



Wise UP! Intro	2-3
Wise UP! Plan	4
Month One: Read Proverbs	4-5
Month Two: Study Proverbs	6-7
Peer Mentor Covenant/Guide	8-9
Peer Mentor Meetings 1&2	10-13
Family Discipleship	14
Life Group Connection	15
3 Tools for Bible Meditation	16-17



# WISE UP



## PROVERBS

Welcome to Wise UP! I believe God's glory is going to be on display in your life as you receive the insight he's entrusted to us in the Biblical book of Proverbs –**the ABC's of wisdom!** Proverbs is a *spirituality of the ordinary*, unpacking how everyday life in the cosmos relates to the God who made it all.

Why does becoming wise matter? Today we have available more information than any humans before us. But how many people possess wisdom? Not all that masquerades as wisdom is wisdom. Our first parents abandoned the Lord by following what they believed was wisdom (Genesis 3:3-6). God promised Israel that by adhering to his laws they would be enviably wise (Deut. 4:6), yet they rarely laid hold of this promise. The prophet Hosea despaired over Israel – rich in literature, culture, and history, yet **“my people are destroyed for lack of knowledge”** – knowledge of the Lord (Hosea 4:6).

Who has wisdom? Through creation and common grace, many nonbelievers possess wisdom – but an incomplete form. Many professing believers also lack Biblical wisdom, disregarding **God's instructions for matters including sexuality, money, parenting, and time.** But others have true wisdom and show a real knack for living incredibly thoughtful, generous, and godly lives.

What is Biblical – **“true”** – wisdom? It is an orientation of life called, **“the fear of the Lord.”** This term is used to open and close the introduction to Proverbs (1:7 and 9:10) and to close the entire book (31:30), making it the dominant theme of the book, amidst all the everyday matters between its pages. Why? To show that if we are to live wisely, the sum of our days are to be lived through the lens of **“the fear of the Lord.”**

What is the fear of the Lord? The two Hebrew words commonly used for “fear” in this phrase indicate a range of meaning from respect to terror. It is related to our word “awe”, suggesting a life of worship and dependency. When you fear God, you know your rightful place in the universe. You have **tasted God’s grace in Christ and fear the infinite loss here and in eternity** that would come if you cast off his kindness to live in rebellion against him. This perspective also motivates you to learn to live the way God intends.

The Wise UP! plan provides you some simple but potentially life-shaping goals for benefiting from the wisdom foundation and principles of the book of Proverbs. We will unpack that plan after first looking at Proverbs in its context.

Proverbs: author, contents & Biblical context. The book of Proverbs is a book in the wisdom genre written and compiled by King Solomon (c. 1000 BC) and several other authors under **the Holy Spirit’s inspiration. An introduction lays the foundation for wise living, contrasting wisdom and folly (ch. 1-9).** The following 22 chapters unpack that practically, usually in brief two-line sayings. Proverbs assumes the salvation history of Israel (Genesis-Kings) and anticipates the fulfillment of wisdom in Christ (cf Luke 2:52, John 1:1-18, 1 Cor. 1:18-31). Jesus lived with perfect wisdom and in fact is the wisdom of God. The wisdom imparted in Proverbs is embodied in the Spirit-anointing Isaiah prophesied for Jesus (Prov 1:1-7, 8:12-15 and Isaiah 11:1-5). In the gospel, the fear of the Lord includes trusting in Christ as Savior and, by faith in him, learning more and more to live under the blessing of his rightful reign over the whole of our lives.



# WISE UP



# PROVERBS

Month One: Read Proverbs

The Wise UP! Plan consists of two parts. In Month one, read the book through. In Month two, study a topic that you believe God, by his grace, wants to develop in your life (pp 6-7).

Each day in month one, read a chapter of Proverbs - thirty-one chapters. Look for what God is saying to you in it, and use the basic tools of Bible meditation (examples on p. 16-17, 3 Tools for Bible Mediation) to listen well to how the Lord is calling and empowering you to live in the reality of his wisdom.

Try using the following chart as a tool, or create your own way to internalize the wisdom God is giving you in this great book.

If you miss a chapter, just skip to the next one, unless you have time, rather than rushing through extra reading and getting less from it overall.

Hint: as you read, ask God to impress on you a theme in Proverbs that **you could take time to study further. That's what month two is all about** (read ahead if you want).

Chapter	Favorite Verse	My faith response
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		

Chapter	Favorite Verse	My faith response
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
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30		
31		



# WISE UP



# PROVERBS

## Month Two: Study Proverbs

In month two, set aside time for extended Bible study. For this task, I suggest at least four uninterrupted blocks of time, minimum 30 minutes each. For some this will be a lot of fun, for others, just hard work at first. Either way, apply yourself and it will be a real gift from the Lord. You might take one day to sort out your tools and do your planning, another day to do the basic study, another day to synthesise what you learned, and another day to prayerfully develop your response.

