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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 20 OF 66

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PROVERBS

An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

THE COMPLETE STUDY • WEEKS 1-8 • PROVERBS 1:1-31:31
GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Proverbs: An 8-Week Bible Study

An 8-Week Bible Study • ESV® • 8 Sessions of 75-90 Minutes

PARTICIPANT STUDY EDITION

Synchronized Section-by-Section with the Leader Guide Edition · Includes Group Reflection Workspace

Proverbs: An 8-Week Bible Study

Participant Study Edition • General / Mixed Group Track

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WEEK 1 OF 8

Week 1: The Fear of the LORD — Proverbs 1:1–3:35

Scripture Scope: Proverbs 1:1–3:35 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

- **The title:** "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel" (1:1). A proverb (Hebrew mashal) is a short, memorable comparison meant to be turned over in the heart. It describes how life usually works under God; it is not a promise without exceptions.
- **The voices:** Solomon (1:1; 10:1; 25:1); "the wise" (22:17; 24:23); the men of King Hezekiah, who copied more of Solomon's proverbs (25:1); Agur son of Jakeh (30:1); and the mother of King Lemuel (31:1). In chapters 8–9, Wisdom and Folly speak as two women calling out to passersby.
- **Its form:** Chapters 1–9 are longer speeches from a father and mother to a son, and from Wisdom herself. Chapters 10–29 gather mostly short two-line sayings. Chapters 30–31 close with numbered sayings, a royal charge, and an alphabet poem.
- **The structure:**
  - Extended instruction (chapters 1–9).
  - The main Solomon collection (10:1–22:16).
  - The words of the wise (22:17–24:34).
  - The Hezekiah collection (chapters 25–29).
  - Agur, Lemuel, and the woman of strength (chapters 30–31).
- **Why it matters:** Proverbs teaches that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom. Wisdom is a path, a voice, and a skill for everyday life: speech, work, money, friendship, family, and justice. The book points to Christ, the wisdom of God.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of Proverbs invites you to walk the path of wisdom together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Proverbs and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. In the weeks covering the short sayings (chapters 10–29), the group reads a selection with a clear emphasis rather than every proverb.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Proverbs:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Proverbs Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**The Fear of the LORD** (1:1–3:35)	The Beginning of Knowledge (1:1–33) / Trust in the LORD (2:1–3:35)	Christ the wisdom of God; the fear of the LORD
2	**Guard the Path** (4:1–7:27)	Get Wisdom; Guard the Heart (4:1–5:23) / The Trap of Adultery (6:1–7:27)	The narrow way; the faithful Bridegroom; a pure heart
3	**Wisdom's House** (8:1–9:18)	Wisdom's Call and Joy at Creation (8:1–36) / Two Houses, Two Invitations (9:1–18)	The Word who was with God in the beginning
4	**Character and Speech** (10:1–15:33)	The Righteous and the Wicked (10:1–12:28) / A Gentle Tongue and a Listening Ear (13:1–15:33)	The good tree and its fruit; speech seasoned with grace
5	**The LORD Weighs the Heart** (16:1–22:16)	Plans, Pride, and the King's Heart (16:1–19:29) / Work, Wealth, and Justice (20:1–22:16)	A heart established by grace; treasures in heaven; the Maker of all
6	**Words of the Wise** (22:17–24:34)	Incline Your Ear (22:17–23:35) / Strength for the Day of Adversity (24:1–34)	The planted word; do not envy evildoers; strength in trouble
7	**Copied by the Men of Hezekiah** (25:1–29:27)	Apples of Gold (25:1–27:27) / The Righteous Are Bold as a Lion (28:1–29:27)	Faithful witnesses; love for enemies; a kingdom of righteousness
8	**Agur, Lemuel, and a Woman of Strength** (30:1–31:31)	Agur's Confession and Lemuel's Charge (30:1–31:9) / A Woman of Strength (31:10–31)	Every word of God proves true; the bride made ready; wisdom embodied

Scripture Scope: Proverbs 1:1–3:35 • **Focal Group Readings:** Proverbs 1:1–9; 1:20–23; 2:1–8; 3:1–12; 3:13–20 (ESV) • **Session Pacing:** 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: The Fear of the LORD (Proverbs 1:1–3:35)

Passage **Proverbs 1:1–3:35**

Opening

Proverbs opens like a family conversation. A father and mother speak to their son: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching." Before any advice comes the book's motto: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." The son is warned not to join those who would draw him into violence for easy gain. Then another voice is heard: Wisdom herself cries out in the street and the marketplace, calling the simple to turn and listen.

