

Proverbs Study Guide #12
Proverbs 1-31

The Fear Of The Lord and The Fear Of Man

Introduction:

Thus far in Proverbs, we have considered seven words or phrases. By this, and by them, we are reminded again that every word in the written Word of God is God-breathed and crucial, being from and of Him, and being a gift to His created receiving ones. God's breathing out of the Word through inspired holy men of God is the exhaling of His very Self as Life contained in words as barley is contained inside its shell. As receivers, we must break open the shell, the written words, and feast on the kernel of the barley corn. The mind, by analysis, can never crack open the life-seed in this Word. As He gave it by the Spirit through the spirits of men, it therefore must be opened and inhaled by the spirits of men, and thereby contact the initiator of the giving, that Giver who is God himself as the Exhaling Spirit. It is by praying in the spirit that believers are able to touch, to receive and to ingest the imparted God-Word into their innermost hidden man.

The verse in the Bible that appears to be the most ancient reference is John 1:1, declaring that in the very beginning there was God, and that He was simultaneously the Word. We may conclude that the very basis of the character of God is that Essence which longs to express itself, and then by exhaling it in the holy scriptures, to impart that divine essence of what He is into those enabled to receive it in the manner and for the purpose which He initially gave it.

The words and phrases we have processed thus far in Proverbs are:

1. wisdom
2. understanding
3. instruction
4. prudence
5. the wise man
6. the foolish man
7. the heart of man

The living of the human life is in itself fragmented. This book reflects the genuineness of that concept. The words we have studied are scattered throughout this book and throughout the old and new testaments of the entire Bible. My selection of these words was not as though there is a biblical order, but there is a relationship among the words, however, and such a realization ought to embellish our apprehending of their meaning and application to us. As indicated by the verses in each study, each word tends to develop importance and fruition as it is used progressively through the Bible. This is a marvelous thing, and too easily overlooked even by the lovers of God.

These seven words and phrases have a genetic and organic relationship in their development. Here we will consider a brief summary of each of the thoughts.

1. Instruction

Most basic of all is the word "instruction". Assuming the human being is born devoid of knowledge, he needs instruction. Later, in spiritual transactions, this concept is parallel and similarly crucial. No matter how excellent the Instructor, or the instruction, if the object of instruction is not receptive, the result is the same as if neither the Instructor or the instruction existed.

To be teachable is as crucial as being thirsty. Without thirst, a creature will dehydrate and die; without a thirst for knowledge the creature will be ignorant and assured failure in every possible sense in his human living. Even the more, the believer must be soft, in humility, as with a broken shell able to receive incoming instruction in order that he may process it and in turn may eventually export the excellence of his processed human living to those around him. How much more so does this apply to the things of God. In Matthew five, this is called being “poor in spirit”, that is... emptied out, holding on to nothing in order to embrace incoming newness.

To desire instruction is to be a seeker of knowledge in its richest and most useful form. In human living, it is important that the adults learn to seek instruction so they in turn may diligently train their children to love learning. This will prepare the person to understand the principles of seeking God as Ultimate Instructor. To be instructed is to receive not only knowledge but essence.

In the spiritual dimension, to be a seeker of God is the most basic posture a believer can have. In this place, he may discover that God himself is a seeker. Even as the God of prevenient seeking stirs an appetite in one of his creatures, that created one finds himself seeking something, someone beyond himself. In this seeking, he ought to ultimately find the Instructor of all things.

2. Wisdom

Proverbs 4:7 said the principal thing is to gain wisdom. Wisdom, therefore is the most important word item for which to pray. Wisdom always contains the realization of what to do.

3. Understanding

Proverbs 4:7 instructs us, that in the getting of wisdom, to also gain understanding. In wisdom, what to do is realized, but it may not be clear why that is important. This needs understanding. Therefore, in the gaining of wisdom, we need to discover why something is to be done.

4. Prudence

This word helps us realize that even when we know what to do, when we understand why it ought to be done, it still may be accomplished in an inappropriate or untimely way. It must not only be addressed clearly with understanding, but it must be accomplished prudently. Prudence refers to how the matter is worked out. Christ is the only genuine Person, the reality of all these four items.

