repentance, only its appearance. "The righteousness of the blameless keeps their way straight," proclaims Scripture, and again, "The righteousness of the innocent will set straight their way."*<sup>1</sup>



**Repentance** **Leader Note:** Remind people of the literal imagery for repentance—admitting that we're going the wrong way, turning around, and moving toward God in humility and love. Using the descriptions from Proverbs 11:1-10, lead people in a time of quiet prayer and invite any necessary confession and repentance before the Lord who is rich in mercy.

- Do you need to confess and repent of anything? He graciously draws you to Himself. Allow the Spirit to convict and encourage you to be free from strongholds of pride and sin. Is He working any of these areas?
  - Honesty?
  - Finances?
  - Work?
  - Arrogance?
  - Perversity?
  - Treachery?
  - Scheming?
  - Greed?
  - Desires?
  - Expectations?
  - Worldly hope?

---

<sup>1</sup> The phrase is attributed to Derek Kidner in the CSB Study Bible: Notes.





## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD’S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Read Ephesians 2:1-10. Your path is made straight by the completed work of Christ. Now it’s God’s will for you to walk in it—it delights Him! What can you do to walk with integrity, doing good works, to “display the immeasurable riches of his grace through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (see verse 7)?

**Leader Note:** Remind people of the Main Point and end on a high note of celebration!

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Any stories, updates, or things to celebrate related to what God is doing in our lives or in the world?
- Have you been developing a rhythm of daily devotion with the Annual Read: *God’s Wisdom for Navigating Life*? Did any of the daily devotions encourage or challenge you this week?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you’d like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, thanking God for the righteousness He has freely given to you in Christ.

*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.*



# Week 5: Steward Money, Don't Let Money Steward You

Group Discussion Guide for: **WORD TO THE WISE**

## *Selected Proverbs*

### MAIN POINT

If you want to enjoy the good life, you need to understand twelve proverbs on money.



**Sacrificial  
Generosity**

**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This week will provide a natural opportunity to remind group members about the powerful practice of sacrificial generosity. Look for the icon later in the lesson for discussion prompts.

### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What is your earliest memory of “sticker shock” or learning the value of money?

**Leader Note:** Help jog memories with a personal example. Maybe you wanted a toy as a kid and realized how much you'd have to do to earn enough money or how long you'd have to save to buy it. Perhaps it wasn't a desire but rather a consequence that opened your eyes—maybe you broke or lost something and were devastated by someone's reaction or your own sense of helplessness to fix the problem.

- How has your view of money been shaped by your experiences or environment while growing up? Is your attitude toward how to spend, save, or share money similar to or different than your family of origin?
- Money is a big part of our life. Despite what people on either extreme believe, it's not inherently good or evil. The Bible offers significant wisdom for how to view and handle money. If you want to enjoy the good life, you need to understand these twelve proverbs.

### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Similar to last week's discussion of work, alternating between reading verses and asking questions, let's jump right into our twelve proverbs, discovering a key principle from each.

**Leader Note:** Use the chat feature on your Zoom meeting to keep track of people's answers. If meeting in another form, display responses for later reference if possible.

8 Keep falsehood and deceitful words far from me.

Give me neither poverty nor wealth;  
feed me with the food I need.

9 Otherwise, I might have too much  
and deny you, saying, “Who is the LORD?”  
or I might have nothing and steal,  
profaning the name of my God.

**Proverbs 30:8–9**

- What is the surprising view of money presented in this proverb?



4 Idle hands make one poor,  
but diligent hands bring riches.

**Proverbs 10:4**

- When life works as it should, what leads to abundance?

7 One person pretends to be rich but has nothing;  
another pretends to be poor but has abundant wealth.

**Proverbs 13:7**

- What is the relation between appearances and wealth?

8 Riches are a ransom for a person's life,  
but a poor person hears no threat.

**Proverbs 13:8**

- How can the amount of money you have result in the opposite of what you might expect emotionally?

3 The LORD will not let the righteous go hungry,  
but he denies the wicked what they crave.

**Proverbs 10:3**

- What does this say about contentment?

9 Honor the LORD with your possessions  
and with the first produce of your entire harvest;

10 then your barns will be completely filled,  
and your vats will overflow with new wine.

**Proverbs 3:9-10**

- Similar to being content in the previous proverb, what happens when our priorities are in the right order financially?

6 Go to the ant, you slacker!

Observe its ways and become wise.

7 Without leader, administrator, or ruler,

8 it prepares its provisions in summer;  
it gathers its food during harvest.

