



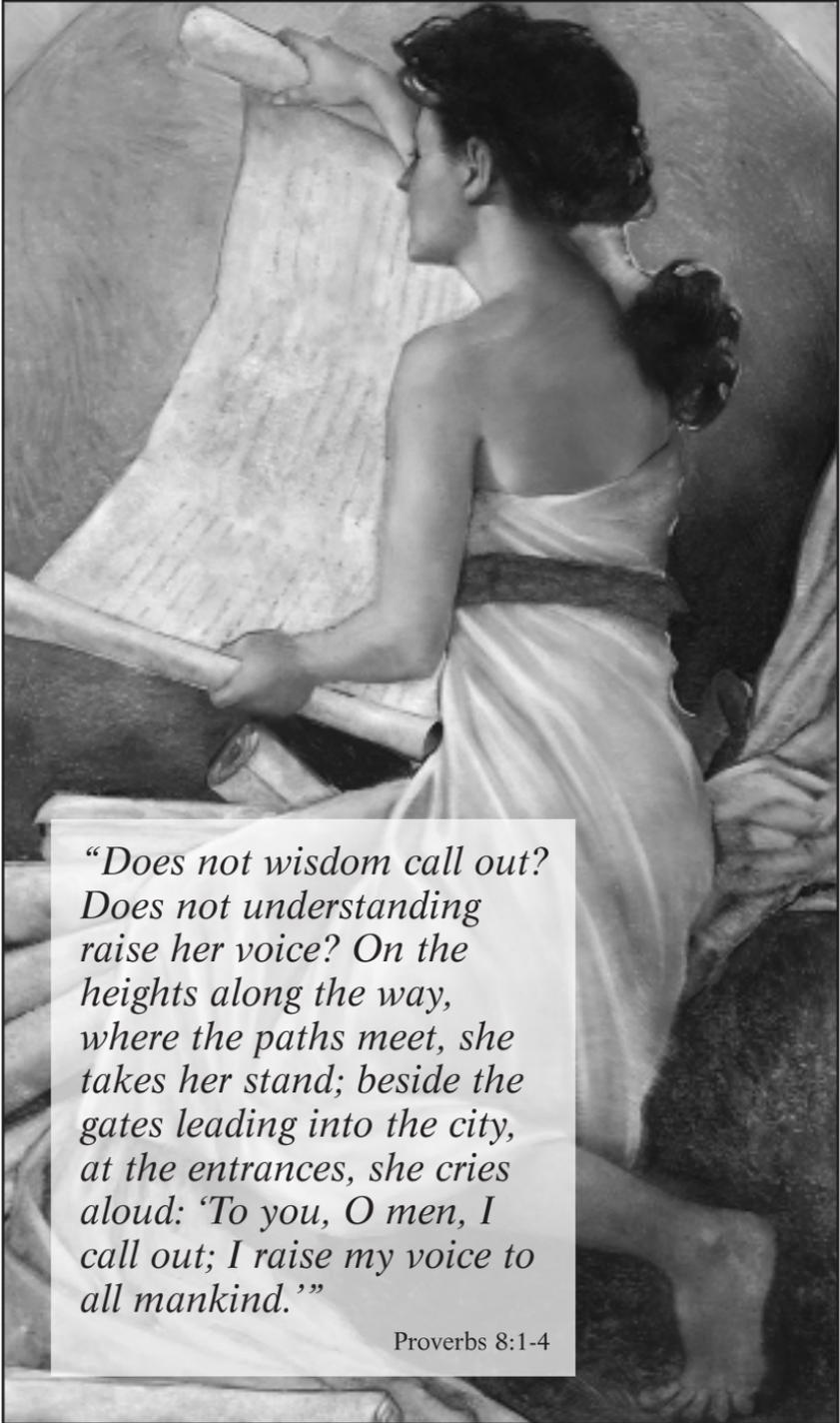
CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

PROVERBS

Week 2



*“Does not wisdom call out?
Does not understanding
raise her voice? On the
heights along the way,
where the paths meet, she
takes her stand; beside the
gates leading into the city,
at the entrances, she cries
aloud: ‘To you, O men, I
call out; I raise my voice to
all mankind.’”*

Proverbs 8:1-4

Rising to the Call

DAY 8

Proverbs 8

Has a unique and positive opportunity ever presented itself to you? Did you accept it? Is your life different because of your decision?

1. To whom does wisdom issue her call?
 2. Wisdom's teaching is described in verses 6-13. What are the key words in this passage?
 3. What are the rewards or benefits of wisdom in verses 14-21?
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1. In this chapter there is a sense of urgency coming from "Lady Wisdom," almost as though she must shout to be heard. How does daily life tend to squeeze out the cultivation of wisdom?

