

WISDOM FOR THE GOOD LIFE



The book of Proverbs

PROVERBS: WISDOM FOR THE GOOD LIFE

| WEEK | PASSAGE | THEME |
|------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Proverbs 1:1-7 | The beginning of wisdom |
| 2 | Proverbs 1:8-19 & 9:1-18 | The nature of wisdom |
| 3 | Proverbs 16 | The patterns of wisdom |
| 4 | Proverbs 30 | The search for wisdom |

INTRODUCTION:

A GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE PROVERBS STUDIES

Humans live in this world constantly trying to work out how to most successfully live within the world that they inhabit. In other words, they are seeking wisdom; trying to work out the best way to live. This is nothing new; people have been doing this for centuries and writing it all down for people to learn and glean wisdom from.

The book of Proverbs is the God inspired book of wisdom for humans; teaching humanity how to live successfully within the world. It offers wisdom in terms of daily life, and the array of human relationships that we operate in. Providing wisdom for how to live in this world amongst the disorder of sin.

As we read Proverbs we are pointed to Christ; the one human who perfectly expresses the gaining of wisdom and living by it. Therefore, today we can read the book of Proverbs in light of the gospel. Letting the life and work of Christ, combined with the book of Proverbs, to be the framework from which we seek to gain wisdom and live by it.

The four main studies provide an overarching study on Proverbs. The daily bible reading guide offers more in depth into Proverbs, providing more of a detailed look into the lessons of wisdom that Proverbs offers. All of this is intended to supplement the sermon series.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK:

1. GOSPEL COMMUNITY

- Take this to GC each week so you can follow along with the Bible Study.
- Use the WFL ideas on page 11 to help and direct your WFL times as a GC.

2. PERSONAL READING

- Read one chapter of Proverbs every day for the next month and think through the following questions:
 - How do you see the wisdom of God in this chapter?
 - How do you see Jesus?
 - How can you put the wisdom of God in affect in your life?
- Use the prayer point suggestions below to guide your prayers as well as writing down people you are seeking to reach.

PRAYER POINTS

- We want to encourage you to be on mission to your non-Christian friends, family and contacts. Who are you on mission to? Make a list and pray for them regularly.

SUGGESTED READING:

If you would like to engage more with the Proverbs series:

- *Proverbs: The Tree of Life* by Graeme Goldsworthy
- *The Discipline of Spiritual Discernment* by Tim Challies
- *The Way of Wisdom* by Tim Keller

WEEK 1 GC STUDY: PROVERBS 1:1-7

Where do people in this world often look to for wisdom and knowledge?

READ PROVERBS 1:1-7

What does this passage say are the purposes of these 'proverbs of Solomon'?

What do you think is meant by the following:

- Wisdom (vs2)
- Instruction (vs2-3)
- Prudence (vs3-4)
- Discretion (vs4-5)

Where does one's search for wisdom begin? What is the link between knowledge and a life of wisdom?

What is the warning in verse 7? What does this show about the process of gaining wisdom?

READ MATTHEW 7:24-27; 12:42

What does Jesus claim about himself in these verses? What does this teach us about how to respond to Jesus' teaching?

Where do you find yourself looking to for wisdom? Why do you think this is?

Is fearing God something that you would consider to be part of life? Why or why not? If so, what does this look like in your life?

Are there things that the Bible/Jesus teaches that just don't make sense to the world, and which just seem silly to do? How does what we have learnt in this study speak into that?

GC PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 2 GC STUDY: PROVERBS 1:8-19 & PROVERBS 9:1-18

What influence do you think community has had on your life? Whether that be positively or negatively?

READ PROVERBS 1:8-19

What reason does the writer (Solomon) give for listening to what he has written?

Who stands to influence the son? What are their methods?

In what ways did Jesus embody/exemplify the wisdom of these verses in his earthly life?

READ PROVERBS 9:1-18

What two invitations are within this chapter? What are the differences between them?

What is the one similarity of these two 'ladies' (verse 4, 16)? Considering how similar the calls are, what can we do to determine which one to follow (see verse 7-12)?

How have you been enticed by the community around you to sin?

How do you usually respond to rebuke/correction? Is it something you seek out? If not, what is stopping you?

Who are the people in your life who can offer you rebuke and correction in a godly and helpful way? What makes constructive criticism more palatable to receive?

What ways as Summerleas community can we impact one another to follow Godly wisdom? What practically promotes/impedes the sharing of true wisdom in our church community? How can we change for the better in this regard?

If you would like some advice on how to rebuke people well, have a read of the article in Appendix A called, 'The Art of Rebuking' by Geoff Lin.

