

Kristen Young and John Young

SURVIVAL GUIDE

to ~~wild~~ wise living



Bite-sized Bible Studies for Girls

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to ~~wild~~ wise living

FOR YOU
& YOUR
YOUTH
GROUP

Bite-sized Bible Studies for Girls



Anglican Youthworks
PO Box A287
Sydney South NSW 1235
Australia

Ph: (02) 8268 3344
Fax: (02) 8268 3357
Email: sales@youthworks.net
Website: www.cep.youthworks.net

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and John Young

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Managing Editor – Julie Firmstone
Theological Editor – Claire Smith
Design – Paul Liddell

Contents

How to Use this Book	04
Before You Begin – Understanding Proverbs	05
Week 1: Wise Up!	06
What is Wisdom?	10
Week 2: Listening Wisely	12
Scribble Page – What are Your Favourite Proverbs?	17
Week 3: Speaking Wisely	18
Ask Wanda	22
Week 4: Who's the Boss?	24
Prayer Pages	28
Week 5: Slacker!	30
What Does a Fool Look Like?	34
Week 6: Wise Friends	36
Time-Out Crossword	40
Week 7: If I Were a Rich Man ...	42
Fun Things to Do with Proverbs	46
Week 8: God and the Grog	48
Time-Out Find-a-word	52
Week 9: Are You the Marrying Kind?	54
Creativity Page	59
Week 10: Looking Through Eternity	60
Solutions	64

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Week by Week

Each week there are a series of daily studies to help you see God's guide to wise living. We've spread the series out over ten weeks, so you have time to take in (and hopefully put into practise) what you've learnt.

How Do the Weeks Work?

Each week has a special theme to get you thinking about who you are as a wise follower of Jesus. We start by introducing you to wisdom, and then go through specific life topics: how can we be wise listeners, wise speakers, wise with our money and in our school/work relationships? The final week helps you to keep an eternal perspective on wisdom.

Daily Questions

There are only a couple of questions to think about each day, so you can focus on a little bit at a time – no pressure! Remember though that the daily breakdowns are only a guide. You can study at your own pace.

The Buzz

Proverbs can be tricky, so we've included a short paragraph each day to help you think about what you've read.

Hold in Ya Head

A verse to remember for the week. (When you were a kid, it was called a 'memory verse'.)

They Said What?!

Serious wisdom with a sense of humour. Proverbs can say some funny things and we've reproduced some of them here for your benefit. But even though they're humorous, these verses still have an important point to make. Laughing is okay, but think about what you're reading, too!

Using this Book with Groups

We've set this book up so that you can go through it with a bunch of friends or together with your youth group. Just look for the passages with this icon:



These questions are ideal for discussion in your small group. Then, you can go home and do the other questions as a personal devotion. There is also a version of this book for boys in your mixed study group. Tell them to look out for *A Survival Guide to Wise Living for Blokes*. It has the same group questions too.

What Happened to 'Day 7'?

We hope that you'll use Sundays to look back over the whole section for the week and to spend time at church. It's really important to keep meeting with your church family and Sundays are usually a good day to do this.

Light Relief

Hidden in these pages are:

- a few jokes about how the world sees wisdom
- spaces for writing your thoughts, scribbles or random pen bits
- prayer pages so you can go back and see how God has answered
- oh, and the occasional puzzle.

Enjoy!

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

UNDERSTANDING PROVERBS

As these studies go on, you'll notice that we're focusing on Proverbs. Proverbs isn't like many other books of the Bible, so it's important to know a little about it first. The book has been described as a collection of 'sayings of the wise'.

You may already know some proverbs that we have in the English language, such as, 'too many cooks spoil the broth' or 'a stitch in time saves nine'. We think of proverbs as short, pithy sayings that we can trot out when the occasion fits. However, in the book of Proverbs, there are actually different sorts of writing. The whole book is written in Hebrew poetry, but the first nine chapters are what you might call 'instruction'. They are built around a father teaching his son and encouraging him to live wisely in God's world, and they are a series of longer poems. But from Chapter 10 onwards, you generally find collections of those pithy sayings that you might recognise as 'proverbs'. (For example, Proverbs 16:18 says, *Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*) There are other types of writing in the later chapters, but those are the main sections.

What is Proverbs on About?

