

# Wise Words *for* Families



## SABBATH AFTERNOON

**Read for This Week's Study:** *Prov. 5:3–14; Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Prov. 13:22; 14:26; 23:13, 14; 17:22; 31:10–31.*

**Memory Text:** “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (*Proverbs 3:5, 6, NKJV*).

Whatever phase of life we are in now, we all, of course, started out with a mother and a father, regardless of the kind of relationship, if any at all, that we had with them after our birth. On the other hand, some people, other than having siblings or other relatives, never have a family of their own—other than the one they grew up in.

Whatever our situation, whatever our phase of life, the book of Proverbs contains a combination of instructions, poems, questions, and wise sayings. Family relationships are directly addressed, and other words of wisdom can be applied to the home. Proverbs is, in fact, cast as a family document, in which keys to a godly life are handed down from parent to child. Just as parents might write a letter of advice to a son or daughter going to college, setting up their separate dwelling, or taking a job away from home, so Proverbs is addressed from father to son: “My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother” (*Prov. 1:8, NKJV*). Deuteronomy directed parents to share their convictions with the next generation. This is what Proverbs does. In the father's summons, we hear the voice of our heavenly Father calling us to learn.

\* Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 4.

## Love the Right Woman

**List** the problems and consequences involved with a sexual liaison before marriage or an extramarital affair as depicted in Proverbs 5:3–14.

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The godly person reserves (if not married) and preserves (if married) his or her deepest affections and sexual intimacy for marriage. Men are specifically addressed in Proverbs, but the same idea as it relates to women is expressed in the Song of Solomon (*compare Song of Sol. 4:12–15*). The powerful attraction of illicit love must be weighed against the horrific consequences of this sin. Casual sexual liaisons lack commitment and, therefore, fall far short of true intimacy. Material, physical, and emotional resources are squandered. Most important, one must answer to God for the choices made in life.

Sexual intimacy, one of God’s greatest gifts to humans, is a privilege of marriage only (*Matt. 19:5; 1 Cor. 7:3, 4; Heb. 13:4*). In Proverbs, the imagery of nourishing, plentiful water is used as a delicate symbol of the pleasure and satisfaction a married couple ought to obtain in their love together. This is contrasted with the waste that results when there is unfaithfulness. The expression “the wife of your youth” (*Prov. 5:18, NKJV*) indicates that, even when the two grow older, their commitment is to continue. A husband is still ravished (“intoxicated” [*Prov. 5:19, NIV*]) by his wife’s charms.

In the human fallen condition, sexual instincts can lure individuals away from the divine design for sexuality. However, God also has given humanity the power to reason and to choose. These temptations, if not continually suppressed, can become overwhelming. A firm commitment to the divine design for sexuality in marriage can prevent the development of illicit sexual relationships. The choice of lifelong faithfulness to God’s design for sexuality in marriage not only is prudent but carries its own bountiful rewards.

**If you knew someone struggling with sexual temptations that could destroy a marriage, what counsel would you give that person?**

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## A Call to Fathers

**Note** the character qualities of fathers described in Proverbs that can have long-term consequences for children:

*Prov. 13:22; 27:23, 24* \_\_\_\_\_

*Prov. 14:26* \_\_\_\_\_

*Prov. 15:1, 18; 16:32* \_\_\_\_\_

*Prov. 15:27* \_\_\_\_\_

*Prov. 29:17* \_\_\_\_\_

The characters of fathers have a direct impact on their children and the legacy they pass on to them. Children look to their fathers for support, devoted affection, guidance, and modeling. Proverbs lauds those fathers who are reliable providers and wise managers of family resources. Many are the ways in which “the greedy bring ruin to their household” (*Prov. 15:27, NIV*); fathers must be mindful to give priority to family over work. Godly fathers seek to be patient and in command of their emotions. They respect their children’s dependence upon them. They discipline their children but are careful not to abuse their position of authority. Most important, dedicated fathers want to follow God, to be controlled by His love and by the teaching of His Word, that they might guide the feet of their children in the right way.

In the end, the most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. His faithfulness and continuing affection for her, or the lack of these, have a telling effect upon children’s well-being even into adulthood.

In Proverbs, loyalty to God, commitment to marriage and family, and integrity in one’s personal and community life are key themes. Success in everything depends upon the condition of the individual heart. The attractions of sin—whether sex, sloth, wealth, or power—abound, but the wise husband and father looks to God for help to make right choices continually.

