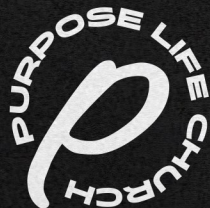




THE
PROVERBIAL
SUMMER

CURRICULUM



THE PROVERBIAL SUMMER

Visible Transformation: Live The Change

A Six-Week Study in the Book of Proverbs

WELCOME TO THE SERIES

The Book of Proverbs is one of the most practical books in all of Scripture. It does not give us theories about wisdom — it gives us wisdom for the daily moments that define who we are becoming. Over the next six weeks, we will journey together through six themes that touch every area of life: how we speak, how we carry ourselves, how we handle our emotions, how we manage conflict, how we respond to correction, and how we invest in the people God has placed around us.

This series is built on a simple conviction: transformation is not accidental. It requires intentional engagement with God's Word, honest community with other believers, and the willingness to put what we learn into practice. That is exactly what The Proverbial Summer is designed to produce — not just knowledge, but visible change.

Six Weeks at a Glance

01 The Power of Words

Discover how the words we speak shape our relationships, our homes, and our spiritual lives — and learn the wisdom of knowing when to hold them.

02 Pride and Humility

Explore how pride quietly closes the doors that humility opens, and why an accurate view of ourselves before God is the foundation of real wisdom.

03 Self-Control and Discipline

Learn why governing yourself is greater than conquering others, and how emotional discipline creates the freedom to live wisely.

04 Anger and Conflict

Examine how unmanaged anger destroys what it took years to build, and what it truly looks like to be a peacemaker in the middle of real conflict.

05 Correction and Teachability

Understand why how you respond to correction reveals more about your character than almost anything else — and why the wise welcome it.

06 Friendship, Accountability, and Healthy Relationships

Reflect on the relationships God has placed in your life and what it means to be the kind of friend who sharpens, encourages, and stays.

JOIN A DISCUSSION GROUP

Proverbs was never meant to be read in isolation. The wisdom in these pages comes alive in conversation — when we ask honest questions together, share what we are learning, and hold one another accountable to what God is saying.

Each week includes discussion questions designed to move you beyond surface-level answers. These questions work best in a small group setting where trust is present and honesty is welcome. If you are not already connected to a discussion group, we encourage you to take that step this week. You were not designed to grow alone — and neither was anyone around you.

DON'T JUST READ IT — LIVE IT

Every week closes with a specific, practical challenge. These are not optional add-ons — they are the bridge between what you hear on Sunday and how you live on Monday. Each challenge is designed to take less than a week to complete and just enough courage to begin. Come to your discussion group ready to share how it went. The conversations that happen around completed challenges are often the most powerful ones of all.

PROVERBS 4:7

"Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do! And whatever else you do, develop good judgment."

Welcome to the journey. We are glad you are here.

WEEK 1

The Power of Words

Before we had social media, microphones, or broadcast television, God already understood the power of a single voice. Long before science confirmed that emotional wounds can outlast physical ones, Proverbs was already teaching a truth that every human being eventually discovers: words matter more than we think.

Think about it — you can probably still hear the voice of someone who spoke life into you at a critical moment. You may also remember, with painful clarity, words that were spoken carelessly that you have never fully forgotten. Words do not simply communicate information. They shape identity, define relationships, build up or tear down, and leave impressions that can last a lifetime.

Proverbs 18:21 puts it plainly: “The tongue can bring death or life.” That is not an exaggeration — it is an observation about human experience. Every conversation we have is an opportunity to either build or damage, to heal or to harm, to bring clarity or create confusion.

This week, we are not just studying what we say. We are looking at how we say it, when we say it, and when wisdom calls us to say nothing at all. Because sometimes, the most powerful thing we can do with our words is choose to hold them.

PROVERBS 12:18 • PROVERBS 18:21

“Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.”

“The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”

TEACHING POINT #1 **Words Have Power**

Words are among the most powerful tools God has given us. Unlike physical wounds, verbal wounds can linger for years. A careless comment can damage a person's confidence, while a word of encouragement can inspire someone to persevere through difficult circumstances.

Our words reveal what is in our hearts and often shape the emotional climate of our homes, friendships, workplaces, and churches.

Every conversation presents an opportunity to either:

- Bring life or bring harm
- Create trust or destroy trust
- Build confidence or create insecurity
- Inspire hope or deepen discouragement

Many people can still remember words spoken to them decades ago — both positive and negative — because words have lasting impact.

