

PROVERBS FOR LIFE

DICK HOPKINS



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

❧

Text written by Dick Hopkins. Dick was converted to the Lord while in the Navy. Following graduation from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, Dick worked for 33 years as a probation officer. Since 1994, he has done volunteer work for ECS Prison Ministry of Northern California, 401 MacArthur Blvd., San Leandro, CA 94577.

❧

Proverbs for Life

Dick Hopkins

Published by:

Emmaus Correspondence School
(A division of ECS Ministries)
PO Box 1028
Dubuque, IA 52004-1028
phone: (563) 585-2070
email: ecsorders@ecsministries.org
website: www.ecsministries.org

First Printing 2003 (AK '03), 1 UNIT

Revised 2005 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2008 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2010 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

ISBN 978-0-940293-80-9

Copyright © 2003, 2005 ECS Ministries

All rights in this course are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any manner, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system including the Internet without written permission from the publisher. Permission is not needed for brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America

A TESTIMONY

Growing up I spent a lot of time in youth homes, jails and prisons. My first term in prison I was a “shot caller” for my gang. When I paroled I was into making money. Then at 24 I was arrested, and under the Three Strikes Law I was facing a life sentence. It was there in County Jail I came to Christ. He radically changed my life. (Thankfully, God had mercy on me and I was able to parole at age 25).

As a new Christian I began to read Proverbs. Proverbs for me was a big blessing. I enjoyed being able to open up the words of wisdom written by the Holy Spirit through King Solomon. All 31 chapters are filled with God’s instruction for our everyday lives, as to our relationship with God, our wives, children as well as our bosses at work.

Proverbs helped get me through many trials and temptations. For example, when I first hit San Quentin as a Christian they sent me a cellmate who was covered with tattoos. With 21 inch biceps he was the biggest white man on the yard. When he entered my cell and saw me reading my Bible his first words were, “I ain’t into religion. It makes a man weak.” God gave me the wisdom through Proverbs to respond to this man and within three days he confessed Jesus as his Lord.

As I read the book of Proverbs I try to examine my own heart so that I can work on the issues that are important in my life, such as watching my tongue, pride, and learning how to live an honorable life.

At 26 I was working as an electrician. I needed God’s wisdom as to how to deal with my bosses and with the men I worked with. Since Proverbs is one of my favorite books in the Bible at various times I’d have a Bible study on Proverbs at work with some of the men. I noticed the men who

acted tough and indifferent softened when they encountered personal problems. Some of them turned to me for advice.

Proverbs is a book of action and instruction on how to receive God's will for us within the corrupt times we live in. During the three years I was on parole I relied on the teachings of Proverbs as to how to deal with the police, when I got a traffic ticket, and how to deal with my Parole Officer. Once he came to my church, interrupted our Bible study, and publicly told everyone there I needed to take a drug test. God's wisdom in Proverbs helped me deal with that and many other situations successfully.

Proverbs 3:5-6 says that as we lean on God He will direct our paths. That has happened to me many times. Once I was doing electrical work with a new crew near a porno movie house. My crew members started to tease me about not wanting to go to the porno show and they called me a "goody two-shoes." Just at that time a former friend, a member of an outlaw motorcycle club whom I knew in prison, drove by and came up and greeted me. My work crew was amazed that I knew someone like that, and that incident gave me the opportunity to share how, even though I'd been to prison, God had changed me. Proverbs gave me the wisdom as to how to respond to these men.

Now at age 29 I am off parole, married, active in my church and still working as an electrician. God has changed my heart so much that whereas I used to live for money, now my greatest joy in life is giving.

—Former ECS Student

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Lessons You Will Study

Introduction	7
1. Fearing God Helps in Personal Relationships	9
2. Trusting God Brings Guidance	15
3. Godly Friends Bring Happiness	21
4. A Righteous Work Ethic Brings Satisfaction	27
5. Sexual Purity Brings Stability of Life	33
6. A Good Marriage Brings God’s Favor	39
7. Love of Righteousness Brings Hatred of Sin	45
8. Avoiding an Angry Man Brings Safety	51
9. Pleasant Words Bring Sweetness to the Soul	57
10. Humbling Yourself Brings Honor	63
11. Truthfulness Brings God’s Delight	69
12. Self-Control Brings Victory	75

Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How To Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in the course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the Bible or textbook where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

See the back of the exam booklet for more information on returning the exams for grading.

