

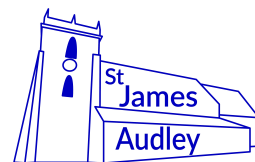


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Bible Reading Notes

January 2021

Proverbs 5-9



How to use these Bible reading notes

These Bible reading notes are a resource to help you feed on God's word a little and often and allow it to change your life. If you miss a day (or several!), don't feel guilty or try to catch up; just pick up wherever you left off – it doesn't matter if it's the wrong date. Here are some tips on how to get the most out of this:

1. Find a time and place where you can be quiet but awake. Maybe set an alarm on your phone to remind you each day.
2. Pray: ask God to help you understand what he says.
3. Use the notes to help you think about the passage (use a good translation of the Bible like the NIV).
 - *'Read' tells you which verses to read*
 - *'Apply' shows how it affects you*
 - *'Pray' suggests ways to talk to God about it*
4. Pray about what you have read. You might also like to use the Church Prayer Diary.
5. Look for a chance to share with someone what God has been saying to you.

These notes are easy to install on most phones or tablets. Install the 'PrayerMate' App and you'll find it under 'Add Subject → Church Life → UK Churches → St.Philemon's → Bible Notes'. You can also find them on our website: www.stphilemons.co.uk. If you have any problems, email miriam@stphilemons.co.uk.

Finding wisdom

If God were to say to you, “*What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you*”,¹ how would you answer?

Just take a minute to turn that question and your answer over in your mind.

King Solomon (he lived between 971-931 B.C.) was asked just this question by God (we can read about it in 1 Kings 3). It’s a searching question, because whatever the answer, it will be a revealing one. God gave a generous and open invitation to Solomon, but he was also testing his heart - what mattered to Solomon the most?

You may know the story: Solomon didn’t ask for wealth, a long life, success or ease. He asked instead for an understanding mind to decide between good and evil, between right and wrong. He asked for wisdom to rule God’s people, the people of Israel. And God was pleased to grant him his request.

Proverbs 5-9 are written by King Solomon (see Proverbs 1v1). They continue in the style of a father instructing his son to live a wise, faithful and godly life under the covenant of the one, true, redeeming God (1v7-8). As God’s people today, we see this wisdom fulfilled in Jesus Christ himself. Those who are in Christ can read and learn from these proverbs as God’s children. As the old hymn goes; ‘*This is my Father’s world*’ - how will we live in response to him and his word?

¹ 1 Kings 3:5b NLT.

Friday 1st January

Listen up! Which path are you on?

Read Proverbs 5v1-6

A father is speaking to his son (see chapter 1v8).

- What does he want his son to do and why? (v1-2)

(Maintain discretion and preserve knowledge means to keep and guard what is true and good.)

The father warns his son in v3-6;

- What does he warn him about?

(‘Gall’ is a bitter tasting plant)

- How does the path to a sexual affair begin and where does it end?

Apply

New Year is often a time for reflection and new resolutions... Have you made any?

- Is sexual purity on your list?
- Have you thought about who you will listen to in the year to come?
- Where will your chosen path lead?

Pray

The father in Proverbs cares deeply for his son. How much more does our heavenly Father care for us?!

Pray that this year you would want to listen even more to your heavenly Father’s voice through his word, the Bible. Pray that you would know his wisdom and grace for your life in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, and that you’d live in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saturday 2nd January

Stay away from immoral men and women.

Read Proverbs 5v7-14

The father continues to warn his sons against sexual temptation;

- What should they do (verses 7-8)?

(To spurn something is to reject or despise it)

- What could they lose (verses 9-14)?
- Where is the root of the problem? (verses 12-13)

(‘The adulterous woman’ (1:3), represents all women who are promiscuous. But the reader is left to adapt the wisdom to their own situation. Daughters should beware immoral men too.)

Apply

- How would you summarise what the Bible says about adultery and sexual sin from verses 1-14?
- Do you believe that? Why/why not?

Pray

- Pray for God’s mercy in your own life and culture in this area of sexual ethics.
- Thank God for Jesus who paid the price for all our sins. Ask for forgiveness if you have strayed into sexual sin.
- Ask God for strength to resist temptation to sexual sin.