In chapters 2–3 the father urges his son to seek wisdom like hidden treasure, because the LORD gives it. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." Wisdom is more precious than jewels, a tree of life, and the very wisdom by which the LORD founded the earth.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Proverbs 1:1–3:35 (the title and purpose of the book, the motto of the fear of the LORD, the parents' first warning, Wisdom's cry in the street, the call to seek wisdom, and the call to trust, honor, and receive the LORD's discipline)
Focal Passages	Proverbs 1:1–9; 1:20–23; 2:1–8; 3:1–12; 3:13–20
Literary & Structural Anchor	The fear of the LORD is the "beginning" of knowledge (1:7): both the starting point and the first principle. Two voices, a parent in the home and Wisdom in the street, say the same thing: listen. Chapter 2 pairs seeking wisdom with the LORD giving it. Trust means not leaning on our own understanding (3:5–6).
Big Idea	The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, and the son is called to trust the LORD, not to lean on himself.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	**Know the Beginning:** Learn how Proverbs is shaped and what "the fear of the LORD" means.
HEART	**Trust the LORD:** See that Christ is the wisdom of God, and that the Father's discipline is a sign of his love.
HANDS	**Seek Wisdom:** Take one step to seek wisdom from God's word and to trust him in a specific decision.

Opening Frame: The Beginning of Knowledge

The Psalms began with two ways of life and with delight in God's word. Proverbs takes that same wisdom out of the place of worship and into the street, the city gate, the workplace, and the home. The book opens with a father and mother teaching a child, and with Wisdom herself calling out in public. Its first long section (chapters 1–9) urges us to choose the path of wisdom; later chapters gather short sayings for everyday life; and the book closes with two final voices and a portrait of a life shaped by wisdom. This week we hear the book's motto: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." The question for this week: where does real wisdom begin, and whom are we trusting? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): What is the best piece of advice a parent, grandparent, or mentor ever gave you?

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: The Beginning of Wisdom (Proverbs 1:1–3:35)

Passage **Proverbs 1:1–3:35**

Entering the World of the Beginning of Wisdom

1. Historical Background

The book is linked to Solomon, son of David, but gathers several collections, some copied centuries later in Hezekiah's day (25:1).

2. Cultural Setting

Collections of father-to-son instruction were a known form in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Proverbs uses that form but grounds everything in the fear of the LORD, Israel's distinctive first principle. The city gate was the place of public and legal speech, so Wisdom's cry there is public truth.

3. Literary Structure of Proverbs 1:1–3:35

- **Title and purpose** (1:1–7)
- **"hear, my son"** (1:8–19)
- **Wisdom cries in the street** (1:20–33)
- **If you seek** (chapter 2)
- **Trust, honor, and discipline** (3:1–12)
- **Wisdom's worth and the neighbor** (3:13–35)

4. Key Themes

The fear of the LORD as beginning, not graduation; two voices saying "listen"; seeking that God rewards; straight paths for those who trust.

5. Theological Considerations

A proverb describes how God's world usually works, not a guarantee for every case. Job and Ecclesiastes guard against reading Proverbs as a formula.

6. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Chapters 1–9 are a series of speeches, not a pile of sayings. They prepare the reader to hear the short sayings of chapters 10–29 wisely.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: The book says its purpose is "To know wisdom and instruction" (1:2) and "to give prudence to the simple" (1:4). What is the difference between being smart and being wise?

1.2 Q2: A proverb describes how life usually works under God, not a promise for every case. Why is it important to read Proverbs this way, especially after studying Job?

1.2 Q3: "Let the wise hear and increase in learning" (1:5). Why does Proverbs address even wise people, and not only beginners?