INTRODUCTION

Proverbs is God's book of Wisdom. God gave Solomon, the author of the Book of Proverbs, great wisdom (1 Kings 3:5-15). This wisdom enabled him to build the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Kings 6 and 7). It enabled him to answer all of the hard questions of the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-9). It also enabled him to act appropriately in difficult situations. An example of this is found in 1 Kings 3:16-28 where Solomon was asked to make a tough decision in a controversy between two women. God's wisdom enabled him to make the right choice.

Although Solomon wrote most of the book of Proverbs, others wrote small sections: Agur (30:1) and Lemuel (31:1). Solomon also spoke thousands of proverbs, or wise sayings (1 Kings 4:29-34), but these were written down, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, so that believers might know how to live.

The Oxford American Dictionary defines the word **proverb** as, "a short well-known saying stating a general truth, as *many hands make light work*." In other words a proverb is a generalized statement about life that must be understood in context. This course places a number of proverbs on the same topic in a chapter so that the student will better understand the principle that Scripture interprets Scripture. Error in interpreting the Bible sometimes occurs when one seizes upon a particular verse while ignoring other verses on the same topic.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . . (Titus 3:5a). Salvation is totally of grace and mercy. We cannot earn it. Trying to live by the teachings of Proverbs will not bring anyone salvation. Salvation comes only as we trust the finished work of Christ. However, if one wishes to be successful in the Christian life

he must live by the principles taught in Proverbs. It is one thing to receive a wonderful gift. It is another thing to enjoy it. Proverbs tells us how we can enjoy the life God has given us.

Living by the principles of Proverbs, however, does not guarantee that believers will not have problems. Jesus promised the disciples that *in the world you will have tribulation* (John 16:33). Proverbs shows us how we can have a positive, fruitful life in spite of our problems. It shows us how we ought to live.

This course, while useful to any Christian, is specifically designed for men and women in prison and on parole. In each of the chapters there are real life illustrations of the principles taught. While the names have been changed, the illustrations are true and involve real people.

1

FEARING GOD HELPS IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

—Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7). The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe (Proverbs 29:25). The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil (Proverbs 19:23).

What Is Wisdom?

While Psalms deals with our relationship with God, Proverbs deals with our relationships with other humans. God's wisdom in Proverbs is the wisdom we need to interact with other people in a way that pleases God. Wisdom is doing or saying the right thing, at the right time and in the right way.

The opposite of wisdom is foolishness. A foolish person is one who is always doing or saying the wrong thing, at the wrong time and in the wrong way. The foolish person is one who fears man, not God. *A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart* (Proverbs 18:2). *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise* (Proverbs 12:15).

The first nine chapters of Proverbs contrasts wisdom with foolishness. William MacDonald, in his Believer's Bible Commentary, describes it this

way, “we hear two voices calling out to men as they pass by. One is the voice of Wisdom, the other the voice of the strange woman. Wisdom, though presented here as a woman, actually symbolizes the Lord Jesus Christ. The strange woman is a type of sinful temptation and of the ungodly world” (page 793). The young man is told to: *Get wisdom! Get understanding! . . . Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you* (Proverbs 4:5,6). The young man who rejects wisdom, however, chooses instead the foolish woman. Proverbs 9:13-18 pictures the foolish woman who seduces a simple-minded youth. It says of the young man who goes into her house that *he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell* (Proverbs 9:18).

Being Teachable

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD . . . therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way (Proverbs 1:29-31). We must choose and desire wisdom, otherwise we will suffer the consequences.

The word wisdom is used over 50 times in Proverbs and the word knowledge is used over 40 times. Here are a few samples of the way wisdom is used in the book of Proverbs.

Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding (Proverbs 3:13).

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor, when you embrace her (Proverbs 4:7-8).

For wisdom is better than rubies, and all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her (Proverbs 8:11).

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom (Proverbs 15:33a).

How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver (Proverbs 16:16).

Buy the truth and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding (Proverbs 23:23).

Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice (Proverbs 29:3).

But fools die for lack of wisdom (Proverbs 10:21b).

