# $\begin{array}{c} \textit{the} \\ \textbf{DAILY} \\ \textbf{GOD}^{\text{\tiny{\texttt{M}}}} \textbf{BOOK} \end{array}$

words of wisdom



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The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom

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Designed by Mark Anthony Lane II

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#### INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom.

The book of Proverbs is one of the more difficult books in the Bible to read. It includes no stories and few explanations. It lacks flow. In fact, the proverbs weren't collected for reading, but for savoring.

In the book of Proverbs, God provides us with a training ground for biblical meditation. Most verses in Proverbs can stand alone. They are bite-sized portions of deep wisdom. Individual proverbs allow us to wrap our minds around a single profound idea and explore it through meditation. That is crucial. If we don't move beyond reading, Proverbs will never accomplish the mind-shaping and life-changing effect God intended it to have on us.

So, what is biblical meditation?

Years ago, Billy Graham and others promoted a wonderful idea for developing systematic Bible reading. As part of a larger plan of study, Mr. Graham pointed to the happy coincidence between the thirty-one chapters of Proverbs and the number of days in a month. He revealed a personal practice of reading each day the chapter of Proverbs that corresponded to that particular day of the month. Thousands have discovered the wisdom of that approach. It creates a familiarity with the book of Proverbs that leads to meditation and application.

Biblical meditation begins when the Scriptures have taken residence in our minds. We can meditate on what we have just read, but we can meditate more productively if we have read a passage enough times that we have memorized it. If you have meditated just once on a passage of God's Word, you have only begun to delve into the depths you will eventually discover if you persist. Meditation improves with repeated exposure!

The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom allows you to practice this discipline. It assumes that you will read the chapter of Proverbs for the day. Then, each day, a single proverb will be lifted for closer examination.

As a way of broadening the scope of your thinking and as an

occasional change of pace, we have included some proverbs spoken by Jesus and others—recorded in other parts of Scripture—that deserve our special attention.

The principle of *repetition* in meditation will be illustrated by one reading per month that will focus on Mark 12:29-31: "Jesus replied, 'The most important commandment is this: "Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength." The second is equally important: "Love your neighbor as yourself." No other commandment is greater than these." Twelve visits throughout the year to these same verses will not exhaust the wealth of spiritual riches in what could be called "The Greatest Proverb."

If *The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom* has the desired effect, you will have an increased sense of confidence as you meditate on God's Word. And if God's Word has its desired effect on you, as a result your life will be transformed. May you discover the truth of Psalm 1:2 and become a person whose life demonstrates the components of joyful living: "They delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night."

# How to get the most out of *The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom*:

If you skipped the Introduction, go back and read it!

Keep this book with your Bible, so you can read the chapter of Proverbs for the day. You should know that the quoted proverbs in *The Daily God Book Words of Wisdom* come from the New Living Translation of the Bible.

Keep a notebook with this book so you can record insights that come as you meditate on individual proverbs throughout the year.

Note in your Bible individual proverbs that have struck you on particular days. Some have found it helpful to put the date in the margin next to the proverb and two or three words to jog their memories about the personal significance of that proverb.

Don't beat yourself up if you miss a day of reading occasionally. Don't try to catch up; just pick up at the current day's reading. Persistence will develop into a habit.

#### Wisdom in Action

Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. PROVERBS 1:3

How would a wiser version of you look and act differently? The book of Proverbs promises to provide wisdom. The first six verses list at least fifteen aspects of wise living that can be gained through a continuous exposure to the book. Today's highlight verse aims at three areas of instruction: discipline, successful lives, and actions characterized as right, just, and fair.

The three areas of instruction have to do primarily with outward behavior. Discipline involves positive habits that demonstrate self-control. Successful lives covers those situations in which we work with others, making sure our participation promotes goodness. Wisdom also learns to manage the fine balance between right, just, and fair actions.

We must be instructed into wisdom. It does not come naturally. That is why the quality of our wisdom will always depend on the source of our wisdom. If God has instructed us, our wisdom will be genuine.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Practice right, just, and fair actions today.

Dear Lord, help me to recognize that you are the ultimate source of all wisdom and that I can count on you to instruct me.

# January 2 READ PROVERBS 2

## Wise Heritage

My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding.

PROVERBS 2:1-2

Kids mimic. One of the unavoidable realities of raising children involves seeing ourselves in their actions. They pick up words, tones, and habits from us. What parents haven't experienced the shock of hearing a familiar expression or seeing a certain mannerism from their children only to realize that the children are mimicking them!

Unfortunately, children don't always choose the most flattering characteristics to mimic. We want them to do as we say, not as we do. They will tend to do what we do rather than what we say, and at the worst possible times. They have an uncanny way of publicizing our contradictions by imitating what we want to hide.

We live wisely before our children when what we do matches what we say. If our doing and our saying are the same and good, it doesn't matter which one they mimic. When we are inconsistent, forcing our children to choose whether to imitate our words or our actions, we do them a great disservice. We can't really expect them to treasure what we don't think is valuable enough to demonstrate by our lives.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Walk what you talk.