There aren't many references to God's Law or Israelite history in this book, so some people have been puzzled about exactly how it fits into the Bible. But Proverbs is based on several important assumptions that fit right in with God's overall message:

- God made the world in an orderly way.
- As God made the world in that way, we can see patterns in life as we observe it.
- God gave us brains, and he wants us to use them.

- God wants us to use our God-given brains to choose the right way to act in a particular situation.

Wisdom is a 'skill for living' that we can learn. It's not simply a matter of 'knowing stuff', it's about living successfully in God's world. We become wise when we can take God's word and apply it to everyday situations.

Are Proverbs Just Rules?

Proverbs are guidelines, not rules that must be obeyed. Check out Proverbs 26:4–5 for example:

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you will be like him yourself. Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes.

At first, these two proverbs seem to contradict one another. If proverbs were meant to be read like the Ten Commandments, we'd all be in a lot of trouble!

We need to look at the proverbs as guidelines for wise living, not commandments. In some situations, it's obvious that you need to call foolish people on what they're saying. At other times, it's wiser to hold your tongue to avoid getting into long and silly arguments. The skill of wisdom is learning when to speak and when to be silent.

How **Not** to Read Proverbs

Don't forget that Proverbs is a part of the whole Bible – our relationship with Jesus is the starting point of wisdom.

Don't expect every proverb to apply in every situation, all of the time. There are some things that always apply (like trusting in God, for example!) but other times, you need to use your head.

Proverbs talks about what usually happens, but there are exceptions. Sometimes life doesn't follow a neat 'cause and effect' pattern. That doesn't mean that Proverbs is wrong; Proverbs describes general patterns.

Don't treat proverbs like unbreakable laws, but don't ignore them either. Being foolish isn't exactly the same as being sinful, but it can lead you there!

So there you have it: a quick introduction to the book of Proverbs. We hope you have fun reading along with us over the next few weeks.

WEEK 1: WISE UP!

THINKS
ABOUT IT

Tick the answers you think are right.

A wise person is someone who:

- has a massive IQ
- has a direct line to God, who tells them what to do
- always knows the right thing to say
- is really old, and says, 'Hmmm ...' a lot
- is a monk sitting cross-legged in a monastery on a mountain
- knows the ways of the world.

DAY 1

GROUP
STUDY

1 Kings 4:29–34

- 1/ What did God give to Solomon (verse 29)?
- 2/ Solomon's wisdom led to many achievements. Can you find some of these in this chapter?

1 Kings 11:1–13

- 3/ Even though Solomon was wise, something went horribly wrong. How did he spoil things?
- 4/ Human wisdom is not perfect. What can go wrong if we rely on our own wisdom?
- 5/ Today we're not likely to marry 300+ people, but there are still ways that we can be tempted to love and desire things that God has told us are wrong. Are there any things in your life that might tempt you to forget God and make bad choices? How can you stay on track?



But it's important to remember from the beginning that it's not enough to be wise some of the time. We can still be swayed by our sinful desires to make the wrong choices, just as Solomon was. Despite all his great achievements, Solomon's pride and lust led him to go against God's way of living – this should be a warning to us too! As we start to learn about wisdom, remember that we need to put God's way first, before our own intelligence or desires. Today, pray that God will help you to live his way, instead of your own way.

DAY 4

Psalm 14; Romans 3:9-26

- 1/ In God's eyes, what is the mark of a fool?
- 2/ According to Paul in the book of Romans, are we any better?
- 3/ What was God's solution?
- 4/ How do these two passages help us to understand the path to wisdom?
- 5/ What can you thank God for?

DAY 5

Job 28:12-28

- 1/ According to Job, how can't we get wisdom?
- 2/ Who is the source of wisdom?
- 3/ What is wisdom, according to Job (verse 28)?

Proverbs 14:26-27

- 4/ What are some of the good things about fearing the Lord?
- 5/ You could try and learn wisdom from experience (like learning from your mistakes) or by the 'school of hard knocks'. What's a better way of learning to be wise?



A fool is someone who says in their heart that God doesn't exist. We can easily point the finger at atheists here, but how many of us spend our days treating God as if he isn't there? In God's eyes, that makes us just as foolish as the person who openly denies God's existence. It's amazing that even though we all reject God's control over our lives, God has redeemed us through Jesus. Being wise doesn't mean that we are better than other people. Without God's grace and mercy, we are just as foolish and lost as everyone else. Why not thank God for his kindness to you through Jesus?



