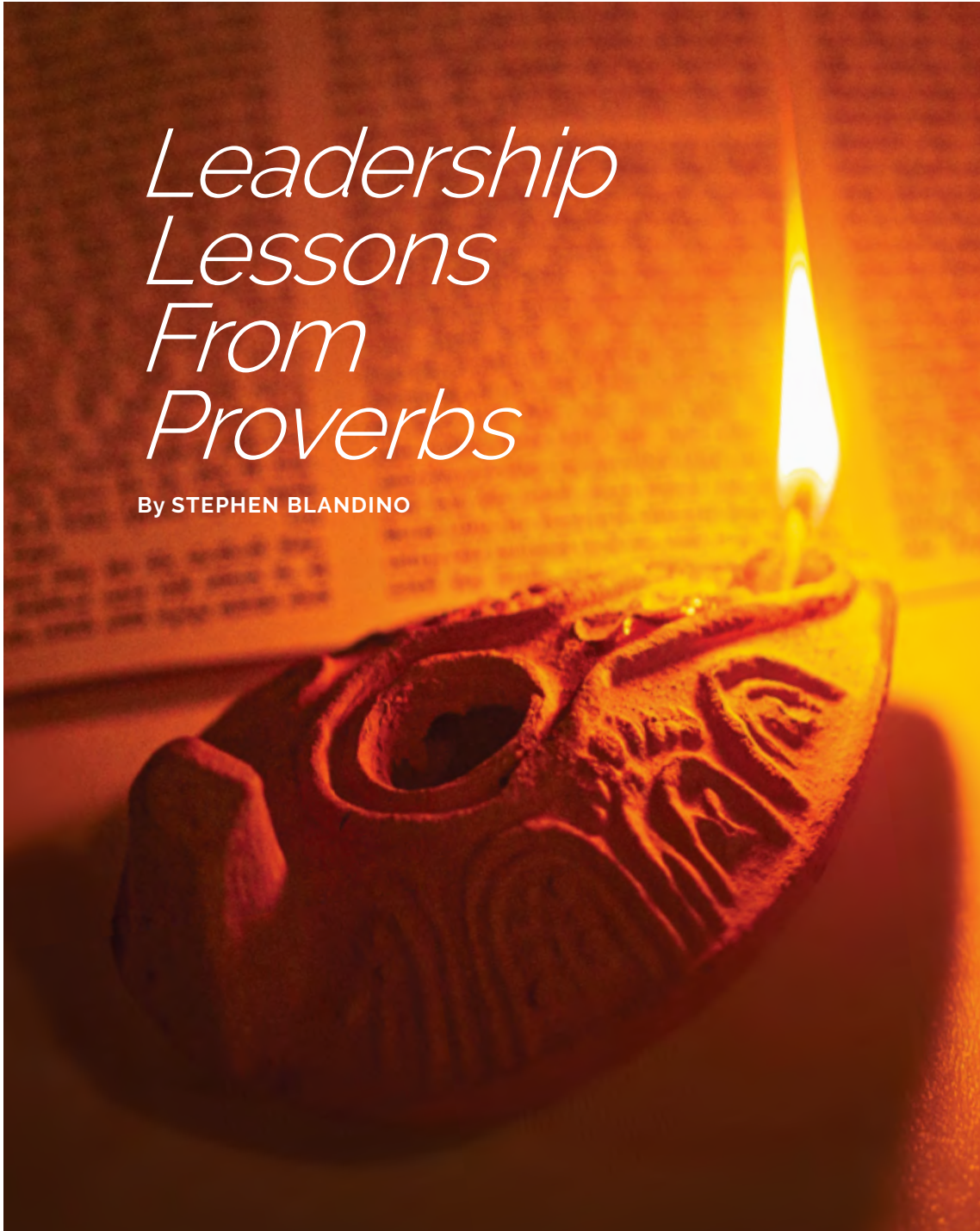


MAKE IT **COUNT**

A 10-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine

Leadership Lessons From Proverbs

By STEPHEN BLANDINO



DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAKE IT COUNT

A 10-Week Study
For Leadership
Teams

What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by **STEPHEN BLANDINO**, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books.



Leadership Lessons From Proverbs

By STEPHEN BLANDINO


We live in complex times that make ministry increasingly difficult.

Pastors have always worn myriad hats, such as shepherd, teacher, counselor, and fundraiser. Yet ministry today calls for an expanding range of skills, and the pressure to perform is high.