**How are the moral principles expressed here important for anyone, whether or not a father? How have your actions, either for good or bad, impacted others, especially children? In what ways might you need to be more careful?**

## Correction With Love

**What** does Proverbs teach about the importance of discipline and correction of a child? *Prov. 10:17; 23:13, 14; 29:1; 29:15.*

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Parents sometimes discipline their children to impress upon them what is socially unacceptable behavior, to punish for disobedience, or even to express their displeasure when embarrassed. But what is God's intention regarding discipline for these young members of His family? Proverbs sets discipline in the context of hope for the future (*Prov. 19:18*). Godly parents know that children have a sinful nature. Only one power can help them with this, and this power is Christ (see Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 29). The mission of Christian parenting, including discipline, is to lead children to God.

*Supporting a tender plant.* Through Christ discipline is seen not as punishment, nor as an expression of authority, but as redemptive correction. God's plan is that loving parents, knowing the strength of sin, guide their children's footsteps to Christ. Caring parents correct kindly and firmly, restraining and guiding children through the early years much as a horticulturalist provides support to a newly planted tree, until self-control emerges and a youth comes to trust in God and cooperates with the divine plan for salvation, growth, and maturity.

**What** message for parents is found in Proverbs 13:24; 23:13, 14?

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All told, just a few verses mention the "rod" (Heb. *shebet*) in the context of disciplining children. Popular within Christian parenting literature is the notion that parental use of the rod should be like that of the heavenly Shepherd who uses it to guide His flock (*Ps. 23:4*). Elsewhere, Scripture points to patient teaching, consistent modeling, good communication, and close relationships for influencing change in children (*Deut. 11:18, 19*). The child's feeling of being loved by his or her parents is vital if discipline is to have its desired effect of being corrective and redemptive (*Prov. 13:24*).

**When discipline has missed its intended purpose by being too harsh or misunderstood, how can parents set matters right with their children?**

## Is Life Better on a Rooftop?

**In** what way does the book of Proverbs sprinkle humor on some of the irritations in domestic living? *Prov. 21:9, 19; 27:15, 16*. What effect does this humor have?

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A number of the proverbs consider the ways we treat each other in close relationships. They make their point with a light touch and a flash of wit, like the ones about the insensitive friend who “sings songs to a heavy heart” (*Prov. 25:20, NKJV*) and the early-rising family member who “blesses” sleepers “with a loud voice” (*Prov. 27:14, NKJV*). Wives reading these verses about contentious women may want to add some “proverbs” about men! They may retort that such sayings perpetuate the very problem of these proverbs by targeting only women when husbands, who share responsibility for the home atmosphere, are equally capable of contentious behavior. (Imagine what it must have been like living in the home of Caiaphas or Annas!)

*A merry heart helps.* Having a sense of humor in family living is a good thing. Humor lubricates the machinery of living, helping to reduce stresses and strains. “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones” (*Prov. 17:22, NKJV*). Proverbs takes some of its own medicine throughout the book and gives us permission to chuckle at a few of the behaviors that annoy and irritate. Perhaps when we have smiled (or smarted a bit if the joke is on us), we are in a better place to talk about habits or behaviors that irritate or annoy us. On the other hand, humor should not be used to minimize or bypass issues that need serious attention.

A low-grade fever may be symptomatic of a chronic infection. Quarreling, nagging, and complaining may signal that there is suppressed anger in one or more family members, perhaps related to difficulties with mutuality or communication in the relationship. The complaining partner tries to offset the perceived power, control, and unwillingness to communicate of another. If the infection is cleared up, the symptoms will go away. In families, rather than avoiding the problem or one another, members build on their love for the Lord and their commitment to one another by communicating their needs and feelings, getting to the root of their anger, and clearing it up.

**Why is laughter so important for the home? How can it be used for good, or how can it be perverted and used for evil? Bring your answer to class.**

## A Truly Wealthy Wife

**The** book of Proverbs closes with praise for a wife of noble character. Identify the characteristics and qualities that are lauded. *Prov. 31:10–31.*

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The woman described is special, and so is the poetry. Each of the verses starting from Proverbs 31:10 begins with one of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. One senses from this tribute to a worthy wife that even the whole national alphabet barely provides a sufficient framework to extol her properly!

Proverbs' emphasis on marrying a good partner is reflected in a dictum of the rabbis: "A man's home is his wife." "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones" (*Prov. 12:4, NIV*). Here, at the end of the proverbs, rolled idealistically into a portrait of one, are many varied skills: clothing manufacture, buying real estate, agriculture, home and financial management. Meanwhile, she cares well for her family. They love her and praise her.