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who keeps understanding will find good (Proverbs 19:8).

Desiring and Getting Wisdom

Solomon says the way to get wisdom is to fear God (Proverbs 9:10). That expression sounds strange in our ears. Most people think the way to get wisdom is to go to college, or read some self-help books. God says to get wisdom we must fear Him. But what does it mean to fear God?

Nearly 20 times Proverbs says we are to fear God. The Hebrew word that is translated as fear is *yirah* and fearing is *yare*. These words mean “to reverence.” It means to give God the highest respect, honor, love, loyalty. By contrast, when Proverbs 29:25 speaks of fearing man, an entirely different word, *charadah*, is used. It means to tremble or to be terrified.

Everyone fears. Teenagers fear peer pressure. Young adults fear criticism and rejection. Inmates fear their enemies, but also their gang friends. They fear what the gang will do if they choose to become a Christian and drop out of the gang.

God says stop fearing all of those things. He says, *The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe* (Proverbs 29:25). He says to us, stop fearing others, and instead reverence Me. I am your Creator. I am the One who watches over you, who listens to your conversations, who knows your every thought. I am the One to whom you must give an account (2 Corinthians 5:10). Fear Me. Reverence Me. Stand in awe of Me. Realize that in Me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17:28). God says, I am the One you must fear, not men.

Fearing Men Instead of God

Ray got a rough start in life. When he was young his dad left. His mom spent most of her time in bars. Meanwhile an uncle molested him. He grew up in group homes, ending up in prison with a tough-guy veneer. Down deep he was afraid. He didn't want people to get close to him for fear they would take advantage of him.

He was saved in prison and was so filled with the Holy Spirit he went cell to cell preaching to other inmates. Inmates kept their distance from Ray. They thought he was a fanatic. Fearing closeness with anyone, Ray

was unable to make any lasting friends even among his Christian brothers.

When Ray was paroled he entered a discipleship program run by a mission. Half way through he was asked to leave. The mission told Ray that he was unteachable. He had made no friends at the mission. Hurt, Ray got a room and a job, but he soon became paranoid about the other men on the job so he quit that job, and the next few jobs. Ray turned into a loner. Without fellowship, he lost his first love for Christ. He tried several churches, but could never fit in. One pastor wanted to disciple him, but Ray declined. He felt suspicious of everyone, even mature Christians who tried to help.

What happened? Ray had the power of the Holy Spirit. He could approach total strangers and start preaching to them, but he was unable to make any friends. Christians reached out to him, but he was unable to respond and develop any healthy relationships. He could preach, but his style of preaching kept others at bay, just as his fists had kept others away from him when he was unsaved. He wouldn't listen to others or receive instruction. He was unable to form relationships. Why? The answer is that Ray did not seek God's wisdom to learn how to successfully form relationships with others.

Fearing God Instead of Men

When we truly fear or reverence God, we don't fear men. Instead we receive God's wisdom on how to get along with all sorts of people. Ever since Cain killed Abel, humans have had trouble getting along with each other. We are filled with fear, hate, envy, and jealousy. Sometimes our fear turns into paranoia. However, when we truly begin to fear God, our fear of man disappears.

And when that happens, God begins to teach us and give us His wisdom. He helps us get along with difficult people. He removes the fear of man. He gives us love so that we are able to build strong relationships with others. He teaches us how to love others. All of this happens when we begin to truly fear God.

Jesus Taught That We Should Fear God, Not Man

Jesus told his disciples, *Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and*

body in hell (Matthew 10:28). Jesus taught that our fears are misplaced. Humans fear men when they should fear God. An example of fearing others rather than God is found in John 9:22.

Think of the dangers Jesus faced. Herod was out to kill Him. The people He grew up with in Nazareth tried to push Him off a cliff. The religious leaders wanted him taken out. Judas was waiting for an opportunity to betray Him. His family tried to discourage Him; His disciples misunderstood Him. While He hung on the cross suffering for our sins, God forsook Him (Matthew 27:46).

Yet Jesus did not fear. Why? Because as God's eternal Son He was *the power of God and the wisdom of God* (1 Corinthians 1:24). He is the source of that wisdom which all believers need. As the source of wisdom, Jesus showed amazing skill in dealing with various kinds of people in differing situations.