GC PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 3 GC STUDY: PROVERBS 16

When you think of the world around you what do you think it is living for?
What are their top priorities?

READ PROVERBS 16:1-15

How do the proverbs in the passage describe the relative importance and power of God and humans?

Would you say these proverbs present the outcomes of a wise/godly life in “idealistic” terms or “realistic terms” (or in some other way)?

What can we learn from these proverbs regarding the relationship between God’s sovereignty and human choices/decisions/responsibility?

What portrait do these verses present of a life wisely lived? How does the power and purpose of God feature in such a life?

READ MATTHEW 16:21-27

How do the plans and purposes of God find practical expression in the life and choices of Jesus? And in the lives and choices of his followers?

How does the relationship between God's sovereignty and human responsibility play out in your life? Is it a source of confusion? Comfort? Or maybe a bit of both? Something else?

What difference would it make in your life if you held onto the truth that life was not all about you, but all about God? How can we help each other remember this truth and live it out?

GC PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 4 GC STUDY: PROVERBS 30

Where/what/who do you tend to look when you are faced with a problem or issue?

READ PROVERBS 30

What do you think the author is seeking in this passage? Where does he find his answer/understanding in life?

What place does the word of God have in these sayings?

What are the two different types of wisdom talked about in this chapter?

What role does worldly wisdom play alongside godly wisdom? How do these work together?

Where do we have to be careful regarding worldly wisdom (see Romans 1:18-21)?

Whose wisdom can we always rely on? (see Psalm 119:105) What does this teach us about how we are to approach wisdom and knowledge in our lives?

How are you going with your daily Bible reading? Are you feeding on the word of God to help you grow and mature? Why or why not? What obstacles are stopping you from daily devotions?

What do you think are the benefits of memorising scripture? Is this something that you prioritise? Why or why not? How could you develop this in your life?

What are some ways that we can help each other grow in and use godly wisdom?

GC PRAYER POINTS

WHOLE FAMILY LEARNING (WFL) IDEA FOR PROVERBS SERIES

1. Choose one theme from the book of Proverbs and trace what it teaches/or you could divide up the different themes to different groups within your GC

You could choose from:

- Speech
- Lies/truth
- Laziness
- Relationships (parent/children or husband/wife or friends)
- Humility/pride
- Parenting
- Anger
- Generosity/greed

A helpful way to do this could be to find all the relevant proverbs (google search could help with this), print them out, and go from there. You could make a game out of it as people have to try and find the right Proverbs for that topic.

Try and come up with a summary of what the book of Proverbs teaches about the particular topic and discuss it as a group.

SUMMERLEAS CHRISTIAN CHURCH MISSION PARTNERS

FELLOWSHIP OF OVERSEAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS (FOCUS) & SUBBIES

FOCUS is a Christian international student society that seeks to share the good news of Jesus with International students at the University of Hobart.



How Summerleas can help:

- Go along to Friday Night FOCUS/Subbies and/or cook for them.
What: FREE food, fun, friendship and Bible teaching
When:
 - FOCUS: Fridays 6.00-8.30pm (if your GC is bringing food please bring it at 5:30pm)
 - Subbies: Tuesdays 7-8:30pmWhere: Wellspring Anglican Church
- Pray:
 - Praise God for this wonderful opportunity to reach the nations.
 - Pray that we will be keen to support this strategic ministry and that it would grow us in our passion for God's great mission!
 - Pray for the leadership teams that they will speak the truth in love.
 - Pray that God will be working in the hearts of those who come along to hear and understand that Jesus is their Lord and Saviour

THE DURDIN FAMILY



Marc and Joey Durdin are another one of our mission partners at Summerleas Church. Marc is the developer of Keyman software which helps translate writing into native languages. Joey is a midwife who provides support and education to women in many ways. They are currently seeking to go to Cambodia in 2022.

- Pray:
 - That God would guide them as they make plans and prepare to move back to Cambodia.
 - Pray for Joey as she continues to educate and support women remotely.
 - Pray that God will use them to be a light to all those they come into contact with. That they will be bold to proclaim Christ and show his love to the people in their lives.



The art of REBUKING

Whether it's the thought of having to rebuke someone or - worse - being the recipient of a rebuke, there are few areas of the Christian life which make us more nervous. Mention the topic of rebuking and retorts like "who are you to judge?", "stop being holier-than-thou", "mind your own business" come to mind. And yet the New Testament repeatedly instructs us to rebuke each other.

To help us with this tricky topic, **Geoff Lin** looks at three aspects of the Christian rebuke: the when, the goal and the how-to.