Cultural tension and division only add to the demands.

Meanwhile, the needs of congregants are unrelenting — as is the mental health strain on church leaders.

With stress high and issues of eternal importance at stake, church leaders desperately need wisdom.



*Wisdom isn't just
the knowledge
of God's design, but
the understanding
and application of it.*

But what is wisdom? One Hebrew word for “wisdom” in the Bible is *hochma*. It often refers to some kind of skill or ability. In Exodus 28:3, for example, certain “skilled workers” had God-given “wisdom” to create priestly garments for Aaron.

During creation, God had the understanding and wisdom to form the universe, ordering it in accordance with His design (Proverbs 3:19; Jeremiah 10:12).

We might say, then, that wisdom is the skill of building our lives according to God’s design. Wisdom isn’t just the

knowledge of God’s design, but the understanding *and* application of it.

The Book of Proverbs has a lot to say about godly wisdom. Ministers should draw regularly from its deep wells for both principles and practice.

Wise Principles

The principles of wise leadership are foundational to leading well. Those principles include the starting point of wisdom: “the fear of the LORD” (Proverbs 9:10).

Additionally, the wise sayings of Proverbs provide an instruction manual for lifelong wisdom.

Principles of wise leadership include listening to the wise, guarding your heart, watching your words, fixing your eyes on the right path, and avoiding distractions (Proverbs 4:18–27).

Such principles set up ministry leaders to finish the race well.

Wise Practice

What leader has never said the wrong thing, slipped into unhealthy work patterns, ignored wise advice, lashed out in anger, or let ego get in the way?

These leadership temptations are common, and Proverbs addresses each one. In the 31 chapters of this book, we can find practical wisdom on communication, daily habits, mentors, emotions, pride, and much more.

Proverbs doesn’t just teach us wise *principles*. It also helps us develop wise *practices*.

How can we make the most of the wise principles and practices Proverbs offers? That’s the question this installment of Make It Count seeks to answer.

Proverbs 2 says of wisdom, “Look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure” (verse 4). Then “wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul” (verse 10).

These 10 lessons mine Proverbs for insights that can help church leaders grow in godly wisdom.

1 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Beginning of Wise Leadership

Assess

What makes a leader wise?

Insights and Ideas

The dictionary definition of a fool is a person lacking judgment, prudence or sense.

Similarly, Proverbs says, “Folly brings joy to the one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course” (15:21).

There’s no shortage of fools in the world today. We can find a lack of judgment and prudence in every part of society.

But when a leader behaves foolishly, the consequences are greater. Not only do unwise choices negatively impact that person’s life, but the fallout also ripples throughout his or her sphere of influence.

When the leader is a minister, foolish behavior can have a devastating effect on the congregation and community.

As much as possible, we need to make our ministries *foolproof*. When something is foolproof, it’s reliable enough to preclude error, misuse or failure.

The reliable truths of Scripture help guard leaders against erroneous behaviors, misuses of influence, and failures of integrity. Rather than stumbling along foolish dead ends, we can pursue the path of wisdom.

Two principles from Proverbs 1:7 help point the way.

1. *Wise leaders start with God.* Knowledge and wisdom begin with a heart that honors God. Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

The Message paraphrase is particularly potent: “Start with GOD — the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning.”

Unfortunately, many people *end* with God. They first try every other tool and tactic. When those things don’t work, they turn to God as a last resort.

Don’t make that mistake. Knowledge *begins* with honoring and serving God. Such a life is the starting place for wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

2. *Wise leaders submit to God.* True learning isn’t just acquiring knowledge. It’s allowing that knowledge to shape you. The wise person learns about God and then submits to Him, His ways, and His will.

Wise leaders recognize they are helpless without God. Therefore, they embrace a posture of submission, acknowledging that without God they *are* nothing and can *do* nothing.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What most speaks to you from Proverbs 1:7?
2. Why do many people have a tendency to *end* with God rather than *starting* with Him?
3. What does it look like for a leader to live a life of submission to God?

Apply

Do a personal inventory of your life and leadership. In what areas have you been “ending” with God rather than starting with Him? Spend time in prayer submitting these areas to the Lord. Intentionally start each day from a posture of submission.

1

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Beginning of Wise Leadership

“Folly brings joy to the one who has no sense, but whoever has understanding keeps a straight course” (Proverbs 15:21).