TEACHING POINT #2 **Wisdom Includes Knowing When Not to Speak**

PROVERBS 10:19 • PROVERBS 13:3 • PROVERBS 21:23

“Too much talk leads to sin. Be sensible and keep your mouth shut.”

“Those who control their tongue will have a long life; opening your mouth can ruin everything.”

“Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble.”

One of the greatest signs of maturity is not knowing what to say — it is knowing when not to say it. Speaking less and listening more is often a sign of maturity.

Many conflicts are fueled by:

- Impulsive responses
- Emotional reactions
- Speaking without understanding
- The inability to pause before responding

Wisdom teaches restraint. Not every thought should be spoken. Just because something is true does not mean it needs to be said immediately. Just because we have an opinion does not mean we must express it.

Silence can sometimes:

- Prevent conflicts
- Allow emotions to settle
- Create space for understanding
- Demonstrate humility

Self-control over the tongue is connected to self-control over one's life. Wise people filter their words before speaking. A helpful question is: “Will what I'm about to say improve the situation or make it worse?”

TEACHING POINT #3 **Tone Matters**

PROVERBS 15:1

“A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare.”

Communication is not only about content — it is also about delivery.

The same message can be received very differently depending on tone. For example:

- “Can we talk?” can feel inviting or threatening.
- “I need your help” can sound appreciative or demanding.
- “I disagree” can sound respectful or combative.

People often remember how they felt during a conversation more than the actual words spoken.

A gentle tone:

- Lowers defenses
- Invites dialogue
- Promotes understanding
- Protects relationships

Harsh communication often causes people to stop listening and start defending themselves. The goal of communication should not merely be to express ourselves but to be understood and to preserve the relationship. A gentle answer does not avoid the issue — it addresses it in a way that promotes peace and understanding.

TEACHING POINT #4 **Timing Matters**

PROVERBS 25:11

“Timely advice is lovely, like golden apples in a silver basket.”

Wisdom involves not only saying the right thing but saying it at the right time.

Even truthful words can be ineffective if spoken at the wrong moment. Consider:

- Correcting someone while they are angry
- Giving advice when it has not been invited
- Addressing sensitive issues publicly instead of privately

Timing requires discernment. Wise communicators pay attention to:

- Emotional readiness
- Environment

- Circumstances
- Relationship dynamics

A well-timed word can:

- Provide comfort
- Offer direction
- Inspire change
- Strengthen faith

Poor timing can cause people to reject even good advice.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do words often have a longer-lasting impact than actions?
2. Can you recall a time when someone's words significantly changed your outlook or behavior?
3. What situations tempt people to speak impulsively?
4. What is the difference between being honest and saying everything that comes to mind?
5. How can silence sometimes be an act of love?
6. Why is timing often overlooked in communication?
7. What role does listening play in determining the right timing?

REFLECTION

What kind of emotional climate do my words create in my home, my friendships, and my workplace? Do the people closest to me leave conversations feeling built up or worn down?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

For the next seven days, before responding in any tense or emotionally charged conversation, pause and ask yourself: "Will what I'm about to say improve this situation or make it worse?" Keep a simple daily tally of the moments you caught yourself and chose your words more carefully.

WEEK 2

Pride and Humility

There is a reason Proverbs returns to the subject of pride and humility more than almost any other theme. It is because pride is not just a personal character flaw — it is a spiritual condition that quietly undermines everything God is trying to build in us.

Pride is deceptive. It rarely announces itself. It does not show up saying, “I am too proud to learn.” Instead, it whispers, “I already know that.” It does not say, “I am too arrogant to receive correction.” It says, “That person doesn't understand my situation.” Pride disguises itself as confidence, experience, and self-awareness — all while closing the very doors through which growth could enter.

Humility, on the other hand, is one of the most misunderstood virtues in our culture. Many people confuse humility with low self-esteem, passivity, or the inability to stand firm. But biblical humility is something far more powerful than that. It is an accurate view of ourselves in light of who God is — and it is the soil in which wisdom grows best.

This week, Proverbs challenges us to take an honest look inward. Not to condemn ourselves, but to examine the attitudes that either open us up to growth or close us off from it. Because the path to honor, wisdom, and lasting influence almost always runs through a season of genuine humility.

TEACHING POINT #1 **Pride Leads to Problems; Humility Leads to Wisdom**

PROVERBS 11:2 • PROVERBS 16:18 • PROVERBS 18:12

“Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.”

“Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.”

“Haughtiness goes before destruction; humility precedes honor.”

Pride causes people to overestimate themselves and underestimate others. It convinces us that we are right, that we do not need advice, and that our way is best.