Why study Proverbs? Proverbs speaks to many themes, and a given theme is usually scattered throughout the book. There is incredible benefit in hunting down, sifting through and pondering all that Proverbs says about a particular theme. (Secret: you can do this with any Biblical book, genre, and with the **whole Bible as well. Some people call it “doing theology”.**)

Goal: identify all that Proverbs says about a particular theme, systematise it in a way that is useful to you, and prayerfully develop plans to apply what you learn, in dependence on Christ and led by the Holy Spirit.

How to study. Here is a simple way you can study themes in the book of Proverbs. Please tweak, improve, whatever, this plan to best serve you, and above all, PRAY and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you and make his wisdom live in you.

### Tools:

a digital or online Bible (i.e. E-Sword (free!), Logos Bible Software, Word-search, crosswalk.com or bible.org), or a concordance (old school! - a book with many or every word in the Bible listed alphabetically with references)

optional: Bible cross references (middle column linked to specific verses – found in some Bibles)

### Planning:

Ask God to help you pick your theme. He might just tell you. Or you may see something in your life you could really use wisdom on.

Identify the word(s) associated with it. For example, if your theme is work, you could look for words like work, diligent, labour, lazy, and sluggish. For your information, the Wise UP! Preaching series we plan to cover themes of the fear of the Lord, sexual purity, hard work, parenting, relationships, money, and speech. You may enjoy picking one of those themes and synthesizing your personal learning with the Sunday message. Then again, you may find another study theme is better now.

### Basic Study:

Method one: Look up those previously chosen words using your concordance or digital/online Bible. If you find cross references, you can check those out too.

Method two: read through the whole book of Proverbs, looking for your theme. Depending on reading speed, this takes **about an hour. You'll come across a lot more verses probably,** since your search is not limited only to the words you thought of.

Copy and paste, type, or write out the verses.

### Synthesise:

Organize the verses according to sub-themes as relevant. The **reason for this is to help you break down what you've gathered** in to more manageable sections.

Craft a simple heading for each. Write a summary of what the Scriptures are saying in each sub-theme.

### Response

**Read through what you've created. What jumps out at you? What is God wanting to bring about in your life? How does Christ's life, death, and resurrection empower you to step into that?** Prayerfully make a plan. Put it in your calendar and tell someone else, like your family or a good friend, and your peer mentor, - whoever can help you follow through.

Your peer mentor can become an incredible ally in your fight to grow deeper as a wholehearted disciple. This commitment lays the foundation for a healthy, intentional, gospel-centred friendship.

**By God's grace, I commit wholeheartedly to:**

- Battle the impulse towards both sin and religious performance, and instead have faith in the transforming power of the gospel in each of our daily lives (Galatians 3:1-5; 5:16-25)
- Create a focused, safe, and open environment, balancing grace and loving accountability (Ephesians 4:15-32)
- Welcome and invite loving feedback for my own growth (Proverbs 27:1-17)
- Enthusiastically practice the *Deep & Wide* habits and attentively listen to the Sunday teaching (Matthew 22:37-40)
- In case of a struggle with either the *Deep & Wide* material or my peer mentor relationship, stay on the journey until I have dialogued with my peer mentor, and if needed, with a church leader to seek support and resolution (Matthew 5:33-37; 18:15-20)
- **Pray for my peer mentor's growth (2 Timothy 1:3)**
- Speak with honour and encouragement towards my peer mentor both in and outside of their presence (Ephesians 4:29)
- Meet for at least six one-hour sessions during the April-June 2014 *Deep & Wide* journey (Hebrews 10:24-25)
- Protect confidentiality both during and after *Deep & Wide* (Proverbs 16:28; 17:29)

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_



*What is a peer mentor?*

A mentor is “an experienced and trusted advisor”; a peer is an “equal”.<sup>2</sup> A peer mentor is a reliable friend you commit to as an equal, to mentor one another.

*What is the goal of this friendship?*

While your friendship may fulfill other purposes, such as companionship and fun, peer mentors have a specific goal: to help one another trust and follow Jesus fully. So your peer mentor relationship is rooted in your *Peer Mentor Commitment* (p. 6), and your sessions together have a discipleship focus. Each month, the *Peer Mentor Meeting* tool (p. 8-9) gives you questions to get you started in meaningful conversations and help you grow in that month’s habit.