9 How long will you stay in bed, you slacker?  
When will you get up from your sleep?

10 A little sleep, a little slumber,  
a little folding of the arms to rest,

11 and your poverty will come like a robber,  
your need, like a bandit.

**Proverbs 6:6-11**

- What can we learn through simple observation of the natural world?



6 Making a fortune through a lying tongue  
is a vanishing mist, a pursuit of death.

**Proverbs 21:6**

- What does dishonest gain really get you?

4 Wealth attracts many friends,  
but a poor person is separated from his friend.

**Proverbs 19:4**

- Will money help your relationships? What will money reveal about your relationships?

25 A generous person will be enriched,  
and the one who gives a drink of water  
will receive water.

**Proverbs 11:25**

- What happens to generous people?

4 Don't wear yourself out to get rich;  
because you know better, stop!  
5 As soon as your eyes fly to it, it disappears,  
for it makes wings for itself  
and flies like an eagle to the sky.

**Proverbs 23:4-5**

- What happens to the material things we work hard to get?

7 The rich rule over the poor,  
and the borrower is a slave to the lender

**Proverbs 22:7**

- How does debt affect our lives?

**LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE**

- Take a minute to review your group's responses to the questions above. Which one is the most surprising? Challenging? Encouraging?
- Wisdom includes all twelve of these principles, but which one do you feel the Spirit directing you toward as your first step toward the life God wants for you?

1. Neither too much or too little is best (30:8-9)
2. Gifts of wisdom and work can result in wealth (10:4)
3. The car and the clothes don't tell the whole story (13:7)
4. More money means both more problems and more opportunities (13:8)



5. The righteous are easily satisfied; the wicked never are (10:3)
6. Honor the Lord with what He gives you (3:9-10)
7. Learn from the ant and save (6:6-11)
8. Diligence over dishonesty or you lose your soul (21:6)
9. Poverty shows your real friends (19:4)
10. Generosity is how you are enriched (11:25)
11. Riches are fleeting (23:4-5)
12. Be Thoughtful about debt (22:7)

## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Did you set any financial goals in the 2021 calendar that you'd like to share for encouragement, accountability, and prayer?
- How might you make a difference in our community or the world by shifting the way you spend, save, and share what God has blessed you with?



**Sacrificial  
Generosity**

**Leader Note:** Encourage group members to consider ways that their own sacrificial giving could make a difference in their community and in the world.

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Any stories, updates, or things to celebrate related to what God is doing in our lives or in the world?
- Did any of the daily devotions encourage or challenge you this week?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, thanking God for His abundant blessings. Ask for wisdom and courage in the ways we save, spend, and share our possessions—we all need help to honor Christ by stewarding our money so that it doesn't steward us!

*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.*





# Week 6: Live Your 100,000 Hours Well

## Group Discussion Guide for: WORD TO THE WISE

### *Selected Proverbs*

#### MAIN POINT

The average American will spend an estimated 100,000 hours in their lifetimes at their jobs—how can we approach our work as a good gift?

#### LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- What are some of the things that you dreamed of being or doing when you grew up? Did you ever get to do any of your dream jobs? What was appealing about that work?
- What work do you most enjoy now? (Remember, “work” doesn’t require a formal title or paycheck—you may volunteer, care for family, be seeking or have part-time, full-time, or contract employment.) Is there any overlap between your dream jobs growing up and the work you currently find appealing or fulfilling?
- Now, what was the worst job you ever had? What made it so bad? Do you see any good that came from it or how it could have potentially made a positive change in the world?

**Leader Note:** Keep this light hearted or honest, without gossip or complaint. It can be helpful to acknowledge tough experiences, learn from them, maybe laugh about them, and bond over the shared reality that life isn’t always what we want it to be.

- Let’s see what Scripture has to say about the nature of work and our posture toward it. We’re going to start with some background on the first man and woman, their work, and what happened to it before jumping back into Proverbs.

#### LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD’S WORD

Choose two people to read Genesis 2:4–9 and 15–18 out loud.

- 4 These are the records of the heavens and the earth, concerning their creation. At the time that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens,
- 5 no shrub of the field had yet grown on the land, and no plant of the field had yet sprouted, for the LORD God had not made it rain on the land, and there was no man to work the ground.
- 6 But mist would come up from the earth and water all the ground.
- 7 Then the LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.
- 8 The LORD God planted a garden in Eden, in the east, and there he placed the man he had formed.
- 9 The LORD God caused to grow out of the ground every tree pleasing in appearance and good for food, including the tree of life in the middle of the garden, as well as the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

**Genesis 2:4–9**



15 The LORD God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to work it and watch over it.  
16 And the LORD God commanded the man, “You are free to eat from any tree of the garden,  
17 but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for on the day you eat from it, you will certainly die.”  
18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper corresponding to him.”

