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---

**YOUR WAY**

NAVIGATING A WORLD OF COMPLEXITY  
*with the wisdom of God*

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**STUDY 1 - *The House of Wisdom vs. The House of Folly***

**READ - *Proverbs 9:1-18***

*"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."*

*- Proverbs 9:10*

### **OVERVIEW**

The ninth chapter of Proverbs begins by contrasting the houses of two women. One house is occupied by an elegant woman named Wisdom, and one house is occupied by a deceitful woman named Folly. One house stands constructed with seven pillars (or the pillars of God's perfection), while the other stands constructed upon the "simple" natural reasoning of humanity.

The understanding set forth in this passage is that the way of God's wisdom leads to life and life in abundance (John 10:10), while the way that seems "wise to a man" in his natural reasoning actually takes him into the house of Folly, which Proverbs describes as a place of "death" and the "depths of hell" (Proverbs 9:18). This coincides with the overall teaching of scripture and with the context of Proverbs itself, which states, "there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25).

Accepting the Biblical principle that our reasoning, our rationale, and our aspirations have been inherently affected by the nature of sin we inherited at birth (Psalm 51:5) is fundamental in understanding that our natural reasoning and subsequent decision-making cannot be fully trusted in guiding our lives. With this fact before us, one would rightfully wonder how the effects of the sin nature could be cleared so that one can begin reasoning properly. The glorious grace of God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ has given us this "reset" to be born again and live life anew in him (Colossians 2:13-14). Hallelujah!

While God's Word makes "wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7) and the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10), the reality is that we are daily faced with this fork in the road where a choice must be made, and we choose to walk down the road of our own reasoning toward the house of folly rather than relying upon God's word to guide us to the house of Wisdom. Jesus pointed out, "the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many." Many of us know this to be true as we look back over some of the destructive choices we have made in our lives rather than relying on the wisdom of God to guide us.

Proverbs 9 makes it clear that if we will respect God's authority and follow the direction of his word, we will not be moved by what "sounds good," "looks good," or "feels good" – we will only be moved by what God says is good.

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**MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION**

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

**PASSAGE QUESTIONS**

1. Give an example of when you leaned upon God's wisdom for a big decision, and describe the outcome. Give an example of a time you leaned upon what you thought was "right" for a big decision and later learned it probably wasn't the right thing to do.

2. Why must wisdom ultimately come from God (Proverbs 3:19)? Why do you think your own natural wisdom may not be enough to solve or resolve the issues and events of your life?

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3. Why is the fear of God so important to gaining true wisdom and living in the house of wisdom (9:10)? What is challenging about placing God and his word in the highest place over our own reasoning and rationale?

4. Life is full of choices. When you are at a fork in the road, do you most often find yourself leaning on your own wisdom or God's wisdom? Why?

What are ways we can grow so God's wisdom instructs us through our daily lives (Psalm 25:12)?

5. Jesus is the wisdom of God, and the good news of his death on the cross reveals the wisdom and power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-31). How does trusting in Jesus allow and empower us to truly live according to God's wisdom?

**AS YOU GO...**

- Read Matthew 7:24-27. Talk about what it looks like to be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.
- Examine how and what you tend to think about. Seek to identify whether you are trusting God's guidance in your thinking or your own natural wisdom.
- Make note of how God has imparted his wisdom to you this week and how it affected your life. Tell your community group and others about the great things God has started doing in your life.

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## **PRAYER**

Invite God into your reasoning. An example Prayer may be:

My Great God and Father, I thank you for your great love that has saved me through the death and resurrection of your holy son, Jesus. It is because of this great gift of your salvation that I even recognize that I am in desperate need of you today. Therefore, I humble myself before you and your great wisdom, and I recognize that I understand nothing about my life and nothing about my circumstances unless you give me your insight.

You alone are my God! I exalt you, and I cast all my thoughts and my reasoning at your feet and ask that you open the eyes of my understanding so that I may know what steps to take next.

