

September 7–13: Proverbs 1–4; 15–16; 22; 31; Ecclesiastes 1–3; 11–12
“He Shall Direct Thy Paths”

Overview

Proverbs are short sayings that generally give counsel about living righteously. The Old Testament records that Solomon “spake three thousand proverbs” (1 Kings 4:32). Some of these wise sayings are included in the book of Proverbs. Although Solomon and the other authors of this book were not prophets, much of what they wrote was inspired by the Lord. Their writings generally reflect a belief that true wisdom comes from God. To the Israelites, wisdom meant obedience to God’s laws. (Old Testament Gospel Doctrine manual, pg. 152)

Seek Knowledge

Prv 9:10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Prv 2:10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

Prv 2:3-5

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.

Prv 8:34-35

34 Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

35 For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

What do these verses teach about the effort required to gain wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of God?

Stay On the Path

Prv 4:13 Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Prv 2:7-9

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

Prv 4:25-27

25 Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee.
26 Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.
27 Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil.

How can we recognize when we are drifting from the straight and narrow path, and what should we do to get back on it?

Gaining Understanding

Prv 1:33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Prv 3:13 Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

Prv 3:14 For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold.

Prv 3:15 She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

Prv 3:16 Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour.

Prv 3:17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

Prv 3:18 She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.

What similarities are there between gaining understanding and partaking of the fruit of the tree of life?

Neal A. Maxwell

"Alma describes the growth of faith and how faith can actually become knowledge with the accompanying intellectual and emotional experiences of the believer. After the understanding of the believer has been enlarged and his mind has been expanded, Alma asks, 'O then, is not this real?' It is real, he says, because it is 'discernible, therefore ye must know that it is good.' (Alma 32:350).

"The truth of each divine doctrine is actually discernible by us in a system of certification and confirmation that justifies our saying, 'I know!'

"This precious perspective about reality that came from God through his prophets surely tells us about 'things as they really are and things as they really will be' (Jacob 4:13); it is the only kind of perspective that can rescue us from the myopic mortal view we have about the relative importance of things." (Things As They Really Are, pg. 10)

Pride

Prv 16:18 Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.

Prv 11:2 When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom.

Prv 18:12 Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility.

Prv 29:23 A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit.

Prv 21:4 An high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked, is sin.

Prv 22:4 By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and honour, and life.

How do these proverbs reflect the pride cycle described in the Book of Mormon?

Ezra Taft Benson

“The proud cannot accept the authority of God giving direction to their lives. They pit their perceptions of truth against God’s great knowledge, their abilities versus God’s priesthood power, their accomplishments against His mighty works.

“Our enmity toward God takes on many labels, such as rebellion, hard-heartedness, stiff-neckedness, unrepentant, puffed up, easily offended, and sign seekers. The proud wish God would agree with them. They aren’t interested in changing their opinions to agree with God’s.

“Pride is a damning sin in the true sense of that word. It limits or stops progression. The proud are not easily taught. They won’t change their minds to accept truths, because to do so implies they have been wrong” (CR, Apr. 1989)

Avoid Contention

Prv 13:10 Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well advised is wisdom.

Prv 21:19 It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman.

Prv 15:18 A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

Prv 14:17 He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.

Prv 14:29 He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

Prv 16:32 He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

What do these proverbs teach about the importance of controlling anger and choosing peace over contention?

JST luke 6:29-30

29) And unto him who smiteth thee on the cheek, offer also the other; or, in other words, it is better to offer the other, than to revile again.

And him who taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.

30) For it is better that thou suffer thine enemy to take these things, than to contend with him...

Sterling W. Sill

“It might be helpful for us to try to inventory all the damage that is done, the unhappiness that is caused, and the estrangements that are brought about by angry people who allow such sins as dissension, bickering, name calling, envying, jealousy, disputations, and temper tantrums to grow in their lives. These awful sins are all the offspring of anger.

“God has said, 'the spirit of contention is not of me' (3 Ne. 11:29). God is love, peace, beauty, and a happy conscience. One of the most important objectives for our lives should be to protect ourselves against the deadly sins by replacing them with the opposite virtues and abilities, including harmony, unity, concord, agreement, happiness, and peace.” (Thy Kingdom Come, pg. 117-119)

Guard Our speech

Prv 18:6-7

6 A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes.

7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

Prv 16:24 Pleasant words are as an honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

Prv 15:1 A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.

Prv 13:3 He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

Prv 29:11 A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Prv 17:28 Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.

How can controlling our speech help us bring peace, avoid contention, and bless the lives of others?

Marion G. Romney

“My appeal in this message is that we control our tongues, and by speaking kind words to each other emulate in our relationships with each other the loving kindness the Lord has for his people

“In his general epistle, the apostle James gives this counsel: 'Be swift to hear, [but] slow to speak' (James 1:19). 'If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.' (James 1:26). ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath,” said the wise author of Proverbs, and added, ‘but grievous words stir up anger.’...

“Let us, therefore, resolve to control our tongues and by speaking kind words to each other emulate the loving kindness of our Lord.” ("Speak Kind Words," Ensign, Aug. 1977)

Worldly Riches

Prv 3:9-10

9 Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
10 So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

Prv 29:5 Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven.

Prv 11:28 He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch.

Prv 15:16 Better is little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith.

Prv 23:4 Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom.

Prv 13:7 There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.

What attitudes toward wealth do these proverbs warn against, and what attitudes do they encourage?

Dallin H. Oaks

“From the emphasis given to this subject in the scriptures, it appears that materialism has been one of the greatest challenges to the children of God in

all ages of time. Greed, the ugly face of materialism in action, has been one of Satan's most effective weapons in corrupting men and turning their hearts from God.

“When we place our trust in our property, we have 'carnal security.' In that state of mind we are inclined to say that all must be well with us and with Zion because we are prospering, thus relying on worldly success as a mark of divine favor. He who does this is an easy mark for being led 'carefully down to hell.'” (Materialism, pg. 73-75)

Care For the Poor

Hand in hand with worldly riches is the commandment to care for the poor.

Prv 19:17 He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.

Prv 28:6 Better is the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

Prv 25:21 If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:

Prv 28:27 He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

Prv 29:7 The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it

What do these proverbs teach about our responsibility to recognize, understand, and respond to those in need?

Abstain from Alcohol

Prv 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.

Prv 23:20-21

20 Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh:

21 For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

Prv 23:29-33

29 Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes?

30 They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine.

31 Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup,
when it moveth itself aright.
32 At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder.
33 Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse
things.

What warnings do these proverbs give about the dangers and consequences of
drinking?

A Virtuous Woman

Prv 31:10-12,20-21,25-30

10 Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.
11 The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of
spoil.
12 She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

20 She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the
needy.
21 She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed
with scarlet.

25 Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come.
26 She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness.
27 She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of
idleness.
28 Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.
29 Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all.
30 Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she
shall be praised.

How does a woman who loves the Lord demonstrate strength, wisdom, kindness,
and faithfulness?