There are many ways people try to gain wisdom or knowledge. Some people say that you can't be wise unless you 'experience life', so you can't be wise unless you go out and make as many mistakes as possible. Others say that studying in the best schools or universities is the path to wisdom. The Bible makes it clear again and again that wisdom is only found in a proper relationship with God, and in understanding and obeying him. Then it becomes a 'fountain of life' and a 'refuge' against the difficulties of living and ultimately a protection against death.

DAY 6

Proverbs 2:1–22

- 1/ How does the writer suggest we gain wisdom (verses 1–5)?
- 2/ What should be the end result (verse 5)?
- 3/ What does this passage tell us about God?
- 4/ As we get to know God more, what else will we know (verses 9 and 10)?
- 5/ How can wisdom be helpful? What do you think it might protect us from?

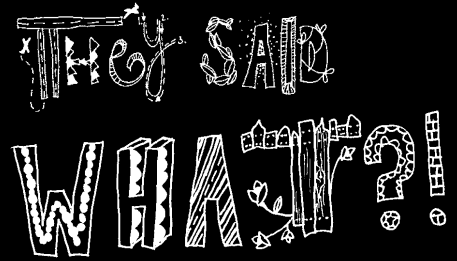


The fear of the Lord is not just the starting point of wisdom, it's also the goal ('Huh?' we hear you say). The more we trust in God and the more we grow in our understanding of him, the more we are able to make good life choices that honour God and improve our relationship with him. Wisdom begins – and ends – with God.



Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD and shun evil.

Proverbs 3:7



As a dog returns to its vomit,
so a fool repeats his folly.

Proverbs 26:11



WHAT IS WIS- DOM?

Sometimes we think of wisdom as knowing stuff that others don't, or being some super-intelligent freak. But that's not the Bible's idea of wisdom. According to the Bible, wisdom is God's word applied to everyday life.

WHERE DOES WISDOM START?

In the Bible, wisdom starts with being in a right relationship with God. *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge*, says Proverbs 1:7. The opposite is foolishness. As Psalm 14:1 says, *The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'*.

So, if you listen to the Bible and want to be wise, you need to be living with God as your boss. Do you want to be wise? Then ask yourself these questions:

- 1/ Am I in a right relationship with God?
- 2/ Do I accept that God made me and has the right to tell me how to live?
- 3/ Do I accept that I've rejected God and deserve to be punished by him?
- 4/ Do I know that Jesus died to take the punishment I deserve for rejecting God?
- 5/ Do I trust in Jesus as my Lord and Saviour?
- 6/ Do I want to follow Jesus and live God's way in my everyday life?

If you answered 'yes' to these questions, then you're already well on the way to being a wise person!

THE THREE STEPS TO WISDOM

- 1/ Being in a right relationship with God.
- 2/ Knowing God's word.
- 3/ Learning to use your God-given mind to apply God's word in everyday life.

WHAT WISDOM ISN'T ...

Wisdom isn't ... the same as intelligence. You don't need a massive IQ to be wise, and you can be very smart while, at the same time, foolish. In fact, going on the Bible's way of thinking, there are some really intelligent fools out there!

Wisdom isn't ... waiting for God to hand out the secrets to what you'll be doing today. God has given you a brain, and he expects you to use it to make the right choices. That's wisdom.

Wisdom isn't ... holiness – but it is linked. Psalm 14 shows us that rejecting God is at the heart of foolishness. That's also the heart of sin. The beginning of wisdom is accepting God's rule over our lives. That's also the beginning of holiness.

Sometimes there are things that are obviously right or wrong. At other times, there are choices we make that aren't automatically right or wrong, like 'Which job should I take?' or 'What sort of person should I hang out with?' There isn't always 'one and only one' job or friend that's right for you, but there are wiser or more foolish choices that we can make along the way. Wisdom involves using your brain to make God-honouring choices, even in 'neutral' things.

Wisdom can help you avoid doing the wrong thing and situations where you'd end up doing the wrong thing. Wisdom can also help you make choices that take you along the path of living God's way.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Through this series of studies, you'll hopefully get a better idea of what it means to be wise. But if you want to know even more about the Bible's attitude to wisdom, check out *Gospel and Wisdom* by Graeme Goldsworthy.