The foolproof path of wisdom:

1. *Wise leaders* _____ *with God.*

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

“Start with GOD — the first step in learning is bowing down to GOD; only fools thumb their noses at such wisdom and learning” (Proverbs 1:7, *The Message*).

Unfortunately, many people *end* with God. They first try every other tool and tactic. When those things don’t work, they turn to God as a last resort.

Don’t make that mistake. Knowledge *begins* with honoring and serving God.

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Wise leaders recognize they are helpless without God. Therefore, they embrace a posture of submission, acknowledging that without God they *are* nothing and can *do* nothing.

Apply

Do a personal inventory of your life and leadership. In what areas have you been “ending” with God rather than starting with Him? Spend time in prayer submitting these areas to the Lord. Intentionally start each day from a posture of submission.

2

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Understanding of Wise Leadership

Team Review

What areas of your leadership were you most challenged to submit to God?

Assess

What does it mean to be a wise leader?

Insights and Ideas

Wisdom is essential for effective leadership, but what exactly is wisdom?

Some assume wisdom is the same as knowledge. However, you've likely known intelligent people who made unwise decisions, rebelled against God, and sabotaged themselves. Intelligence does not equal wisdom.

One Hebrew word for "wisdom," *hochma*, often refers to skill or ability. In Exodus 28:3, it described those who were creating priestly garments: "Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest."

Notice that in this passage the workers' ability to follow God's design for manufacturing garments was called "wisdom."

The word *hochma* also describes God's creative work. Proverbs 3:19 says, "By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place." And Jeremiah 10:12 says, "But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding."

These passages depict God as a wise Designer and Builder.

God gives us the tools for building as well. Knowledge of His will is like the blueprint. Building from that blueprint requires the application of godly wisdom.

Thus, we can think of wisdom as the skill of building our lives according to God's design. Wisdom isn't just the knowledge of God's design, but the application of it.

There are many designs people use to build their lives, such as cultural trends, political views, and self-serving agendas.

However, the most effective leaders grow in wisdom by knowing and applying biblical truth to their lives and ministries. They are skillful in living and leading because the blueprint of their lives is built on the eternal design of God's Word.

Proverbs 30:5 says, "Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him."

Reflect and Discuss

1. How would you describe godly wisdom?
2. Can you share an example of a time when a leader had knowledge but not wisdom? What were the end results?
3. How can you ensure you are living and leading according to God's design?

Apply

Carefully consider both your attitudes and actions as a leader. Do they reflect the truths of Scripture? Do they exhibit the wisdom of Proverbs? Pinpoint one area you need to work on, and then make that a growth priority over the next month.

2

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Understanding of Wise Leadership

One Hebrew word for “wisdom,” *hochma*, often refers to skill or ability.

“Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest” (Exodus 28:3).

“By wisdom the LORD laid the earth’s foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place” (Proverbs 3:19).

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The most effective leaders grow in wisdom by knowing and applying biblical truth to their lives and ministries.

“Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him” (Proverbs 30:5).

Apply

Carefully consider both your attitudes and actions as a leader. Do they reflect the truths of Scripture? Do they exhibit the wisdom of Proverbs? Pinpoint one area you need to work on, and then make that a growth priority over the next month.

3 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Guide to Wise Leadership

Team Review

In what area of leadership are you growing in wisdom?

Assess

What is the source of wisdom for effective leaders?

Insights and Ideas

In his letter to the church in Ephesus, the apostle Paul said, “Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16).

If leaders are to become wise (as Paul asserts), what guide should they use for the journey? The Book of Proverbs is a great place to start.

Proverbs reveals God’s design for skillful living. Without that design, we’ll make foolish decisions and build a foolish life.

King Solomon wrote much of Proverbs. Upon opening the book, Solomon explains why he’s writing these wisdom-filled words. *The Message* captures it powerfully:

These are the wise sayings of Solomon,

David’s son, Israel’s king —

Written down so we’ll know how to live well and right,
to understand what life means and where it’s going;

A manual for living,

for learning what’s right and just and fair;

To teach the inexperienced the ropes

and give our young people a grasp on reality.

There’s something here also for seasoned men and women,

still a thing or two for the experienced to learn —

Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate,

the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women (1:1–6).

This passage provides a powerful roadmap for skillful living and leading. While these insights are valuable for everyone, four lessons are vital for leaders.