WHEN SHOULD YOU REBUKE?

One situation is to combat heresy amongst God's people. Take Paul's final charge to his protégé Timothy:

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

2 Timothy 4:1-5

Misconduct (ie sin) amongst God's people also calls for a rebuke:

But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

Luke 3:19-20

A third situation takes Paul's logic in 1 Corinthians 6:12 ("Everything is permissible for me" - but not everything is beneficial") to imply that we ought to rebuke a brother or sister who is engaged in non-beneficial or "unwise behaviour." This is not so much sinful behaviour as stupid behaviour - although it is, of course, the hardest situation to identify!¹ Much wisdom for the rebuker is required, both in identifying unwise conduct and in formulating an appropriate response.

WHAT'S THE GOAL OF A REBUKE?

Firstly, to save Christians from eternal judgment. Unchecked sin will lead to (spiritual) death and so an effective rebuke will bring them back to eternal life:

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

James 5:19-20

Secondly, so that Christians might grow in godliness:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.²

Colossians 1:28

Either reason is a noble, lofty and worthwhile basis for "biting the bullet" and rebuking each other.



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HOW TO REBUKE

Much more could be said than this, but here are seven principles for rebuking.

PRINCIPLE 1: "NOT WHAT I SAY, BUT WHAT GOD SAYS"

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:14-17

Scripture can make us wise for salvation (v15) ... but equally if it is God breathed it useful for "teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" in terms of both what to say and how to say it. In other words, the criteria for and conduct of a rebuke must always be governed by Scripture. So the best way to be ready to rebuke (and to do so appropriately) is to read your Bible more, that you might know what God says in any given situation.

This is particularly important when the person you are rebuking is older than you ...

PRINCIPLE 2: REBUKE + ENCOURAGE

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father.

1 Timothy 5:1

Timothy was a young pastor and yet Paul says he is to rebuke older men in his congregation. No doubt this would have been awkward for everyone, and so Paul carefully instructs Timothy in the manner of his rebuke. He doesn't say, "never rebuke an older man"; rather, he says "just don't do so harshly", and the model he gives is to "exhort" him as your father. I find it hard to imagine ever rebuking my Dad (or envisage the time when my 4 year old son might rebuke me!); so if ever I have to do so, it will be with gentleness.

In fact, our emphasis is to be on encouragement: focussing on the positives, not negatives; highlighting the upside, not the downside. In 1 Timothy 5:1 the word "exhort" is normally translated "encourage", and it's surely no co-incidence that the command to rebuke is so often paired with one to encourage (eg Colossians 1:28 (above); Titus 2:15 "encourage and rebuke with all authority").

In the final analysis, would you rather be known as a "rebuker" or an "encourager"? Can you imagine the evangelistic potential of our communities if they were full of the latter?!

PRINCIPLE 3: "WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT ANYWAY?"

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom ...

Colossians 3:16

We've already seen that those with authority in the church are to rebuke. And yet the Bible insists that we are ALL to rebuke each other. The reason is because heresy, misconduct and unwise behaviour are contagious: they spread and



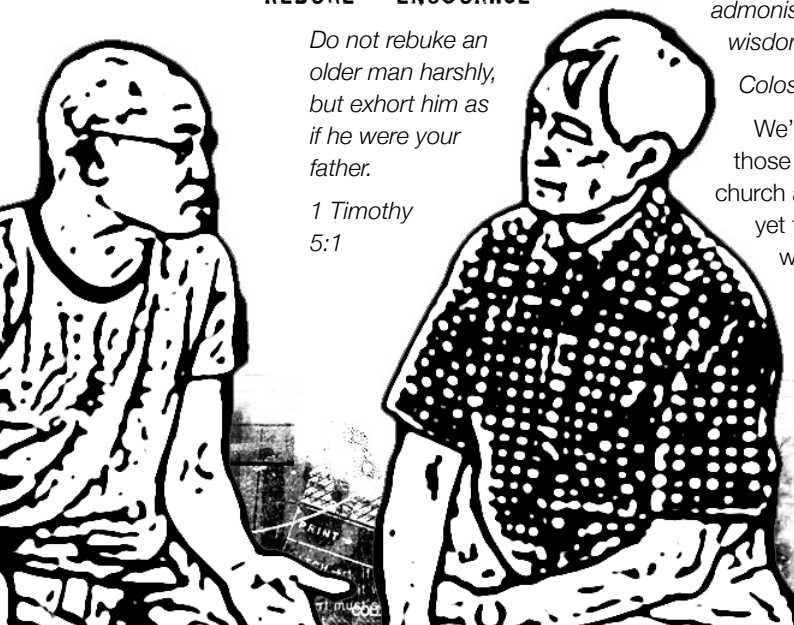
[T]he criteria for and conduct of a rebuke must always be governed by Scripture. So the best way to be ready to rebuke (and to do so appropriately) is to read your Bible more, that you might know what God says in any given situation.

infect others, and so it's everyone's responsibility to preserve and protect our community. Don't just leave the task for someone else to deal with.