One of the dangers of pride is that it often blinds us to our own weaknesses. Proud people frequently struggle to see what others see clearly.

Humility, on the other hand, creates space for growth because humble people recognize they do not know everything and can learn from others.

Pride Sounds Like:

- "I already know that."
- "Nobody can tell me anything."
- "It's not my fault."
- "I don't need help."

Humility Sounds Like:

- "Help me understand."
- "I may be wrong."
- "What can I learn from this?"
- "Thank you for the feedback."

TEACHING POINT #2 **Pride Creates Conflict; Humility Promotes Peace**

PROVERBS 13:10

"Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise."

Many conflicts are not caused by the issue being discussed but by the attitudes involved in the discussion.

Pride often causes people to:

- Insist on being right
- Refuse correction
- Compete for control
- Defend themselves excessively
- Refuse to yield

Humility allows people to listen, compromise, and seek understanding. Many arguments continue not because solutions are unavailable but because neither person wants to surrender their position.

In marriages, friendships, workplaces, and churches, pride often fuels:

- Defensiveness
- Blame-shifting
- Power struggles
- Refusal to apologize
- Keeping score

TEACHING POINT #3 Humility Begins with Reverence for God

PROVERBS 15:33 • PROVERBS 22:4

“Fear of the Lord will teach you wisdom! Humility precedes honor.”

“True humility and fear of the Lord lead to riches, honor, and long life.”

Biblical humility is not thinking poorly of yourself. It is thinking of yourself accurately in light of God.

Humility grows when we recognize:

- God's greatness
- Our dependence on Him
- Our need for His wisdom

People who walk closely with God tend to become more humble because they realize that everything they have ultimately comes from Him. Humility is not weakness — it is strength under God's authority.

Signs of Healthy Humility:

- Gratitude
- Teachability
- Willingness to serve
- Openness to correction
- Dependence on God

TEACHING POINT #4 Honor Follows Humility

PROVERBS 15:33 • PROVERBS 18:12 • PROVERBS 22:4 • PROVERBS 29:23

“Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.”

Our culture often teaches people to promote themselves, seek recognition, and pursue status. Proverbs teaches a different principle: humility often precedes honor.

People who seek recognition often become frustrated when they do not receive it. Those who focus on serving, growing, and helping others often earn respect naturally.

God's pattern is often:

- Humility before honor
- Service before influence
- Character before promotion

TEACHING POINT #5 Teachability Is a Mark of Wisdom

PROVERBS 11:2 • PROVERBS 13:10 • PROVERBS 15:33

"Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom."

"Pride leads to conflict; those who take advice are wise."

One of the clearest signs of wisdom is teachability.

Wise people:

- Ask questions
- Seek counsel
- Welcome feedback
- Continue learning

Pride says: "I have arrived." Wisdom says: "I still have more to learn." The most mature people are often the most teachable.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some subtle ways pride shows up in relationships?
2. How can we distinguish confidence from pride?
3. Why is yielding sometimes a sign of strength rather than weakness?
4. What would change in our relationships if understanding became more important than winning?
5. How does self-promotion differ from letting your work speak for itself?
6. How can we pursue excellence without becoming prideful?
7. Why is humility often misunderstood in today's culture?
8. What is the difference between humility and low self-esteem?

REFLECTION

In the moments where I've experienced conflict recently, was the root issue the problem itself — or my attitude going into it? Where might pride be quietly closing a door that humility could open?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, seek out one person — a spouse, mentor, close friend, or colleague — and genuinely ask them: "Is there an area of my life where you see pride holding me back?" Listen without defending yourself. Sit with what they share.

WEEK 3

Self-Control and Discipline

We live in a culture that celebrates power. We admire people who dominate their competition, command a room, and project strength in every situation. But Proverbs offers a very different definition of what it means to be truly strong.

According to Proverbs 16:32, the person who controls their temper is greater than a military conqueror. The person who masters their impulses has achieved something more significant than winning a battle on an open field. Why? Because conquering others is something that external force can accomplish — but conquering yourself requires something far deeper: wisdom, discipline, and the work of God's Spirit in your life.

Most of us know what it feels like to regret a reaction. To wish we had paused before speaking. To realize, in hindsight, that our emotional response made a situation worse rather than better. Those moments are not just about personality — they reveal the state of our self-governance.

This week, Proverbs invites us to look honestly at how well we manage our emotions, our impulses, our words, and our reactions. Because real freedom does not come from having no limits — it comes from having the internal discipline to make wise choices even when our feelings are pulling us in a different direction.

