

# Proverbs: The Key to a Good Life

Proverbs 1:1-7

## Living Life God's way *is better*.

- i. Relationships, God's way, bring more satisfaction.
- ii. Faith correlates with happiness, life satisfaction, flourishing, and civic engagement.
- iii. Church attendance correlates with better mental health during the COVID pandemic.
- iv. Religiosity is associated with lower depression and better mental health trajectories in many contexts.

### **Marital “wage premium” — married men tend to earn more (review & analyses)**

Summary: Multiple economics studies find a “marriage premium” for men — married men on average earn more than unmarried men. Some of the premium is selection (higher-earning men are more likely to marry), but longitudinal and econometric work suggests part of the effect remains after controls (marriage → changes in productivity, stability, incentives). Useful for the claim that married men often have better financial outcomes.

Sources: Antonovics & Town review and other economic literature summarized in conservative outlets and academic reviews. [ResearchGate+1](#)

### **Sexual satisfaction: married people (esp. married men) report higher sexual satisfaction (NHLS & related analyses)**

Summary: Large U.S. sexual behavior surveys (the National Health and Social Life Survey and follow-up studies) report that married respondents, on average, report higher levels of sexual satisfaction than cohabiting or single respondents. Institute for Family Studies aggregates and discusses these survey findings for applied audiences.

Sources: NHLS (1992) dataset and IFS summary/brief. [ICPSR+1](#)

### **Longitudinal link between relationship (marital) satisfaction and sexual satisfaction**

Summary: Longitudinal research finds a positive association across time between sexual satisfaction and marital satisfaction for both spouses — sexual satisfaction

tends to track marital quality and vice versa (relevant to “married couples report better sex and relational wellbeing”).

Source: McNulty et al., longitudinal study on relationship and sexual satisfaction. [PMC](#)

### **Religious service attendance and wellbeing / life satisfaction (Gallup & Global Flourishing work)**

Summary: Large multi-nation and US datasets show that frequent religious service attendance (and active religious participation) correlates with higher life satisfaction and flourishing. Gallup’s Global Flourishing / large surveys show frequent religious practice often aligns with better scores on domains of flourishing (life satisfaction, purpose, social support). Gallup also reports US data showing weekly attenders report higher personal-life satisfaction than infrequent attenders.

Sources: Gallup analysis & Global Flourishing initial findings. [Gallup.com+1](#)

### **Pew Research Center: active religious congregants tend to report higher happiness and civic engagement**

Summary: Pew’s cross-national analysis finds that active, engaged religious people are more likely to report being “very happy,” and also show higher civic engagement and social connections than unaffiliated or inactive believers — consistent with the “religion buffers against loneliness and supports wellbeing” interpretation.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis (religion’s relationship to happiness, civic engagement, health). [Pew Research Center](#)

### **Pandemic-era studies: religiosity and mental health resilience / church attendance effects during COVID**

Summary: Several studies tracking religiosity around the COVID era find that religious beliefs and attendance were protective for many people’s mental health or life satisfaction during the pandemic (religious coping, social support, virtual worship). Examples include a 2023 longitudinal study on religiosity and pandemic outcomes and analyses of changing attendance patterns from Pew. (Useful for your example: “during COVID people who regularly attended church were more satisfied.”)

Sources: Svob et al. (2023) longitudinal religiosity/COVID study and Pew reports on pandemic attendance effects. [PMC+1](#)

### **Systematic/longitudinal evidence linking religiosity and better mental health (meta/longer-term studies)**

Summary: Recent longitudinal and meta-analytic work finds that religiosity (belief, attendance, religious practice) is associated with lower depression and better mental health trajectories in many contexts — not universally, and context matters — but the trend in many rigorous studies is positive. This is useful when you want academic, peer-reviewed backing that religious commitment can be protective for mental health and subjective wellbeing.

Source: Prati et al. (2024) 9-year study/meta style analysis on religion and mental health. [PMC](#)

## Proverbs lives with Job and Ecclesiastes

- i. Life is messy and doesn't always work this way.
- ii. They're *proverbs* not *promises*.
- iii. Proverbs teaches us how things *should* work.
- iv. Living life God's way > living life any other way.

**Main Idea:** God built wisdom into creation; so, we live God's way to better navigate the complexities of life.

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

<sup>2</sup>To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, <sup>3</sup>to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; <sup>4</sup>to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—<sup>5</sup>Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, <sup>6</sup>to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

<sup>7</sup>The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

**Main Idea:** God built wisdom into creation; so, we live God's way to better navigate the complexities of life.

## Proverbs: The Key to a Good Life

1. Learn to live skillfully (1:1-4).
2. Recognize God's design for life (1:5-6).
3. Fear the Lord (1:7).
4. True wisdom is found in Christ (1Co 1:24).



# 1. Learn to live skillfully (vv. 1-4).

- <sup>2</sup>To know wisdom and instruction,  
to understand words of insight,
- <sup>3</sup>to receive instruction in wise dealing,  
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
- <sup>4</sup>to give prudence to the simple,  
knowledge and discretion to the youth—

Wisdom: the ability to live well in God's world.

