



Let's be honest – life is complicated. Every day we're faced with a thousand decisions, big and small, and the stakes are high. One careless word can wound someone we love. A pattern of laziness can sabotage our future. Poor money choices can crush us with debt. A failure to invest in our kids can leave them rudderless. Choosing the wrong friends can lead us down destructive paths. The truth is, we desperately need wisdom – not just information, but the kind of deep, soul-level insight that actually changes how we live. And here's the good news: wisdom isn't just good advice for a better life. True wisdom is a person, and his name is Jesus. In Colossians 2:3, Paul tells us that in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." When Solomon wrote Proverbs, he was pointing us forward to the One who would embody every word of wisdom he penned. Jesus is the fear of the Lord made flesh. He's the Word that brings life, the diligent servant who finished his Father's work, the generous King who gave everything, the perfect Son who honored his parents, and the friend who sticks closer than a brother. Over the next six weeks, we're diving into Proverbs not just to get practical tips for living, but to meet Jesus – the Wisdom of God – and let him transform every corner of our lives. Because when we find him, we find the life we've been searching for all along.

This year, our church's theme is MAGNIFIED – our aim is to see Jesus Christ be magnified in our ministry, in our thankfulness, in the new life that we would see, in the generosity that would come from this church, and ultimately in the glory that we would give to him. At the core of this is an ever-deepening humility. A deepening understanding that apart from Jesus moving in his strength, in his power, in his truth, we can do nothing. "He must increase, but I must decrease." This foundational truth from John 3:30 shapes our study of Proverbs also! As we learn God's wisdom for home, relationships, work, and money, we're not just seeking self-improvement – we're seeking to magnify Christ in every area of life. The book of Proverbs isn't ultimately about making us wiser; it's about pointing us to the One who is Wisdom incarnate.

**BANNOCKBURN LIFEGROUP GUIDE**

**MAGNIFIED**  
"He must increase, but I must decrease."  
– John 3:30

## READ THIS FIRST: HOW SHOULD I READ PROVERBS?

Proverbs is a different kind of book in the Bible, and if we don't understand that upfront, we're going to misread it. While clearly not a story or narrative, and equally so not a prophetic book, Proverbs also isn't a list of promises God has to keep, and it's not a rulebook where every line is a command. Proverbs is a collection of wisdom – observations about how life generally works in God's world. These are principles, not guarantees. They describe patterns, not rigid formulas. A proverb like "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" isn't a contract with God – it's a wise observation about the power of faithful parenting. There are exceptions, because we live in a broken world. But the principle holds: invest well in your kids, and it usually bears fruit. Proverbs asks us to think, reflect, and apply wisdom to the complex situations we face every day.

Here's the foundation: Proverbs is built on "the fear of the LORD." That phrase shows up over and over because it's the starting line for everything. The fear of the LORD isn't terror – it's reverent awe, deep respect, and humble dependence on God. It's recognizing that God made the world, He sustains it, and He knows how it works.

**Wisdom isn't just about being smart or successful – it's about aligning your life with reality as God designed it.** You can't separate wisdom from relationship with God. If you try to use Proverbs as a self-help manual while ignoring the LORD, you're missing the whole point. Wisdom begins with knowing God and submitting to Him.

Now here's where it gets even better: **Jesus is the fulfillment of Proverbs.** He's not just mentioned here and there – He is Wisdom personified. When we read Proverbs, we're reading about the kind of life Jesus lived perfectly. He's the wise son who honored His parents, spoke gracious words, worked diligently, stewarded resources faithfully, and feared the LORD completely. Colossians 2:3 tells us that in Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So we don't read Proverbs to become better people through self-effort – we read it to see Jesus and to be transformed by the Spirit into His likeness. The wisdom of Proverbs isn't about pulling yourself up by your bootstraps; it's about being united to Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit to walk in the wisdom He embodied.

**Finally, Proverbs is intensely practical.** It speaks to how we use our words, how we handle money, how we raise our kids, how we choose friends, and how we work. It's meant to be applied – but applied thoughtfully, not woodenly. Life is complicated, and wisdom requires discernment. Two proverbs might seem to contradict each other (like "answer a fool" vs. "don't answer a fool" in Proverbs 26), but that's because wisdom knows there's a time for each. As we read Proverbs, we ask the Holy Spirit for insight, we consider the principle behind each saying, and we seek to live it out in the everyday moments of our lives. Remember: this isn't just information – it's transformation. And it all points us back to Jesus, the Wisdom of God, who gave everything so we could know Him and walk in His ways.