TEACHING POINT #1 **Self-Control Is Greater Than Raw Strength**

PROVERBS 16:32 • PROVERBS 25:28

"Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city."

"A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls."

Our culture often celebrates people who can conquer others, dominate situations, or impose — but the greater victory is conquering ourselves.

Self-control is one of the clearest indicators of wisdom and spiritual maturity. Anyone can react emotionally. Anyone can lose their temper. Anyone can say the first thing that comes to mind. Wisdom is demonstrated when a person has the ability to control:

- Emotions
- Impulses

- Reactions
- Desires
- Words

Strength is not merely the ability to control circumstances or other people — it is the ability to govern ourselves. True strength is demonstrated through restraint, patience, emotional control, and wise responses. True strength is not demonstrated by controlling others but by controlling yourself.

TEACHING POINT #2 **Wise People Manage Their Emotions**

PROVERBS 14:29 • PROVERBS 29:11

“People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.”

“Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.”

Emotions are not sinful, but unmanaged emotions often produce destructive behavior.

Proverbs teaches that wisdom includes learning how to:

- Slow down
- Think before reacting
- Regulate emotions
- Respond thoughtfully

Foolishness is often revealed through impulsive reactions. When anger, frustration, disappointment, or fear control us, we often say and do things that damage relationships. Wise people recognize their emotions but refuse to allow emotions to become their master.

Signs of Emotional Self-Control:

- Listening before responding
- Remaining calm during disagreement
- Avoiding impulsive decisions
- Thinking before speaking
- Managing frustration appropriately

TEACHING POINT #3 **Patience Prevents Many Problems**

PROVERBS 14:29 • PROVERBS 19:11

“People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.”

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

Patience allows us to respond wisely rather than react impulsively.

Many conflicts escalate because people:

- Assume the worst
- Jump to conclusions
- React immediately
- Refuse to give others grace

Patience creates space for understanding. A patient person recognizes that:

- Not every offense requires a response
- Misunderstandings happen
- People are imperfect

Patience protects relationships from unnecessary damage.

TEACHING POINT #4 **Emotional Discipline Protects Relationships**

PROVERBS 19:11 • PROVERBS 29:11

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

“Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.”

Many relationships are damaged not by major betrayals but by repeated emotional reactions.

A lack of self-control often appears as:

- Outbursts of anger
- Harsh words
- Defensiveness
- Impulsive decisions

- Overreactions

Emotionally disciplined people understand that every feeling does not require immediate expression. Wisdom helps us choose responses that preserve relationships rather than damage them. Mature people learn to pause before speaking and consider the impact of their words and actions.

One of the most powerful demonstrations of wisdom is choosing not to retaliate. Proverbs teaches that it is honorable to overlook an offense. This does not mean ignoring abuse or avoiding necessary conversations. Rather, it means refusing to be easily offended and extending grace when appropriate.

God regularly shows patience, mercy, and restraint toward us. As we grow spiritually, we learn to reflect those same qualities toward others. Mature believers understand that every irritation does not require confrontation and every offense does not require revenge.

TEACHING POINT #5 **Discipline Creates Freedom**

PROVERBS 16:32 • PROVERBS 25:28

“Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.”

“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”

Many people view discipline as restrictive, but discipline actually creates freedom.

Without discipline:

- Emotions control us
- Habits control us
- Impulses control us
- Circumstances control us

With discipline:

- We make better decisions
- We build stronger relationships
- We earn trust
- We experience greater peace

A person without self-control is compared to a city with broken walls — unprotected and vulnerable. Discipline serves as a protective boundary that helps us live wisely.

What Self-Control Sounds Like:

- “Let me think about that.”
- “I need a moment before I respond.”
- “Help me understand what you meant.”
- “I don't want to react emotionally.”

Discussion Questions

1. Why do people often view self-control as weakness rather than strength?
2. What situations test your patience the most?
3. What is the difference between expressing emotions and being controlled by them?
4. Why is patience difficult in today's culture?
5. When is overlooking an offense wise, and when should an issue be addressed?
6. What habits help people respond wisely during stressful situations?
7. What practical strategies help people slow down before reacting?

REFLECTION

When pressure, conflict, disappointment, or frustration comes into my life, what controls my behavior: my emotions, my impulses, or God's wisdom?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Identify one recurring situation where you consistently lose self-control — whether in your words, your temper, or your reactions. This week, write down a specific plan for how you will respond differently the next time that situation arises. Share that plan with one person who can hold you accountable.

WEEK 4

Anger and Conflict

No matter how spiritually mature we become, conflict will find us. It will show up in our marriages, our friendships, our workplaces, and yes, even in our churches. Conflict is not a sign that something has gone terribly wrong — it is simply an inevitable part of living in relationship with imperfect people.

