



Bible Study

Proverbs 13 v. 10, 20

14 v. 12

15 v. 12

21 v. 30

25 v. 12

For the purposes of our Bible Studies we will be using A Life Builder Bible Study. Our Theme for these studies is: Proverbs (Learning To Live Wisely). The studies were originally written by William Mouser, but we will be modifying them in order that they become more usable for both home study and Church study.

These studies give us the opportunity to study the Bible in a greater depth and to reflect on what it is saying to us.

If you will be doing the studies from home, it is suggested that you do the study on a Wednesday morning, for an hour, starting at 10.30am. Get yourself a tea or coffee, a Bible, pen and paper (for any notes you want to make) and begin studying.

Hope that you enjoy it!

Pastor Ian

CONTEXT: There are 'how to' books on virtually every activity under the sun. We can pick up or polish any number of new skills that contributes to success in our careers, relationships or finances. But one book of the Bible – PROVERBS – specialises in real wisdom for all of life. Understanding it will give us direction that is practical, godly and shrewd, and will bless us richly.

Some thoughts to help you while you study

The purpose of the study is to equip ourselves to seek out skills we lack from wise men and women who have those skills.

In general, the Proverbs indicate that wisdom is something best received from wise people rather than from raw experience. Whether or not wisdom comes through advice (**Proverbs 13 v. 10**), correction (**Proverbs 15 v. 12**) or rebuke (**Proverbs 25 v. 12**), wisdom is best imparted from wise people to those who would be wise.

Whether we learn by raw experience alone or through the mentoring of a wise man or woman, it is invariable that we must face our own faults and flaws. If our character cannot receive correction, we cannot become wise.

Inexpensive and ready sources of wisdom exist among one's acquaintances. All around us are people with skills valuable to us. If approached properly, their skills may become our skills. Offering to help them is one way to learn from them. Sometimes simply asking their advice will open up a learning dimension to your relationship with them.

'Wising up' means confronting our faults, flaws and

weaknesses. Many times it will be unpleasant to learn about these, especially if we thought they were our strengths! To become wise we must be able and willing to change our mind about ourselves. This is not always easy or pleasant.

Proverbs 21 v. 30 reminds us that when God is at work in history, his agenda will overrule any competing ones, even if they are otherwise 'righteous' (that is, not involving actual transgression). The best we can do (and should do) is to test whether our goals and means to achieve them are in harmony with God's character and purposes revealed in Scripture.

Study 4

Finding Wisdom

A factory manager's assembly line was down, so he summoned a consultant to suggest remedies. After inspecting a huge piece of machinery, the consultant produced a small hammer, reached between some gears and gave a small tap. The assembly line worked again, and the factory manager got a bill for £10,000. Aghast, the manager, demanded another bill itemising the charges. When it came, the second bill read:

Tapping with a hammer: £5.00

Knowing where to tap: £9,995.00

Wisdom is 'knowing where to tap'. If we don't know where to tap, we need to find someone who does.

PERSONAL REFLECTION: Describe a skill you would like to acquire because it would make your life, work or relationship with others better than they are.

The book of Proverbs shows us 'where to tap' in many areas of life and also encourages us to seek out those who understand things we cannot yet perceive.

Read Proverbs 13 v. 10, 20; 14 v. 12; 15 v. 12; 21 v. 30; 25 v. 12

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT:

All these Proverbs are pointing, in one way or another, to a single kind of 'source' for wisdom. How would you describe that source?

As you look over these Proverbs, what do you see in them that keeps a person from becoming wise?

Think of a mentor or teacher or coach who helped you become wise in some area. Which of the Proverbs for this study comes closest to matching how you acquired skill or wisdom from the mentor?

In Solomon's day, the wisdom of Proverbs was probably taught in two places – the home and wisdom schools. Today the 'wisdom school' takes many forms, from apprenticeships to enrolment in universities. Using the Proverbs for this study as a guide, what would you look for when trying to select such a school?

Of course, formal schooling isn't the only way to get wisdom. Think of a person within your circle of acquaintances who has wisdom that you do not have. How would you describe his or her area of wisdom?

What specific steps might you take to acquire the wisdom from that wise man or woman?

Sometimes acquiring wisdom will feel unpleasant. How do

the Proverbs that you have read explain why 'wising up' can sometimes involve pain?

A common Proverb among athletes striving for skill says: 'No pain. No gain'. Try and give an example from your own life – not involving athletic training – where learning wisdom cost you something in terms of personal pain.

Why do you think there is often such a huge gulf between what seems right to us and what is truly wise (Proverbs 14 v. 12)?

Proverbs 21 v. 30 assures us that certain kinds of advice will come to nothing. How can you know if the advice you've gotten is the kind that will not succeed?

Something to do

Now or Later

The personal reflection asked you to list an area in which you need wisdom. What can you do in the week ahead to begin acquiring it?

Wisdom, skill, common sense, money – whatever you call it, is something we cannot acquire all by ourselves. We are always standing on the shoulders of wise men and women who lived before us. Pray that in your life you can harvest the wisdom offered by others.

We often say that someone is 'street wise', meaning that the person has become 'shrewd through enrolment in the 'School of Hard Knocks'. Is this way of gaining wisdom the same as or different from the ways suggested in the Proverbs for this study?