

Wise Words for Families



SABBATH—FEBRUARY 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Proverbs 5:3-14; Proverbs 13:22; Proverbs 14:26; Proverbs 17:22; Proverbs 23:13, 14; Proverbs 31:10-31; Matthew 19:4-6; 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4.

MEMORY VERSE: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways remember him. Then he will make your paths smooth and straight” (Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV).

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS HAS INSTRUCTIONS, POEMS, QUESTIONS, AND WISE SAYINGS. Proverbs talks openly about family relationships.¹ Proverbs is a family book in which a parent gives advice to a child on how to live a godly life. Parents might write a letter of advice to a son or daughter going to college, setting up their own home, or taking a job away from home. In the same way, Proverbs carries a father's advice to his son. “My son, listen to your father's advice. Don't [do not] turn away from your mother's teaching” (Proverbs 1:8, NIV). Deuteronomy tells parents to share their beliefs with their children. Proverbs also tells parents to share their beliefs with their children. In the father's advice, we hear the voice of the heavenly Father calling us to learn.

A LOOK AT THIS WEEK'S LESSON: The book of Proverbs gives those who will listen powerful, useful advice for marriage and family.

Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 11.

¹relationships—the connections we have with people.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 5**LOVE THE RIGHT WOMAN
(Proverbs 5:3-14).**

List the problems and results of a sexual relationship before marriage or an adulterous affair. Proverbs 5:3-14.

The unmarried godly person does not have sex. A godly married person has sex only with her or his spouse.² Proverbs talks especially to men about this. The Song of Solomon talks especially to women. Read Song of Solomon 4:12-15. The powerful attraction of ungodly sex must be weighed against the terrible results of this sin. Sex outside of marriage lacks responsibility. So it is not love. Physical and emotional strength are lost. Most important, one must answer to God for the choices made in life.

Sexual closeness is one of God's greatest gifts to humans. It is an honorable right of marriage only (Matthew 19:5; 1 Corinthians 7:3, 4; Hebrews 13:4). In Proverbs, the picture of refreshing, plentiful water is used to symbolize the pleasure and satisfaction a married couple should have in their love together. This is different from the waste that comes from unfaithfulness. The words "the wife of your youth" (Proverbs 5:18, NKJV) show that, even when the two grow older, their duty and responsibility should continue. A husband is still

²spouse—a husband or a wife.

³humanity—all the people of the world.

attracted to his wife's beauty (Proverbs 5:19).

Because of sin, sexual desires can pull persons away from God's plan for sex. But God also has given humanity³ the power to reason and to choose. If not kept under control, sexual desires can be overpowering. Faithfulness to God's plan for sex in marriage can prevent the development of wrong sexual relationships. The choice of lifelong faithfulness to God's plan for sex in marriage is wise and gives many rewards.

What advice would you give someone who is struggling with sexual temptations?

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 6**A CALL TO FATHERS
(Proverbs 14:26).**

What good points of character should a father have? (These good points can have long-term influences on children.)

Proverbs 13:22; Proverbs 27:23, 24

Proverbs 14:26 _____

Proverbs 15:1, 18; Proverbs 16:32

Proverbs 15:27

Proverbs 29:17

The characters of fathers directly influence their children. Children look to their fathers for support, love, guidance, and modeling.⁴ Proverbs praises fathers who are faithful givers and wise managers of family resources.⁵ Many fathers are the same as “a greedy man [who] brings trouble to his family” (Proverbs 15:27, NIV). Fathers must remember to make their families more important than their work. Godly fathers try to be patient. They respect their children’s depend-

⁴modeling—acting as a role model for others’ profit.

⁵resources—all that the family has.

⁶authority—the right to be in charge.

ence upon them. They discipline their children. But they also are careful not to abuse their position of authority.⁶ Most important, dedicated fathers want to follow God. They want to be controlled by His love and by the teaching of His Word (the Bible). In that way, they might guide their children to God.

Another important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. The father’s faithfulness and continuing love for her have a strong influence upon the children’s well-being, even into their adult years.

In Proverbs, loyalty to God, faithfulness to spouses, and honesty in one’s personal and community life are important truths. Success in everything depends upon the person’s heart. The attractions of sin are many. But the wise husband and father looks to God for help to always make right choices.

How are the truths shown in today’s lesson important for everyone? How do you think your actions might influence others, especially children? How should you be more careful?

TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 7

CORRECTION WITH LOVE (Proverbs 29:1).

What does Proverbs teach about the importance of correcting a

child? **Proverbs 10:17; Proverbs 23:13, 14; Proverbs 29:1; Proverbs 29:15.**

Parents sometimes correct their children to teach them what is right. They correct the children for disobedience, or even to show their displeasure when embarrassed. But what is God's plan for correcting young family members? Proverbs talks about hope when it talks about correcting children (Proverbs 19:18). Godly parents know that children have a sinful nature. Only one power can help them with this. This power is Christ. (Read Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 29.) The purpose of Christian parenting,⁷ including correction, is to lead children to God.

Supporting a tender plant: Through Christ, correction is not punishment. It is not a show of authority. It is redemptive.⁸ Loving parents know the strength of sin. So God's plan is for parents to guide their children to Christ. Caring parents correct kindly and firmly. They control and guide their children through their early years. They guide and control the same way a gardener supports a newly planted tree. Parents guide and control their children until self-control takes over and the children come to trust in God and cooperate with His plan for salvation and growth.

What message for parents is



found in Proverbs 13:24; Proverbs 23:13, 14?

Just a few verses mention the “rod”⁹ (Hebrew: *shebet*) when correcting children. It is popular among Christian parents to believe that the rod should be used as the heavenly Shepherd (Jesus) uses His rod to guide His flock (Psalm 23:4). Elsewhere, the Bible points to using patient teaching, steady modeling, good communication, and close relationships for helping a child do what is right (Deuteronomy 11:18, 19). The child's

⁷parenting—bringing up children.