2. Jewish scholar Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972) said: "Wisdom is the ability to look at all things from the point of view of God." Do you agree or disagree? Why?

3. Proverbs 8:17 reads: "Those who seek me find me." What are you seeking in your life now? Are you close to finding it?

*In this chapter, wisdom is personified. **Personification** is a poetic and literary device that is also used in other places in the Old Testament, such as Psalm 85:10-11 and 96:11-12. "Lady Wisdom is not only the discovery of human wisdom learned by experience, but more importantly, the divine wisdom of God, brought forth by him before the world was created (vs. 22-31).*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Make Your Choice

Proverbs 9

OPENING
up to the Word

Choosing wisdom over folly appears to be a “no-brainer,” yet the world is full of foolishness. Why do you think so many people choose folly over wisdom?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. This chapter concludes the nine-chapter discussion of wisdom and folly. Here, both wisdom and folly make their final appeals. As an interesting exercise, briefly write the arguments made by wisdom in one column and the arguments made by folly in another column.

2. What verse is repeated in this chapter from chapter 1? Why the repetition?

3. Do you think faith increases wisdom (vs. 10-11)? How?

LIVING
out the Word

1. If you were asked to design a “house of wisdom” supported by seven pillars, what would the seven pillars be? What is the call from wisdom in verses 1-6? What is served in abundance at the table of wisdom?

2. Read verses 7-10 and answer this question: How do you react when a parent, teacher, preacher, employer or friend points out a mistake to you?

3. How have others responded when you tried to offer friendly advice?

4. What are some wise ways of responding to criticism?

5. What are some ways that wisdom can result in a longer and richer life (vs. 10-12)?

WINDOW
on the Word

The number seven is used in 9:1. In Hebrew thought, the number seven was believed to denote perfection. Thus, when the text says, “Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars,” it probably refers to the perfect world that only true wisdom can build.

TWELVE WHO WERE CALLED “WISE”

While there were many other men and women in the Bible who displayed wisdom, the Bible actually describes these 12 as wise.

Joseph	Acts 7:10	Prepared for a major famine. Helped rule Egypt.
Moses	Acts 7:20-22	Learned Egyptian wisdom, then graduated to God's lessons in wisdom to lead Israel out of Egypt.
Bezalel	Exodus 31:1-5	Designed and supervised the construction of the Tabernacle and its furnishings in the desert.
Joshua	Deuteronomy 34:9	Learned by observing Moses, obeyed God, led the people into the Promised Land.
David	2 Samuel 14:20	Never let his failures keep him from the source of wisdom—reverence for God.
Abigail	1 Samuel 25:3	Managed her household well in spite of a surly and foolish husband.
Solomon	1 Kings 3:5-14; 4:29-34	“He was wiser than any other man.” though he often failed to put his own wisdom into action.
Daniel	Daniel 5:11,12	Known as a man in touch with God. A solver of complex problems with God's help.
Magi	Matthew 2:1-12	Not only received special knowledge of God's visit to earth, but confirmed God's revelation.
Stephen	Acts 6:8-10	Organized the distribution of food to the Grecian widows. Preached the gospel to the Jews.
Paul	2 Peter 3:15-16	Spent his life communicating God's love to all who would listen.
Christ	Luke 2:40,52; 1 Corinthians 1:20-25	Not only lived a perfect life, but died on the cross to save us and make God's wise plan of eternal life available to us.

*“When the
storm has
swept by,
the wicked
are gone,
but the
righteous
stand firm
forever.”*