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Beginning of Knowledge (Proverbs 1:1–33)

Passage Proverbs 1:1–33

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Proverbs 1:1–9** (focal passage) — The proverbs of Solomon are given so that people may know wisdom, receive instruction, and gain prudence; the wise will grow and the simple will learn; the fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom; the son is to hear his father and mother, whose teaching is like a garland and a necklace.
- **Summary of Proverbs 1:10–19** — The father warns his son not to give in if others invite him to ambush and rob the innocent for easy gain; their feet run to evil, and greed like theirs takes away the life of those who hold it.
- **Reader 2: Proverbs 1:20–23** (focal passage) — Wisdom cries aloud in the street, the markets, and the city gates, asking how long the simple will love being simple and scoffers delight in scoffing; if they turn at her reproof, she will pour out her spirit and make her words known.
- **Summary of Proverbs 1:24–33** — Wisdom warns that those who refuse her call will one day meet the fruit of their own way when trouble comes, but whoever listens to her will dwell secure, without fear of disaster.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

Proverbs 1:7: The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 1:8–9: Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.

Teaching Narrative: The Beginning of Knowledge

1. Why This Book (Proverbs 1:1–6)

Wisdom for the simple, the young, and the wise.

2. The Beginning of Knowledge (Proverbs 1:7)

The motto of the whole book.

3. Hear, My Son (Proverbs 1:8–9)

Teaching from father and mother.

4. Do Not Consent (Proverbs 1:10–19)

Retold briefly. The lure of easy gain and its end.

5. Wisdom in the Street (Proverbs 1:20–23)

A public call to turn.

6. Refusal and Security (Proverbs 1:24–33)

Retold briefly. The consequences of refusing, and the safety of listening.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (1:7). What do you think it means to "fear" the LORD, and why is that where knowledge begins?

1.3 Q2: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching" (1:8). How can faith be passed on in families, and what can people do whose parents did not teach them to fear the LORD?

1.3 Q3: "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent" (1:10). How does pressure from others pull people, young and old, toward wrong choices today?

1.3 Q4: "Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice" (1:20). Why might it matter that wisdom calls out in public places and not only in religious ones?

1.3 Q5: Wisdom asks, "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple?" (1:22), and promises, "but whoever listens to me will dwell secure" (1:33). What makes people resist good counsel, and what does listening bring?

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Trust in the LORD (Proverbs 2:1–3:35)

Passage Proverbs 2:1–3:35

Guided Scripture Reading

Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries between readings:

- **Reader 1: Proverbs 2:1–8** (focal passage) — If the son receives his father's words, calls out for insight, and seeks it like silver and hidden treasure, then he will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God, for the LORD gives wisdom and guards the paths of his faithful ones.
- **Summary of Proverbs 2:9–22** — Wisdom will enter his heart and guard him from people who walk in darkness and from the seductive words of the adulteress; the upright will remain in the land, but the wicked will be cut off.
- **Reader 2: Proverbs 3:1–12** (focal passage) — The son is not to forget his father's teaching; steadfast love and faithfulness are to be bound around his neck; he is to trust in the LORD with all his heart and not lean on his own understanding; not be wise in his own eyes but fear the LORD and turn from evil; honor the LORD with his wealth; and not despise the LORD's discipline, for the LORD reproves those he loves.
- **Reader 3: Proverbs 3:13–20** (focal passage) — Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, more precious than jewels, a tree of life to those who hold her; the LORD by wisdom founded the earth and established the heavens.
- **Summary of Proverbs 3:21–35** — Wisdom gives safe sleep and steady steps; do not withhold good from your neighbor when it is in your power, do not plot harm, and do not envy a person of violence; the LORD mocks the scornful but gives favor to the humble.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Proverbs 3:5–6:** Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
>
> **Proverbs 3:7:** Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
>
> **Proverbs 3:11–12:** My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.
>
> **Proverbs 3:19–20:** The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

Teaching Narrative: Trust in the LORD

1. If You Seek (Proverbs 2:1–5)

Seeking wisdom like hidden treasure.

2. The LORD Gives Wisdom (Proverbs 2:6–8)

Wisdom as God's gift.

3. Guarded from Evil (Proverbs 2:9–22)

Retold briefly. Wisdom's protection.

4. Trust and Do Not Lean (Proverbs 3:1–8)

The heart of the chapter.

5. Honor and Discipline (Proverbs 3:9–12)

Generosity and fatherly reproof. The LORD's discipline is a father's love; it is never a cover for harshness or abuse.