Sunday 3rd January

Good sex

Read Proverbs 5v15-19

God created sex to be enjoyed in marriage and the Bible isn't shy about expressing that!

- How is the goodness of sex in marriage described in verses 15-19?
- What words can you think of that summarise what is being said here?

Apply

- Does anything surprise or challenge you about the Bible's view of sex in these verses?
- How does this compare with your culture's view of sex and marriage?

Pray

- Thank God that he has created sex to be enjoyed in marriage.
- Talk to God about the things that have surprised and/or challenged you in his word today.
- Pray for faithfulness in the marriages in your church family (and with your own spouse if you're married).

Monday 4th January

The Lord examines all our paths.

Read Proverbs 5v20-23

The father again encourages his son to pursue purity and faithfulness in sex and marriage.

- What reason does the father give his son to choose the right path?
- What's the alternative?
- What does 'for lack of discipline' mean? (Look back to verse 12 for help)

Apply

There are many sexual dangers and temptations open to us whether we are single or married.

- Where are you tempted to be wayward and led astray?
- What will help you from these verses in your fight against sexual sin?

Pray

Proverbs 1v7 says, *'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.'*

- Pray for a right, humble, loving and reverent fear of the Lord that will help you keep on the right path when it comes to sexual purity.

Tuesday 5th January

Financial advice.

Read Proverbs 6v1-5

- What does it mean to 'put up security' or be 'in pledge' with someone? (verse 1)
- Why does the father warn his son against doing this? (verses 2-3, 5)
- What should he do if he finds himself trapped by his pledge?
- What should he be like?

Apply

- Is it always wrong to loan money to someone? Why/why not?
- How do these verses help shape your answer?

Pray

- Pray for wisdom and honesty in your financial dealings with both neighbours (those you know) and strangers.
- Ask the Lord to help you be a good steward of the money he has given you.

Wednesday 6th January

Lazybones?

Read Proverbs 6v6-11

- What is the father warning his son against in these verses?
- What are the differences between the ant and the sluggard? (A sluggard is a lazy person)
- What are the different outcomes for people who are like them?

Apply

- Which - the ant or the sluggard - do you tend to be most like?
- Are there times and situations when you're more like one than the other? Why?
- What principles can you take from these verses into your own situation?

Pray

Whatever we do in our life of worship and work is '*as for the Lord and not for men*' (Colossians 3v17, 23).

- Pray that the Lord would strengthen you by his grace to live for him today - whatever you are doing.

Thursday 7th January

Troublemakers.

Read Proverbs 6v12-15

- What are the signs that someone is a troublemaker according to these verses?
- Where does their deceit come from?
- What will the outcome be for their way of life?

Apply

How we communicate reveals a lot about us. Proverbs 4:23 says: *'Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.'*

- What does your communication say about your heart?

Pray

- Ask God for a spiritual heart check-up today.

Friday 8th January

Conflict in the community.

Read Proverbs 6v16-19

Verse 16 explains why v15 (yesterday's reading) is so severe.

- How do verses 12-14 and 17-19 compare with each other?

(Where it says, '*There are six things . . . seven . . .*', this is a way of writing that makes you stop and take special notice of the seventh thing.)

Apply

Sadly, conflict in churches is not uncommon.

- What is the Lord's verdict on conflict in the community of his people - a church family? And on the person who causes it?

Pray

Hebrews 10:24 says, '*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*'

- Pray that you will be a 'spurrer' not a stirrer!

Saturday 9th January

The way to life.

Read Proverbs 6v20-24

- What do these parents want for their son?
- What do they want him to especially avoid?
- How will wisdom help him?

Apply

- We have focussed on sexual immorality and adultery already. Why do you think Solomon returns to talking about these things again?
- If you're a parent/ grandparent/ relative/ godparent/ carer - how might these verses help shape your prayers and ambitions for the children you care for? What about the children in your church family?

Pray

Psalm 119v105 says, *'Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.'*

- Pray that God's word would guide you and adorn your life and the life of the children you know today and every day.

Sunday 10th January

Playing with fire.

Read Proverbs 6v25-29

- What is Solomon warning against? (v25-26)

(Lust in this context means a strong sexual desire)

- What's the answer to the questions in verses 27 & 28?
- Why does Solomon use this imagery?