The question Proverbs forces us to face is not whether we will experience conflict, but how we will handle it when it comes. Because how we respond in moments of tension, offense, and disagreement reveals more about our character than almost anything else.

Anger, left unmanaged, has a way of growing far beyond the original offense. What starts as a misunderstanding becomes a grudge. What begins as a small crack becomes a fracture. Proverbs 17:14 compares the start of a quarrel to opening a floodgate — once the water is moving, it is very difficult to stop.

But Proverbs also gives us hope. It teaches us that gentle words can de-escalate what harsh words would have inflamed. It teaches us that some offenses are better overlooked than pursued. It teaches us that wisdom — not just emotion — can guide how we engage in the most difficult moments of our relationships.

This week, we are not just studying anger management. We are studying what it looks like to be a peacemaker — and discovering that peacemaking is one of the most demanding and most honorable callings in a believer's life.

Conflict is a normal part of life, but how we respond to conflict determines whether relationships are strengthened or damaged. These Proverbs teach that wisdom is not found in avoiding every disagreement but in managing anger and conflict in a way that honors God and preserves relationships.

Many conflicts begin with small offenses but grow because of pride, impulsive reactions, harsh words, or unresolved anger. Proverbs repeatedly teaches that wise people learn to control their emotions, choose their words carefully, and pursue peace whenever possible.

TEACHING POINT #1 **Uncontrolled Anger Leads to Foolish Decisions**

PROVERBS 14:17 • PROVERBS 29:22

"Short-tempered people do foolish things, and schemers are hated."

"An angry person starts fights; a hot-tempered person commits all kinds of sin."

Anger itself is a normal human emotion, but unmanaged anger often produces foolish actions and regrettable decisions.

When people become angry, they may:

- Speak without thinking
- Exaggerate situations
- Assume the worst
- Make impulsive decisions
- Damage relationships

Anger narrows our perspective and often causes us to focus on winning the moment rather than preserving the relationship. Wise people recognize their anger but refuse to let it control their behavior.

TEACHING POINT #2 **Gentle Responses Can De-escalate Conflict**

PROVERBS 15:1 • PROVERBS 15:18

"A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make tempers flare."

"A hot-tempered person starts fights; a cool-tempered person stops them."

One of the most powerful tools in conflict resolution is a gentle response.

When emotions are high, harsh words often fuel the fire. Gentle words, however, can calm emotions and create space for understanding.

A gentle response does not mean weakness, passivity, or avoiding truth. It means choosing a respectful and measured approach even when addressing difficult issues. The goal of communication should not be to defeat the other person but to resolve the issue and preserve the relationship.

TEACHING POINT #3 **Some Conflicts Grow Because They Are Not Stopped Early**

PROVERBS 17:14

"Starting a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so stop before a dispute breaks out."

Many conflicts begin as small disagreements but become major problems when left unchecked.

Like a small leak in a dam, unresolved tension can grow into resentment, division, and broken relationships.

Wisdom teaches us to address concerns appropriately before they become larger problems. This may involve:

- Having difficult conversations
- Seeking clarification
- Extending forgiveness
- Addressing misunderstandings promptly

Healthy relationships do not avoid problems; they deal with them before they become destructive.

TEACHING POINT #4 **Not Every Offense Requires a Response**

PROVERBS 19:11 • PROVERBS 20:3

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

“Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.”

One of the greatest signs of wisdom is knowing which battles are worth fighting.

Many conflicts continue because people feel compelled to respond to every criticism, disagreement, or offense.

Proverbs teaches that there is honor in overlooking certain offenses. Wise people understand:

- Not every mistake is intentional
- Not every disagreement is personal
- Not every irritation deserves confrontation

Choosing peace over unnecessary conflict demonstrates maturity and self-control.

Overlooking a Wrong Is NOT:

- Accepting abuse
- Ignoring serious sin
- Allowing harmful behavior to continue
- Suppressing emotions

It IS:

- Choosing not to magnify every offense
- Extending grace where appropriate
- Refusing to be easily provoked
- Prioritizing the relationship over being right

TEACHING POINT #5 **The Company We Keep Influences Our Behavior**

PROVERBS 22:24-25

“Don't befriend angry people or associate with hot-tempered people, or you will learn to be like them and endanger your soul.”

Relationships shape attitudes, habits, and emotional responses. Proverbs teaches that anger is not only an emotion; it can become a learned pattern of behavior.