1. *Proverbs teaches leaders the difference between right and wrong.* In a world of compromise, knowing how to make God-honoring choices is a beautiful gift.
2. *Proverbs helps leaders make sense of life.* Leaders need the ability to navigate complex issues with godly wisdom.
3. *Proverbs equips the young and inexperienced to live and lead well.* The practical wisdom in Proverbs helps set young people on the right course early in the leadership journey.
4. Proverbs is a lifelong manual with fresh wisdom for all seasons of life. We can and should return repeatedly to the wisdom of Proverbs, regardless of our season in life and leadership.

If you want to become a wise leader, you need an effective guide. Proverbs offers a roadmap for living and leading rightly. This book’s well of wisdom does not run dry, and its truths are enduring.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which part of Proverbs 1:1–6 is most relatable for you?
2. Which of the four insights above encourage or challenge you the most? Why?
3. What wisdom from Proverbs has been a source of help in your leadership journey?

Apply

There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. Commit to read one chapter daily for the next month. As you read, write down some leadership lessons you learn along the way. At the conclusion of the 31 days, share your greatest lessons with team members.

3 LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Guide to Wise Leadership

“Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15–16).

Proverbs reveals God’s _____ for _____ living. Without that design, we’ll make foolish decisions and build a foolish life.

These are the wise sayings of Solomon,
 David’s son, Israel’s king —
 Written down so we’ll know how to live well and right,
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 A manual for living,
 for learning what’s right and just and fair;
 To teach the inexperienced the ropes
 and give our young people a grasp on reality.
 There’s something here also for seasoned men and women,
 still a thing or two for the experienced to learn —
 Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate,
 the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women (Proverbs 1:1–6, *The Message*).

The value of Proverbs for leaders:

1. *Proverbs teaches leaders the difference between _____ and _____.*
2. *Proverbs helps leaders make _____ of life.*
3. *Proverbs equips the _____ and _____ to live and lead well.*
4. *Proverbs is a _____ manual with _____ wisdom for all seasons of life.*

Proverbs offers a roadmap for living and leading rightly.

Apply

There are 31 chapters in Proverbs. Commit to read one chapter daily for the next month. As you read, write down some leadership lessons you learn along the way. At the conclusion of the 31 days, share your greatest lessons with team members.

4 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Path to Wise Leadership

Team Review

What leadership wisdom have you gleaned as you've started reading Proverbs?

Assess

What is the path of wisdom for effective leaders?

Insights and Ideas

The longer you lead in the right direction, the brighter your path becomes. Conversely, the longer you lead in the wrong direction, the more difficult it will be to find your way.

Proverbs 4:18–19 says, “The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

In the verses that follow, Solomon describes five characteristics of the path of wisdom that leads to a brighter future.

1. *Listen to the wise.* Proverbs 4:20–22 says, “My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body.”

Leaders often have a bent toward talking, but wise leaders assume a posture of listening so they can continually learn.

2. *Guard your heart.* Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.”

Your words, behaviors, and habits begin with your heart. In fact, the condition of your heart determines the condition of your life. Therefore, guard your heart carefully.

3. *Watch your words.* Solomon continues his wisdom in verse 24: “Keep your mouth free of perversity; keep corrupt talk far from your lips.”

Convoy of Hope founder Hal Donaldson observed that words can be like *weapons* or *welcome mats*. A weapon is destructive, but a welcome mat says, “You’re welcome here. You won’t be turned away.” Healthy relationships start with gracious communication.

4. *Fix your eyes on the right path.* Solomon said, “Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways” (Proverbs 4:25–26).

It’s not enough to *know* the right path. We must also *walk* the right path, which requires keeping our eyes on it.

5. *Avoid distractions.* Proverbs 4:27 says, “Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil.”

You can drift off the path of wisdom when you become sidetracked by ideas and philosophies that sound good but are spiritually damaging. Avoid these distractions and stay the course.

This is the path of wisdom every leader must follow.

Reflect and Discuss

1. When has your path grown brighter or darker because of choices you’ve made?
2. Which of the five characteristics above represents your greatest strength or struggle?
3. What’s your biggest takeaway from this lesson?

Apply

If you were to fast-forward 10 years, where would the path you’re currently on lead? What changes do you need to make today to create a brighter — and wiser — future?

4 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Path to Wise Leadership

“The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble” (Proverbs 4:18–19).

The path of wisdom:

1. _____ *to the wise.*

“My son, pay attention to what I say; turn your ear to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to one’s whole body” (Proverbs 4:20–22).

