

PROVERBS AND PRINCIPLES

6

Truths to
Live By

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Introduction

Renew your mind in God's Word; its truth helps you make better decisions.

Why do we get stuck in destructive patterns?

Dealing with the same struggle repeatedly can be very frustrating. Sometimes, we point the finger at the people or the circumstances around us, thinking that if we could just fix these things, everything would be okay.

The trouble is, **the problem is often an internal, not an external one.** It's often because we've developed misbeliefs—and until we replace these misbeliefs with the truth, chances are we'll just keep putting ourselves into the same frustrating situations.

The book of Proverbs is a great place to look for wisdom for our everyday life. Each chapter of this eBook covers principles from its pages to help **interrupt destructive patterns** you may find yourself in.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

As you meditate on God's Word, remember Proverbs 3:5-6, which encourages us to trust in God and rely on Him for direction. You see, as you renew your mind in God's Word, its truth helps you make better decisions. At the same time, Holy Spirit directs your paths by helping you understand and apply what you're reading!

Along with reading this eBook, take the time to meditate on these Proverbs, and get ready to go to a whole new level of living!

Think Before You Trust

Trust is built over time and is not based on what people say they will do, but on what they actually do.

Have you ever trusted someone, only to regret it later?

It's happened to us all. We want to believe that people are trustworthy, and all too often we hand over trust too quickly. Part of the problem is that we confuse love and trust. As believers, we're told to love and accept others unconditionally, but if we package trust in with these two, it gets us in trouble every time.

You see, **trust must always be earned**. It's not something you just give away; it's built over time and is not based on what people *say* they'll do, but on what they *actually* do.

Putting confidence in an unreliable person in times of trouble is like chewing with a broken tooth or walking on a lame foot.

Proverbs 25:19 (NLT)

Proverbs 25:19 is a gem. It's saying that **if we rely on people who haven't earned our trust, it's going to cause us pain**. This verse does an incredible job describing that pain—it's not hard to imagine what it would feel like to chew on a broken tooth or walk on a broken foot.

There's nothing wrong with reserving your trust for those who have earned it. Take your time before you trust. If you require people to build a track record of trustworthy behaviour before you rely on them, that's wisdom!

Let's move on to the second piece of wisdom we can learn from the book of Proverbs.

Refuse to Gossip

Set a boundary by letting people know that you won't tolerate gossip.

Gossip is something we need to watch out for in our lives—not only that we don't spread it, but also that we don't listen to it and entertain it. In our work, friendship circles and our own home, gossip only leads to hurt.

A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; and a gossip separates the best of friends.

Proverbs 16:28 (NLT)

Why is gossip harmful? As Proverbs 16:28 says, **gossip plants seeds of strife and separates even the best of friends**. You see, some people just love to stir things up. They are quick to focus on others' flaws and seem to take offence with everything.

While gossiping about other coworkers or friends might seem like an easy way to build connection with someone, it's not the way to build strong, trusting relationships. In fact, if you know that someone just loves to get into all the juicy gossip going around, be careful about trusting that person. If they're quick to gossip about others, you never know when they might turn their fault-finding microscope on you.

It's important to **set boundaries when it comes to gossip by letting people know that you won't tolerate it**. When you meet someone new and gossip comes up, try casually diverting the conversation away to a different topic. If that doesn't work and it keeps coming up, you may need to address the problem directly in a loving manner that clearly communicates your boundaries.

In many ways, refraining from gossiping and the principle we'll cover in the next chapter go hand in hand. Let's see how meddling can impact your life in negative ways if you let it.

Refrain from Meddling

When you put yourself in the middle of an argument, be prepared for anger to come at you from both parties!

There were once two rescue workers who were called out to respond to a domestic dispute call between a husband and wife. Because the police hadn't yet arrived when they got there, they found themselves in a tricky situation. The dispute had become physical, so they had a choice: wait for the police to arrive or stop the fight themselves. Fearing for the wife's safety, they chose to pin the man to the ground, thinking she would be relieved. To their surprise, they got a different response. Both of them received nasty bumps on the head from being hit by a frying pan—by the wife!

Like a man who seizes a wild dog by the ears, so is anyone who walks by and meddles in someone else's argument.

Proverbs 26:17 (VOICE)

This story may remind you of this proverb, which shares another great piece of wisdom. It warns against getting involved in others' arguments. I'm not saying that these paramedics were wrong to do what they did, but it's an interesting lesson. **When you put yourself in the middle of an argument, be prepared for anger to come at you from both parties!**

Getting involved in others' arguments is risky, just as it is to grab a stray dog by the ears. You may need to if you suspect that someone is being bullied or abused, but if it's just a disagreement or a personality clash, **getting involved may do more harm than good**. In fact, it may even cost you a friendship. If two of your friends are fighting, it's best to stay out of it if possible.

Let's move to the fourth important piece of wisdom we can learn from the book of Proverbs!