## WEEK 1: Starting Right

### The Fear of the Lord / Foundation of Wisdom

You can't build a house starting with the roof. You can't learn calculus before algebra. And you can't live wisely without first understanding the fear of the Lord. This isn't about being scared of God – it's about seeing Him rightly, which changes everything else. The fear of the Lord is where wisdom begins, and without it, we're just collecting life hacks that won't hold up when the storms come. This week, we're laying the foundation. We're learning what it means to align our hearts with God's heart, to hate what He hates, and to find our security in Him rather than in ourselves. If you skip this, nothing else in Proverbs will make sense. But if you start here, everything else falls into place.

## KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 1:7 – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

*Proverbs 9:10 – “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”*

*Proverbs 3:5-7 – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.”*

*Proverbs 14:26-27 – “In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.”*

*Proverbs 22:4 – “The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.”*

## THINKING THEOLOGICALLY

What Does the "Fear of the LORD" Mean?

The "fear of the LORD" is one of the most important phrases in all of Scripture, especially in Proverbs, and if we misunderstand it, we'll miss the heart of biblical wisdom. This isn't about being terrified of God like you're cowering before a tyrant. It's about reverent awe – a deep, soul-level recognition of who God is: holy, powerful, majestic, and utterly worthy of our worship and obedience. It's standing before the Grand Canyon and feeling small, but infinitely better because this is the Creator of the universe. The fear of the LORD means you take God seriously. You recognize that every thought, every word, every action happens in His presence, and He sees it all. You live with the awareness that God is not a cosmic buddy you can manipulate or ignore – He's the sovereign King who made you, sustains you, and will one day judge you.

But here's what makes this so beautiful: for those who know God through Jesus Christ, the fear of the LORD isn't rooted in terror – **it's rooted in love and trust.** Yes, God is holy and powerful, and yes, we should tremble at the thought of standing before Him in our sin. But because of the gospel, we know that God is also merciful, gracious, and faithful. The fear of the LORD for a believer includes confidence in His goodness. It's the kind of fear a child has for a loving father – not afraid of abuse, but deeply aware of the father's authority and desperately wanting to please him. This fear produces obedience, not out of dread, but out of gratitude. When you understand what God has done for you in Christ, you want to honor Him. You want to live in a way that reflects His character. The fear of the LORD moves you to say, "God, your word matters more than anything else, and I'm going to align my life with it."

So what does this look like practically? It means you don't make decisions based solely on what feels good, what's popular, or what benefits you in the moment. You ask, "What does God say about this?" It means you live with integrity even when no one is watching, because you know God is always watching. It means you confess sin quickly because you hate the thought of grieving the One who loves you. It means you worship Him not just on Sunday mornings, but in how you work, how you speak, how you spend money, and how you treat people. The fear of the LORD is the foundation for all of life – it's the beginning of wisdom, the starting point for every good decision, and the anchor that keeps you steady when life gets hard. Without it, you're just drifting. With it, you're walking in the light, secure in the presence of the God who made you and loves you.

## WEEK 1: STARTING RIGHT

### LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Think about someone you deeply respect. What qualities do they have that earn your respect, and how does that respect affect how you interact with them?
2. When you were growing up, what was one rule or boundary in your home that you didn't understand at the time but now see was actually for your protection?

#### DIVING DEEPER

3. Circle or highlight the phrase “fear of the LORD” every time it appears in the passages above. What words or ideas does Solomon repeatedly connect with this phrase?
4. Compare Proverbs 1:7 with Proverbs 9:10. Both say the fear of the LORD is the “beginning” of something. What’s the difference between “knowledge” and “wisdom,” and why does this matter?
5. According to Proverbs 8:13, what does the fear of the LORD mean we should hate? Why is it significant that fearing God includes hating certain things?
6. Read Proverbs 3:5-7 carefully. What is the opposite of fearing the LORD according to these verses? How does “leaning on your own understanding” show up in everyday life?
7. Look at Proverbs 14:26-27. What benefits does Solomon promise to those who fear the LORD? How would these benefits have been especially meaningful to someone living in ancient Israel?