Apply

Verses 20-21 (from yesterday's reading) say;

*"My son, keep your father's command
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
Bind them always on your heart;
fasten them round your neck."*

Compare them with verse 25;

- Where will the battle of temptation take place?

Jesus says, *'that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.'*
(Matthew 5v28).

Pray

- Pray the Lord's Prayer today, giving thought to any temptations you may be facing and asking for God's help to resist.

You might want to share this with a trusted friend or your pastor and ask them to pray for you.

Monday 11th January

Adultery is theft.

Read Proverbs 6v30-35

- How do a thief stealing to satisfy his hunger and a man who commits adultery compare? (v30-32)
- What consequences will the man face?
- How might someone in this situation try to get out of it? (v35)

Apply

- From all that we've been reading so far, how does God view adultery?
- How does your view compare?
- Has your view changed through reading this section of Proverbs? How?

Pray

- Thank God that Jesus (the faithful bridegroom of his bride, the church) will never betray or abandon his people.

Tuesday 12th January

Store, keep, bind, write.

Read Proverbs 7v1-5

- What does the father want his son to do? Why?
- What do you think he means by '*guard my teachings as the apple of your eye*'? (v2)

'The apple of your eye' = someone who/something that is very dear or cherished.

Apply

- How will you store up and keep God's commands?
- What will it look like for you to guard and cherish his teachings?

Pray

'Holy Spirit, living breath of God,
Breathe new life into my willing soul.
Let the presence of the risen Lord,
Come renew my heart and make me whole.
Cause Your Word to come alive in me;
Give me faith for what I cannot see,
Give me passion for Your purity;
Holy Spirit, breathe new life in me.'

(Keith Getty & Stuart Townend, 2005, Thankyou Music)

Wednesday 13th January

A cautionary tale

Read Proverbs 7v6-9

- What is it that the father sees happening?
- Who is this young man walking near (see v5)?

Look back to chapter 5 verses 8-9 and compare them with these verses.

- Why is he in peril?

Apply

- Have you ever found yourself walking into trouble or temptation you could have avoided?
- Why was your guard down? (Look back to Proverbs 4v23).
- As you look back to the event, what did you learn from it?

Pray

- Thank God that he is greater than our foolishness and when we lack common sense.
- Pray to him now about being more alert to temptation and choosing the way of wisdom instead.

Thursday 14th January

Guilty secret

Read Proverbs 7v10-20

- The young man has foolishly walked into trouble. What happens next?
- How does the woman tempt him?
- Is she all she appears (v14)?

Sexual sin is not only a physical sin. It takes place in our thoughts and imagination too, and is just as serious.

Apply

- How can a Christian flee this temptation?
- If you have time, you might like to read about how Joseph resists Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.

Pray

- Pray that you would be someone who glorifies God with your body and flees sexual temptation.

Friday 15th January

It's a trap!

Read Proverbs 7v21-23

- Look back to yesterday's passage. How does this imagery compare with verses 14-20?
- Why does the father use this imagery to warn his son?
- Notice how quickly the young man follows the adulteress. How is he pictured in verses 22-23?

Apply

One of today's great dangers and problems is online pornography.

- Reflecting on today's passage, and on Proverbs 5-7 so far, how might they guide you in thinking through the dangers of pornography?
- How can children be protected from it?

Pray

- You might like to pray for your government to bring in legislation that better protects children from the dangers of online pornography.
- Pray for those who are ensnared by pornography, both inside and outside your church family, to find their freedom in Christ.

Saturday 16th January

A highway to the grave

Read Proverbs 7v24-27

- What does it mean for someone to stray? (v25)
- This might happen in a moment (v22), but what are the effects?
- Why does the father keep repeating this?

Apply

- What is your attitude to sexual temptation?
- Is it something that you think you don't need to worry about?
- If so, what would the father in Proverbs say about that?

Pray

'So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!' (1 Corinthians 10:12).

- Pray that you would take these warnings from God's Word seriously and be alert to the dangers of sexual sin.

Sunday 17th January

Wisdom's way

Read Proverbs 8v1-4

These verses echo chapter 1v20-33.

- How is wisdom represented?
- What does 'wisdom' do?
- Who does 'wisdom' call out to?

Apply

- Why does Solomon picture Lady Wisdom standing where paths meet (a crossroad?) and at the entrance to the city?
- How do you decide which way to go in life?