Wisdom = skill. (Ex 31:3-5). Not necessarily right/wrong, but all things can be done both right and wrong.

Proverbs offers guidance for the young and simple (v. 4)

Also depth for the wise (v. 5).

## 3 Ways to increase wisdom.

- i. Evaluate your life. Are you living wise, or like a fool?
- ii. Utilize wisdom in all decisions, not just the BIG ones.
- iii. Strive for wisdom; seek it through God and others.

## 2. Recognize God's design for life (vv. 5-6).

<sup>5</sup> Let the wise hear and increase in learning,  
and the one who understands obtain guidance,  
<sup>6</sup> to understand a proverb and a saying,  
the words of the wise and their riddles.

## Proverbs gives us insight into how life works.

- i. From youth (v. 4) to maturity (v. 5) we need proverbs.
  - They're like letters from a father to a son (ch. 1-9).
  - Two women exemplify Wisdom & Folly (ch. 9).
- ii. Simple in form but profound in application (v. 5).
  - They teach us wisdom for all aspects of life (ch. 10-30).
  - Some riddles we may never understand (v. 6; 30:18-19).
- iii. The Prov 31 Woman is Wisdom Incarnate (ch. 31).

Proverbs are not random sayings, but insights into how life generally works.

Remember, not promises, but proverbs.

Wisdom is living in harmony with the grain of God's creation.

Go against it, and life splinters.

"The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings" (Ecc 12:11).

Even some riddles (v. 6) ... I have no idea what they mean.

"There are three things that are too amazing for me,  
four that I do not understand:

<sup>19</sup>the way of an eagle in the sky,

the way of a snake on a rock,

the way of a ship on the high seas,

and the way of a man with a young woman. (Prov 30:18-19).

The proverbs are often *simple in form but profound in application*.

"Let the wise hear and increase in learning" (v. 5).

We don't age out of becoming wise. You've not arrived. I've not arrived.

Watch out for pride. Foolishness arises because we think we're wise, when we're not actually wise.

Sometimes we think we're better than we are because we're good at one aspect of life. It's dangerous.

Like work/life balance – we can be successful in work, but a fool at home.  
When we compromise one thing to make another thing best, it can become idolatrous.

Brilliant minds, like Isaac Newton, wrote more about theology than physics.

There's something about God that we'll never really understand

The one who is already wise continues to search the scriptures for more wisdom.

The first 9 chapters are like letters from a father to his son.

Prov 1:8-9 ... "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction  
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

<sup>9</sup>They are a garland to grace your head  
and a chain to adorn your neck."

Christ is the promised seed of David, of Solomon ...

In Christ we have been grafted in to be 'sons' with him (Rom 8:16-17)

<sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ...

So, these proverbs are written to us.

Then Chapters 10-30 detail wise ways to live. They're proverbs, not promises.

Wisdom is applied knowledge, skill.

In proverbs, the wisdom is morally focused wisdom. But sometimes it's not even a moral issue, but just skill in doing something.

Skillful things may be done in both good and evil ways.

Every aspect of life does not have a moral right and wrong, but there is a morally right and wrong way to do each thing.

Wise ways to life...

Wisdom in Work and Finances -- Proverbs commends diligence and warns against laziness.

"Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise" (Prov. 6:6).

It also warns against dishonest gain and reckless debt.

Work is not just about making money; it's about reflecting God's creativity and faithfulness.

Making money

## God built the world with Wisdom (Ch 8)

<sup>22</sup> “The LORD possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. <sup>23</sup> Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth...

<sup>32</sup> “And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. <sup>33</sup> Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. <sup>34</sup> Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. <sup>35</sup> For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD, <sup>36</sup> but he who fails to find me injures himself; all who hate me love death.”

## Live in harmony with God's wisdom.

- i. It's firmly fixed, you cannot change it (Ecc 12:11).
- ii. Instead of asking, "Is this allowed?" ask, "Is this wise?"
- iii. Submit your habits and choices to God's wisdom.
- iv. Bring your finances, relationships, and speech in line with God's wisdom.

### 3. Fear the Lord (v. 7)

<sup>7</sup>The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;  
fools despise wisdom and instruction.



“Fear the Lord *before* you need to  
be afraid of the Lord”

Fear: reverent awe, submission, and trust in God’s authority.

The “fear of the Lord” is both the foundation and controlling principle of true wisdom.

Wisdom apart from the fear of the Lord is just human cleverness.

When we remove God from the equation, our wisdom suffers.

Fear, in it’s biblical context, is not terror but reverent awe, submission, and trust in God’s authority.

One guy said it like this “Fear the Lord before you need to be afraid of the Lord”  
Adam feared the Lord

## Receive wisdom. Fear the Lord

- i. Maintain the moral compass God has written on your heart.
- ii. Live with humility before God and others.
- iii. Cultivate your relationship with God through worship, prayer, and obedience.

#### 4. Look to Christ for true wisdom (1Co 1:24).

<sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God...

“In Christ we have the fullness of wisdom;  
without Him we grope in darkness.”

- Charles Bridges

Today, continue to hone your skill in navigating this world. Seek wisdom—in the Word, in prayer, and in reverence before God.