Of course, we don't want to become a community of self-appointed morals crusaders who actually enjoy running around handing out theological red cards at the slightest infraction (if you've ever met someone like that you know that dying on every hill makes you sound a lot like a sheep crying wolf)³. Conversely our tendency in our highly individualistic and privatized 21st century western churches is to avoid conflict rather than confront it ("it's none of my business ..."). If that's your default position, hear the strength of Paul's exhortation in Col 3:16 ... otherwise, those who aren't very good at rebuking will end up being the ones who do, while those who should be doing so remain silent.

PRINCIPLE 4: IN PUBLIC, NOT IN PRIVATE (WHERE APPROPRIATE)

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or



three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

1 Timothy 5:17-20

Because sin is contagious then sometimes a public response is called for. This is particularly the case for church leaders: just as they are entitled to public honour, so are they to be subjected to public rebuke.

The key is 'where appropriate'! When I discussed this principle with members of my congregation (of which I am the pastor) some observed that given I'm far from perfect every Sunday could turn into a "rebuke Geoff publicly" session! However, 1 Timothy 5:19 indicates that an accusation must be both substantiated and (by implication) serious ... but if it is, then a public rebuke is necessary "that others may take warning."

As an aside, Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Corinthians 5:1-5 speak of more extremes matters and processes of church disciple (eg "handing someone over to Satan"). I'm not going to look at them ... except to mention that the goal in each case is that the offender might be saved from eternal judgment and brought to eternal life (see goal 1 above).

PRINCIPLE 5: "WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT HERE?"

Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

1 Timothy 4:16

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

1 Timothy 5:1-2

One way to prevent frivolous accusations against elders is to remember that "he who is without sin may cast the first stone." In

other words, rebuke only after examining yourself first. I suspect that's why Paul's command to rebuke in 1 Timothy 5:1 comes after Paul has urged Timothy to "watch his own life and doctrine closely".

Does that mean you can't rebuke anyone until your own life is perfect? Clearly not; the New Testament expects we will rebuke. Rather this is a reminder (dare I say 'encouragement'?!) that before you try to remove the speck from your brother's eye, make sure you've got the log out of your own ... if for no other reason than it will make eye surgery a lot easier.

PRINCIPLE 6: REBUKING ... AND BEING REBUKED

Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you.

Proverbs 9:7-8

To take Principle 5 further: are you prepared to ask others to rebuke you? If you want to be wise (remember 2 Timothy 3:14-17?) then you should want to be rebuked! In fact - and this is harder still - will you love the person who rebukes you ... because if you do, you are a wise person indeed!⁴

PRINCIPLE 7: "THIS HURTS ME MORE THAN IT HURTS YOU"

So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.

Acts 20:31

The final and most important principle in rebuking is to remember that your tone of voice will often be heard more clearly than what you actually say. A rebuke delivered with compassion is far more likely to change someone's heart than one delivered coldly or condescendingly. And so, is your concern painfully evident?

That's why the most effective rebuke comes from a close friend, not a complete stranger or a church elder. If you must rebuke a friend (with compassion) and your friend realizes you are so concerned for them and their salvation and their godliness you're even putting your friendship on the line, then if they are (in this regard!) wise, they might just turn from the error of their ways.

Geoff Lin

- 1 There are some case studies below ... although it seems to me they generally fall into 1 of 3 categories: attitude, behaviour and doctrine
- 2 Paul must be referring to progressive sanctification, not to justification (Col 1:22 says that was secured for us at the cross)
- 3 Apologies for the 3 mixed metaphors!
- 4 cf 1 Thess 5:12 - 13 "Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work ..."



Read each point below and ask: is this a case for rebuke? What are the issues? What would you say? How would you say it?

1. A good friend is always complaining about how financially poor they are
2. Someone in your homegroup is constantly talking about advancing their career
3. Even though he never sleeps there, a guy in your church is always at his girlfriend's house (who lives alone)
4. A member of your homegroup insists that "those who don't hear about Jesus can be saved according to what they do know about God"
5. A self-professing Christian friend only comes to church when s/he 'feels' like it
6. A newly-married couple who are about to start work want to buy a house (saying "rent is wasted money")

FOR DISCUSSION