*Meeting tips*

- Set up a regular day to meet, and reschedule any missed meetings
- Book at least an hour for each session (two hours is best the first time)
- Eliminate distractions: choose a setting that helps you each to focus uninterrupted; silence phones, etc.
- **Begin with the current week’s *Peer Mentor Connection* tool (p. 8-9), and be open to the direction the Holy Spirit may take your conversation; share relevant Scriptures**
- Always pray for one another, especially regarding areas of brokenness that come up during your conversation
- *It can be hard to share your inner world with another person. With regard to yourself, cut to the chase as well as you can. This is a unique chance to let the Lord minister to you through a brother or sister, and your openness is key. With regard to your peer mentor, be gracious and patient. They will only share as they feel safe and are ready. Listen much; preach little. With regard to both you and your peer mentor, take a Biblical attitude towards sin, grace, and growth. Concerning sin, neither rub it in nor brush it aside. Concerning grace, point to Jesus as the gracious promise and source of both our forgiveness and our holiness. Concerning growth, use questions like, “What next step could Jesus be leading you to take in this area?” “How is Jesus better than this temptation?” “How can I encourage your commitment to grow?” “May I offer a suggestion?”*

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Soanes and Angus Stevenson, *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).



# WISE UP



# PROVERBS

Peer Mentor Meeting One (in first month)

Make sure to set aside at least one hour for your meeting. Expect and seek to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-10, 13-14).

Pray together **for the Holy Spirit's leading in your conversation.** Use the questions below which are most helpful to you.

Make sure you have both reviewed Peer Mentor Guide, signed the Peer Mentor Covenant (p 8-9) and reviewed the notes below.

If you have not peer mentored together before, get to know each other better by telling one another key parts of your story:

- Family of origin – what did it contribute to you positively / negatively?
- Significant joys and hurts
- 1-2 main strengths / weaknesses
- Your journey of trusting and following Jesus up to this point (or exploring faith, if that describes you)

If you have been peer mentoring one another, share any significant events in your life since your last meeting—celebrations or challenges.

If you have not read it, read the introductory material in this booklet (pp 2-4).

Read Proverbs 1:1-7. **How do you understand “the fear of the Lord”, and what does it look like or not look like in your life? Have there been times when you had a massive sense of “the fear of the Lord”? What can you do to cultivate that outlook? How do you see the concept of “the fear of the Lord” relating to concept of the love and grace of God in the gospel?**

If one or both of you is in a family, discuss if and how you plan to adapt the Wise UP! material for your family discipleship. (Husband and wives are called to disciple one another, and parents, not church, are the primary disciplemakers of their children. It is advantageous to learn the same things together. However, if you feel this material may not be what your family needs for discipleship right now – be free - the Lord will lead you!)

Discuss how the Lord has spoken to you through your reading of Proverbs and how, through his Spirit, you are responding in faith **and obedience and growing in wisdom**. (If you've been writing in the chart in this booklet, you could refer to that).

What is one area of your life where you believe the Lord is calling you to grow in wisdom?

**Review the “Month Two: Study Proverbs” section (pp 6-7).** Make sure you both understand this task, and ask for help from another mentor or pastor if you need it. Discuss: What theme in Proverbs do you plan to study during Month Two? Have you ever done detailed Bible study before? How do you feel about this – how can I support you in it? When will you do this? How do you hope to grow?

Pray for one another, your families, your church family, and those God has sent you to on mission.

Consider this: challenge one another to memorize a passage in Proverbs over the summer. Recite it to each other at the end of summer. Suggested passages: Proverbs 1:7, 2: 1-22, 3:1-12; 13-18; 21-26.

Plan to follow up with each other by phone / text or getting together just for fun between now and your next Wise Up peer mentor meeting.

Commit to praying for each other for this two month journey.



# WISE UP



## PROVERBS

Peer Mentor Meeting Two (in second month)

Make sure to set aside at least one hour for your meeting.

Expect and seek to follow the direction of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-10, 13-14).

Pray together **for the Holy Spirit's leading in your conversation.**

Use the questions below which are most helpful to you.

Share any significant events in your life since your last meeting—celebrations or challenges.

Practice lectio divina (3-4 slow, contemplative readings. See pp 16-17) using Proverbs 3:1-8. What is the Lord saying to you in it?

If one or both of you is using this material with your family, discuss **how it's looking to adapt the Wise UP! material for your family discipleship**, or if you have another family discipleship plan at work, **how are you sharing with your family what you're learning through Wise UP!**

## **Review “Month Two: Study Proverbs” (pp. 8-9 \*\*\*)**

Discuss your progress so far in studying Proverbs: what have you learned? Is it easy or hard to practice the discipline of study? How is God shaping you and developing wisdom in you? What specifically is he asking you to put into practice, with his strength? Are there any barriers, lies, or fears that may block you? How is Christ and the promise of the gospel greater?

Make plans to meet again and share a written copy of your study notes and responses with one another.

How does the wisdom you are gaining from Proverbs equip you for a life of mission? (This may be a hard question – give it time. Your growth cannot be just about you – we are saved and sanctified to serve!)

Pray for one another, your families, your church family, and those God has sent you to on mission.