Spending significant time around angry, negative, or argumentative people can influence our own behavior. When people regularly observe:

- Explosive reactions
- Constant complaining
- Chronic criticism
- Hostility
- Conflict

...they can begin to see these behaviors as normal. Over time, anger becomes contagious. One of the greatest dangers of unhealthy influences is that repeated exposure can make unhealthy behavior seem normal.

Proverbs is not teaching isolation. It is teaching discernment. Jesus ministered to many people, but He allowed only a few into His closest circle. Wise people evaluate character, values, habits, and influence before allowing someone to become a close companion.

TEACHING POINT #6 **Peacemaking Is a Mark of Wisdom**

PROVERBS 15:18 • PROVERBS 19:11 • PROVERBS 20:3

“A hot-tempered person starts fights; a cool-tempered person stops them.”

“Sensible people control their temper; they earn respect by overlooking wrongs.”

“Avoiding a fight is a mark of honor; only fools insist on quarreling.”

Sometimes the strongest person in the room is the one who chooses peace.

Wise people understand that not every disagreement needs to become a debate, not every criticism requires a defense, and not every conflict deserves engagement.

Peacemakers:

- Listen carefully
- Seek understanding
- Control their emotions
- Choose their battles wisely
- Look for solutions rather than victories

Peacemaking requires humility because it often involves surrendering the desire to be right in order to preserve the relationship. Peace is rarely achieved accidentally; it requires intentional effort.

Our responses during difficult moments reveal our character. People may forget the details of an argument, but they often remember how someone behaved during it.

Discussion Questions

1. How does tone influence the outcome of a conflict?
2. What is the difference between gentleness and weakness?
3. How can we communicate difficult truths without escalating conflict?
4. Why do people often avoid addressing problems early? What prevents people from having difficult conversations?
5. What are some common triggers that cause conflicts to escalate?
6. What practical steps can help resolve issues before they escalate?
7. What is the difference between overlooking an offense and avoiding a problem?
8. What is the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking?

REFLECTION

How do I respond when offended? How do I handle disagreements? Am I known for escalating conflict or bringing peace? Do my words calm situations or inflame them?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Think of one unresolved conflict or lingering tension in a current relationship. This week, take the first step toward resolving it — initiate the conversation, extend forgiveness, or make the apology. Don't wait for the other person to move first.

WEEK 5

Correction and Teachability

We have spent four weeks walking through some of the most important themes in Proverbs — words, humility, self-control, and conflict. And if there is one thread that runs through every single one of those topics, it is this: wisdom is not a destination. It is a direction.

No one graduates from needing correction. No one reaches a point where growth is optional. The moment we believe we have arrived is often the moment we begin to decline. Proverbs 1:5 reminds us that even the wise keep learning — that the mark of true wisdom is not having all the answers, but remaining open to receiving more of them.

In a world that rewards confidence and penalizes uncertainty, teachability can feel like a liability. We are often pressured to project expertise, defend our positions, and never appear to not know something. But Proverbs consistently teaches that the wisest people in any room are not the ones doing all the talking — they are the ones still listening, still asking questions, and still willing to be challenged.

This week, we examine how we respond to correction. Because ultimately, our response to correction is one of the clearest indicators of whether we are truly growing in wisdom — or simply growing older.

PROVERBS 1:5 • PROVERBS 19:20

“Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance.”

“Get all the advice and instruction you can, so you will be wise the rest of your life.”

TEACHING POINT #1 **Wise People Love Correction; Foolish People Reject It**

PROVERBS 15:31-32 • PROVERBS 9:8-9 • PROVERBS 12:1

"If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise. If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself; but if you listen to correction, you grow in understanding."

"Don't bother correcting mockers; they will only hate you. But correct the wise, and they will love you."

"To learn, you must love discipline; it is stupid to hate correction."

One of the clearest distinctions between wisdom and foolishness is how a person responds to correction.

Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has blind spots. Everyone has areas that need growth. The question is not whether we need correction. The question is: How do we respond when correction comes?

There are two responses to correction: the wise receive it and grow, the foolish reject it and stagnate. Correction is not meant to shame — it is meant to sharpen.

Wise people understand:

- Feedback is a gift
- Correction prevents failure
- Discipline protects future outcomes

The ability to receive correction determines the speed of personal growth. Wise people do not reject correction based on emotion but evaluate it based on truth.

TEACHING POINT #2 **Your Response to Correction Reveals Your Character**

The Mocker: resists correction, becomes defensive, takes feedback personally, blames others, resents those who challenge them.

- "Who do they think they are?"
- "They're just criticizing me."
- "I don't need anyone telling me what to do."

