



JANUARY 2018

THE PROVERBS PLAN
HARVEST // NCL

PASTOR CLIVE: Welcome to this New Year of 2018 and welcome to this introduction on what will be our bible reading focus for the first month of the New Year. We are going to begin 2018 by reading together one whole book of the Bible, which happens to have 31 chapters. That's helpful, as there are 31 days in January, so we can all read one chapter of this book a day. What is this book and why are we going to read it? Well, it's book of Proverbs, or, as I like to call it, "Practical wisdom for the 21st Century!" It might seem that Proverbs was written a long time ago, so how can it be interesting, relevant and helpful to us in the 21st-century? The answer is, through the Holy Spirit at work in our lives today. In 2 Timothy 1:7, the Bible tells us, "God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind." That last phrase, a 'sound mind' is really better translated as the word level-headed, or, sensible behaviour, or, (and this is my favourite), "streetwise." What God wants to do for us is equip us by his spirit to be people who are 'streetwise,' switched on, understanding, not uninformed or naïve. The result is, that we make sensible, level headed decisions that really do work in our lives about all kinds of things. And in doing that we keep ourselves on a great path, free from of all kinds of trouble and problems; the kinds of things that so many other people seem to get wrong and then get their lives into so many difficulties with. It's essential that we, as Christians, become wise people whose lives are working well in all areas through understanding and applying God's wisdom to everything we do. That way, our lives work well in God as he intends them to, and at the same time we are a great testimony to others of how we live and conduct ourselves. Jesus even pointed out to his disciples (in Luke 16:8) that sometimes the people of this world are more 'switched on' than his own followers. Can you believe that? Christians may not always be as streetwise as the people we are reaching out to, and it's Jesus that says so! Well, that's a situation we want to put right as quickly as possible! Somebody once said, "The problem with common sense is that it is just not common!" However, there is a Bible type of 'common sense' - the kind of 'streetwise' spirit that the apostle Paul is talking about in 2 Timothy 1:7. A careful, prayerful, Holy Spirit inspired reading of the book of Proverbs will help us all learn more of that level-headed, practical, streetwise way of living for the 21st Century. So it is in this spirit that I commend Proverbs to you this January. A chapter a day to read, to receive from, and to be helped by in order to become more Bible 'streetwise' - that is, wise in God, for yourself and for those around you. God bless you and may this focus on Proverbs help you to have a great start, in God, to 2018.

HOW TO READ IT

Proverbs is part of a group of books of the Bible that we call “Wisdom Literature.” It contains practical, Godly wisdom for day-to-day life and living. The foundation of being wise in life like this is found in a relationship, not just in head-knowledge or having access to some information. It’s in knowing someone and pleasing them rather than knowing something and pleasing ourselves. The first relationship we have to get right, is with God and the second one is with our father and mother, (especially in a spiritual sense – that is our leader or discipler.)

Each of these relationships needs a certain right response if they are to work for us and make us truly wise in life. In the case of our relationship with God, we need to fear him to even begin to be wise, (Proverbs 1:7).

What does fear actually mean here? Well, there are all sorts of ideas like ‘respect’ and ‘honour’ but what the Hebrew word actually means is – be terrified of!



A GOOD, HEALTHY UNDERSTANDING OF WHO GOD IS, AND WHAT HE DOES TO DEAL WITH SIN PROPERLY, SHOULD CAUSE US ALL TO BE ABSOLUTELY TERRIFIED OF MESSING WITH GOD. SERIOUSLY!

If you’re not convinced about what I’m saying take a good look at these scriptures: Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 10:31 and 12:29. In the case of our relationship with our spiritual father or mother, the key response is to listen, (Proverbs 1:8).

The word in Hebrew to listen (shema) is also the same word that’s used for obey. So listening Bible-style means not just to hear the word as advice and think, “Well maybe, maybe not.” Rather, it means, be attentive, tune in, receive it as good for your soul, and follow it, do what it says, obey, even. That kind of idea may not be so popular in many parts of our society today, but it’s what God calls us to through his word. When we do it, (that is, truly fear God and follow his word to us), a blessed, peaceful, flowing, secure, strong and prosperous in God life is what follows. That’s a prize and reward we all want and Proverbs will help get us there, if we relate and respond in the right way!

STRUCTURE //

At first reading, Proverbs seems to be just a collection of good but often random or unrelated sayings. However, the book does have a certain structure and it may be helpful to be aware of this when reading.

1. Chapters 1 to 9 contain an introduction to Wisdom and a call to be wise.

There is a lot about avoiding falling into sin including sexual temptation and how to avoid this – (mainly by avoiding bad company and bad behaviour). This can also be applied to spiritual unfaithfulness as well, since the Bible often describes false religion as a woman who seduces.