2. *Guard your* _____.

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it” (Proverbs 4:23).

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4. *Fix your* _____ *on the right path.*

“Let your eyes look straight ahead; fix your gaze directly before you. Give careful thought to the paths for your feet and be steadfast in all your ways” (Proverbs 4:25–26).

5. *Avoid* _____.

“Do not turn to the right or the left; keep your foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:27).

Apply

If you were to fast-forward 10 years, where would the path you’re currently on lead? What changes do you need to make today to create a brighter — and wiser — future?

5 LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Words of Wise Leaders

Team Review

What changes have you made to follow a path of greater wisdom?

Assess

How do you recognize wise words?

Insights and Ideas

Mark Twain once said, “The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.”

Words are powerful indeed, and this is one of the big themes we find throughout Proverbs. In fact, Proverbs 18:21 says, “The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Words are powerful. Yet we often speak with little thought.

Solomon shares three dimensions of wise words that leaders should cultivate carefully.

1. *The substance of wise words.* Wise words are substantive in nature. Consider these examples:

- “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence” (Proverbs 10:11). Are your words life giving?
- “The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy” (Proverbs 12:22). Are your words truthful and trustworthy?
- “Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up” (Proverbs 12:25). Are your words kind and encouraging?

2. *The sound of wise words.* It’s not just *what* you say that matters, but also *how* you say it. That’s where the sound of words comes into play. According to Proverbs, our words should be gentle. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (15:1).

Further, our words should exhibit self-control. Proverbs 13:3 says, “Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin.”

Finally, our words should be timely: “A person finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!” (Proverbs 15:23).

3. *The significance of wise words.* Proverbs 12:18 says, “The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.” A leader’s wise words minister to the hurting.

Always remember that “the tongue has the power of life and death” (Proverbs 18:21). Intentionally speak words of life over your family members, friends, congregants and co-workers.

Leaders must choose their words carefully if they want to bear fruit that lasts.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How does Proverbs 18:21 challenge you as a leader?
2. How would you describe the *substance* and *sound* of your words as a leader? What steps could you take to improve your communication?
3. How can a leader deliver hard truths in a tone of grace?

Apply

Pastor Scott Wilson says leaders don’t just have *blind spots*; they also have *deaf spots*. In other words, we often fail to hear how we come across to others. Ask a couple of trusted friends or co-workers how you sound when speaking to others. Seek feedback for improving the words you speak and the tone you use.

5

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Words of Wise Leaders

“The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.” — Mark Twain

“The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit” (Proverbs 18:21).

Three dimensions of wise words:

1. *The _____ of wise words.*

“The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence” (Proverbs 10:11).

“The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy” (Proverbs 12:22).

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up” (Proverbs 12:25).

2. *The _____ of wise words.*

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

“Those who guard their lips preserve their lives, but those who speak rashly will come to ruin” (Proverbs 13:3).

“A person finds joy in giving an apt reply — and how good is a timely word!” (Proverbs 15:23).

3. *The _____ of wise words.*

“The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (Proverbs 12:18).

Apply

Pastor Scott Wilson says leaders don’t just have *blind spots*; they also have *deaf spots*. In other words, we often fail to hear how we come across to others. Ask a couple of trusted friends or co-workers how you sound when speaking to others. Seek feedback for improving the words you speak and the tone you use.

6 LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Work of Wise Leaders

Team Review

What did you learn from friends or co-workers regarding your words and tone? What steps are you taking to improve?

Assess

What does it mean for a leader to work wisely?

Insights and Ideas

Martin Luther King Jr. once described work like this: “If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.’”

King likely learned a great deal about work from the wisdom of Proverbs. From its wisdom-filled pages, leaders can glean three valuable keys to becoming a wise worker.

1. *The foundation of wise work.* Most people seek wisdom through self-examination — focusing on *who* they are and *what* they do. However, the true foundation of wise work begins with God.

Proverbs 16:3 says, “Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.” Your labor is first and foremost a matter of lordship.

2. *The characteristics of wise work.* Solomon offers us a vivid picture of wise work in Proverbs 6:7–8 when he describes the lowly ant: “It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.”

This passage reveals several characteristics of the ant’s work. First, the ant takes initiative. Despite having no supervision, it still works.

Further, the ant is a hard worker, laboring throughout the summer season.

Finally, the ant plans ahead. Winter is coming, so it carefully prepares.