## Family Discipleship

Remember, husband and wives are called to disciple one another, and parents, not church, are the primary disciple-makers of their children. It is advantageous to learn the same things together. However, if you feel this material may not be what your family needs for discipleship right now – be free - the Lord will lead you! But if you need to begin or update your focus in family discipleship – why not start with this.

Here are some ideas for families.

- Read Proverbs daily with your family (See Month One: Read Proverbs, pp. 4-5). Use the provided chart to let each family member name a favorite verse. Discuss how those Scriptures apply to each of you. Try to connect that application to Christ, who is our wisdom from God, and on whom we depend for the power to change.
- **Memorize a section of Proverbs together. You'd be surprised** what you can do with a verse every couple days. Kids memories are amazing and adults minds are not as shabby as we often think. Suggested passages: Proverbs 1:7, 2: 1-22, 3:1-12; 13-18; 21-26.
- **Crafty people:** get some Proverbs coloring pages for your little artists (just Google it and print). Or do an art project and each one draw their depiction of an image-rich verse or section.
- **As parents,** prayerfully choose a few character traits you feel could use some development in your family. Do a study with your kids on those, using the Month Two: Study Proverbs material (pp. 6-7). **If they're too young, do the study yourself, and use what you develop as a basis for teaching your kids.**

For older kids, encourage them to pray and choose their own themes in Proverbs to study during Month Two. Provide the needed support.

## Life Group Connection

If you are part of a life group—a group of Christians who meet to study, share life and serve together, consider using this tool to strengthen that community.

Here are a few ideas for life groups:

**Have a barbeque with your life group... share what you're learning and applying from Proverbs!**

Get together at the end of the Wise Up journey and let each member read out or summarize the wisdom they gained through their Month Two: Study Proverbs experience (pp 6-7).

Challenge one another to memorize a passage in Proverbs. Recite it to each other at the end of the Wise Up journey. Suggested passages: Proverbs 1:7, 2: 1-22, 3:1-12; 13-18; 21-26.



## Three Tools for Bible Meditation

**Lectio Divina.** This ancient practice (Latin for “Divine reading”) is simple and contemplative. Read a short passage (6-8 key verses from your chapter) of Scripture, preferably aloud, at an unhurried pace, listening for the voice of the Spirit of God to you in the words. Pause. Read it again, seeking to understand the specific part of your life he is addressing. Pause. Read it again, then respond in prayer voicing your commitment to what he is saying to you. Pause, then read it once more and pray, expressing your **trust in the Lord’s help to live in the light of this word.**

**Word Emphasis.** Use this when dwelling on a single verse or sentence of Scripture. Emphasize different words to soak up the nuances in the text. For example, in Matthew 6:33 (ESV), see how emphasizing a different word high-lights a different part of the **command or promise, and helps you hear God’s message to you.**

But *SEEK* first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

But seek *FIRST* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and *ALL* these things will be added to you.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things *WILL* be added to you.



S.O.A.P. An acronym outlining four helpful steps in meditation: Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer. This works well with a journal.

**Scripture.** Read the selected passage of Scripture.

**Observe.** Jot down insights on the text. Using journalistic questions (who, where, what, why, when, and how) yields much insight.

**Apply.** Jesus, through the word, calls us to respond and empowers us to make that response. Write a specific way you will respond to his call in faith and obedience.

**Prayer.** Pray in response to God's word to you.

Make it Happen and Let it Count

This month, at least five times a week, practice Bible meditation and response. **Decide now when you will do it, so you don't fail** through lack of planning. Plan at least 5 uninterrupted minutes; most people would benefit from 15-30 minutes.

**After taking time to meditate, don't leave it there! Try to** remember your key thought throughout the day or the next few days (Ps 1:2-3). Share it with a spouse, child, parent, or friend (Col 3:16). This gives them encouragement, drives the word deeper in your heart, and creates accountability for you where relevant.

**As well, don't deceive yourself by understanding the word without** doing what it says (James 1:22). What is the response the Word is calling for? Respond with trust and action. Make a specific plan, put it in your calendar if that helps, and do not put it off.



# WISE UP



PROVERBS

*Wise Up* is a two month discipleship journey developed at Bay Community Church. It is the fruit of what many at Bay have been learning about disciple-making and mission.

During the two months you will:

*Read Proverbs,*

*Study Proverbs,*

*and Build a Friendship.*

*Wise Up* is designed for you to experience along with with one or two friends called *peer mentors*. You can also adapt *Wise Up* to use with your family or life group.

Heart issues may surface as God works in your life through *Wise Up*—that is normal and ultimately good. Reach out to your pastors, elders and life group leaders and let them know how they can serve you.

As you take the journey, please send testimonies, comments and questions to [david@baychurch.net](mailto:david@baychurch.net).

Pray for yourself and those doing this journey with you that together you will *grow in wisdom, community, and mission*.