⁸redemptive—something that helps to save you for Jesus.

⁹the rod—a stick a shepherd uses to guide the sheep.

feeling of being loved by his or her parents is important if correction is to be redemptive (Proverbs 13:24).



Gently guide your children the way a shepherd gently guides his sheep.

Sometimes a parent can be too harsh¹⁰ in correcting a child. Then correction is not redemptive. What should the parent do then?

WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 8

**IS LIFE BETTER ON A ROOFTOP?
(Proverbs 27:15, 16).**

How does Proverbs add humor to some of the problems of family life? Proverbs 21:9, 19; Proverbs 27:15, 16.

Many proverbs deal with the ways we treat each other in close relationships. These proverbs make their point with humor. Good examples of these are about an insensitive friend



It is better to live on your roof than to be with a nagging wife.

who “sings songs to a heavy heart” (Proverbs 25:20, NKJV) and the early rising family member who “blesses” sleepers “with a loud voice” (Proverbs 27:14, NKJV). Wives reading these verses about quarreling women may want to add some proverbs about men! They may argue that such sayings cause the very problem these proverbs describe by focusing only on women. But husbands who share the responsibility for having a happy home are guilty, too, of being quarrelsome.

A merry heart helps. Having a sense of humor is good for a family. Oil in a machine helps the machine to run smoothly. In the same way, humor in a family can help the family run smoothly. Humor reduces stress and problems. “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (Proverbs 17:22, NKJV). Proverbs takes some of its own medicine throughout the book. It gives us permission to laugh at a few of the

¹⁰harsh—being too strict.

things that bother us. Humor can help us smile. Humor can make it easier to talk about things that bother us. But humor should not be used to make fun of something that needs serious attention.

A low-grade fever may be a sign of a continuing infection. Quarreling, nagging, and complaining may show there is controlled anger in one or more family members because of difficulties with communication in the relationship. The complaining partner tries to overcome what she or he thinks is the power, control, and unwillingness of the other person by nagging or quarreling. But if the infection is cleared up, the fever will go away. Family members should build on their love for God and their responsibility to one another to communicate their needs and feelings. In this way, they can get to the cause of their anger and clear it up.

Why is laughter so important for the home? How can laughter be used for good? When should family members not laugh about something or about another family member?

THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 9

A TRULY WEALTHY WIFE (Proverbs 31:10-31).

Proverbs closes with praise for a wife of noble character. List the

characteristics and qualities (good points) that are praised. Proverbs 31:10-31.

The woman described is special. The poetry is special also. Each of the verses beginning with Proverbs 31:10 begins with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. So from these verses we get a great sense of tribute to a worthy wife. Not even the whole Hebrew alphabet can praise her enough!

Proverbs' focus on marrying a good partner is shown in a proverb of the rabbis:¹¹ "A man's home is his wife. A noble wife is her husband's crown. But a wife who brings shame is like sickness in his bones" (Proverbs 12:4, NIV). At the end of Proverbs is a picture of an ideal wife with many different skills. She makes clothes, buys land, farms, and manages the home and money. She also cares well for her family. Her family loves her and praises her.

We should not expect every woman to have all these talents. These verses are not a blueprint, with which husbands should measure their wives. Rather, these verses suggest what is most important for both women and men: trustworthiness, mercy,¹² dependability, faithfulness, kindness, and industry.¹³ The secret of such a life is that she "fears [honors] the Lord" (Proverbs 31:30, NKJV).

In Proverbs 31:10, we see the word "virtuous" (pure) or "of noble charac-

¹¹rabbis—Jewish religious teachers.

¹²mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

¹³industry—hard work.

ter” (NIV). This means strength or wealth. It is translated as “riches” in Psalm 62:10. It describes Joshua’s “men of valor [courage]” (Joshua 1:14). Boaz praises Ruth with the word “virtuous” (Ruth 3:11). In Proverbs 31:10, the word is used to describe wealth. True wealth lies in character, honesty, and the fear of the Lord. These are worth so much more than jewels.

Who are some of the women of valor and virtue who have influenced your life? What other qualities do godly women have?

FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 10

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Ellen G. White, “Marital¹⁴ Duties and Privileges,” *The Adventist Home*, pp. 121–128; “Manual¹⁵ for Training,” *Education*, pp. 214–222; “Security Only in Right Thinking,” *The Faith I Live By*, p. 222.

Keeping the heart in heaven: “Christians should be careful that they keep the heart with much care. They should develop a love for thinking about God and worshipping Him. Many complain about having to study the Bible, pray, and think about God. They feel that doing these things is a waste of time. I wish you could all see that these are things God wants you to do. Then you would make the kingdom of heaven the most important

part of your life. To keep your heart in heaven will give strength in everything you do, and put life into all your duties. To help the mind think about heavenly things will put life into everything we do. . . . We are small in spiritual things. (Ephesians 4:13.)” —Adapted from Ellen G. White Comments, *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1157.



Where is your heart?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Many Christians find a support group helpful as they try to guard their hearts against temptation. How can support groups add to the help a person receives from prayer, Bible study, and the Holy Spirit?

¹⁴marital—having to do with marriage.

¹⁵manual—a book that teaches you how to do something.

2. As a class, read your answers aloud to Wednesday's final question. Discuss the possible results of your answers.
3. How does today's culture glorify women? How can we protect ourselves from glorifying women in these ways?

SUMMARY: The book of Proverbs passes on the wisdom of many godly men and women. They have valued loyalty to God and also the freedom of choice. Proverbs asks us today to respect and honor God and make wise choices that will strengthen marriage and family life.