Dear Lord, help me to be an example of consistency before others so that even my failures become good lessons for them as I depend on you for forgiveness.

## More Than Skin Deep

Never let loyalty and kindness leave you! Tie them around your neck as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart. PROVERBS 3:3

What connection can we find between loyalty and kindness that would cause them to be the subject of Solomon's solemn thought? They are qualities that require both internal (heart) and external (necklace) evidence in order to be true. Loyalty and kindness may be faked—for a while. The context indicates that Solomon was thinking of character traits that create a solid relationship between a person and God as well as between that person and others. The very next proverb says, "Then you will find favor with both God and people, and you will earn a good reputation" (Proverbs 3:4). A good way to remember the principle of this proverb relies on a version of an old saying: "When it comes to loyalty and kindness, you may be able to fool people part of the time, but you will fool God none of the time."

The phrase "Never let loyalty and kindness leave you" also deserves attention. Neither kindness nor loyalty fits as an automatic or permanent trait. They are hard won and easily lost. Both require continual practice with people and before God.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Keep a promise.

Dear Lord, help me see the opportunities you offer me to keep loyalty and kindness fresh in my life today.

# January 4 READ PROVERBS 4

#### Wisdom R & D

Get wisdom; develop good judgment. Don't forget my words or turn away from them. Don't turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you. PROVERBS 4:5-6

Businesses that want to survive and succeed must invest in research and development. Money, personnel, and time make up that investment. A company unwilling to improve on even good products will quickly find that others will eagerly step in to profit from making better versions of the same things.

Daily life tests wisdom. Yesterday's insight may help face the first of today's problems but fall short on the second. Every day allows us to apply what we have already learned and to engage in fresh research and development for tomorrow. We "get wisdom" and "develop good judgment" as we acknowledge our lack of wisdom and our poor judgments. Part of each day's investment will involve the mistakes and errors that lead to wisdom. That wisdom grows as we remember and don't turn away from God's words. We love wisdom when we realize she always has more to teach us.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Invest in wisdom.

Dear Lord, help me to love your Word today as I seek to practice wisdom.

#### Thin Ice!

The lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil. But in the end she is as bitter as poison, as dangerous as a double-edged sword. PROVERBS 5:3-4

Appearances offer tempting deceptions. Whether they come in the form of a thin coating of ice on a deep pond or an enticing cover on a book, what we see often doesn't turn out to be what we get. The first few steps may seem secure enough and the first pages may seem harmless, but the end results chill the body and soul. The writer of this proverb understood that character counts more than appearance.

Proverbs offers truth without subtlety. The sweetest kiss can't make up for a dark heart. Sweetness and smoothness tend to be temporary—poisons and swords cause permanent damage. The poison of immorality leaves relationships ruined and trust severed. Those who cannot see beyond their momentary needs and wants will discover the painful consequences of their shortsighted decisions.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Think beyond appearance.

Dear Lord, help me to think twice about your truth rather than looking twice at temptation.

# January 6 READ PROVERBS 6

# Handcuffs

My child, if you have put up security for a friend's debt or agreed to guarantee the debt of a stranger—if you have trapped yourself by your agreement and are caught by what you said—follow my advice and save yourself, for you have placed yourself at your friend's mercy. Now swallow your pride; go and beg to have your name erased. PROVERBS 6:1-3

Scams, disappointments, and financial ruin often begin with misplaced trust. What does the requirement of a cosigner or guarantor indicate right away? It tells you that someone who handles money for a living doesn't consider the primary signer fully able or willing to pay the debt. They need a third person to share the risk—and if you sign on the dotted line, then you are putting yourself at risk. If the person for whom you cosign a debt defaults on the loan, then you become responsible for that person's debt. Have you anticipated what it will take to pay the debt yourself? The proverb recognizes how easy it is to fall into these commitments. Better to avoid them—at all costs!

In other words, if you would hesitate or be unable to give or loan this "friend" the money, then why would you want to place yourself in a position of being responsible for the debt by cosigning? A genuine friendship represents too valuable an item ever to be equated with money or real estate. Those who trade on your friendship do not have your best interest in mind.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Consider before committing.

Dear Lord, if a friend has a genuine need, give me wisdom to help him/her find a responsible way to meet that need.

## **Unhealthy Discrimination**

You have heard the law that says, "Love your neighbor" and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! MATTHEW 5:43-44

The decision to follow Jesus may begin as a simple choice, but following the Lord daily will not be easy. He never said it would be. In fact, Jesus' statements often show us how far we have to go. For example, we seldom succeed in loving our neighbors, which Jesus took as the expected starting point from which to love our enemies. We ask, "Lord, how can I call them enemies and love them?" To which God answers, "Now you get my point!"

Forget about differentiating between neighbors and enemies. Simply start next door. Who lives there? How well do you know them? What are their needs? What specific action could you take (have them over for a meal, help them with a project, pray for them, return with gratitude something you've borrowed and kept for too long, etc.) that would be an expression of love for them? Carry out that action in the next several days.

#### A WORD FOR TODAY

Love doesn't discriminate.

Dear Lord, help me love my neighbor \_\_\_\_\_\_ in some specific way this week.

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