Jesus knew how to deal with His parents in a mature and respectful way when He was only 12. He knew how to lead a diverse group of men such as Matthew, the Jew who collected taxes for the Romans, and Simon the Zealot who came from a group that hated the Romans. He was sought out by mothers and young children. He appealed to all sorts of outcasts and misfits, to sick people as well as working people and ordinary fishermen. A rich young ruler, the Jewish leader Nicodemus, even Pilate and Herod sought to question him. His interactions with this assortment of people is simply amazing. As the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), Jesus shows us how to effectively interact with an assortment of people in every conceivable situation.

Conclusion

Read the book of Daniel and you will find a case study of four young Jewish men who feared God. They did not fear the fiery furnace or the lion's den. They did not fear the threats of an evil king or the plots of wicked men. They feared God instead. Because they feared God, not men, God gave them wisdom (Daniel 1:17). He showed them how to handle all sorts of difficult situations.

If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him (James 1:5).

PROVERBS FOR LIFE

EXAM BOOKLET

AK '05 (1 UNIT)

STUDENT NAME

I.D.#

INSTITUTION

H.U.

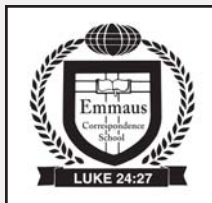
CELL#

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School, founded in 1942.

A NOTE ON THE EXAMS

The exams are designed to check your knowledge of the course material and the Scriptures. After you have studied a chapter, review the exam questions for that lesson. If you have difficulty in answering the questions, re-read the material. If questions contain a Scripture reference, you may use your Bible to help you answer them. If your instructor has provided a single page Answer Sheet, record your answer on that sheet. This exam contains the following types of questions:

MULTIPLE CHOICE

You will be asked to write in the letter of the correct answer at the space on the right. Here is an example:

The color of grass is

- A. blue C. yellow
B. green D. orange

 B

TRUE / FALSE

For these questions, circle the correct answer.

T F

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Questions headed this way are designed to help you express your ideas and feelings. They will help you to apply the principles and concepts in this course. You may freely state your own opinions in answer to such questions.

RETURNING THE EXAM

See the back of this exam booklet for instructions on returning your exam for grading.

First Printing 2003 (AK '03), 1 UNIT

Revised 2005 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2008 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

Reprinted 2010 (AK '05), 1 UNIT

ISBN 978-0-940293-80-9

Copyright © 2003, 2005 ECS Ministries

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical.

Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

FEARING GOD HELPS IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. Generally speaking
 - A. Proverbs deals with our relationships with other human beings
 - B. Proverbs deals primarily with the plan of salvation
 - C. Proverbs deals primarily with Bible prophecy
 - D. Proverbs deals primarily with Biblical history

2. Wisdom and Foolishness are pictured in the first nine chapters of Proverbs as
 - A. abstract concepts of Greek philosophy
 - B. two literal daughters of Solomon
 - C. terms that show the difference between educated and uneducated people
 - D. two women who compete for the affection of young men

3. Proverbs urges us to
 - A. get wisdom and understanding
 - B. get a college education
 - C. associate with foolish women
 - D. pay attention to what our peers think

4. The Hebrew word for fearing God means
 - A. to be paranoid of God
 - B. to fear God as one would fear a man who was out to get you
 - C. to fear God means simply to recognize that God exists
 - D. to reverence God, to give Him the highest respect, honor, love and loyalty

5. The four young men in the book of Daniel
- A. were unfaithful to God because they worshipped idols
 - B. feared the wicked men who were out to kill them
 - C. were given by God wisdom and knowledge
 - D. were disciples of Nebuchadnezzar
-

Circle the letter of the correct answer: T—if true, or F—if false.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 6. Proverbs says that wisdom is better than fine jewelry and riches. | T | F |
| 7. Proverbs 29:3 says that loving wisdom will make one's father rejoice. | T | F |
| 8. Proverbs says that happiness comes to the one who gains wisdom and understanding. | T | F |
| 9. Proverbs 29:25 says that the fear of man brings safety. | T | F |
| 10. Jesus taught that we should fear God rather than men. | T | F |

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Ray's Christian life was hindered because he was fearful of others, even Christians. In what ways is your Christian life affected by the fear of others?