Chapters 8 and 9 present wisdom in the form of a person to help us see how important it is and understand better. Parts of this sound just like a description Jesus, too. (Though, if we take this view we need to note that wisdom was not 'created' 9:22 as some versions say but the Hebrew says 'possessed' (see NASB). Likewise, Jesus was never created since he has always been there as part of the eternal Godhead.)

2. Chapters 10 to 22:16 – individual proverbs of King Solomon

3. Chapters 22:17 to 24:32 –Thirty sayings of “the Wise”

4. Chapters 24:23 to 34 – Further sayings of “the Wise”

5. Chapters 25 to 29 – More sayings of Solomon copied out by Hezekiah's men

6. Chapter 30 – words of Agar Son of Jakeh

7. Chapter 31 – words of King Lemuel

TIPS & IDEAS //

When reading through Proverbs, think ahead to a theme in the book that might be of particular interest to you or be able to speak to you at this time. Then, when reading each day, look out for that theme. Themes popular in Proverbs are things like, the use of the tongue, or family relationships, or relationships in general, or the company and friends we keep, or warnings of things to avoid in life, e.g. laziness, drunkenness, gossip. A good idea is to underline or make a note of any verses that stand out to you each day and think about them for a minute or two after reading them. You can also go back and re-read them during the day. Another good idea, at least once in the chapter you read, is to stop and think more deeply, “What does that mean – then and now?” Or “Why was that proverb so important?” or “Why does God say that?” Talk it over with your City Group leader. Proverbs in different Bible Translations: One of the things you may notice is that some of the proverbs have different translations in different versions. No need to worry about that though.

The way the verses are written is like poetry or songs and often sentences are shortened and words may re-ordered or missed out altogether. So, sometimes, it's quite a challenge for the translators to work out what the original proverb or saying was, what any missing words are and what they might have meant then as well as now. They, (the translators), have done their best for us and given us their best attempts but, nevertheless, there is room for the occasional difference of translation.

*a proverb
a day...*

MON 1
TUES 2
WED 3
THUR 4
FRI 5
SAT 6
SUN 7
MON 8
TUZE 9
WED 10
THUR 11
FRI 12
SAT 13
SUN 14

MON 15
TUE 16
WED 17
THU 18
FRI 19
SAT 20
SUN 21
MON 22
TUE 23
WED 24
THU 25
FRI 26
SAT 27
SUN 28
MON 29
TUE 30
WED 31

NEW YEARS EVE

HERE'S A RECAP OF PASTOR CLVE'S PROVERBS-BASED MESSAGE FROM OUR 10.30PM YEARS EVE MEETING

PROV 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 YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT. NASB

In these verses is a message for each one of us to posture ourselves before the Lord at this time and to help us walk with him in greater love, closeness, service and victory. If all of this is done and it works, what is the end result?

The answer is in the last two words, "straight paths." What God wants to give us all in life, and the place he wants to get each one of us to is, "straight paths." That's his goal for you and me. The word can better be translated as smooth, easy to travel, doesn't damage you or hurt you in any way, just helps you in your way, helps you get to your destination with ease and lets you enjoy the journey. Isn't that what we all want for our lives as well?

What God tells us here is three things we need to know and to act on, decisively and daily, in order to make sure our lives are traveling on on a straight, smooth road. Keep reading to find out what those three ways are.

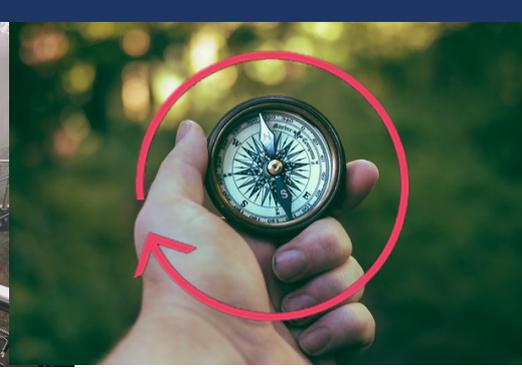
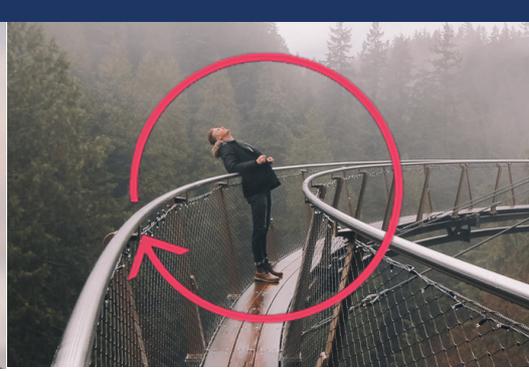
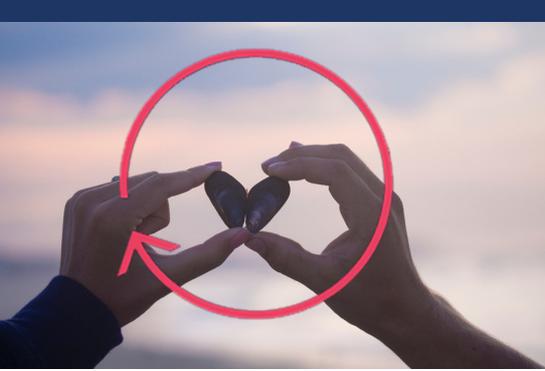
But first, note that the passage says HE will make straight our paths. You can't do this for yourself!