Speak to me, Jesus, through your word. Guide my heart. Capture my thoughts so that I may know your direction for my life. I reject worry, fret, panic, or fear from governing my thoughts – for you are my God, you are my wisdom, you are my strength, and I completely trust in you to guide me and direct me in all my ways. Speak to me, Lord, and I will listen to your voice.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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**STUDY 2 - *The Tongue***

**READ - *Proverbs 18:21***

*"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits"*

*- Proverbs 18:21*

**OVERVIEW**

Proverbs 18:21 reminds us that there are two options for the things we say (or don't say): they either bring death or life. Words that bring life are from God, are true, build up, and bind us together through love, trust and intimacy. Words that bring death are from Satan, the father of lies, and conceal, destroy, cause us to hide, and tear us apart. We use words all day, every day, in conversation, emails, text, social media, interactions with others, and thoughts in our heads. With that, we have the opportunity each day to choose to bring life or bring death with our words – to both ourselves and others.

Jesus says in Matthew 12:36-37, "I tell you, on the day of judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." This is good news in one sense that God will judge those who have hurt us with their words. But at the same time, it condemns us because we all have been careless and hurtful with our words. That is why we need Jesus – the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us; the Word who justifies us through his perfect obedience to God's word.

Ray Ortland put it this way about Jesus' words, "His words were infallibly wise, and we felt outclassed, we felt threatened, we felt shamed, so we killed him—and he took it. Why? What happened at the cross? On the cross Jesus loved us so much that his sacrifice deleted the damning record before God of every foolish word you and I have ever spoken. He took the divine condemnation for our lies, insults, gossip, put-downs, bragging, false promises, and griping, as well as our guilty silence when we should have spoken up. He took it all onto himself and hit the delete button. Look at him on his cross, dying for what you and I have said and left unsaid. See him there, trust him, and you are finally free of it all forever."

As we look to Jesus, we are humbled by our need for him and empowered by his Spirit to be like him and bring life through our words.

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### MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

### PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Where have you experienced “death” from what people said (or didn’t say) to you? Where have you experienced life?

2. Look up the following passages and write out particular ones that speak to you currently. What are some takeaways?

Proverbs 12:17-19  
Proverbs 12:22  
Proverbs 12:25  
Proverbs 14:23  
Proverbs 15:1-4, 7  
Proverbs 17:4, 9, 27  
Proverbs 18:6-8

Proverbs 20:15  
Proverbs 29:11  
Proverbs 31:8-9  
Luke 6:43-45  
John 8:42-47  
James 3:4-12



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3. Discuss why words are so powerful. What impact does what we hear and say have on our lives?

4. God's word reveals that in Christ, despite our failure with our words, we are children of God (Romans 8:15-17) and God's word to us is that in Christ, we are his "beloved, with whom he is well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). How is this good news? How does this bring freedom and worship?

5. Read 1 Peter 1:23-25. What do we learn about the power of God's word and what it brings? What might it look like for God's word to dwell deeper in you to bring new life to both yourself and others?

**AS YOU GO...**

- Identify areas of your life where your words can bring death and hurt. Think of people who have been on the receiving end of these words. Take some time to repent, and confess to those you have hurt.
- Be proactive this week to encourage and bring life to those around you with your words. Discuss what that might look like.
- We fall short with our words, but God's words never fail. Remind one another of the truth of God's words for his children. How can you "preach the gospel" to yourself and others?

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**PRAYER**

God, we praise you for your good word that is true and right. Jesus, we confess that our words are often the sword thrusts that little by little bring death to others and ultimately caused your death for our sin. We thank you for your perfect life and sacrificial death. Holy Spirit, we ask that you empower us to put to death the inclination of our heart to bring hurt, and empower us to bring life to those you bring to our path.

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

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## STUDY 3 - Money

### READ - Proverbs 10:22

*"The blessing of the LORD makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." - Proverbs 10:22*

## OVERVIEW

One of the things that jumps off the page as we look at this text is the phrase "the blessing of the Lord makes rich." The reason this phrase is so important is because many people see God as disinterested in their physical condition and only interested in their spiritual condition. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Many people also rarely envision God as someone who has a heart to "bless" them, which again is a falsehood. These perversions of truth tend to make people feel like money is worldly and somehow disconnected from their relationship with God, even though scripture says something very different.