Pray

God's wisdom is on offer to all people everywhere who will stop and listen;

- Ask the Holy Spirit to remember God's word to you today, that you would stop and listen as you go about your business.

Monday 18th January

More precious than rubies

Read Proverbs 8v5-11

- Who is speaking in these verses? (see 8v1-4).
- How do verses 6-9 compare with chapter 7v21?
- What is wisdom worth?
- 'Prudence' may sound a bit old fashioned nowadays, but why is it a good quality to possess?

Apply

- What hope is there for those who are 'simple'?
- Have you ever found yourself to be 'simple'? What happened?
- How can someone go about growing in and gaining wisdom? (e.g., 'set your hearts on it', v5).
- How will you? Try and think of one concrete way you can gain and grow in God's wisdom.

Pray

- Ask the Lord today for a wise and discerning heart, that values godly wisdom above all things.

Tuesday 19th January

Living with wisdom

Read Proverbs 8v12-14

'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.' (Proverbs 1v7)

- How do verses 12-14 add to your understanding of what it is to fear the Lord?

[Discretion means to be careful in speech/communication – for example; not causing offence or revealing confidential information.]

Apply

- What are these verses calling the reader to be and do?
- What do these verses tell us about the importance of character?
- How will this help you in life?
- Where are you setting your heart today?

Pray

- Pray about where/what/who your heart is aligning itself to, and where you need God's wisdom today.

Wednesday 20th January

Wise leadership

Read Proverbs 8v14-16

- What do rulers need in order to govern well?

Apply

- What do you look for in a leader?

It can often seem like wisdom is in short supply among our world's leaders, locally and nationally.

But this is what Jesus said to Pilate: *'You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above.'* (John 19v11).

- So, who is ultimately in charge?

Pray

Pray for your local and national leaders today.

- Ask for God's wisdom for them in decision making, in caring for and protecting the people they have God-given responsibility for, for the ability to tell the difference between right and wrong, and the courage to act on it.

Thursday 21st January

Seek and find

Read Proverbs 8v17

- What will happen for those who love and seek wisdom?
- Do these words in v17 sound familiar?

Jesus says in Matthew 7v7, *“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.”*

- How does what Jesus says connect with v17?

Apply

Jesus goes on to say that our Father in heaven gives good gifts to those that ask him (see Matthew 7v11).

- What will you ask the Father for today, in light of v17?

Pray

- Pray about that now.

Friday 22nd January

Treasure of wisdom

Read Proverbs 8v18-21

- Imagine a society that is blessed in this way. Is this describing material blessing or is there something more?
- What is the fruit of wisdom according to these verses?
- Who will benefit?
- Why is there a focus on righteousness?

Apply

Think back over the warnings of the previous chapters.

- How do these verses persuade you of the riches and goodness of God's righteousness?
- What is facing you today? How can you pursue righteousness this day?

Pray

- Ask the Father to guide you along the right paths today, for his name's sake (Psalm 23v3).

Saturday 23rd January

The first of God's creation

Read Proverbs 8v22-31

- Reminder: who is speaking? (Look back to 8v1, 4, 6, 12, 17, 20 for help)
- How is wisdom portrayed?
- What do we learn about creation? And about humanity in particular (v31)?

Apply

As poetry, this section captures the wonder of God's wisdom in creation.

- Do we share the wonder?
- If not, where and how has this been lost?
- What is needed to bring restoration?

Pray

- Thank God that his creative wisdom is clearly fulfilled and seen in Jesus: that *'all things have been created through him and for him, that he is before all things and in him all things hold together, that he is the head of the body, the church'* (Colossians 1:15-17).
- Spend some time in praise and thanks for Jesus.

Sunday 24th January

Blessed

Read Proverbs 8v32-33

- What is the repeated instruction in these verses?
- Why are the listeners addressed as children?

Apply

- How can you listen to God's wisdom?
- What tempts you to ignore it?
- Why is good to listen to God's wisdom?

Pray

- Pray that you may humbly listen to the voice of your Creator and know the benefits of living in his ways.
- Who else needs God's wisdom today? Pray for them too.

Monday 25th January

Life-giving wisdom

Read Proverbs 8v34-36

- How is finding wisdom described in verses 34-35?
- What is the stark contrast?

