

STUDY

Proverbs Bible Study Questions and Answers (Free PDF)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A 10-session walk through Proverbs, from the fear of the Lord to the woman of Proverbs 31, with open questions for your own answers. Free to print, no sign-up.

A 10-session study of Proverbs for groups or solo reading.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:7 (NIV)

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.

Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

The study guide

SESSION 1 · PROVERBS 1:1-33

The Beginning of Wisdom

Solomon sets out the purpose of the book, and a father urges his son to listen. Wisdom cries out in the street, and those who refuse her call are warned.

1. What is the purpose of Proverbs according to Proverbs 1:2-6, and what does Proverbs 1:7 say is the beginning of knowledge?

Proverbs 1:2-6 says the book is for gaining wisdom and instruction, and for understanding words of insight. It is for the simple and the learned alike. Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

2. What does it mean to fear the Lord, and why would that come before all other learning?

Historic Christian teaching reads the fear of the Lord as reverent awe before a holy and loving God, not terror. It comes first because every other kind of knowledge is bent when we set God aside. Wisdom starts with knowing who God is and who we are.

3. Where are you tempted to lean on your own cleverness, and what would it look like to listen instead?

Leader's note: This question invites honesty about the places we trust our own judgment. Let people name one decision they are facing. Do not rush to give advice. Ask what listening to God, and to wise people, might look like this week.

SESSION 2 · PROVERBS 2:1-3:35

Treasure and Trust

The father urges his son to seek wisdom like hidden treasure. He calls him to trust the Lord with all his heart and to honor God with what he has.

1. What does Proverbs 2:1-6 tell the son to do, and where does it say wisdom comes from?

The son is to receive his father's words, listen closely, call out for insight, and search for wisdom as for hidden treasure (Proverbs 2:1-4). Verse 6 says the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

2. What does Proverbs 3:5-6 ask of us, and how is trusting the Lord different from simply being careful?

Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." Trust here is not a lack of thought. It is placing our thinking under God's rule. Readers take the straight paths as God's faithful guidance, not a promise that every road will be easy.

3. What is one area of your life where it is hardest to stop leaning on your own understanding?

Leader's note: This question is meant to be gentle. Many of us trust God in words and lean on ourselves in practice. Give the group quiet time to name one area, and pray for each other to take one step of trust.

SESSION 3 · PROVERBS 4:1-5:23

Guard Your Heart

A father passes on what his own father taught him, that wisdom is supreme. He urges his son to guard his heart and to stay faithful to the wife of his youth.

1. What does the father say about getting wisdom in Proverbs 4:7, and what does he command in Proverbs 4:23?

The father says wisdom is supreme, so get wisdom (Proverbs 4:7). In Proverbs 4:23 he says, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."

2. Why does the heart come first in Proverbs 4:23, and how does Proverbs 4:25-27 show what guarding it looks like?

The heart in Scripture is the center of a person, where desire, thought, and will meet. If it goes wrong, everything does. Proverbs 4:25-27 gives it practical shape, look straight ahead and keep your feet from evil. Guarding the heart means watching what we look at and where we walk.

3. What are you letting into your heart through your eyes and ears, and what might need to change?

Leader's note: This question can be tender, since it touches habits people may feel ashamed of. Keep it honest and kind. Remind the group that God's mercy meets us in the same place his warnings do.

SESSION 4 · PROVERBS 6:1-7:27

Warnings and Wisdom's Cost

The father warns against surety for another's debt, laziness, and a list of things the Lord hates. He urges his son to flee adultery, which promises pleasure and ends in ruin.

1. What does Proverbs 6:6-8 tell the sluggard to learn from the ant, and what seven things does the Lord hate in Proverbs 6:16-19?

The ant has no commander, yet it stores its food in summer (Proverbs 6:6-8). The Lord hates haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that plots evil, feet quick to rush into evil, a false witness, and one who stirs up conflict (Proverbs 6:16-19).

2. Why does Proverbs 7 describe the path of the adulterous woman as leading toward death, and what makes the young man so easy to lead?

Proverbs 7:21-23 shows the young man led on by smooth words, like an ox to slaughter, not knowing it will cost him his life. He lacks judgment (Proverbs 7:7), and he drifts into her street at twilight (Proverbs 7:8-9). Sin often works by small steps and flattery, not a leap.

3. Where is a small compromise pulling at you, and who can you trust to help you stay on the right road?

Leader's note: Invite the group to name the small step, not the big fall. Proverbs 7:25 says not to let your heart turn to her ways. Encourage each person to think of one trusted friend, and pray that they would be brave enough to invite that friend in.

SESSION 5 • PROVERBS 8:1-9:18

Wisdom and Folly Call

Wisdom speaks in her own voice, present with God before creation began. Then wisdom and folly each set a table and call out to the simple.

1. What does Wisdom say about herself in Proverbs 8:11 and Proverbs 8:22-31?

Wisdom says in Proverbs 8:11, "for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her." She says she was there with the Lord at the beginning, before the earth was made, and was a delight to him (Proverbs 8:22-31).

2. How do the invitations of Wisdom (Proverbs 9:1-6) and Folly (Proverbs 9:13-18) sound alike, and how do they differ in what they lead to?