One thing we need to fix in our view about God is noticing that, from the beginning, he is one who blesses. We find that the very first thing that God does after he creates man and woman is bless them (Genesis 1:27-28). His blessing is for them to multiply and be fruitful with all that he has given them (Genesis 1:28-31). This was God's original plan for humanity, and it hasn't changed. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve rejected this plan for a lesser plan that was in rebellion to God's plan (Genesis 3), and humanity has continued to make these same decisions ever since. The result of this decision against God was a curse, because the blessing had been rejected.

God delights in blessing us. This knowledge, coupled with our proverb that the "blessing of the Lord makes rich," leads us to understand that – though God's blessings are vast and take many forms – God does sometimes bless us financially. Financial blessings, like all blessings, can and should be used for the glory of God. If we fear the Lord, we do not need to fear money as something inherently destructive. This lines up with the second half of the proverb, "...and he adds no sorrow with it." In other words, "rich" does not simply mean having some form of wealth and possessions – it means God giving us grace to be able to enjoy them, free of sorrow. This is true financial blessing.

We need to realize is that everything on this earth belongs to God, because he created it (Psalm 24:1). As Christians, we say to God with the apostle Paul, "all things are yours" (1 Corinthians 3:21). Understanding this leads us to realize that our question is no longer, "what should I do with my money?" Rather the question is, "what should I do with God's money that he has entrusted to me?" The change in this question shows that we are stewards of someone else's money; all that we have belongs to the Lord.

Since our role is that of stewardship, we need to seek the Lord in order to understand how he wants us to spend it – if we want to live in the realm of the proverb, "the blessings of the Lord make rich, and he adds no sorrow with it." While God allows great freedom with money, he is also very specific about certain things he wants done with his money. The reason he is specific about certain actions with our money is based upon his desire and "delight" in blessing us as his children.

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### MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

### PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Proverbs 28:28 says, "a greedy man stirs up strife, but the one who trusts in the Lord will be enriched."

How does trusting God keep us from becoming greedy?

What hold does money have on us when we trust in it more than we trust in God?

How do you think our trust in God is revealed to others in how we use our money?

2. Read the following Proverbs. What connection does our diligence have to our money?

Proverbs 10:4

Proverbs 12:11

Proverbs 13:11

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3. Proverbs 11:24 states, “one gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want.” Jesus promises us that if we give, “it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38).

What do you see as the importance of regularly giving of our money?

Knowing that God will give us exactly what he knows we need, why do you think it is still so difficult to give at times?

4. Read 2 Corinthians 8-9. What does it teach us about Jesus’ life that gives us hope despite our failures with money (8:9)? What does the passage teach us, and how does it compel us to use our money?

5. Proverbs 3:9-10 tells us “honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first-fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”

Why do you think it is difficult to make giving to God our top priority with our finances?

In remembering that our money is God’s and we are simply stewards, why do you think God connects giving to him first as a matter of “honor”?

**AS YOU GO...**

- Do you believe investing your money in the mission and vision God has for the earth is a wise money move? How do you think this honors God?
- Discuss where you are currently financially and in regard to giving. What would be a next step in growing in generosity and “giving freely”?
- Dream about how God might use your generosity to further his mission in this world.

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## **PRAYER**

Seek to honor God with your money. An example Prayer may be:

Gracious and wonderful Father, you have indeed blessed me with every blessing necessary for my life and purpose on this earth. I praise you because you are a God who is full of blessing, and you give good gifts to your children. I thank you because you are a God who has delivered me from living under the curse of sin by sending your holy son Jesus on my behalf to set me free from the law of sin and death.

All that I have, O Lord Jesus, is yours. I claim nothing as my own, as I have placed my life and everything attached to it into your hands. I don't trust my own wisdom, but I trust your wisdom implicitly to guide me and direct me through the power of your Holy Spirit and through the scripture you have given me. In place of fear, I put my trust fully in you. In place of my greed, I put my hope completely in you to provide what is best for me. In place of shrinking back and hoarding, I give liberally to you, because I believe you have given liberally to me and that you will meet all of my needs.