5. The wise man

A person who increases in his human living in the what, the why, and the how of things, may be considered a wise man. Although this may be the increasing condition of his living, every wise man is capable of doing foolish things. I Corinthians 1:30 informs us that the very source and embodiment of wisdom is a Person, even Christ himself. True wisdom in its highest, purest, life-giving form, is receiving this Wisdom as the Spirit realized as an application in and through the spirit of man in his situation, to meet the need of the moment.

6. The foolish man

Proverbs makes it evident that every wise man can be a fool at any moment, and that every fool has the possibility to be wise in a given situation. The foolish man is characterized as a person having thoughts and making decisions that violate the principles of instruction, wisdom, understanding and prudence. In his most distinctive state, as a fool he has said in his heart that there is no God (Psalm 53:1-5; Romans 3:10-18). A thought such as this occupying the inner parts of a

man will lead him into destruction spiritually, and usually in human terms as well, sooner or later.

7. The heart of man

The word “heart” is used over 900 times in the Bible. The words representing each part of the heart are used or described hundreds of times additionally. Sometimes “heart” is referred to clearly indicating one of its mechanical parts or functions; other times it clearly speaks generally of that which indicates the inclusive and deepest representation of the person or persons.

Proverbs offers much detail as to the details of the heart of man, as do the scriptures from beginning to end. If we were to diagram the heart in real functional terms, it has several parts. In terms of mechanics, it is composed of a person’s entire soul plus part of his human spirit. In the study we addressed only a few of many verses clarifying for us that the soul is composed of man’s psyche, his psychology, which is indicated by the mind, the emotion and the will of man. The spirit of man has three parts and functions, one of which is pertinent to the heart. The conscience of the spirit is the door to the person’s inner man as the mind is the door into the soul or the self of man. The conscience, plus the three parts of the soul compose the heart of man.

The wellspring of every person arises from his heart. Whether the waters of life which he sprinkles on others are pure or putrid, they come from the depths of his being. The heart of man at birth is like an empty basket. As he lives and grows, his thoughts and resulting behavior(s) arise from the collection and resources in his heart. His words express what is in his heart. His heart represents everything in him and what others see in his words and living are usually only the small tip of that great iceberg in the hidden depths of that ocean which is the sea both of his momentary and accumulated humanity.

The first four words- wisdom, understanding, instruction and prudence compose an understanding of general human living, with pervasive applications in their reality expressed in spiritual living. They explain a person who before giving has learned how to receive and process instruction, who in wisdom learns what to do, in understanding realizes why it needs to be done, and in prudence works out the decision in an appropriate and timely way, bringing honor and respect both to the giver and to the receiver.

These words explain a lifestyle that may be developed to characterize a person. To the degree these characteristics are admirable or defiling in a person, to that degree he may appear as a foolish man or as a wise man. Whatever that consummate expression of the person is, it all arises out of the heart of man, expressing from within either that which is corrupt or that which is precious. The result is a person who has become a wonderful expression of God or a shameful expression of the enemy of God. That life which becomes complete is the result either of one who has processed truth and has become its spiritual embodiment, or one who in his heart has been given over to deceit with all the works of the flesh resulting from its source in things contrary to those items which would compose a godly man and a man of God.

May we make room in our hearts deeply to yield to the vision contained inside these seven words and phrases. If we can grasp the relevance of these, it will help us to understand from a scriptural viewpoint the following subject to now study, which is “the fear of the Lord and the fear of man”.

The book of Proverbs contains many words key to understanding human life, especially human life that is to engage itself with divine life. Following are some of these words. Compare each word as it is used in several different verses, chapters and contexts in this book and other books.

Note contrasts, progression of thought, exceptions, promises, circumstances in which the word may have a different meaning, etc. Exercise yourself to drink in these words as written on page thirteen. Last lesson we considered “The Heart of Man”. This lesson we will consider “The Fear Of The Lord and The Fear Of Man”.

