

**Proverbs: a Practical User Manual on
Discovering God's Will**
(An Object Lesson, "All the Parts Working
In the Practical Christian Walk")

PROV 1:2 That people may know skill and Godly wisdom and instruction, discern and comprehend the words of understanding and insight, ³ Receive instruction in wise dealing and the discipline of wise thoughtfulness, righteousness, justice and integrity; ⁴ That prudence may be given to the simple, and knowledge, discretion and discernment to the youth; ⁵ The wise also may hear and increase in learning, and the person of understanding acquire skill and attain to sound counsels [so that he may be able to steer his course rightly]; [See Prov 9:9].

My son has this impressive model car built out of legos. This car has many details of a real hi-tech car and, in fact, could be used to teach many of the parts of the real thing. What impressed me is that he was able to pay attention to the detail. This car has capability of being all wheel drive (with a fully functional manual transmission), all wheel steering with fully independent suspension! It even has tilt up headlights like the expensive sports cars do.

Another thing that impressed me is that if just one part becomes disconnected in this car it becomes basically inoperative. Alan used to constantly adjust and re-connect lego parts to keep this car working properly.

I would like to make this lego-car an object lesson on the practical Christian life. Altogether too many times the average believer takes the attitude that the length and breadth of his relationship with his Lord is that of his confession of faith and a certain church life-style. I would like to suggest that every area of his life is important to his relationship with his Lord *and* his testimony in the world.¹ Before we finish with this series we will see the importance that every area of our life, no matter how mundane, has to our Lord in our fellowship with him and our testimony in the world.

Are All the Parts Working? (Prov 3:1-8; Luke 2:52)

Prov 3:1 My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: ² For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee. ³ Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: ⁴ So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man. ⁵ Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. ⁶ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. ⁷ Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD, and depart from evil. ⁸

¹ In fact, we learned last time that a properly nurtured marriage is important to the believer's prayer-life. I Peter 3:7.

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It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.

Alan's lego-car holds a lesson for us in the Christian walk. Notice verse 4: the words *favour* and *good understanding* are unified in concept in this sense. They mean that the person who observes this "user's manual" will obtain a *good name* (NIV) - *high esteem* (Amplified) in the sight of both God *and* man. This man is a man of integrity - he will live a *full* life - not necessarily a long life in terms of years but a life that is *fulfilled*.² He will find favor both in God's sight and in the sight of man - in the Christian walk that translates into a life of practical holiness and a good testimony in the world.

The Example of Jesus' Childhood

Little is known about Jesus' childhood. The Holy Spirit did make one important point: Luke 2:52 "**And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.**" The lesson from Jesus' childhood is that God expects his moral character to be on display both in the spiritual and the mundane. Our Lord kept the law perfectly *including the instructions found in Proverbs*.

**God's Moral Character in Every Area
of Our Lives**

Here's where our object lesson comes into play: "**...6a In all thy ways acknowledge him...**" All the "parts" in our Christian life must be in place and working - every area of our life must be under the discipline and prudent control of God's word, including proverbs. **A believer who is neglectful of God's moral control in his marriage, his business or in the work place is most certainly out of the will of God! "... 6b and he shall direct thy paths..."** This is God's guarantee that the believer can know that he is in the will of God - remember, the scope of this series is especially regarding the mundane - the every-day details of life. There are many other areas of study that affect the believer's relationship with the Lord - this particular area, I feel, has been neglected in emphasis. **A believer may claim lofty degrees of spirituality but, if he is neglectful especially in the mundane areas covered in the book of Proverbs his claim of spirituality is an empty one.**

Practical User Information for the Young

Prov 1:4 **for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young--**

Proverbs is especially useful to the young people. The ability to make the right decisions at an early age is very important. One major contributor to bad choices is

² The Old Testament presents length of life in terms of quality, not just years. Abraham was a man "...full of years..." when he died (Gen 25:7, 8). However, when the pharaoh asked how old 130 year old Jacob he was, he replied that his years had been "...few and difficult..." (Gen. 47:9).