Forgive me, dear Lord, for the times I have put my hope, my trust, and my dependence upon money and my abilities to manage that money. I now recognize that you – not money – are my strength, my fortress, and my deliverer. You – not money – are my hope, my salvation, my peace, and my blessing. I set you in the highest place in my life and cast down any other thing that would try to exalt itself in equal position to you.

Guide me now, Jesus my Savior. Grant me wisdom in how to use the money you have entrusted to me. Teach me how to honor you in everything that I do with the money you have given me. Fill me with the strength of your Spirit to put you first with the money you have given. The entire earth is yours and all the fullness thereof, and that includes me and money. I gladly give back to you what is yours. I thank you for teaching me your will for my life. I commit to following your will and trusting you with all that I have and all that I am.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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**STUDY 4 - Family**

**READ - Proverbs 22:6**

*"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

*- Proverbs 22:6*

**OVERVIEW**

One of humanity's commonalities is inclusion in a family. Some come from strong, loving families; others come from disconnected, hurtful families. Most come from something in between. The Proverbs, and all of Scripture, help us live wisely, even beautifully, in our family relationships, no matter what size or shape they may take.

There is a foolish and a wise way to interact in all of these relationships. We can either curse and despise our parents (Proverbs 15:20, 20:20), or we can honor and thank them (Exodus 20:12). We can quarrel with and tear down our spouse (Proverbs 19:13), or we can praise and build them up (Proverbs 31:10-31). We can give our children over to folly and destruction (Proverbs 17:21), or train them up in the way they should go – which ultimately is heaven! (Proverbs 22:6). Each day we have an opportunity to help our families flourish or fade.

As evidenced in our lives and in scripture, we all experience and cause some level of suffering through our family relationships, no matter how good our families are or how much we try. The brokenness of our families and the suffering we experience and bring reveal our need for hope and redemption. That hope and redemption is brought through Jesus. It is through the sufferings of God's own son – Jesus – that we are brought into the family of God (Hebrews 5:8-9) and perfectly loved by him despite our failure. And because God loves us as sons and daughters, he will use all things to train us up (Hebrews 12:5-7) and to conform us into the image of his Son (Romans 8:28-29). Being part of God's family, the church, gives us ALL a role to play in being spiritual mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters.

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**MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION**

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

**PASSAGE QUESTIONS**

1. What was positive and encouraging about your family growing up? What was hard and painful?

2. Children growing in wisdom toward their parents: Read the following passages and talk about how children ought to treat their parents. What does this look like for you?

Proverbs 15:20

Proverbs 20:20

Proverbs 23:25

Exodus 20:12



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3. Parents growing in wisdom toward their children: Proverbs 22:6 says to train up or “dedicate yourself” to the way a child should go. Why is it so important for a parent to teach kids godly wisdom? How does the parent’s relationship with God shape that?

4. Husbands and wives growing in wisdom toward one another: Read Proverbs 31:10-31. What do we learn about a godly woman and her strength? How are husbands to cultivate that (31:28), and what are husbands called to?

How does our view of Christ shape our view of (how we treat, praise, adore) our spouse?

5. Everyone growing in wisdom from the LORD: Read Ephesians 2:11-22. How does the gospel (2:13) bring us into the family of God, and how does this shape how we treat and invest in one another as brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers, sons and daughters – no matter our current family circumstances (see also Hebrews 12:5-7)?

**AS YOU GO...**

- Take some time this week to reach out to your parents or someone who was a parent figure, and thank them for their investment in you.
- Who is someone in your family who you have a strained relationship with? How can you take a step toward reconciliation and forgiveness this week?
- Develop daily and weekly rhythms that help your family grow in wisdom from the LORD. Write them down and put a couple things into practice.

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**PRAYER**

God, we thank you that you are our heavenly father – that you are all powerful and reign and rule over all things, yet through Christ you are our good father who knows us, loves us, provides for us, and cares deeply for us. Jesus, we thank you for your suffering and sacrifice on the cross that enables us to be your brothers and welcomes us as sons and daughters of God Almighty. Holy Spirit, we ask that you work in and through each of us to help us grow in wisdom in our particular families and our church family.

