



“Proverbs / Wisdom for Life”
Wk. 1 The Pursuit of Happiness
By Pastor Jody May 02/06/2022

Proverbs 3:5-8; 13 ESV

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

- ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
- ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.
- ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

- ¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,
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[INTRO]

Proverbs is a collection of teachings in helping the young, (the next generation), the simple (the working class, everyday person) and those already wise (the elder generation). It is interesting to know King Solomon who is the author, doesn't spend a lot of time talking to fools for what he has to say won't make sense to them anyway. "He who has ears let Him hear" (Rev. 2:29 - Jesus).

Proverbs has a lot to say to us, because we share some coincidental things with the original audience. At the time of the recording Solomon is a post war king, David (his father) has conquered all the hostile nations and Solomon has subdued them. Solomon has turned the country to God worship, and now their blessings in war and finance with peace, was seen as a direct result for them being obedient unto God. They were the receivers of God's grace through God's promises (Abrahamic Cov., Mosaic Cov., & the Davidic Cov.,). The Proverbs were written to encourage the people now that they have received and entered into the promised land, here's how they could keep it.



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Unfortunately, you know the rest of the story. They heeded not, they fell into idolatry, their **pursuit of happiness (blessings of the covenants)** became the means to an end, and the kingdom eventually was destroyed.

Do you see the similarities? Do you see how the pursuit of happiness above all in our land has us headed in the wrong direction? Do you see how we mistook our earthly victories for God’s undying favor? Do you see where we are headed?

Let me just say brothers and sisters, take hope, for all kingdoms must fall in order for the real king to rise. Nations must see that true happiness can only be found in the true king, that is from Solomon’s heir, and He is glorified the most when people feel their need for Him and see the futility of their earthly striving.

King Solomon, David’s son, wrote most of the book of Proverbs. He was noted to be one of, if not the wisest man to ever have lived. He was gifted with wisdom because he asked for it:

1 Kings 3:8-12 ESV

⁸And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?”

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹And God said to him, “Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you.

Solomon as Israel’s king would glorify God, as the world would be watching him, and in this way, he would show God’s wisdom, His glory, in all things. These very things are only exemplified more in one place/person, in the life of Jesus Christ his heir, who had all the wisdom with none of the downfalls of sinful flesh.



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You see the things we find in Proverbs are the insights that Jesus, preincarnate, gave to Solomon, to use, to rule and reign and to cause His people to flourish. That means that **Proverbs is a part of the gospel**, they are teachings that gospel people portray, they are warnings that gospel people adhere to, and they are blessings that gospel people receive.

WHY PROVERBS? For at least 8 weeks we will look at the teachings of Proverbs to better equip us as Gospel-centered, Christ honoring people to live a life where we can show our land **we still can flourish**, no matter what happens in the country. By going through this study, we will discover there is Wisdom to be found, for this time right now, to be lived in all areas and seasons of life. The first area we will focus on is very particular to westernized society and that is of the **Pursuit of Happiness**.

[CONNECT]

When Thomas Jefferson helped compose the Declaration of Independence, he wrote one of the most famous and one of the most argued about ideas in western civilization over the last 2+ centuries:¹

*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed **by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights**, that among these are Life, Liberty and the **pursuit of Happiness**.*

NOW, this helps us understand why people flock to America, why they risk being smuggled across the border, float in make-shift rafts across the Atlantic, because nowhere in the world has there ever been a definition of freedom more coveted than this line. There is a **problem though and that is the way people interpret the phrase the, “Pursuit of Happiness”**. Most historians argue that this phrase, when given almost 250 years ago, meant something totally different than how we interpret it today.

¹ Declaration of Independence, July 4, 1776. <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/declaration-transcript>



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It is suspected that Thomas Jefferson took this phrase from the Scottish philosopher John Locke whose original statement was every man has the right to *life, liberty, and property*. Both Jefferson and Locke were ascribing to their ancient Biblical, Greek, and classical influences.² The ancient eastern world along with the Greeks believed that **happiness was an (not ‘the’) end in itself, not the means to an end (not the driver of all life)**. Happiness is what you got from pursuing thoughts, desires, ideas, and ambitions that led to the good/betterment of mankind.³

Therefore, ‘Happiness’ is the meal, rest, and relaxation you find at the end of a long trip (byproduct) that has been worth the travel. It’s not snack you eat on the way. Happiness is the byproduct of that which you seek, meaning if you make it your **primary search** you will never have a full taste of it, a full measure, a full helping of it.

The chief aim of man is to glorify God AND enjoy Him forever⁴, **happiness is the result** of that life lived hard in the pursuit of glorifying Jesus in all things, and happiness is what you get for doing that. In saying that, the Bible is the best place to go for how to do this, and **Proverbs** is the best place to start because the author spent a lot of time thinking on it, teaching a people who for one moment in time had it all, they were happy.