Proverbs 10:25

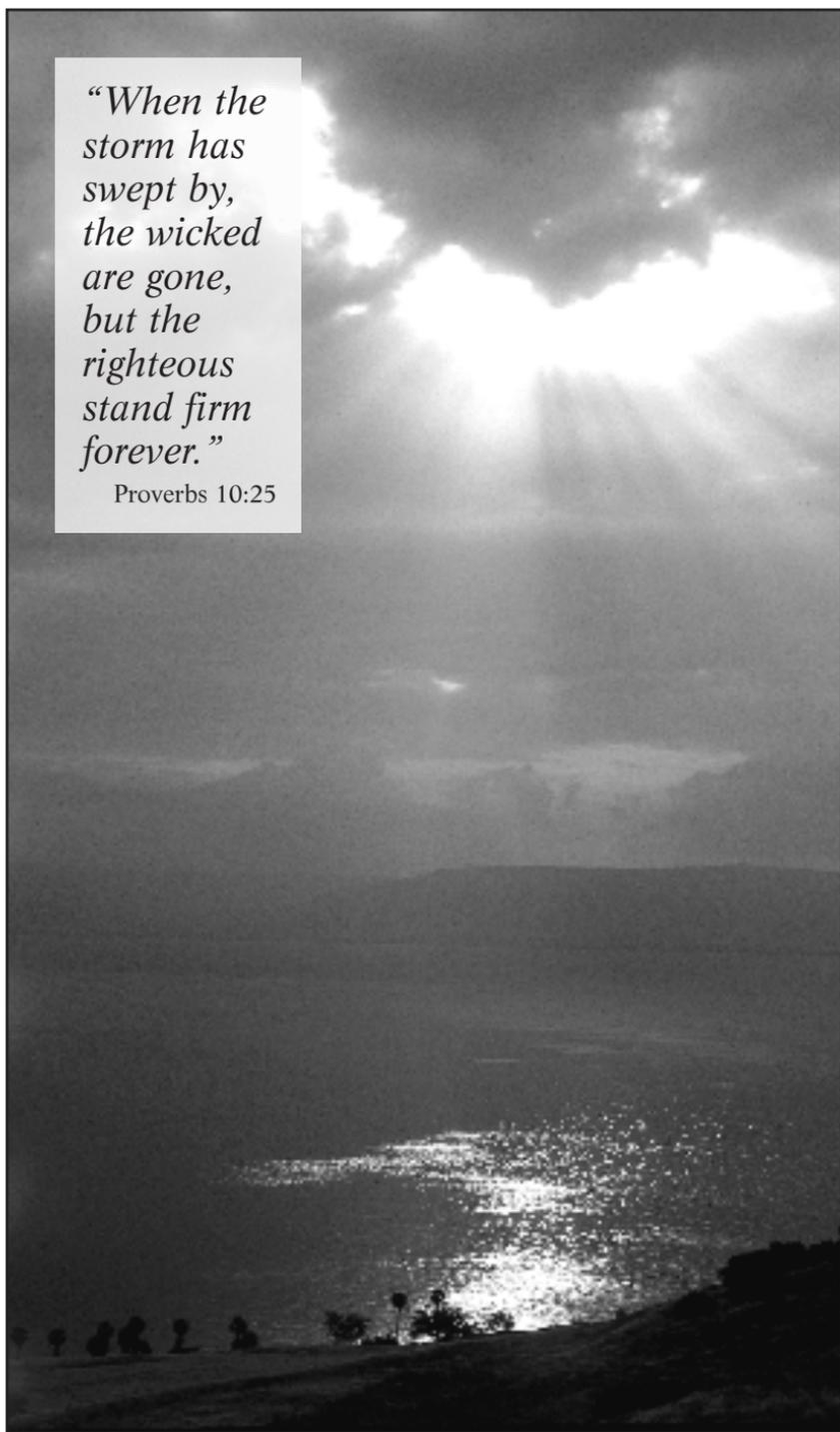


Photo of Sea of Galilee by Barry Stahl—PTM

Sharing Knowledge

DAY 10

Proverbs 10

Have some sayings or proverbs been passed on to you by a parent, pastor, teacher or coach? Are you passing some proverbs along to others?

1. According to the dictionary, a proverb is “a short, popular saying that expresses some obvious truth; adage; maxim.” What are some of the proverbs from this chapter that fit that definition?
2. List the benefits gained by those who are wise.
3. What do you learn about God from this chapter?
4. What warnings concerning our speech appear in verses 13-14; 18-21 and 31-32?

1. What proverb or proverbs speak most to you in this chapter? Why?
2. This chapter describes various virtues and vices. Which virtues would describe you? Which vices do you have? What steps could you take to maximize your strengths and minimize your weaknesses?
3. Connect verse 6 with the apostle’s teaching in 2 Corinthians 9:6. Both refer to the law of harvest—*you reap what you sow*. In what ways has this been true in your life? In what ways has it *not* been true?
4. Consider verse 12. Read 1 Peter 4:8 for a similar view. How does love cover over all wrongs?

*Verses 18-21 deal with the **power of our words**. What we say can either heal or hurt, inspire or injure, console or condemn. How we speak is frequently addressed in the Bible. Read the words of Jesus (Mt 5:37) and James (Jas 3:1-12) for further thought on this important topic.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Honesty Is the Best Policy

Proverbs 11

OPENING
up to the Word

In news accounts, the word *honesty* is often preceded by the term *old-fashioned*. What does this say about society?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Pretend you are an editor. Go through this chapter assigning titles to the various sections. For example, verse 11: *Helpful or Harmful Speech*; verses 16-17: *The Benefits of Kindness*.