**PRAYER REQUESTS**

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**STUDY 5 - Emotions**

**READ - Proverbs 15:30**

*"The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones." – Proverbs 15:30*

**OVERVIEW**

Our text states that "the light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones." This statement captures eyes sparkling with joy and a body and soul leaping with excitement over good news. The passage is talking about the emotions of those who are "righteous" (Proverbs 15:28-29). Those who have trusted in Jesus are what scripture refers to as "righteous" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In other words, God is explaining to us that our relationship with him should be emotional.

As we consider that the origins of life came from God creating us in his own image (Genesis 1:27), it becomes evident that the emotions in God are the same emotions created in us. Does God have emotions? Absolutely. He laughs (Psalm 2:4), he's compassionate (Psalm 103:13), he delights (Psalm 35:27), he rejoices & sings with joy (Zephaniah 3:17), he is zealous (Isaiah 9:7). Far from the stale, harsh, emotionless God that is often portrayed by people who don't know him, God Almighty is full of joy, life, and a wide range of emotion.

Proverbs provides us with many examples of the power of our emotions: "the cheerful of heart has a continual feast" (Proverbs 15:15), "a joyful heart is good medicine" (Proverbs 17:22), "a tranquil heart gives life to the flesh" (Proverbs 14:30), "love covers all offenses" (Proverbs 10:12). In contrast to this, Proverbs points out how our emotions can also become toxic: "a crushed spirit dries up the bones" (Proverbs 15:15), "envy makes the bones rot" (Proverbs 14:30), "wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming" (Proverbs 27:4), "hatred stirs up strife" (Proverbs 10:12).

Based on seeing the power of our emotions to either bring life or death to us personally and to others, it becomes clear that we probably need to get some control over our emotions so that they can be used for the purpose that God has intended.

Our passage for study says that "the light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the bones." The "good news" is the gospel of Jesus Christ who came to free us from the bondage of sin and to give us eternal life with him. God's good news is that, through Jesus Christ, you don't have to live brokenhearted, bound, mourning, or faint in spirit. Rather you can live in true liberty, in the favor of God Almighty, with gladness instead of mourning, and praise in place of a faint spirit (Isaiah 61:1-3). If we would let our emotions wrap around this understanding, we would have a hard time not getting a little excited and shouting for joy!

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**MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION**

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

**PASSAGE QUESTIONS**

1. Why do you think it is important for us to have emotions?

2. What is the function of emotion in our life? Do you see them as a blessing from God or as a curse?

Where have they brought destruction? Joy?

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3. Where do you lean :: emotionless or over-emotional? (expound)

How can a right view of God, his emotions, and what he calls for in his word allow you to bring about a right balance to your emotions?

4. Think about the life of Jesus – how did he display various emotions? How did his emotion drive him to bring freedom, life, and joy for us through the gospel?

5. How would you describe your emotional connection to God? What do you think your emotions would be if you truly understood how God loves you, shed his grace upon you, and will always give you victory?

**AS YOU GO...**

- The psalmist said to himself, “why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you” (Psalm 42:5-6). This passage shows the role we can play over our emotions in bringing them into alignment with God. Talk about how remembering what God has done for you can change your emotions. Give an example of when this has happened for you.
- Take note of your emotions this week. Notice when your emotions are leading you to God and when your emotions are leading you away from God. Take note of what is going on when your emotions are leading you to God, and consider sharing it in your community group this week.
- Jesus said he proclaims, “good news to the poor,” He “proclaims liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus is stating that you no longer need to be poor, captive, bound, or blind; rather you can live in God’s favor. Dwell on/discuss these benefits this week (Psalm 5:11-12).

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## **PRAYER**

Give your emotions to God. An example Prayer may be:

Glorious God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I praise you because you do all things well. You have given me emotions, but they are often too great for me to handle. I readily admit that I don't know how to control my emotions, and I gladly give them into your hand to craft them into a benefit to you and to those around me.

You are my hope and my salvation. You are my deliverer. I call upon you to deliver me from evil and from any place where my emotions become more attached to the things of this earth than to the things of your kingdom.