Words previously studied in this venture:

1. Wisdom (Proverbs Study Guide #5) (Proverbs 1:2, 3, 7, 20, etc)
2. Understanding (Proverbs Study Guide #6) (Proverbs 1:2, 5, 6, etc)
3. Instruction (Proverbs Study Guide #7) (Proverbs 1:2, 7, 8, etc)
4. Prudence (Proverbs Study Guide #8) (Proverbs 8:12, 12:26, etc)
5. The wise man (Proverbs Study Guide #9) (Proverbs 1:5, 6, etc)
6. The foolish man, fool (Proverbs Study Guide #10) (Proverbs 1:7, etc)
7. The Heart (Proverbs Study Guide #11) (Proverbs 2:2, etc)

8. Subject of this study: The Fear Of The Lord and The Fear Of Man

Proverbs 1:7

1:29

2:5

3:7

8:13

9:10

10:27

(13:13)

14:2

14:26

14:27

15:16

15:33

16:6

19:23

22:4

23:17

24:21

(28:14)

(29:25, trembling)

31:30

Other references:

Genesis 20:11

Genesis 31:42, 53

Genesis 42:18

Exodus 20:20

(Deuteronomy 2:25)

Deuteronomy 4:10

Deuteronomy 5:29

(Joshua 8:1)

Nehemiah 5:9

I Samuel 11:7

II Chronicles 20:29

Job 1:1, 8; 2:3

Job 28:28

Psalms 2:11

Psalms 5:7

Psalms 15:4

Psalms 19:9

Psalms 34:11

Psalms 90:11

Psalms 111:10

Psalms 119:38

Isaiah 2:19-22

Isaiah 8:12, 13

Isaiah 11:2-3

Isaiah 14:3

Isaiah 29:13

Isaiah 43:5

Malachi 3:16

Malachi 4:2

(Matthew 1:20)

(Matthew 10:28)

(Matthew 28:5)

(Luke 12:32)

(Acts 2:43)

(Acts 5:5, 11)

Acts 9:31

Acts 10:2, 22

Acts 13:16

Romans 3:18

(I Corinthians 2:3)

II Corinthians 7:1

Ephesians 5:21

(Philippians 2:12)

Colossians 3:22

(II Timothy 1:7)

(Hebrews 4:1)

(Hebrews 12:22-29)

(Hebrews 13:6)

(I Peter 1:17)

(I Peter 2:18)

(I Peter 3:2, 15)

(I John 4:18)

(Jude 23)

(Revelation 1:7)

Revelation 14:7

Revelation 19:5

Exercises:

1. What is the “fear of the Lord”?

2. Is fear of the Lord an emotion? or?
3. Distinguish between the fear of the Lord and the fear of man.
4. Is fear of the Lord always good and the fear of man always bad?
5. Do you have the fear of the Lord? of man? Is fear of the Lord something that can be acquired?
6. Something to share with others:

Other words to study in Proverbs:

9. Knowledge` (Prov. 1:7, 22, 29; 2:5, 6)
10. Teaching (Prov. 1:8)
11. Sinner (Prov. 1:10)
12. Sheol/Hades (Prov. 1:12)
13. Wealth (Prov. 1:13)
14. Path (Prov. 1:15; 2:8, 15, 18, 19)
15. Way (Prov. 1:31; 2:8)
16. Hear (Prov. 1:5, 33)
17. Spirit (Prov. 1:23)
18. Reproof (Prov. 1:30)
19. Receive (Prov. 2:1)
20. Commandments (Prov. 2:1)
21. Learn, teach, speak (Prov. 2:1)
22. Law (Prov. 1:8)
23. Righteous (Prov. 2:7)
24. Simple (Prov. 1:32)
25. Evil man (Prov. 2:12)
26. Upright, good men (Prov. 2:20, 21)
27. Slothful (Prov. 15:19)
28. Walk (Prov. 2:7)

Exercises:

1. For one year (or...?) read a chapter of Proverbs every day that matches the day of the month.
2. Try to memorize at least one verse in Proverbs every week of this study, remembering the reference with each verse. Review, review, review.