**Genesis 2:15-18**

- What does this text reveal about work? What does it reveal about working conditions?

**Leader Note:** If people are having trouble picking up on the significance right away, direct their attention to verses 5, 15, and 18. Highlight the fact that part of God’s good plan for all of creation is for humanity to work—joining God’s creative work of order and flourishing. Next point back to verses 9, 16, and 18 for examples of the perfectly ordered and beautiful relationships between God, humanity, and the earth. The garden was pleasing to the senses, laden with potential, and partnered perfectly for the work.

Choose someone to read Genesis 3:17-19 out loud.

17 And he said to the man, “Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘Do not eat from it’:

The ground is cursed because of you.  
You will eat from it by means of painful labor  
all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you,  
and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 You will eat bread by the sweat of your brow  
until you return to the ground,  
since you were taken from it.  
For you are dust,  
and you will return to dust.”

**Genesis 3:17-19**

- Who can give a 30-second recap of what happened? How did we get from the breath of life, God’s order of fruitfulness, and mankind’s freedom to enjoy work together in the misty garden to laboring among thorns and thistles, sweating in pain until death turns them back into dust?

**Leader Note:** In short, Adam and Eve doubted God’s goodness while talking to a serpent, choosing to disobey the only restriction, destroying their own freedom and all of the natural harmony between God, mankind, and nature.



Don't let people miss the fact that work was part of Eden. It was productive and pleasing. Sin broke everything—including work. It became difficult and painful. Our common experience of work feeling like a necessary evil was not the way God made us to live. This brings us back to Proverbs—wisdom about how life should function even though the world is broken.

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Alternate between having someone read each of the following verses and discussing the personal application questions.

23 There is profit in all hard work,  
but endless talk leads only to poverty.

**Proverbs 14:23**

- In what way is all hard work valuable—even toilsome labor? How can you avoid missing out on God-given opportunities for actual blessings?

25 A slacker's craving will kill him  
because his hands refuse to work.

**Proverbs 21:25**

- What "craving" distracts your focus, killing your motivation and productivity?

29 Do you see a person skilled in his work?  
He will stand in the presence of kings.  
He will not stand in the presence of the unknown.

**Proverbs 22:29**

- What are you currently doing to develop useful skills? How could those skills open doors to greater opportunities? How might they bless others?

23 Know well the condition of your flock,  
and pay attention to your herds,

24 for wealth is not forever;  
not even a crown lasts for all time.

**Proverbs 27:23-24**

- As we've seen in the past year, totally unexpected circumstances could change everything. How are you making the most of current opportunities and blessings? Honestly, are you taking certain things for granted? If so, what? How can you better steward that opportunity or influence?



Dishonest scales are detestable to the LORD,  
but an accurate weight is his delight.

**Proverbs 11:1**

- You might remember this verse from last week. What are you doing to ensure that your work has integrity? How are you instilling confidence in others that your work provides a good value?

28 A contrary person spreads conflict,  
and a gossip separates close friends.

**Proverbs 16:28**

- How can you bring unity to your workplace? How can you stop division?

## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- How would your life change if you kept in mind that work is God's good design for you, for your relationship with Him, your relationship with other people, and your relationship with the world?
- How can your work make the world a better place?

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Any stories, updates, or things to celebrate related to what God is doing in our lives or in the world?
- Did any of the daily devotions encourage or challenge you this week?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, thanking God for His good gift of work. Ask that He would refresh your enthusiasm for the opportunities before you and possibilities for the future—that you'd clearly see the intrinsic value of work and in making the world a better place, flourishing and pleasant.

*All Scripture references are from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB) unless otherwise noted.*



# Week 7: Honor the Lord by Honoring the Poor

Group Discussion Guide for: **WORD TO THE WISE**

**Proverbs 14:31, 22:22-23, 29:7**

## MAIN POINT

Our Lord champions the cause of the poor, and we honor Him by being kind to the poor and by seeking to understand their plight and their rights.



Serve the  
Community

**RHYTHM REMINDER:** This final lesson of the series naturally highlights opportunities to serve the community. Look for the icon later in the lesson for discussion and application prompts.

## LEAN IN | BREAK THE ICE

- When have you been helpless, maybe even felt invisible or avoided, until someone paid attention to you and your need? What happened? How did you feel during and after the experience?
- When was the last time you accepted someone's help? When was the last time you offered to help someone else—specifically someone who may have felt helpless?
- After looking at how to view wealth and money last week, mostly from a perspective of working hard while spending and saving wisely, this week we turn our attention more fully to sharing with the poor and those in need of help.