I praise you, Jesus, for your death and resurrection that always leads me in triumph! I do not look at a momentary emotional outburst as an eternal condition – for you have saved me and rescued me from myself. You have all authority and power over my emotions, and I willingly submit them to you – knowing that you are a good and loving God.

Make me more like you in my emotions. May I find pleasure in the success of others. May I rejoice in your salvation. May I laugh at what you laugh about. May I weep over what brings you grief. May my entire life be wrapped up in you.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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## STUDY 6 - *Friendship*

### READ - *Proverbs 18:24*

*"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

- *Proverbs 18:24*

## OVERVIEW

In this passage, there is a contrast between "companionship" and "friendship." Companionship does not imply friendship. A companion is someone you accompany or who accompanies you. Just having someone accompany you to an event, on a trip, or throughout life is simply a surface-level and disposable relationship that is often void of commitment, accountability, or reliability. This is in stark contrast to friendship. Friendship, as defined in Proverbs, is when someone sticks closer to you than their own natural birth family. As you might imagine, finding someone of this caliber in your life – who will fully engage with you in emotion, commitment, reliability, and accountability for the long term – is very rare. This is why the author states, "many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find" (Proverbs 20:6). It would be easy to become cynical and hopeless about friendship, but the writer tells us to wait a minute: "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."

Who is the friend who sticks closer to us at all times than even our natural birth family? It is our God! This is amazing and true. God wants to be our friend. God doesn't want to be our co-pilot or companion – it is our friendship that he seeks. Jesus clearly states, "I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). You may ask, what kind of friend is God? God answers this question by saying, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5), "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you" (Jeremiah 31:3), "I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). God is a friend like no other. His love is unending, he will never leave us, and he will strengthen us when we are weak and cling to us when others forsake us.

Understanding friendship from God's perspective will help us to understand what human friendship should actually resemble. True friendship is not based on the surface components of companionship (e.g. agreeability, flattery, or meaningless talk); rather Proverbs states that true friendship is similar to when "iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another" (Proverbs 27:17). True friendship is a relationship that sharpens the other person. True friendship challenges you to think about things you wouldn't normally think about. True friendship challenges your current state of being in contrast to what God says about your life. True friendship stands with you when everyone else abandons you.

The apostle Paul explains the love that Jesus displays in his friendship toward us in John 15:13: "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." This is exactly what Jesus did to prove his friendship to us once and for all. When our sin had separated us and destroyed any opportunity for friendship, Jesus went to the cross to deliver us from sin so that our friendship could be restored. No wonder the Proverbs writer calls us to remember that "there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." There can be no better friend than our God. When human friendships falter and fail, we can quickly forgive, because they are not our only friends. We have a friendship with God that "sticks" through all time regardless of circumstance, situation, or event. This is God's perspective on friendship.

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*with the wisdom of God*

### **MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION**

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

### **PASSAGE QUESTIONS**

1. Who is a friend that has stuck closer to you than a brother? What are some of the characteristics of the friendship?

2. Proverbs 17:17 states that, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." What do adverse and challenging times in life reveal about friendship?

Can you think of a time when you were facing something challenging and a friend made a huge difference in the situation?



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3. Proverbs 27:6 says, “faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy.” Based on this, why do you believe it is important to have a friend who will speak honestly with you?

How do you think relationships that are both loving and honest build and strengthen you as a person?

4. Proverbs 17:9 states, “whoever covers an offense seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates close friends.” How do you see gossip being detrimental to human friendships?

How have you done this to others? When has this been done to you?

5. How does the gospel reveal what a true friend is (John 15:13)? How does our friendship with God bring freedom to all our other friendships?

**AS YOU GO...**

- Ephesians 4:29 tells us to “let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.” Discuss how you think this should guide our words in our friendships.
- This week take note of your friendships or lack of friendships. Examine what type of friend you are to others. Are you reaching out to others? Are you seeking friendships that encourage your relationship with God? Are you seeking friendships where you can be an encouragement to others? As believers in Jesus, we are to be “lights” in a dark world. Friendship is often a way that we can accomplish that.
- Talk about how you can cultivate your friendship with God and how that can grow your friendships with others

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## **PRAYER**

Seek friendship with God and others. An example Prayer may be:

Heavenly Father. You have displayed your great love for me through the death and resurrection of your holy Son, Jesus. I praise you because I am unworthy of your friendship but you sought me out to make me your friend in spite of who I was. I thank you for sticking closer to me than anyone else in this world and for refusing to leave me even though I have often been less than a friend to you. Your friendship is everything to me. I desire you as my friend more than I desire the friendship of any other.