In addition to these characteristics, wise workers do quality and honest work. Proverbs 22:29 notes that such workers are worthy of respect. *The Message* puts it this way: “Observe people who are good at their work — skilled workers are always in demand and admired; they don’t take a backseat to anyone.”

Even when it doesn’t lead to higher pay or greater material success, integrity is its own reward. Proverbs 16:8 says, “Better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice.”

3. *The results of wise work.* Wise work may lead to provision and promotion.

Proverbs 12:14 says, “From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward.”

And Proverbs 12:24 says, “Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.”

Reflect and Discuss

1. How do you intentionally put God in charge of your work?
2. Which of the characteristics of wise work come naturally for you: taking initiative, working hard, or planning ahead? What can you do to improve in your weakest area?
3. How have you experienced the results of wise work? What should a leader do if those results have not yet shown up?

Apply

What changes do you need to make to model work aligned with the wisdom of Proverbs? List two areas that need improvement, and then put together a plan for growth.

6 LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Work of Wise Leaders

“If it falls your lot to be a street sweeper, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures, like Shakespeare wrote poetry, like Beethoven composed music; sweep streets so well that all the host of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, ‘Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.’” — Martin Luther King Jr.

Keys to becoming a wise worker:

1. *The _____ of wise work.*

“Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans” (Proverbs 16:3).

2. *The _____ of wise work.*

“It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet [the ant] stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest” (Proverbs 6:7–8).

The ant takes _____. Despite having no supervision, it still works.

Further, the ant is a _____ worker, laboring throughout the summer season.

Finally, the ant _____ . Winter is coming, so it carefully prepares.

In addition to these characteristics, wise workers do _____ and _____ work.

3. *The _____ of wise work.*

Wise work may lead to _____ and _____.

“From the fruit of their lips people are filled with good things, and the work of their hands brings them reward” (Proverbs 12:14).

“Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor” (Proverbs 12:24).

Apply

What changes do you need to make to model work aligned with the wisdom of Proverbs? List two areas that need improvement, and then put together a plan for growth.

7 | LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Emotions of Wise Leaders

Team Review

What steps are you taking to become a wiser worker?

Assess

Which emotions do leaders most struggle to manage?

Insights and Ideas

Leadership is emotional. We experience ups and downs, victories and disappointments, and joy and strain — sometimes all within the same day.

Proverbs 29:11 describes two ways people may deal with emotions: “Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.”

Holding back emotions is difficult when the pressure is on, demands are high, and resistance is great. That’s when leaders may feel tempted to vent.

Consider three common emotions in leadership and how to navigate them wisely.

1. **Jealousy.** Proverbs 27:4 says, “Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?”

The *New Living Translation* compares wrath to a flood, but notes jealousy is “even more dangerous.” When jealousy overflows its banks, the results can be devastating.

The best way to overcome jealousy is by maintaining a posture of gratitude, contentment and celebration. Give thanks for what you have, remain satisfied where you are, and celebrate the success of others.

2. **Fear.** Fear can be crippling. Negative thoughts, toxic environments, and a loss of hope are the soil in which fear takes root.

What is the cure for the fears that sabotage us? Proverbs 29:25 says, “Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.”

When we trust God, He becomes our safe place. But the only way to experience that sense of safety is by letting go and placing our faith fully in Him.

3. **Anger.** Leadership can be frustrating at times. However, Proverbs warns against lashing out in anger.

Anger is destructive. Proverbs 29:22 says, “An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins.”

That’s why self-control is vital. Proverbs 29:11 says, “Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end.”

Self-control makes it possible to respond with gentle words. Proverbs 15:1 says, “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Every leader will face the temptations of jealousy, fear, and anger, but the responses above offer a path for navigating each with wisdom.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How can a leader’s emotions impact the people he or she leads?
2. When do you tend to struggle with jealousy, fear or anger?
3. How can you respond to such emotions with greater wisdom?

Apply

Which emotion are you struggling with most right now: jealousy, fear or anger? Reread the passages from Proverbs above, and identify two things you can start doing to deal with the emotion in a healthy way.

7

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Emotions of Wise Leaders

Leadership is emotional. We experience ups and downs, victories and disappointments, and joy and strain — sometimes all within the same day.

“Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end” (Proverbs 29:11).

Three common emotions in leadership:

1. _____.

“Anger is cruel and fury overwhelming, but who can stand before jealousy?” (Proverbs 27:4).