The Wise Person: welcomes correction, appreciates honesty, learns from feedback, grows through instruction, values truth over ego.

- "Is there truth in what they're saying?"
- "What can I learn from this?"
- "How can this help me improve?"

The difference is not intelligence; it is attitude. Wise people understand that correction is an investment in their growth.

TEACHING POINT #3 **Correction Is Essential for Growth**

PROVERBS 12:1

"To learn, you must love discipline."

Growth and correction are inseparable. Athletes improve through coaching. Students improve through instruction. Leaders improve through feedback. Believers grow through correction and conviction.

If we only want encouragement and never correction, our growth will be limited. You cannot become better while rejecting the very process that produces improvement.

Consider how correction works in everyday life:

- A driver uses a GPS correction when off course
- A teacher corrects mistakes to improve learning
- A coach identifies weaknesses to strengthen performance

Correction is not punishment; it is redirection.

TEACHING POINT #4 **Constructive Criticism Is a Gift**

PROVERBS 15:31

"If you listen to constructive criticism, you will be at home among the wise."

Constructive criticism helps us see what we cannot see ourselves. Everyone has blind spots.

A blind spot is an area where:

- We are unaware of a weakness
- We do not see the impact of our behavior
- We overestimate our strengths
- We fail to recognize needed change

Constructive criticism provides insight that can prevent future problems. Not all criticism is pleasant, but valuable criticism is often one of life's greatest gifts.

TEACHING POINT #5 **Rejecting Correction Harms Us More Than Anyone Else**

PROVERBS 15:32

"If you reject discipline, you only harm yourself."

Many people think rejecting correction hurts the person giving it — it primarily hurts the person receiving it.

When we reject correction:

- Problems remain unresolved
- Bad habits continue
- Character weaknesses deepen
- Opportunities for growth are lost

Correction may be uncomfortable, but refusing correction is often far more costly. Growth is optional. Stagnation is the consequence of refusing growth.

TEACHING POINT #6 **Teachability Is a Mark of Spiritual Maturity**

One of the strongest indicators of spiritual maturity is teachability.

Mature people recognize:

- They have not arrived
- They still need guidance
- God often speaks through others
- Growth is a lifelong process

Immature people often resist accountability, defend every action, explain away mistakes, and struggle to admit wrong.

Spiritual maturity is not measured by how much we know but by how willing we are to grow.

A teachable person:

- Listens without interrupting
- Asks questions
- Reflects before responding
- Admits mistakes and makes adjustments when necessary

Wise people do not fear correction — they value it because they understand that correction leads to growth, understanding, wisdom, and maturity. The foolish person protects their pride. The wise person pursues growth.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the difference between criticism and constructive feedback?
2. Why do people confuse discipline with rejection?
3. What does it look like to be “easy to correct”?
4. Why is feedback often difficult to hear?
5. How can we separate emotion from truth when receiving correction?

REFLECTION

When correction comes my way — from a friend, a spouse, a leader, or God's Word — what is my first reaction? Do I lean in or push back? And what does that reaction reveal about where I truly am in my growth?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

Identify one area of your life where you know you need to grow but have been resistant to input. This week, seek out one resource — a book, a mentor, a podcast, or a trusted voice — and take one concrete step toward growth in that area.

WEEK 6

Friendship, Accountability, and Healthy Relationships

One of God's greatest gifts to humanity is the gift of relationships. From the very beginning of creation, God declared that it is not good for man to be alone — and He has never changed His mind. We were wired for community, built for connection, and designed to grow in the context of relationship with others.

But here is what many of us have learned the hard way: not every relationship moves us forward. Some relationships sharpen us. Others soften our convictions. Some friendships call out the best in us, while others gradually pull us away from who God has called us to be. The people we allow into our inner circle have more influence over our lives than we often realize.

The Book of Proverbs speaks directly to this reality. It does not just tell us to be friendly — it challenges us to be wise about friendship. It teaches us how to choose relationships that build us up, how to be the kind of friend that adds value to others, and how to navigate the inevitable tensions that come with deep, honest community.

In a culture that often values popularity over character and convenience over commitment, Proverbs challenges us to pursue friendships marked by loyalty, honesty, forgiveness, wisdom, accountability, and mutual growth.

As we study these passages together, we should not only ask: “What kind of friends do I have?” But also: “What kind of friend am I becoming?”

TEACHING POINT #1 Friendships Shape Our Character

PROVERBS 13:20

“Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.”