8. Read Psalm 111:10 and Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. How do these passages expand our understanding of what Proverbs teaches about fearing the LORD?
9. Imagine a friend says, "I believe in God, but I don't see why I need to 'fear' Him – that sounds negative and unhealthy." Using today's passages, how would you explain that the fear of the LORD is actually good news?
10. What's the connection between humility and the fear of the LORD according to Proverbs 15:33 and 22:4? How does pride prevent us from truly fearing God?
11. Proverbs 19:23 says that whoever has the fear of the LORD "rests satisfied." What does this tell us about the relationship between fearing God and contentment? How is this countercultural?
12. Think about this week ahead. What is one decision, conversation, or situation where you need to choose between trusting your own understanding and acknowledging God? Be specific.
13. How does understanding Jesus as the embodiment of wisdom change the way we read Proverbs? When we fear the LORD, we're ultimately submitting to Christ. What does this mean for how we magnify Jesus in our daily lives?

## WEEK 2: Words Matter

### The Power of Speech

Your words are creating the world around you right now. Every conversation, every text, every offhand comment – they're either building up or tearing down, healing or wounding, bringing life or death. We underestimate the power of our speech, treating words like they're cheap and disposable. But Proverbs won't let us get away with that. God takes our words seriously because they reveal what's really going on inside us and because they have the power to shape reality for those around us. This week, we're going to confront the gap between how we think we talk and how we actually talk.

This week in Proverbs, we're going to learn when to speak and when to stay silent, how to heal with words instead of harm with them, and why truth-telling is non-negotiable for anyone who follows Jesus.

### KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 10:19 – "When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent."*

*Proverbs 12:18 – "There is one whose rash words are like sword thrusts, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."*

*Proverbs 15:1 – "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*

*Proverbs 15:4 – "A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit."*

*Proverbs 18:21 – "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits."*

*Proverbs 21:23 – "Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble."*

*Proverbs 25:11 – "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver."*

## WEEK 2: WORDS MATTER

### LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Share about a time when someone's words brought you unexpected encouragement or healing. What made those words so powerful?
2. Think about your typical day. In what situations do you find it hardest to control your words?

#### DIVING DEEPER

3. Look at the action words used to describe speech in these passages ("restrain," "thrust," "turn away," "stir up," "break," "keep"). What do these verbs reveal about the active power of our words?
4. Compare Proverbs 10:19 with Proverbs 17:27-28. What is Proverbs teaching us about the relationship between silence and wisdom? Why is restraint praised?
5. Proverbs 18:21 says "death and life are in the power of the tongue." Give concrete examples from your own experience or observation of how words have brought either "death" or "life" to a relationship or situation.
6. Read James 3:1-12. How does James build on the wisdom found in Proverbs regarding the tongue? What additional insight does he provide?
7. Your teenager comes home upset about a conflict with a friend and says something harsh about that friend. How would you use Proverbs 15:1 and 12:18 to guide the conversation without sounding preachy?

8. According to Proverbs 10:11, 10:20-21, and 15:2, what is the connection between a person's heart and their speech? How does this challenge the idea that "I didn't mean it – I was just angry"?
9. What does Proverbs 25:11 teach us about timing and appropriateness in our speech? Can you think of a time when you said the right thing at the wrong time, or vice versa? How do you know it was the right thing to say?
10. Look at Proverbs 15:1 and 15:4 together. How do tone and manner affect the outcome of our conversations? Why does gentleness have such power?
11. Proverbs frequently contrasts truthful speech with lies (12:17, 12:19, 12:22). What makes lying so destructive according to these verses? How does truth-telling honor God?
12. This week, identify one relationship or conversation where your words have been destructive rather than life-giving. What specific change will you make? Share your plan with others in your group.
13. How can our speech magnify Christ?

## WEEK 3: Hard Work

### Diligence and Labor

Laziness is trending. We're drowning in shortcuts, life hacks, and get-rich-quick schemes. Meanwhile, our kids watch us hustle for comfort instead of character, and deep down we know something's broken. Proverbs doesn't coddle our excuses. It calls out the sluggard who always has a reason why today's not the day, and it celebrates the diligent worker who shows up when no one's watching. This week isn't about guilt-tripping you into exhaustion – it's about recovering the biblical vision of work as worship, as a gift, as the means by which God provides and shapes us. Whether you're in an office, at home with kids, or retired, you have work to do. And how you do it matters more than you think.

### KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 6:6-11 - "Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man."*

*Proverbs 10:4-5 - "A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. He who gathers in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame."*

*Proverbs 12:24 - "The hand of the diligent will rule, while the slothful will be put to forced labor."*

*Proverbs 13:4 - "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied."*

*Proverbs 14:23 - "In all toil there is profit, but mere talk tends only to poverty."*

*Proverbs 16:3 - "Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established."*

*Proverbs 22:29 - "Do you see a man skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men."*

## WEEK 3: HARD WORK LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What's the hardest you've ever worked on something, and what was the result? Was it worth it?
2. If you could master any skill instantly without having to put in the work, what would you choose and why?

### DIVING DEEPER

3. In Proverbs 6:6-8, what specific characteristics of the ant does Solomon highlight? Why is the ant's lack of a supervisor significant?
4. Compare the descriptions of the "sluggard" in various passages (6:9-11, 10:26, 13:4, 19:24, 20:4, 26:13-16). What patterns do you see in the sluggard's behavior and excuses?
5. Look at the contrast between the diligent and the lazy in Proverbs 10:4-5, 12:24, and 13:4. What consequences does Solomon promise for each? Are these guarantees or general principles?
6. Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13 and Colossians 3:23-24. How do these New Testament passages build on Proverbs' teaching about work? What additional motivation do Christians have?
7. A coworker regularly shows up late, does the minimum required, and complains that life isn't fair because they don't get promoted. Using Proverbs, how would you lovingly address this?

8. What is the significance of Proverbs 16:3's command to "commit your work to the LORD"? How does this verse challenge both workaholism and laziness?
9. According to Proverbs 14:23, what is the relationship between talk and toil? How does this apply to our culture of personal branding and self-promotion?
10. Proverbs 22:29 promises that skillful workers will "stand before kings." What does this teach us about excellence and opportunity? How does this challenge mediocrity?
11. Look at Proverbs 24:30-34. What does the condition of the sluggard's field reveal about the long-term effects of laziness? What areas of your life might be like an untended field?
12. Identify one area where you've been lazy or making excuses. What is one concrete action you will take this week to demonstrate diligence in that area?
13. How does our work – either in what we do, or the way we do it – magnify Christ?

## WEEK 4: It's God's Money

### Generosity, Stewardship & Wealth

Let's get uncomfortable. Money exposes what we really believe about God. We say we trust Him, but our bank accounts tell a different story. We claim He's generous, but we live with clenched fists. Proverbs cuts through our financial pretending and shows us what's really going on: we think money will save us, so we hoard it, chase it, and worship it. Meanwhile, God keeps saying the same thing over and over – it's all Mine anyway, and you'll be happier when you start acting like it. This week, we're talking about generosity that defies logic, stewardship that honors God before our retirement accounts, and the reality that how we treat the poor reveals how we see God. If this makes you squirm, good! That means you're paying attention.

### KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 3:9-10 – "Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine."*

*Proverbs 11:24-25 – "One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered."*

*Proverbs 11:28 – "Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf."*

*Proverbs 14:31 – "Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him."*

*Proverbs 19:17 – "Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the LORD, and he will repay him for his deed."*

*Proverbs 22:1-2 – "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor meet together; the LORD is the Maker of them all."*

*Proverbs 22:7 – "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender."*

*Proverbs 30:8-9 – "Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God."*

## WEEK 4: IT'S GOD'S MONEY

### LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What is one purchase you regret, and one purchase you're glad you made? What made the difference?
2. If you received an unexpected \$10,000 today, what would you do with it? Be honest – what would be your first instinct?

#### DIVING DEEPER

3. Notice how many times Proverbs uses the word “better” when discussing wealth (15:16-17, 16:8, 19:1, 22:1, 28:6). Make a list of what Proverbs says is “better than” riches. What does this tell us about God’s value system?
4. Compare Proverbs 11:24-25 with 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. How do both passages describe the paradox of generosity? Is this a guarantee or a principle?
5. According to Proverbs 3:9-10, what does it mean to honor the LORD with our wealth? Why does God command “firstfruits” rather than leftovers?
6. Read Luke 16:13. How does Jesus’ teaching that “you cannot serve God and money” relate to Proverbs’ warnings about trusting in riches (11:28, 23:4-5)?
7. Your friend is drowning in credit card debt but continues to make unnecessary purchases. They justify it by saying, “You only live once!” How would you use Proverbs 22:7 and other passages to speak truth in love?