2. Verse 26 refers to a socially responsible merchant. Do you know of any companies or business people in your community who are known for operating their business in socially responsible ways?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Why does pride block wisdom while humility facilitates wisdom (v. 2)?

2. Was there a time when gossip hurt you (v. 13)? Would your friends describe you as trustworthy?

3. Is it true that the “wicked will not go unpunished” (v. 21)? Are there times when the “wicked” seem to get away with it?

4. Do generous people always prosper (v. 25)? Who is the most generous person you have met?

WINDOW
on the Word

*In ancient times crooked merchants used **dishonest scales**, meaning they had two sets of weights. One was used for buying goods and another used for selling merchandise. The buying weights were heavier than standard, so the merchant got more goods than he paid for. The selling weights were lighter than standard, so the customer got less than he paid for. Evidently the temptation to use dishonest scales was pervasive enough that Jewish rabbis consistently emphasized the need for scrupulous honesty when it came to weights and measures. For example, one rabbinical law commands: “The shopkeeper must wipe his measure twice a week, his weights once a week, and his scales after every weighing.” In another law, the rabbis prohibited shopkeepers from keeping their weights in salt water because it was believed it made the weights heavier.*



*“The Lord
abhors
dishonest
scales, but
accurate
weights are
his delight.”*

Proverbs 11:1

“I Don’t Mean to Be Critical, But...”

Proverbs 12

OPENING
up to the Word

Think about this wisdom from pastor and author H. A. Ironside (1876-1951): “On facing criticism: If what they are saying about you is true, mend your ways. If it isn’t true, forget it and go on and serve the Lord.”

DIGGING
into the Word

Search the chapter and answer these questions:

What cheers the heart?

How does God bless the righteous?

In what way are peacemakers blessed?

What kind of people are praised by others?

Who is trapped by his own words?

People who know everything are _____?

What kind of person is not easily annoyed?

What does God detest?

Laziness leads to _____?

Some people use words like a _____?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Can you welcome criticism and correction, even when it hurts?

2. Discuss the difference between a dream and a fantasy. Are you a dreamer or one who fantasizes?

3. When you need to make an important decision, do you: (a) make it alone, (b) consult with a spouse/close friend, (c) gather a variety of opinions, (d) pray? How has your decision-making style helped or hurt you in the past?

4. Have you ever been falsely accused? How did it make you feel? Today, how do you feel about the person who made the accusation?

WINDOW
on the Word

Several characteristics of the righteous man are cited in this chapter. One is noteworthy because it is a little less talked about in the Bible. Verse 10 notes that the righteous man “cares for the needs of his animal.” This attribute should not be overlooked as we seek to cultivate a deeper spiritual life. This verse makes clear that God is pleased when we extend love and compassion to animals. Many experts believe the way a person treats an animal is indicative of the way that person treats human beings.

How Hope Can Help You Cope

DAY 13

Proverbs 13

In your experience, does hope deferred make the heart sick? Have you ever had to endure a long wait for some hoped-for event or objective? Did it take a toll on you emotionally, or did you remain patient and positive?

1. Look over this chapter and find three virtues mentioned that you have made a part of your life.
2. Now, look over this chapter and find three vices that may be part of your life. What can you do about these?
3. What are the threats faced by the wealthy?
4. Based on this chapter, describe the qualities of a wise, prudent, righteous person.

1. Success usually comes in some form to people who are patient, persevering and persistent. This is the theme of verse 4. Is there an area of your life where you need to practice the virtues of patience, perseverance and persistence?

2. Some say that the poor have only themselves to blame. But in verse 23 it is clear that, because of exploitation by those who are more powerful, those who are less fortunate can be plunged into poverty. Have you seen this happen? What should a Christian do?

3. How were you disciplined as a child? Fairly? Harshly? Something in between? Do you agree with the view expressed in verse 24? Has your upbringing affected the way you would discipline your children?