These extensive talents are not to be expected in every woman, nor are they a blueprint whereby husbands should measure their wives. Rather, through describing these capabilities and qualities, Proverbs conveys what is most important and universally relevant for women, as well as for men: the traits of trustworthiness, compassion, reliability, faithfulness, kindness, and industry. The secret of such a life, according to Proverbs 31:30, is that she "fears the LORD" (*NKJV*).

In Proverbs 31:10 the word for "virtuous," or "of noble character" (*NIV*), means "strength," "might," or "wealth." It is translated as "riches" in Psalm 62:10 and describes Joshua's "men of *valour*" (*Josh. 1:14*; emphasis added). Boaz commends Ruth with the word *virtuous* (*Ruth 3:11*). In Proverbs 31:10 there is a play on the concept of "wealth." True wealth lies in character, integrity, and the fear of the Lord. This vastly exceeds the worth to be found in precious stones.

**Who are some of the women of valor and virtue who have influenced your life? How would you expand the list of character qualities, virtues, and capacities of godly women?**

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**Further Thought:** *Keeping the heart in heaven.* “Christians should be careful that they keep the heart with all diligence. They should cultivate a love for meditation, and cherish a spirit of devotion. Many seem to begrudge moments spent in meditation, and the searching of the Scriptures, and prayer, as though the time thus occupied was lost. I wish you could all view these things in the light God would have you; for you would then make the kingdom of heaven of the first importance. To keep your heart in heaven, will give vigor to all your graces, and put life into all your duties. To discipline the mind to dwell upon heavenly things, will put life and earnestness into all our endeavors. . . . We are dwarfs in spiritual attainments. . . . [Eph. 4:13.]”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1157.

### Discussion Questions:

- 1 Many Christians find a support group network helpful as they seek to “guard their hearts” against temptation. In what way might this augment prayer, Bible study, and reliance on the Holy Spirit? In some cases, why might it be a good idea to seek professional help if someone really struggles with temptations that do lead them into sin, and they seem unable to stop?
- 2 As a class, read your answers aloud to Wednesday’s final question. Discuss the implications of your various answers. As with so many of the wonderful things that God has given us, how can laughter and humor be perverted and twisted into being something actually harmful?
- 3 In contrast to Proverbs 31, what qualities does contemporary culture tend to exalt in women? How can we as individuals protect ourselves from partaking of that same degrading attitude?
- 4 In general, what are some of the cultural attitudes about family life in your society that directly conflict with biblical principles of family life? On the other hand, are there some cultural attitudes that parallel biblical principles? If so, what are they, and how can they be used to strengthen our families?

## Baby Is Coming!

By ANDREW MCCHESENEY, Adventist Mission

A physician praying to be used by God after hearing a Sabbath sermon about mission work in the cities unexpectedly delivered a baby in the parking lot of the Seventh-day Adventist world church's U.S. headquarters.

Dr. Yvette C. Ross Hebron delivered a healthy baby boy in the car of the parents, who had been rushing to the hospital but pulled into the church's parking lot in Silver Spring, Maryland, after getting lost.

Ross Hebron said she believed God arranged the events.

"The most wonderful opportunity in response to our prayers was orchestrated by the Master," she said.

Ross Hebron began praying about how to do more to serve God after hearing Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson preach during the 2017 Annual Council business meetings at the church's General Conference headquarters. The church leader had appealed for a renewed effort to reach people in the cities and spoke of the need for physicians and other health-care professionals to reach city residents.

Five days after the sermon, Ross Hebron and her husband were driving past church headquarters when they saw a man pull into the parking lot, frantically jump from his car, and run around it. Rolling down the window, she heard him crying and screaming, "The baby is coming!" Then she heard the screams of the expectant mother in the car.

"My husband and I immediately pulled into the driveway," she said.

Moments later, the baby was born. As Harold Hebron telephoned the paramedics, the new father removed his shoelaces from his tennis shoes and found a pair of scissors in the car. Following Ross Hebron's directions, he tied off the umbilical cord and cut it.

Ross Hebron wrapped the baby in a blanket from her car and made sure that he was comfortable and breathing fine. General Conference security arrived and fostered a calm environment. After a short time, the paramedics took a healthy and stable mother and baby to the hospital.

Later that day, Ross Hebron visited the mother in the hospital and again held the baby in her arms.

The mother excitedly told the nurses that God sent an angel to help her in the parking lot.



"I don't know where she came from," the mother said. "I just looked up, and she was there."

Ross Hebron said she has no doubt that what happened in the parking lot was an answer to prayer.

"My husband and I attribute all to God's plan," she said.