8. What is the connection between how we treat the poor and how we honor God according to Proverbs 14:31, 17:5, 19:17, and 22:2? Why does God take this so personally?
9. Proverbs 30:8-9 is a remarkable prayer. What are the spiritual dangers of both poverty and riches according to this passage? How does this challenge both the prosperity gospel and asceticism?
10. How do Proverbs 11:4 and 15:16 reshape our understanding of what true “profit” and “treasure” are? What are you actually gaining if you get wealth but lose righteousness?
11. Look at your bank statement or credit card statement from last month. What does your spending reveal about what you truly value and trust?
12. What is one specific change you need to make in how you earn, spend, save, or give money? Write it down and share it with someone who will hold you accountable.
13. Jesus became poor so that we might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). How does Christ’s ultimate generosity and sacrifice transform how we view and use our money? How does generosity magnify Christ?

## WEEK 5: Here Come the Kids

### Parenting and Child Training

Nobody hands you a manual when you bring that baby home from the hospital. You're just supposed to figure it out – keep them alive, teach them right from wrong, and somehow turn them into functional adults who love Jesus. No pressure. The good news? God hasn't left us guessing. Proverbs is loaded with wisdom about raising kids – what to teach them, how to discipline them, and why your own integrity matters more than any parenting technique. This week is for parents who are exhausted, confused, and desperate for help. It's also for those who aren't parents yet but will be someday, or who invest in the next generation in other ways. Because here's the truth: parenting is too important to wing it, and too hard to do alone. God has something to say, and we need to listen.

### KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 1:8-9 – "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck."*

*Proverbs 3:11-12 – "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the LORD reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."*

*Proverbs 13:24 – "Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him."*

*Proverbs 19:18 – "Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death."*

*Proverbs 20:7 – "The righteous who walks in his integrity – blessed are his children after him!"*

*Proverbs 22:6 – "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."*

*Proverbs 22:15 – "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him."*

*Proverbs 29:15 – "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother."*

*Proverbs 29:17 – "Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart."*

## WEEK 5: HERE COME THE KIDS

### LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What is one piece of advice or wisdom your parents (or another mentor) gave you that you didn't appreciate at the time but now see was valuable?
2. If you could go back and thank your parents for one thing they did right in raising you, what would it be?

#### DIVING DEEPER

3. Count how many times the phrase "my son" appears in Proverbs (1:8, 1:10, 2:1, 3:1, 3:11, 3:21, 4:1, etc.). What does this repetition tell us about the relationship between parent and child in wisdom literature?
4. Compare Proverbs 3:11-12 with Hebrews 12:5-11. How does God's discipline of His children serve as the model for parental discipline? What is the purpose of discipline according to both passages?
5. Look at Proverbs 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, and 29:15. What is "the rod" and what does it accomplish? How should we understand these verses in light of the entire biblical teaching on parenting?
6. Read Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20-21. How do Paul's instructions to both children and fathers expand on Proverbs' teaching? What balance does Paul strike?
7. A parent in your small group confides that they struggle to discipline their child because they don't want to damage the relationship or hurt their child's self-esteem. Using Proverbs, how would you encourage them?

8. What does Proverbs 22:6 mean by training a child “in the way he should go”? Is this a guarantee or a general principle? How does this affect how we view successful Christian parenting?
9. According to Proverbs 20:7 and 14:26, what is the connection between a parent’s integrity and their children’s future? How does your walk with God affect your kids?
10. Look at the promises connected to discipline in Proverbs 29:17. What does it mean that a disciplined son will “give you rest” and “give delight to your heart”?
11. Proverbs repeatedly shows the grief caused by foolish children (10:1, 17:21, 17:25, 19:13). What does this teach us about the long-term consequences of parenting choices?
12. Whether you have children or not, what is one way you can invest in the next generation this week? (If you’re a parent, what’s one specific area of training you’ve been neglecting?)
13. Jesus is God’s perfect Son who always honored His Father. How does Christ’s obedience and relationship with the Father inform how we parent and how we respond to our own parents? How does godly parenting magnify Christ?