The best way to overcome jealousy is by maintaining a posture of gratitude, contentment and celebration. Give thanks for what you have, remain satisfied where you are, and celebrate the success of others.

2. _____.

Negative thoughts, toxic environments, and a loss of hope are the soil in which fear takes root.

“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe” (Proverbs 29:25).

When we trust God, He becomes our safe place. But the only way to experience that sense of safety is by letting go and placing our faith fully in Him.

3. _____.

“An angry person stirs up conflict, and a hot-tempered person commits many sins” (Proverbs 29:22).

“Fools give full vent to their rage, but the wise bring calm in the end” (Proverbs 29:11).

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

Apply

Which emotion are you struggling with most right now: jealousy, fear or anger? Reread the passages from Proverbs above, and identify two things you can start doing to deal with the emotion in a healthy way.

8

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Posture of Wise Leaders

Team Review

What steps are you taking to manage jealousy, fear and anger more effectively?

Assess

Why is pride so dangerous in leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Proverbs addresses several themes, but one is particularly dangerous: pride.

Pride is a pitfall for many leaders, and its impact can be catastrophic. In fact, pride can inflict damage in three ways.

1. **Upwardly:** *Pride repulses God.* Proverbs 16:5 says, “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.”

Pride *separates* us from God and *substitutes* us for God. It separates us from God because pride is sin. And it substitutes us for God by elevating our desires above His. As Timothy Keller once said, “Pride is being your own supreme being.”

2. **Outwardly:** *Pride ravages relationships.* Prideful people believe they are better and more important than others. That’s certainly no way to build friendships.

Pride is people repellant. By constantly arguing their positions and insisting they are always right, prideful individuals undermine relationships.

Proverbs 13:10 says, “Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”

3. **Inwardly:** *Pride ruins you.* Pride ultimately leads to personal trouble.

Proverbs 11:2 says, “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.” And Proverbs 29:23 says, “Pride brings a person low, but the lowly in spirit gain honor.”

The cure for pride is humility. This is the posture of wise leaders. In *A Leader’s Legacy*, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner describe humility and pride this way:

The words *human* and *humble* share a common origin. They both come from the Latin *humus*, meaning earth. To be human and humble is to be down-to-earth, both feet planted firmly on the ground. Interesting, isn’t it, how as people climb the ranks in organizations they also climb to a higher floor in the building, getting farther and farther away from the ground? It gets harder and harder to remain humble the higher up you go.

Even as they climb, leaders must remember the warning in Proverbs 16:18: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

The wisdom of Proverbs calls leaders to avoid the deadly path of pride and cultivate a humble posture. The attitude of humility is key to drawing near to God, fostering healthy relationships, and protecting our own hearts.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen pride and arrogance undermine a leader?
2. Why do leaders often find it difficult to remain humble?
3. What practical steps can you take to develop a posture of humility?

Apply

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to search your heart for pride. Humble yourself before Him, submitting your leadership to His lordship. Then ask God to guide you in the path of humility.

8

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Posture of Wise Leaders

Three ways pride can inflict damage:

1. _____ : *Pride repulses* _____.

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Pride *separates* us from God and *substitutes* us for God.

“Pride is being your own supreme being.” — Timothy Keller

2. _____ : *Pride ravages* _____.

“Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice” (Proverbs 13:10).

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Apply

Spend some time in prayer, asking God to search your heart for pride. Humble yourself before Him, submitting your leadership to His lordship. Then ask God to guide you in the path of humility.

9

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Mentors of Wise Leaders

Team Review

What is the Holy Spirit teaching you about humility?

Assess

What wise mentors have made the greatest impact on your life?

Insights and Ideas

Good leaders understand the importance of being lifelong learners. They learn from books, conferences and classrooms. Among the greatest influences in a leader's learning journey are wise mentors.

Proverbs 12:26 says, "The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray" (NLT). Good leaders seek the advice of wise mentors.

As Proverbs 13:20 says, "Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm." Note two important phrases here.

1. Walk with. The action of *walking with* implies several things:

- Friendship. Walking with someone means you're not going alone. You need others by your side. These fellow travelers can include family members, mentors, coaches and close friends.
- Frequency. Walking connotes the image of a journey. It involves ongoing fellowship with others along the path, not just an occasional gathering to catch up.
- Forward movement. Finally, walking implies momentum. You're intentionally going somewhere — moving from point A to point B. You're not moving backward or standing still, but taking purposeful steps toward a destination.