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wilful disobedience. Young people need to guard against wilful disobedience. It is a problem of all ages - however, young people are inexperienced - this makes them especially vulnerable. Wilful disobedience is by definition an act of the will. Disobedience to God's word is hardly ever a straightforward act of rebellion. Many times it blends in with wilful ignorance - let me illustrate. Believe it or not there is another intersection worse than the traffic circle in Derry. I used to commute to work in Bedford Massachusetts by driving through Chelmsford. One intersection has 6 roads coming into it (we used to call it "kamikaze corners"). Driving through that intersection almost qualified as a "religious experience!" The most common trick motorists would use to get through the intersection (this is my illustration) would be to drive through without looking at you. With eyes straight ahead. Oh, they knew you were there, the theory was if you *thought* that they hadn't seen you, you would stop to avoid being hit.

Sometimes I fear we use the same technique with God's word. We come to an intersection in our lives where we should be learning about a certain area in our lives where we need to obey God (especially in learning about our faults) instead of looking into God's word, instead of confessing a newly learned sin in prayer or acting in an area where we should apply God's word - we look straight ahead *thinking that if we aren't looking at God's word - looking at our sin - looking at an area that needs an act of obedience maybe God won't hold us accountable* . Wrong! **Romans 6** deals with our emancipation from the dominion of our sin nature. In this text (*Rom 6:17*), Paul makes obedience to God's word the key to being freed from slavery to the sin nature .

James 4:17 states flatly that if we know what is the right thing to do and do not do it, then that is sin to us. *Lack of application of bible doctrine in especially the case of personal sins is outright rebellion in the sight of God.* Failure to actively seek out those areas in our lives that might be offensive to God is the equivalent of driving through God's intersection of opportunity of *learning obedience*. This is the sin of wilful ignorance. A good youth program will bring our young people face-to-face with these issues, not just entertain them. Our young people stand at this imaginary "intersection of opportunity."³ Our young people need to know that they are responsible for their decisions, right or wrong. They need to know that there are going to be intersections of opportunity to obey or disobey the Lord. They must assume the responsibility to "look" at the Lord's will and obey it and not just drive through the intersection ignoring God's will for their lives.

There are three important qualities that the young need to cultivate in their lives and I can think of no better source than God's word. First, there is "prudence" [subtlety in

³ Prov 4:25-27. ^{vs 25} "Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee, ²⁶ Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established [*on firm ground*]. ²⁷ Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil."

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KJV] as one grows up he needs to develop a shrewdness with regard to those whom he meets. Not to develop shrewdness means one is or becomes "simple" or naive (Prov 14:15 **A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps**). Many times thoughtless or even arrogant decisions made in haste and in naivete can affect the rest of a young person's life. Prudence makes a young person "think twice" before making a bad decision.

Then there is "knowledge." This is the knowledge that is gained from experience. A young man needs to learn from experience. A "simple" one does not (Prov 14:18 **The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge**). "Folly" in the original means to be "thick-headed" **a good working translation here would be that the simple wear a crown of bone-headedness but the shrewd are crowned with knowledge [from experience]**.

Finally there is "discretion." Discretion means to think through, to plan. Discretion is an important ingredient to our young man's education - his growing up in the Lord. Look up the following references; Prov 2:11; 3:21; 8:12 (this is the pre-existent Christ speaking); finally, in 31:16 the full meaning is brought home where the wife of noble character considers the value of property before buying it.

Our User Manual Never Becomes Obsolete

Prov 1:5 **"A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:"**

The practical Christian walk is a never-ending learning experience. One of the most dangerous attitudes anyone can take, especially the "mature" folks, is to assume that he has nothing more to learn - that he has learned all there is to learn from God's word. The mundane especially becomes a stumbling block for continued good favor and a good name with God and man (Prov 26:12 **"Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him."**) There is no guarantee that old age means a believer is walking close to the Lord and has no need of taking in and applying *all* of God's word every day of his life. Proverbs is an invaluable resource for *adding to the wisdom that a mature believer already has*.

"...man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:..."(vs.5) The young are not the only ones who need advise. The sign of a mature "senior saint" is one who seeks counsel both from the word of God and those around him whom he trusts as a good source of biblical advise.

Are all the "parts" working in your practical Christian life? The challenge today is to renew our conviction that we are not to be wise in our own conceits, but rather, to seek God's user manual on continuing to grow in wisdom and in favor with God and man.