6. The Tree of Life (Proverbs 3:13–20)

Wisdom's worth and its role in creation.

7. Wisdom with Neighbors (Proverbs 3:21–35)

Retold briefly. Doing good and refusing envy.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

1.4 Q1: The father says to seek wisdom "like silver" and "as for hidden treasures" (2:4), and then says, "For the LORD gives wisdom" (2:6). How do our seeking and God's giving work together?

1.4 Q2: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (3:5). Where are you most tempted to lean on your own understanding?

1.4 Q3: "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil" (3:7). How does being "wise in your own eyes" keep a person from real wisdom?

1.4 Q4: "The LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights" (3:12). How have you experienced loving correction through Scripture or trustworthy counsel, and what distinguished that correction from shame or cruelty?

1.4 Q5: Wisdom is "a tree of life to those who lay hold of her" (3:18), and "The LORD by wisdom founded the earth" (3:19). What does it mean that the same wisdom that made the world is offered to us for daily life?

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: Christ the Wisdom of God; the Fear of the LORD

Passage Proverbs 1:7

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

The wisdom Proverbs calls us to seek is found in Christ, the wisdom of God, and the fear of the LORD that begins it is the reverent trust that rests in him. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. Christ the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30; Colossians 2:3)

In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. To begin with the fear of the LORD is, in the full light of Scripture, to begin with him.

2. The Son Who Trusted the Father (Luke 22:42; Philippians 2:8–11)

Jesus perfectly trusted and obeyed the Father on the path of the cross, submitting his human will to the Father even when that path led through suffering to resurrection.

3. The Father's Loving Discipline (Hebrews 12:5–11)

Hebrews quotes Proverbs 3:11–12 so that hardship is not read as rejection.

4. Wisdom Received as Children (Matthew 11:25–30; 18:3–4)

Those who come to Jesus are not wise in their own eyes; they receive the kingdom as children.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Proverbs 1:7:** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

> **1.5 Q1:** Paul says Christ "became to us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30), and that in him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). How does this change what it means to "seek wisdom"?

> **1.5 Q2:** In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, "not my will, but yours, be done" (Luke 22:42). How does Jesus model trusting the LORD with all your heart?

1.5 Q3: Hebrews quotes Proverbs: "For the Lord disciplines the one he loves" (Hebrews 12:6). How does Hebrews distinguish God's loving formation of his children from rejection, and why should we avoid assuming that every hardship is correction for a particular sin?

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	Proverbs begins with the fear of the LORD, a call to listen to wise teaching, Wisdom's public cry, and the call to trust the LORD rather than ourselves.
HEART	Christ is the wisdom of God, and the Father's discipline is a sign of his love.
HANDS	Faith seeks wisdom like treasure, trusts the LORD in every path, and stays humble.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: What decision are you facing where you need to trust the LORD rather than lean on your own understanding?

1.6 Q2: How could you "seek wisdom like silver" this week in a practical way?

1.6 Q3: Who in your life could you pass on wisdom to, as a parent, mentor, or friend?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, we heard the motto of Proverbs and the call to trust the LORD with all our hearts.

Transition: Next week the father urges his son to guard his heart and his path, and warns him at length about adultery.

Week 2 Overview — Guard the Path (Proverbs 4:1–7:27): Movement 1, Get Wisdom; Guard the Heart (4:1–5:23), covers the two paths and faithfulness in marriage. Movement 2, The Trap of Adultery (6:1–7:27), covers practical warnings and the danger of the adulteress. The Canonical Horizon traces the narrow way, the faithful Bridegroom, and a pure heart.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Proverbs 4:1–9
- Proverbs 4:18–27
- Proverbs 5:1–6
- Proverbs 5:21–23
- Proverbs 6:6–19
- Proverbs 6:20–23
- Proverbs 7:1–5

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD, the fear of you is the beginning of knowledge. Thank you for the parents, mentors, and teachers who pointed us to you, and we pray for those who never had such teachers. Forgive us for leaning on our own understanding and being wise in our own eyes. Teach us to seek wisdom like hidden treasure. We trust you as the Father whose discipline is love, and we pray for any here who have known harsh discipline. Thank you for Christ, the wisdom of God. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.