Today we are going to begin our Journey in Proverbs, in a place that is useful for the whole series. If you lose me now on this point, just like in Algebra or any higher-level math, you will be lost for the rest of the time. This first point may be the actual thing you pray over for the next 8 weeks:

1. Trust comes FIRST.

Proverbs 3:5 ESV

⁵ **Trust** in the LORD with all your heart,

² Carol Hamilton, <https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/46460>.

³ Ken Myers, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/pursuit-happiness>, Sept. 1, 2008. Ligonier, Web, Feb. 02, 2022.

⁴ Westminster Catechism, Question 1 <https://www.apuritansmind.com/westminster-standards/shorter-catechism/>



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and **do not lean** on your own understanding.

The very first word there in the beginning of the sentence I find is the hardest one for us to comprehend. **"TRUST"** - *Batakh* - A bold/secure confidence as in with your life. That means to put your hope and faith in someone other than yourself to know what is best for you. Trusting in the Lord is not to lean on your own understanding. **It is the opposite of it.**

Pursuing happiness from a subjective perception, your heart/your feelings, means you have already taken the **first wrong step**. Trusting in the Lord with all your heart **goes against** the natural inclinations of your heart. Trusting in the Lord with all one's heart means we have to be able to say, "You know what's best, **now please do it**". Trusting in the Lord with all one's heart is none other than the admission of God is Lord, and we turn control over to Him.

Currently our culture is in a battle that, to put it simply, is a battle of who gets to say what's right or wrong in our land. The pursuit of happiness in our culture is about the individual dictating to themselves and others what is right and what is wrong. There is no standard outside of you, the individual, by which you can be judged. It's all relative, it's all subjective, it is all based on your feelings, so you build a subjective reality solely upon your will. That is why the **pursuit of happiness** most believe it to mean, "Pursue 'your' happiness at all cost, because that is the chief end of man!" So, the world has set up all its' marketing, all its pop-psychology, and all its' media, based on how you can achieve happiness sooner rather than later, making it the chief aim of life.

Thank be to God the Bible describes and defines, offering objective truth, what happiness actually is:

Psalm 1:1-2 ESV

1 Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,



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- nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

Blessed - אֲשֶׁר **esher** (80d); from 833; **happiness**, *blessedness*:—blessed(41), happy(4).⁵ Means happy is the man that stays away from those in the world that try to define happiness for you (wicked, sinners, & scoffers). The ‘blessed’ man’s delight is the law (the Bible) in which meditating on it leads to acting out of it all the time!

Now here comes the first hard question I have for you, **what would you do**, to inherit a true happiness, a happiness that does not leave you EVEN when the world makes it hard on you? If you want a real happiness, an objective happiness, that is a happiness defined outside of you, that means the definition of happiness that is also accepted by others that you don’t have to try and create. Then here’s the truth you must accept: to trust and lean not on one’s own understanding means to:

- ⁶ In all your **ways acknowledge** him,
and he will make straight your paths.

All ways, all paths, all interests, all goings, all journeys, in all of life you acknowledge God, that He is the boss, that He dictates right and wrong, that He defines what is good, and then you live your life demonstrating that. Then what you discover is that all of life’s choices, all roads, are straight.

Let me make this very real for everyone today, whether a Christian or not, on how important this TRUST is.

Jesus when tempted by the world/devil – see Matthew 4- and everything it had for Him, went to scripture and quoted God’s word (Deuteronomy). Why? Because He actually **TRUSTED that it was true!** When Adam and Eve did not take God at His word about what would destroy them, Jesus did **(explanation)**. He models a type of trust that we can know, that’s why **we**

⁵ Thomas, R. L. (1998). [New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek dictionaries : updated edition](#). Anaheim: Foundation Publications, Inc.



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look to Him and trust Him, He did it first! When you want to trust yourself or someone else feeding you a line that sounds good look to see if Jesus had anything to say on it. His wisdom comes from God.

The way in which we not only pursue Happiness but achieve it, is to **Trust Jesus with our lives**. It is the way we are created that is to sustain off of His wisdom, not ours. As He told the devil, man must live on more than bread but every word that comes out of the mouth of God! Being well fed is what we all want, being well nourished comes from worshipping Jesus, it makes us happy, but it comes from only one true source. Paul describes it this way in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 ESV

²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Jesus IS God’s power and WISDOM; He is the only thing offered to the world for true happiness.

God’s Wisdom, JESUS, is what Breeds True Happiness!