## LOOK DOWN | LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Choose three people to read Proverbs 14:31, 22:22-23, and 29:7 out loud.

31 The one who oppresses the poor person insults his Maker,  
but one who is kind to the needy honors him.

**Proverbs 14:31**

22 Don't rob a poor person because he is poor,  
and don't crush the oppressed at the city gate,

23 for the LORD will champion their cause  
and will plunder those who plunder them.

**Proverbs 22:22-23**

7 The righteous person knows the rights of the poor,  
but the wicked one does not understand these concerns.

**Proverbs 29:7**

- Starting with Proverbs 14:31, what is significant about the title "Maker"—arguably more powerful than the more common "LORD"? What truth does the intentional usage of this name for God highlight?





**Leader Note:** If people need help connecting the dots, remind them of how we looked back to Genesis and the creation story to see the intrinsic value of work as part of God's good design before sin corrupted everything. The theological truth and emotional response to recognizing another person as being created in the image of God is life-changing. (This is a great opportunity and last chance to promote the upcoming *Deep Dive: The Image of God* with Pastors Ines Franklin and Steve Bang Lee. Would your Life Group be interested in doing the study together?)

- In 14:31 who does “his” refer to—the one who oppresses or the poor? How does the fact that “his Maker” equally applies to the oppressor and the oppressed affect the way you feel or think about power and poverty, and about being a rich or poor person?

**Leader Note:** Notice that this same ambiguity exists at the end of the verse, “one who is kind to the needy honors him.” Honoring a person created in the image of God is simultaneously honoring the Maker of that person.

- In addition to the theological truth for our minds and the emotional tug on our hearts, the next verses provide a stern warning and promise. Why should the rich and powerful be disturbed by Proverbs 22:22–23? Why should the poor and powerless be comforted by the same verses?

**Leader Note:** The Maker of all people is a champion of justice. Just like we honor the Maker by honoring people He created. We insult the Maker when we insult or ignore people He created in His image. The oppressed is no less dignified and worthy of respect as an image bearer of God than the powerful oppressor.

- In Proverbs 29:7, how does true kindness and righteousness go beyond mere politeness? What does this verse encourage us to actively seek as we honor our Maker?

## LOOK IN | APPLY GOD'S WORD TO YOUR LIFE

Read Matthew 25:31–46 out loud.

- How do Jesus's words make you feel? Like Proverbs 22:22–23, how is this imagery both scary and beautiful?
- Has a person or need been on your heart lately, or came to mind while we read Jesus's words about the least of these? If so, who or what?

**Leader Note:** Once again, allow the group to feel the tension of conviction and compassion growing in their hearts. However, the point is not in any way to guilt or scare people into the appearance of caring about the poor or any particular cause. Jesus's parable of the sheep and goats, Proverbs 22 and other Scriptures should be sobering yet break our hearts in love, not fear.



## LOOK OUT | IDENTIFY THE RELEVANCE OF GOD'S WORD IN THE WORLD

- Have someone read 1 John 3:16–18. How can we love in action and in truth? How can we better educate ourselves for meaningful solutions? How can we get to know people as image bearers of our Maker—not just as “poor” or as a project?
- What needs are you aware of? Are you in a certain part of town, near a certain person or group of people, or otherwise aware of a need that you could help meet?
- Is there a ministry of the church or an organization in the community that you are curious about or actively and passionately involved in?
- How can you as an individual, with your family, or with us as a group serve our community?



Serve the  
Community

**Leader Note:** If anyone in your group (or all of you) would like help finding ways to serve, go to [marinerschurch.org/serve/](https://marinerschurch.org/serve/). The menu in the top right corner of the site also has specific information about serving with Outreach, on campus, or in the Resource Center.

## STORIES & CELEBRATION

- Any stories, updates, or things to celebrate related to what God is doing in our lives or in the world?
- Is there anything else that God put on your heart during the sermon on this text that you'd like to share—something that helped you better understand what it means to follow Jesus or inspired you to take a step of faith?
- What has been your greatest takeaway or point of growth during this series, *Word to The Wise*?

**Leader Note:** If Matthew 25 wasn't shocking enough already, remind everyone about the new series on scandalous conversations with Jesus starting next week.

## PRAY

- Close in prayer, praising our Maker for His justice and compassion for those in need. Ask for a broken heart overflowing with love for all our brothers and sisters in Christ, including “the least of these” who are still fellow image bearers. Pray for wisdom and discernment in seeking a better understanding of their plight and their rights—and how together we can fearlessly change the world!