## WEEK 6: We Need Friends

### Relationships, Friendships & Community

You were not made to do life alone. I know we live in a culture that celebrates independence and self-sufficiency, but that's a lie that will wreck you. Proverbs is relentless about this: isolation is dangerous, bad friends will drag you down, and real friendship – the kind that sharpens you and tells you hard truths – is one of life's greatest treasures. This week, we're talking about the people you're doing life with. Are they making you better or worse? Are you surrounded by flatterers or truth-tellers? And maybe most importantly – what kind of friend are you? Because the call isn't just to find good friends; it's to become one. We're going to learn what real biblical friendship looks like, why gossip destroys everything it touches, and how iron sharpens iron when we're willing to get close enough to spark.

## KEY PASSAGES

*Proverbs 13:20 – "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."*

*Proverbs 17:17 – "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."*

*Proverbs 18:1 – "Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment."*

*Proverbs 18:24 – "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."*

*Proverbs 22:24-25 – "Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare."*

*Proverbs 27:5-6 – "Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy."*

*Proverbs 27:9-10 – "Oil and perfume make the heart glad, and the sweetness of a friend comes from his earnest counsel. Do not forsake your friend and your father's friend, and do not go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is near than a brother who is far away."*

*Proverbs 27:17 – "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another."*

## WEEK 6: WE NEED FRIENDS

### LIFEGROUP QUESTIONS

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. Think about your closest friend. How did that friendship develop, and what makes it strong?
2. Have you ever had a friendship that ended badly? Without naming names, what happened and what did you learn?

#### DIVING DEEPER

3. Look at the contrast in Proverbs between good friends and bad influences (13:20, 22:24-25, 14:7). What specific characteristics should we look for – or avoid – when choosing close friends?
4. Compare Proverbs 18:1 with 11:14 and 15:22. What does Proverbs teach about the danger of isolation and the safety of community? Why is going solo so foolish?
5. Proverbs 27:5-6 contains one of the most counterintuitive statements in Scripture. What does it mean that “faithful are the wounds of a friend”? How is this different from being critical or harsh?
6. Read 1 Corinthians 15:33 and James 4:4. How do these New Testament passages echo Proverbs’ warnings about choosing friends wisely? What additional insights do they provide?
7. Your teenage child wants to spend more time with friends who you suspect are a bad influence, but you don’t have concrete proof. How would you use Proverbs 13:20 and 22:24-25 to have a conversation without being controlling?

8. What is the difference between the “man of many companions” and the “friend who sticks closer than a brother” in Proverbs 18:24? What kind of friend are you?
9. According to Proverbs 27:9-10, what is the value of “earnest counsel” from a friend? When was the last time you sought counsel from a godly friend on an important decision?
10. Look at the passages about gossip and betrayal (16:28, 17:9, 20:19, 26:20-22). How does gossip destroy friendships, and what is the antidote?
11. Proverbs 27:17 says “iron sharpens iron.” What does this metaphor teach us about how friends should interact? Is your closest friendship sharpening both of you?
12. Evaluate your current friendships honestly. Is there a friendship you need to invest in more deeply? Is there a relationship that’s unhealthy and needs boundaries? What will you do this week?
13. How do our friendships magnify Christ?

## A FINAL WORD TO LEADERS

Thank you for leading your group through this study of God's wisdom in Proverbs. Remember that your role is not to have all the answers, but to facilitate genuine discussion and point people to Jesus, who is Wisdom incarnate. The goal of these six weeks is not merely to make your group members wiser about life issues, but to deepen their love for Christ and their understanding of Scripture. As you lead, model humility, vulnerability, and a genuine dependence on God's Word.

This year, we're seeking to see Jesus Christ be MAGNIFIED in every area of our lives – in our ministry, our thankfulness, the new life we would see, the generosity that would come from this church, and ultimately the glory we would give to Him. As you lead your group, keep coming back to this theme. Every practical lesson from Proverbs should ultimately lead us to decrease so that Christ can increase. May the Lord bless your group as you pursue wisdom together!

**"He must increase, but I must decrease."**

**– John 3:30**