It was God’s wisdom to offer Christ alone for our needs, to offer Christ alone to atone for sin, to offer Christ alone as Lord of our lives, to offer Christ alone as true Wisdom, to offer Christ alone as our true path to happiness. Will you accept it, will you TRUST this OBJECTIVE truth? It all starts with Trust, are you willing to put that trust in Christ to let Him define the terms of you your life?

Family I’m not asking you to follow me blindly, I am asking you to trust the epitome of God’s Wisdom that took on flesh, Jesus. Don’t take my word on happiness you take His. There’s even more here in the Gospel found in Proverbs and that is once you begin to TRUST first, God gives a way in which you stay close to Him so that you continually benefit from the relationship.



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2. Happiness begins with trust and is sustained by a healthy FEAR of God.

- ⁷ Be not wise in your own eyes;
FEAR the LORD, and turn away from evil.
- ⁸ It will be healing to your flesh
and refreshment to your bones.

We all need to begin this process somewhere, and if we were parented the right way as God wants us all we would have learned that **with good and natural fear comes respect** for someone. That respect breeds into us the willingness to stop and listen.

Proverbs 9:10 ESV

"The **fear** of the Lord is **wisdom**, and the knowledge of the Holy One is **insight**."

When we understand God by a revealing of Grace about who He is, establishing a healthy fear, it keeps us in line and that's the smart thing to do, that is knowledge...

Fear is that which keeps us nearby. This is the same fear that for those of us that had hard-nosed football coaches, degrading drill sergeants, scolding/switch wielding moms, strict-by the rule bosses, stern unbending fathers, grace and truth pastors 😊 etc... it is what **keeps us coming back to them for advice and counsel**. It is that, which drives us to be near them if we can. We yearn for those that can be rough because we know what it is to be loved. It is to have boundaries placed on you and enforced. We run to those people because even though we fear them we **long to have their praise**. We long for the security they offer. We long to have shepherds that care and chase off wolves.

We fear those that love us because we fear being without them because in their steadiness there is peace. **Understanding the strength of God produces peace in our lives, it is wisdom to know your God's ability in protecting His name.** That understanding who your Father is produces a good effect in you:



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⁸ It will be **healing** to your flesh
and **refreshment** to your bones.

Insight is a Grace because knowing that you could have received the punishment that Jesus endured, you now have an awe of God! Someone so Holy that cannot stand the sight of sin and must punish it, must produce justice, should put in you a healthy respect for the creator. If you want to know what this looks like, just look at Jesus earthly life.

When we look at OT most people see a very vengeful and angry God, it is hard for us to see the love of God, that’s because our view of love and creational order is warped by the way. We then see Jesus in the NT full of Grace and Truth, the Apostle John even told us that on this trip He did not come to judge the world but to save the world. But let me point out to you, that in His travels He came across an entity that actually knew Him, recognized Him from His preincarnate state. In Mark 5 Jesus encounters a Legion of Demons in a man that had been running around crazy in the countryside. **Out of fear** they beg Him not to torture them but to at least send them out into some pigs nearby.

A Legion of evil knows that upon encountering Jesus they have no power against Him and must obey. If the powers of the world fear Him, then that’s the guy I want to be right next to! I want them to know that when they come after me, they are going to be looking into the scowl of my shepherd. Let them deal with Him, I have no power, but He is living power. I respect my Lord, I have read and believed in what He can do, how about you?

Do you run to Him in prayer pleading for deliverance when you need it? Do you sense His boundaries around you? You get those by reading scripture and prayer. All the things in the world become distractions that will lead you outside the gate and will end up destroying you. Fear will keep us by His side so please seek to know the real Jesus. Want a good look at the real Jesus? Read the book of Revelation, this guy is the baddest man around! When we truly begin to see Him then we have the beginning of Wisdom, it generates a



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healthy respect and fear for Him, it brings refreshment to our bodies, and we are on our way to glorifying Him and receiving happiness...

Lastly today, if you are willing to TRUST first and then be conformed by a healthy FEAR, then our last point I want you to heed as a warning:

3. Obstacle to Happiness - Foolish People like to LISTEN to Foolish People...

Some of us are struggling right now, you know why? Because we think we know the path to happiness. Yeah, maybe Jesus is strong, maybe He’s smart but He’s a killjoy man! Ok so let me just say I’ve been down that road and from what I have seen if I could change it all I would. I don’t want the so-called fun, I have tainted images and past desires in my heart that take me away from God. Since Grace has come into my life, I don’t want those things but some fleshly desires will linger. The older I get the more they fade but man, if I had not given into some of those things, I would be so much closer to Him now. So in saying what I just said did you catch the irony? **My happiness is not from my pursuits in the world it’s from pursuing Jesus.** I am happier than I have ever been because I am not reliant on a fix from the world anymore.