Apply

- Have you ever been hungry to learn something?
- If yes, how does your experience help you understand v34?
- How hungry are you for God's life-giving wisdom?

Pray

Jesus is the one in whom there is life (John 1v4) – Find Jesus, find life.

- Pray for your church's witness in your community today.

Tuesday 26th January

Wisdom's invitation

Read Proverbs 9v1-6

- Where and what is Lady Wisdom inviting people to?
- Who is she inviting?
- Is the guest list surprising? Why/why not? (see 8v5).
- Why the imagery of a wealthy host, a house and a feast?

Apply

- Does this sound inviting to you?
- Would you see yourself as one of the 'simple'? Why/why not?
- Why isn't her cry to 'those who've got it all sorted'?

Pray

Jesus says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . those who mourn . . . the meek . . . those who hunger and thirst for righteousness . . . the merciful . . .*" (Matthew 5:1-7 and following).

- Thank Jesus that he came for those who know their sin, weaknesses and needs. Thank him that his wisdom is available to all who will receive him.

Wednesday 27th January

Wisdom in action

Read Proverbs 9v7-9

- In what situations will correcting someone only make things worse?
- In contrast, when will it make things better?
- Who will benefit?
- Who will lose out?

Apply

- How can you use this wisdom to discern what to say to someone?
- Can you think of any examples where you've seen this played out?
- How do you respond to someone who is trying to help you? Do you have a teachable spirit?

Pray

It's possible to grow in wisdom by being open to instruction and humble in receiving advice.

- Pray for wisdom to know when to speak and when to stay silent; and for a humble heart to receive advice and instruction.

Thursday 28th January

The Holy One

Read Proverbs 9v10-11

Chapter 1v7 says; *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”*

- Compare this with verse 9v10. What is the same? What is different?
- What is the beginning or goal of wisdom?
- What is meant by ‘the fear of the Lord’?
- Who is ‘the Holy One’?
- Can you put verses 10-11 in your own words?

Apply

- What’s distinctive about biblical wisdom compared to the wisdom of the world?
- What motivates you to want to grow in wisdom? Why?

Pray

Simon Peter answered [Jesus], *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have come to believe and to know that you are the Holy One of God.”*
(John 6:68-69)

Jesus came to show us what God is like. You might like to praise him and pray about your motivation to grow in wisdom.

Friday 29th January

Mockers

Read Proverbs 9v12

- What does it mean to be a mocker?

(Look back to 9v7-8 for help. You can also look at Proverbs 21v24 and 22v10).

- What is the difference between a wise person and a mocker?

Apply

- Where have you seen mockery in action?
- What is the impact of it?
- Why do you think it's talked about in Proverbs?
- Can you think of any examples from other parts of the Bible?

Pray

- If you've ever been mocked for being a Christian, take heart. Jesus was mocked as he went to the cross. He knows what it is like and bore it, so that mockers might be forgiven. Why not talk to him about that?
- Pray for those in your church family who are mocked for following Jesus.

Saturday 30th January

Folly

Read Proverbs 9v13-18

- Look again at 9v1-9 - how do Wisdom and Folly compare?
- Why do you think Solomon ends this section of Proverbs with a description of Folly?

Apply

- Have you ever eaten something in secret? Why? How did it feel? What else might v17 refer to?
- What do these verses reveal of the natural human heart?

Pray

- What temptations are you facing today?
- Pray about them now. Ask the Lord for strength to '*go straight on [your] way*', (v15) and to keep to his path of wisdom out of love and a right fear of him (v10).

Sunday 31st January

Looking back, moving forward

Read Proverbs 5v1

Think back over Proverbs 5-9;

- Which verses in particular stood out to you this month?
- What is it that you want to remember most and not forget?
- What is it that you want to put into practice in your life?

Apply

We've come full circle from the beginning of chapter 5 on the 1st of January.

- How have your answers to these questions (below) changed having read and prayed through Proverbs 5-9:
 - Who will you listen to in the year to come?
 - Which path are you choosing to be on?

Pray

James 1v5 says, *'If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.'* What a wonderful encouragement!

- Pray about your answers to today's questions.
- Ask in faith that your Father in heaven will supply the wisdom you need to live for him today and every day as you seek to live for Jesus.