Choose Your Inner Circle Carefully

As adults, sometimes we think we're immune to the influence of others, but it's not true.

To a large degree, the friends you choose determine the direction of your life.

Every person you enter into a relationship with has the power to influence you, which is why Proverbs 12:26 encourages us to choose our friends carefully. We know this is true of kids. We say things like, "Little Johnny got in with the wrong crowd, and now he's in trouble all the time." **As adults, sometimes we think we're immune to the influence of others, but it's not true.**

In reality, we are all impressionable to a certain extent. Our hearts absorb whatever we expose them to, whether we are conscious of it or not.

The righteous should choose his friends carefully, for the way of the wicked leads them astray.

Proverbs 12:26 (NKJV)

Not all friendships bring good things into our lives, which is why we can't become close friends with every person who shows interest in us. Now, I'm not saying that we need to completely avoid people who think or believe differently than we do. In fact, we're called to reach out and to influence the world for Jesus. However, we do have to **be careful when it comes to choosing our close friends.**

When it comes to determining **how much time is too much time** with people who have the potential to negatively influence you, consider this analogy: If you're on an iceberg and it's melting, you're okay. But if you're getting cold, it's time to get off. In other words, as long as you're influencing that friend in a positive way, you're okay. But if you start to notice that you're being influenced negatively, it's time to create some distance, and you may even need to move on entirely.

Even Jesus chose His inner circle carefully. Examine your friends' characteristics, because most likely those same attributes will rub off on you.

Stay Sharp

The truth isn't always pleasant. Just as a blade being sharpened against a file makes a really annoying sound, words that sharpen can be unpleasant.

Are you continually growing and **keeping your character sharp**?

Proverbs 27:17 challenges us to be choosy about our friends. It's saying that just as iron sharpens iron, a *sharp* friend can inspire and challenge you to become sharper.

As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Proverbs 27:17 (NKJV)

What kind of friends make you sharper? One very important thing to look for in your friendships is the willingness to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). You see, **we all need people who are willing to tell us the truth, even when they know it's going to hurt.**

Of course, developing a friendship like this is a two-way street. If a friend takes the chance to tell you when they think you're making a mistake and you just get defensive, they may not do so again. But if you invite your friends to share their opinions with you and you resist the urge to just convince them to think your way, you'll develop friendships that make you sharper.

The truth isn't always pleasant. Just as a blade being sharpened against a file makes a really annoying sound, words that sharpen can be unpleasant. That doesn't mean they aren't good for you.

I'm not saying that you should just put up with someone who does nothing but criticize and find fault with you. I'm talking about building friendships where both parties feel free to speak the truth in love.

Be willing to get a little vulnerable, and you'll develop friends who sharpen you. It may be a little uncomfortable at first, but they'll help you to grow—and they'll challenge you because they believe in you.

Accept Wise Correction

Be willing to share your perspective and hear a friend out when their opinion differs from yours.

Proverbs 27:6 talks about "wounds from a sincere friend," and it's not talking about holding on to friends who purposefully hurt you. These wounds it speaks of are the little loving corrections we can get from good friends.

Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

Proverbs 27:6 (NLT)

You see, we all have blind spots—problems or bad habits that we don't see or that we're choosing to ignore. Sometimes we need a good friend to bring up one of these areas to us. A good friend might point out when they notice you're spending too much time at work and not enough time at home, for example. If you haven't been taking care of your health, they might give you a hard time when you want to stop for donuts or when you reach for that third or fourth can of soda.

Even though it might get uncomfortable and may even hurt at times, we need to embrace these moments of truth because they help us to grow and make better choices in the future. In fact, according to Proverbs 9:8 (NLT), accepting correction is a sign of wisdom. It says, "Don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you."

Let's build strong, healthy relationships by **being willing to talk about touchy issues and work out differences.** Be willing to share your perspective and hear a friend out when their opinion differs from yours. Simply by listening, you take one more step toward being the best you can be.

Conclusion

Many of us might experience fewer storms if we spent time developing wisdom.

If you find the same storms keep showing up in your life, sometimes it can be due to a lack of wisdom. For example, we may point our finger at the devil for problems in our marriages when maybe we simply need to learn how to communicate more constructively.

Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them. Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you

Proverbs 4:5-6 (NLT)

We can all agree that Jesus lived a perfect life, yet He had to deal with problems. So, not all the issues that crop up in our lives are our fault. However, many of us might experience fewer storms if we spent time developing wisdom. Why? Because **wisdom helps you make smart decisions.**

A lot of what we go through is not from the enemy having power. He's just a loser who looks for opportunities to deceive you. However, **the more we grow and walk in wisdom, the fewer opportunities we give enemies or storms of any kind.**

Try reading a chapter from Proverbs every day and begin to absorb God's incredible principles for living a successful, fulfilling life. **Get wisdom and it will protect and guard you!**