Both women call from the heights of the city to the simple (Proverbs 9:3-4, 9:14-16). Wisdom offers bread and wine and life (Proverbs 9:5-6). Folly offers stolen water and a secret, yet her guests are in the realm of the dead (Proverbs 9:17-18). Proverbs 9:10 gives the key, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

3. What invitation are you answering right now, and where is it leading?

Leader's note: This question asks for a choice, not a confession. Let people name a voice they are tempted to follow. Many Christian readers see Christ, who is called the wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 1:24, as the fullest answer to Wisdom's call.

SESSION 6 • PROVERBS 12:18; 15:1-4; 18:21; 10:19

Words and the Tongue

Proverbs treats our words as weighty things that heal or wound, and it returns to the tongue again and again. This session gathers those sayings.

1. What does Proverbs 12:18 say about reckless words and wise ones, and what does Proverbs 15:1 say about a gentle answer?

Proverbs 12:18 says, "The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing." Proverbs 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."

2. What does Proverbs 18:21 mean when it says the tongue has the power of life and death?

Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit." Words shape the people who hear them and the one who speaks. Proverbs 10:19 adds that sin is not absent when words are many, and the prudent hold their tongues.

3. Whose words have you carried a long time, and whose life could you speak into this week?

Leader's note: Give room for hurt as well as habit. Some will name words spoken to them. Others will name words they regret. Ask the group to think of one person who needs a kind word, and let each person make a plan to speak it.

SESSION 7 · PROVERBS 10:4; 13:11; 11:24-28; 22:7; 30:7-9

Work, Laziness, and Money

Proverbs honors diligent work and warns against laziness. It speaks just as plainly about money, generosity, and the danger of both poverty and wealth.

1. What does Proverbs 10:4 say about lazy hands and diligent hands, and what does Proverbs 30:8-9 ask of God?

Proverbs 10:4 says, "Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth." In Proverbs 30:8-9, Agur asks God to give him neither poverty nor riches, only his daily bread, lest he be full and deny God or be poor and steal.

2. Why does Proverbs 11:24-28 speak of generosity and trusting in riches so differently, and what do they show about the heart?

Proverbs 11:24-25 says the one who gives freely gains even more, and the generous will prosper. Proverbs 11:28 says whoever trusts in riches will fall. Readers take these as wise general patterns, not promises of payment, that show the heart holds money loosely when it trusts God.

3. How do you handle work and money, and where do fear or greed shape your choices?

Leader's note: Money can bring shame or pride, so keep this question kind. Ask people to name one habit, whether saving, giving, or working, that they want to grow in. See also what the Bible says about money.

SESSION 8 · PROVERBS 17:17; 27:17; 13:20; 15:18; 16:32; 29:11

Friendship and Anger

Proverbs values true friends and warns about the company we keep. It also teaches patience and warns against a hot temper.

1. What do Proverbs 17:17 and Proverbs 27:17 say about a friend, and what does Proverbs 13:20 say about the company we keep?

Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another." Proverbs 13:20 says whoever walks with the wise grows wise, and a companion of fools suffers harm.

2. What do Proverbs 15:18 and Proverbs 16:32 say about a quick temper and a patient spirit?

Proverbs 15:18 says a hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel. Proverbs 16:32 says patience is better than a warrior, and one who controls his temper is better than one who takes a city. Self-control is counted as a strength, not a weakness.

3. Who sharpens you, and where does your anger need to be handed to God?

Leader's note: Invite the group to think of a friend who has been iron to them, and to thank that person this week. For anger, allow quiet. Some will be carrying heavy things, and the goal is to bring them to God, not fix them.

SESSION 9 · PROVERBS 16:18-19; 11:2; 18:12; 3:34

Pride and Humility

Proverbs names pride as a road to ruin and humility as the road to honor. This session gathers what the book says on both.

1. What does Proverbs 16:18 say about pride, and how does Proverbs 11:2 put pride and humility side by side?

Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Proverbs 11:2 says when pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

2. Why does Proverbs 18:12 say humility comes before honor, and what does it say about how God sees the humble?

Proverbs 18:12 says before a downfall the heart is proud, but humility comes before honor. Proverbs 3:34 says God mocks the proud but shows favor to the humble. James 4:6 and 1 Peter 5:5 quote this to the church, so the same Lord who resists pride gives grace to the humble.

3. Where has pride kept you from asking for help or admitting you were wrong?

Leader's note: This question asks people to name a time they would not bend. Model it by sharing your own. Keep the tone gentle, and close by praying for a humble heart in the group.

SESSION 10 · PROVERBS 31:1-31

The Woman of Proverbs 31

King Lemuel's mother teaches her son, and the book closes with a poem about a woman of noble character. It draws together the wisdom of the whole book.

1. What does King Lemuel's mother tell him in Proverbs 31:1-9, and what qualities mark the woman in Proverbs 31:10-31?

Lemuel's mother tells him to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves and to defend the rights of the poor and needy (Proverbs 31:8-9). The woman is trustworthy (31:11), diligent (31:13-18), generous to the poor (31:20), wise in her speech (31:26), and looks after her household (31:27).

2. Why does Proverbs 31:30 say charm and beauty are not what matter, and how does that tie the poem back to Proverbs 1:7?

Proverbs 31:30 says, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised." The poem ends where the book began. Wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and it shows in the work of ordinary days.

3. How can you grow in the wisdom this chapter praises, whether or not you are married or a parent?

Leader's note: Handle this carefully, since this passage has burdened many women. Read it as a portrait of wisdom that all of us, men and women, are invited to grow into. Ask which quality the group would most like to see in themselves.