Listen to what Proverbs has to say about the person that thinks they know about true happiness – Oh, and again I pray and ask you to TRUST God on this, He’s the wise one not us.

Prov. 12:15 ESV

The **way** of a **fool** is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.

Prov 4.12

There is a **way** that seems right to a man, but its end is the **way** to death.

In the book of Proverbs, the fool is portrayed in many different ways; scoffers, drunkards, lazy people, the prideful, adulterous, etc... In all of these writings they just do what they want, and they never heed the advice of wisdom. They do what seems fit to them. They follow the pursuits of their heart/desire because usually it satiates a physical need; caught up in **the**



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pursuit of happiness! In the end they are trapped by what they have come to worship.

Proverbs 15:21 ESV

"Folly is a joy to him who has no sense."

Folly is the by-product or production of a fool. It is a waste of time. If it were not for the grace of God everyone in the world would be a contributor to this. So, what does our folly look like? It is anything that does not bring Glory to God. Because, as we have said in this church before, and it is one of the most quoted and true sayings around.

“God is most Glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him?” – John Piper

The foolish thing about all of this is that God created us to be happy to enjoy Him fully forever. We can't escape the desire to be happy. We long to experience those things that are pleasant and bring joy. It is natural for us to pursue happiness!

But by playing the fool, and listening to fools, we run to other things for happiness.

- Climbing the corporate ladder – always looking to make more money
- A Bigger and better vacation maybe Vegas?
- A better and more pleasant spouse!?
- Maybe it is the amount of money you spent on a hobby this year?
(sports, tv, movies, porn, comic books, video games, exercise, yard work, inappropriate sex)

Man, we all do this but here's the dilemma most people in the world never escape this and all of this we just read leads to what!? Death/Destruction, how many do you know who can't get unstuck out of their pursuits? This is why we need the gospel, it is the only thing that sets us free. As we proposed in the beginning we must run to a wiser counsel, or we are doomed. **But the great thing about Jesus is not that we have to learn all wisdom and then accept Him. NO! We accept Him and in turn He teaches us His wisdom, it is on His shoulders to save us.** Everything I have learned to spare my life has



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been from a lesson that Jesus took me through without myself ever knowing I needed it. That’s because I am a fool, no Amens, and He’s steadfast and merciful!

[CLOSING / CHALLENGES]

● **DESIRE WISDOM**

This comes from the correct heart in the seeking. Humbleness and Humility beget wisdom. Pride will seek to use wisdom for your own gain, which is folly. Desiring Wisdom with HUMILITY means we start with Trust, we cling to Jesus out of a healthy fear, and we stay away from fools and foolish ventures.

● **Read TRUE WISDOM literature.**

First, we start with the Bible, second, we ask for recommendations. Gaining wisdom has to go further than the popular podcast or what is currently being pushed on TBN. We need to read the classics:

- [*The Christian Life*](#) – Sinclair Ferguson
- [*How Long Oh Lord*](#) – D. A. Carson
- [*Gospel according to Jesus*](#) – John MacArthur
- [*Holiness*](#) – J.C. Ryle
- [*Knowing God*](#) – J.I. Packer
- [*Concise Theology*](#) – J.I. Packer
- [*Knowledge of the Holy*](#) – A.W. Tozer
- [*Saved by grace*](#) – Anthony A. Hoekema
- [*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*](#) – John Piper and Wayne Grudem
- [*The Legacy of Sovereign Joy*](#) – John Piper
- [*Desiring God*](#) – John Piper
- [*The Pilgrims Progress*](#) – John Bunyan
- [*The Prodigal God*](#) – Tim Keller
- [*Prayer*](#) – Tim Keller
- [*Chosen by God*](#) – R.C. Sproul
- [*The Holiness of God*](#) – R.C. Sproul
- [*The Death of Death in the Death of Christ*](#) – John Owen



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- **PRAY and ask for WISDOM**
Like Solomon you pray for it and expect to receive it for Christ’s sake.
- **Think about the SHORTNESS of LIFE.**
- **COME to JESUS!**

Blessed Is the One Who Finds Wisdom

¹³ Blessed is the one who finds wisdom,
and the one who gets understanding,

The Pursuit of Happiness begins with the pursuit of Wisdom, not happiness in and of itself. Happy is the man who finds Wisdom/Jesus and gains understanding. May we all turn now to our Lord because only in Him can we find True Wisdom for there was no other name given to show us the way to a fulfilling life.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, that has graciously given us the living embodiment of His Wisdom in His Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that demonstrated perfect Wisdom, in His life, ensuring we can Trust in Him as our Savior King.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, whom gifts Wisdom when we ask for it, and bestows happiness at its’ proper time. No go and share that gospel with others.