Precious Jesus, teach me to be a friend like you are. Teach me to be quick to forgive when I am offended and to keep myself from offending others. You are my friend, Lord, and I need the power of your Spirit to change my heart to be a friend like you to others. Give me the strength to speak honestly to others. Empower me to love others freely. Protect me from harm as I trust in you. Direct my steps into friendships that bring glory to you and which challenge me to become more like you.

## **PRAYER REQUESTS**

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**STUDY 7 - *Humility***

**READ - *Proverbs 22:4***

*"The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life." - Proverbs 22:4*

**OVERVIEW**

The call for humility is a central theme and drum that is beat throughout the Scriptures – and really the first step toward entrance into the Kingdom of God and growth in the Christian life. "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:4); "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5). In a self-exalting culture and with our self-exalting hearts, this demand for humility is radical and counterintuitive to us. However, that doesn't make it untrue. This passage, and all scriptures, teach us that with humility we attain true riches, true honor, and true life.

In our pride, we all seek our own way and exaltation that ultimately leads to death (Proverbs 14:12). That's why we need God's wisdom revealed in the scriptures – "they are a more reliable guide away from death and toward life than our own intuitions. The Bible warns us away from death that feels like life and toward life that sometimes feels like death. Which do you trust more – your hunches or the Bible? Humility before the Bible is a matter of life and death. That's why humility matters". (Ortland)

Our pride exposes and reveals our need for Jesus. We also see what true humility is in him – from humbling himself to do the will of the Father, to humbling himself by becoming a man, to humbling himself by "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:4-8). So our hope is in his humility. Our trust is in him. We don't come to Jesus because we are humble, we come to Christ because we are proud, and he receives us and loves us and helps us in our pride. (Ortland)

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### MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is that main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

### PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What do you picture when you think of humility? Who do you know who has it? What is attractive about it?

How does a “fear of the Lord” tie to humility (Proverbs 22:4)? What does this verse mean when it says the reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life?

2. Read the following passages and compare the results of pride vs. humility ::

Proverbs 14:12  
Proverbs 15:33  
Proverbs 16:2  
Proverbs 16:18

Proverbs 18:12  
Proverbs 28:26  
Proverbs 29:23  
Proverbs 30:12

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3. Why is it difficult to see our own pride? What avenues has God given us to help us identify it?

4. Meditate on Philippians 2:1-11. What do we see that leads to worship of Jesus? What do we learn about humility?

5. Ray Ortland explains that true humility “behaves” by 1) Revering (God and his Word), 2) Listening, and 3) Confessing (in that order). Read the following proverbs and describe what it could look like for you to grow in humility by making revering, listening, and confessing a natural part of your behavior.

Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded. (Proverbs 13:13)

The ear that listens to life-giving reproof will dwell among the wise. (Proverbs 15:31)

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

### **AS YOU GO...**

- Talk about times when you have seen the biblical pattern of the humble being exalted and honored by others (Proverbs 15:33). What does it look like to live a life of humility and fear of the LORD?
- Talk about the implications of Jesus humbling himself – What does it teach about God’s love for us? What does it teach us about true life? What does it teach us about his character and his worthiness of our devotion?
- Invite someone to have the freedom to speak into areas of your life where they see pride welling up – give them the green light!

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**PRAYER**

God, we thank you for revealing the wonderful truth that true life and honor and riches come from a life of humility. Jesus, we thank you for living the perfect life of humility and humbling yourself to the point of death to cover and take the deserved penalty for our pride. Holy Spirit, help us to see the ways we drift toward pride and death, and empower us to repent and turn to humility and fear of the LORD.

**PRAYER REQUESTS**