The people we spend time with influence our:

- Attitudes
- Thinking
- Priorities
- Speech

- Habits
- Decisions
- Values
- Spiritual growth

We become like the people we spend time with. Over time, we begin to adopt the values and behaviors of those around us. Friendships are not neutral — they either pull us toward wisdom or away from it.

Influence often happens gradually. Most people don't wake up one day and suddenly change. Character is often shaped through repeated exposure to people and ideas over time. The influence may be subtle:

- Adopting negative attitudes
- Lowering moral standards
- Developing unhealthy habits
- Becoming more cynical or critical

Godly friendships can inspire faithfulness, wisdom, integrity, and spiritual growth. Evaluate your inner circle and ask: “Who am I becoming because of the people closest to me?”

TEACHING POINT #2 **Healthy Friends Tell the Truth**

PROVERBS 27:5-6

“An open rebuke is better than hidden love! Wounds from a sincere friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.”

Healthy friendships are built on honesty, not flattery.

A true friend speaks truth with love, addresses concerns respectfully, and desires your growth more than your approval.

Many people avoid difficult conversations because they fear conflict. True friends care enough to say:

- “I'm concerned about you.”
- “I think you're making a mistake.”
- “Have you considered another perspective?”

Healthy friends are willing to risk temporary discomfort for long-term growth. Honest friends protect us from ourselves. Sometimes our greatest danger is not what others see, but what we fail to see.

God often uses friends to:

- Reveal blind spots
- Challenge unhealthy thinking
- Confront destructive behavior
- Redirect us toward wisdom

TEACHING POINT #3 **Loyalty Matters**

PROVERBS 17:17

“A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need.”

True friendship is revealed during difficult times — failure, loss, disappointment, illness, financial hardship, or personal struggles.

Loyal friends:

- Remain present
- Offer support
- Pray
- Check on us
- Encourage
- Stand with us through challenges

Loyalty does not mean enabling. Sometimes loyalty means confronting harmful choices, encouraging accountability, and helping someone make necessary changes.

TEACHING POINT #4 **Accountability Helps Us Grow**

PROVERBS 27:17

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.”

Accountability is not about control — it is about growth.

God often uses relationships to challenge us, strengthen us, expose blind spots, and encourage maturity.

When iron sharpens iron, sparks are produced. Growth often comes through:

- Honest conversations
- Challenging questions
- Different perspectives
- Constructive feedback

Growth is often uncomfortable before it becomes beneficial. Accountability creates better outcomes. People are more likely to reach goals, maintain commitments, overcome weaknesses, and make wise decisions when they are accountable to others.

TEACHING POINT #5 **Forgiveness Preserves Relationship**

PROVERBS 17:9

“Love prospers when a fault is forgiven, but dwelling on it separates close friends.”

No friendship survives without forgiveness because every friendship will experience offenses.

Misunderstandings, disappointments, and mistakes are inevitable. The question is not: “Will I ever be hurt?” The question is: “How will I respond when I am hurt?”

Unforgiveness creates distance. When offenses are continually revisited:

- Trust erodes
- Resentment grows
- Communication suffers
- Relationships weaken

Forgiveness creates room for healing. Forgiveness means releasing the desire for revenge, choosing not to hold the offense over someone, and creating the possibility of restoration. Healthy relationships require grace, patience, understanding, and the willingness to let go of offenses.

TEACHING POINT #6 **Friendship Requires Intentional Investment**

PROVERBS 27:9

“The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.”

Strong friendships do not happen accidentally.

Healthy relationships require:

- Time
- Trust
- Consistency
- Vulnerability
- Communication
- Encouragement
- Mutual investment

Relationships grow when they are nurtured. Healthy friends intentionally express appreciation, offer encouragement, celebrate successes, show gratitude, and speak life-giving words.

Friendship requires presence. One of the greatest gifts we can offer another person is our attention. Being present means:

- Listening carefully
- Showing genuine interest
- Making time for the relationship
- Being available during important moments

Discussion Questions

1. What warning signs might indicate a friendship is becoming unhealthy?
2. What is the difference between criticism and loving correction?
3. How can we speak truth without damaging the relationship?
4. What is the difference between loyalty and enabling unhealthy behavior?
5. How does accountability differ from judgment?

REFLECTION

When people experience friendship with me, do they leave encouraged, sharpened, challenged, and supported — or drained, discouraged, and unchanged? What kind of friend am I becoming?

THIS WEEK'S CHALLENGE

This week, identify one friendship in your life that has been drifting. Reach out to that person — not by text, but by a phone call or in-person conversation — and make a specific plan to reconnect. Come back next week ready to share what that conversation was like.