Not us. No amount of attempting to change ourselves will help us get off the rough road and onto that smooth road. No amount of telling ourselves, no self-made good idea, no plan, no resolve or resolution, no self-help book, no course, no coach or guru can cause us to change roads. Only a heart based trust, a putting in place of our minds, an knowing of who God is and his eternal ways, only this will change the rough road for the smooth.

All we can do is call on the Lord and make two life-defining choices for 2018:
1) Jesus I trust in you completely, for absolutely everything in my life, nothing held back
2) Jesus I choose to respond to you from my inner being, my heart and not try and work it out and work you out.

This month we're challenging the whole church to read one Proverb a day, matching the dates of the month. It's a great opportunity for us all to let God's wisdom RESET our hearts and minds on the smooth path. Keep reading to find out how.
Happy New Year everyone!

RECAP
RESET



TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART

Trust comes with the idea of confidence and security. We can trust God for our security in life, spiritually- for our salvation, but in every other area too, financially, emotionally, physically inc. our health, relationally, career-wise, job-wise.

Put our confidence in God, the Lord, the One who made us, and whose plan for everyone who believes in him and his salvation, is that we have a straight and smooth road in life. This, of course is very similar to faith in the NT. The idea behind the word is that you lie down or are thrown down on the ground in front of someone – **like a combination of surrender and rest.**

There is a special part of you that leads the way in doing this. It's like a special organ of the body given over for this very purpose of trusting. It's our heart. Truly trusting in God is a matter of the heart. And we can see in the Bible, it takes All our heart, not just some or part or even the majority but all our heart for this to work.

„How much do I trust God? How much of my heart is involve din trusting him. Is it all? Is it all?

Only all will do, only all will work.

Right now, for 2018, could I make a choice, a decision and a commitment to him to say,

“Yes I will trust you, yes I will trust, put my full confidence, have my total security in you and you alone - with all my heart.”

AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING

There is an inbuilt obstacle to trust, to giving God all of my heart and it's desires and plans and wants and future. It's called, “Your own understanding.” Trust is rooted in our hearts. It doesn't originate in our heads heads, but ‘our own understanding’ does. So it's not another person's ideas or opinions that makes my life such a difficult road. It's my own!

It's my own ideas and interpretations, about what has happened to me in life, about who God is and who I am. It's my own thoughts and imaginations about what I think I will do, how I see things, what I think is best for me, and will make me happiest. Now, we all have minds and thoughts but it's how we use them that really counts. If we get this wrong, we will end up not trusting God fully, and on a very rough road as a result.

Here, the Bible tells us not to lean on, or no to try and support yourself, depend on yourself or even touch a boundary. Unfortunately our society actually encourages us to lean on our own understanding, and trust only what we can analyse and prove in our minds and not listen to anything else. Is it any wonder we don't see the miracle power of God more fully at work in the nation? The key question here for each one of us is, “How much do I really lean on my own understanding, how much do I really depend only on myself at the end of the day?” Because if I do, I won't be able to fully trust and put my confidence in God alone. To put it another way, “How open and willing am I to have my thinking changed about a situation that I passionately believe I'm right in?”

IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM

What does it mean to acknowledge him?

The word ‘acknowledge’ here has a simple meaning.

It means to know; to know personally and and relationally, to feel, be aware of.

Not simply about knowing facts or information.

It means in all we do, in all we engage in in life, we know God as a person, we know who God is and what he's like, we know his word and his ways and all of that informs shapes and governs everything we do.

“All our ways” – there is nothing left out of that.

Business, finances and work, the office, the mall, the gym, the dining room, the lounge, the bedroom, the car, and of course, the church meeting.

So the key question for us to finish with is

“Do I know him and his ways in every part of my life?”



A BACK TO BASICS, BETTER
WAY TO MAKE LIFE WORK.
FOR EVERYONE.



FAMILY &
PARENTING



MONEY
MATTERS



PRESSURE
POINTS



WELL-
BEING

KIDS
GROUPS
TOO!

EVERY SUNDAY DURING JANUARY // 10.30AM-12PM
HARVEST CHURCH // STANHOPE STREET // NE4 5HJ

iharvest.org.uk //   iharvestchurch

Reg Charity 1052178