OPENING

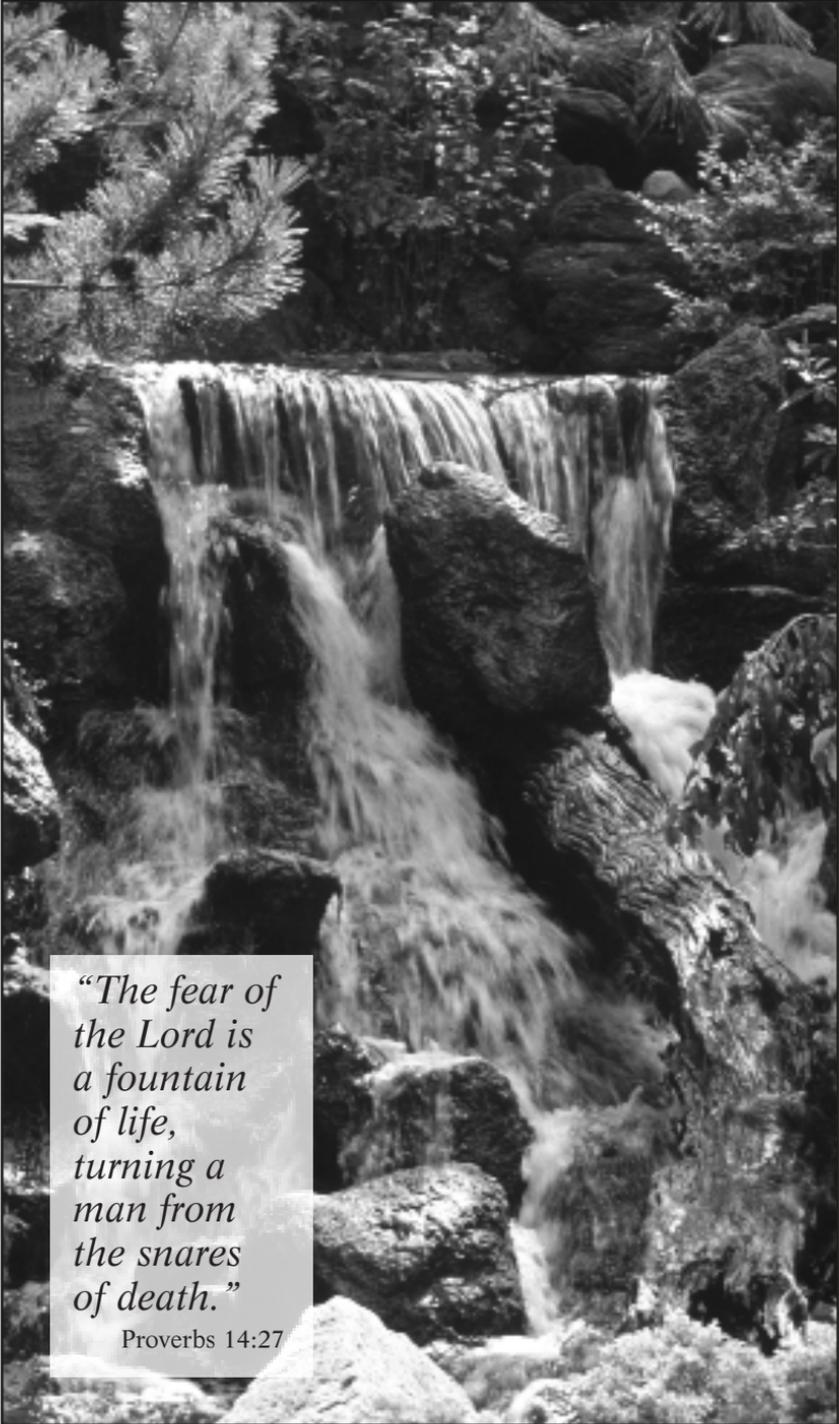
up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word



*“The fear of
the Lord is
a fountain
of life,
turning a
man from
the snares
of death.”*

Proverbs 14:27

Beware of Fools

DAY 14

Proverbs 14

Who, in our society, are considered *fools*? Are they people to be avoided? Do you know any “fools”? How do you deal with them?

Read this chapter and complete the following sentences:

Contempt for God is shown by . . .
A nation can be disgraced by . . .
A false witness pours out . . .
The foolish do not make amends for . . .
Wealthy people have many. . .
Those who fear the Lord have a . . .
Love and faithfulness are found by those
who . . .
Lives are saved by . . .
Knowledge comes to those who are . . .

1. Verse 2 says that a person’s conduct reflects what he or she believes about God. What does your life show others about your faith in God?
2. Normally we think of a house as permanent and a tent as temporary. Yet verse 11 reverses the two. Why? Are you living in a spiritual house or a tent?
3. What are some ways that “seem right” (v. 12) but actually lead to destruction and even death?
4. Is it dangerous to be naïve or gullible? (v. 15). Describe a time when you acted naïvely...a time when you were prudent.
5. Have you ever reacted out of anger and said or done something regrettable?
6. True or false? “The poor are shunned even by their neighbors, but the rich have many friends” (v. 20). Is this good or bad? Why?
7. Has God been a “secure fortress” in your life (v. 26) and a “fountain of life” (v. 27)?

OPENING

up to the Word

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into the Word

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