Leaders who commit to walking with others will find the mentors they need for finishing the journey well.

2. The wise. Proverbs 13:20 continues, "Walk with the wise and become wise."

As you read through Proverbs, you will discover wise people model several qualities. They live humbly and morally; are learners, diligent laborers, and careful listeners; and lead honorably in the areas God calls them to serve.

What should leaders do while walking with wise mentors? Proverbs 19:20 says, "Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise."

Walking with the wise means surrounding yourself with the right people and then actively learning from their wisdom.

When leaders hang out with the wise, they grow in wisdom.

The opposite is also true. As the apostle Paul observes in 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Bad company corrupts good character."

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you seen the three "walk with" factors — friendship, frequency, and forward movement — impact your life and the lives of other leaders?
2. What qualities make a person wise?
3. When you are around wise mentors, how do you intentionally learn from their wisdom?

Apply

Make a list of three wise people in your circle of relationships from whom you'd like to learn. Invite them to lunch, sharing your intent of gleaning wisdom. Come prepared with several thoughtful questions, and take careful notes. Then apply the insights you gain.

9

LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM PROVERBS

Mentors of Wise Leaders

“The godly give good advice to their friends; the wicked lead them astray” (Proverbs 12:26, *New Living Translation*).

“Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20).

Two mentoring lessons:

1. _____.

- _____. Walking with someone means you’re not going alone. You need others by your side.
- _____. Walking connotes the image of a journey. It involves ongoing fellowship with others along the path, not just an occasional gathering to catch up.
- _____. Finally, walking implies momentum. You’re intentionally going somewhere — moving from point A to point B. You’re not moving backward or standing still, but taking purposeful steps toward a destination.

2. *The* _____.

Wise people model several qualities. They live humbly and morally; are learners, diligent laborers, and careful listeners; and lead honorably in the areas God calls them to serve.

“Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end you will be counted among the wise” (Proverbs 19:20).

Walking with the wise means surrounding yourself with the right people and then actively learning from their wisdom.

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Apply

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Resources of Wise Leaders

Team Review

From what wise mentor are you learning? What are the biggest takeaways from a recent conversation with that person?

Assess

How do wise leaders manage money?

Insights and Ideas

Pastors often deal with money matters in the ministries they lead. They must raise funds with integrity, manage finances carefully, and give generously. Doing so requires wisdom each step of the way.

Thankfully, Proverbs offers wisdom about money that is just as relevant today as it was in ancient times.

Consider the following four principles:

1. *Spiritual leaders should maintain the right perspective concerning money.* Leaders must carefully guard their hearts by cultivating a biblical view of finances.

Proverbs 11:28 says, “Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.” Wise leaders recognize God, not money, as their Source.

2. *Spiritual leaders should work at a wise pace to earn their wages.* Proverbs 10:4 says, “Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.”

A strong work ethic is important. However, leaders must also balance work with rest. Proverbs 23:4 says, “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; do not trust your own cleverness.”

3. *Spiritual leaders should steward money wisely.* Money is a resource with which God entrusts us, and how we manage it matters. Proverbs 13:11 says, “Dishonest money dwindles away, but whoever gathers money little by little makes it grow.”

Wise leaders steward money day after day, week after week, and year after year. They don’t fall for get-rich-quick schemes, but instead manage money with integrity.

4. *Spiritual leaders should be generous.* Proverbs 3:9 says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops.”

Honoring God with money begins by tithing — giving the first 10% to Him.

But wise leaders don’t stop there. They also help those in need. Proverbs 28:27 says, “Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who close their eyes to them receive many curses.”

Spiritual leaders should notice the needs around them and respond with generosity.

These four money management insights from Proverbs provide a firm foundation for leaders, helping them manage money in a way that honors God, protects integrity, and serves those in need.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What kind of perspective should spiritual leaders have toward money?
2. What does it mean to steward money wisely, and how can leaders practically do so?
3. What does it look like to be a generous leader?

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how would you rate yourself in the four money management areas above? What steps do you need to take to begin growing in each area?

Resources of Wise Leaders

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Four money insights from Proverbs:

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These four money management insights from Proverbs provide a firm foundation for leaders, helping them manage money in a way that honors God, protects integrity, and serves those in need.

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10 (10 being the best), how would you rate yourself in the four money management areas above? What steps do you need to take to begin growing in each area?