

# **Proverbs**

## **Living by Faith**

Lesson #11 for March 14, 2015

Scriptures: Proverbs 28:4-5,7,9; 29:13; Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 3:24; 1 John 2:15-17.

1. Proverbs is a book about wisdom. Proverbs 28 and 29, which we are studying in this lesson, focus on the contrast between human wisdom and divine wisdom. Divine wisdom is centered in God's law. God Himself is love. (1 John 4:8,16) His law is an expression of His love and His character. Love to God and love to our fellow humans are the two principles of the law. (Matthew 22:34-40; Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18) The Ten Commandments give more details about that law. But, Ellen White further explained: "But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of." (*Mount of Blessing* 109.2) So, where should we look for a more complete expression of God's law? When were God's laws for human beings first given? Are His laws proscriptive or descriptive? Do they just describe the way things are supposed to work?

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* 364.2.

2. Why did Paul say the law was added? Which law was added? (Galatians 3:19-24) Why are there so many professed Christians who have such diverse views about theological matters and about God's law? How much is included in the Christian's walk? Inspiration sets out the pattern; but, we must make choices on a day-by-day basis to follow that pattern. Our study of Scripture will make it clearer and clearer what that pattern is.
3. Read Proverbs 28:4,7,9. Compare James 5:16. What do these verses tell us about the importance of obedience to God's law? Would you agree that those who are disobedient to God's law are wicked, unintelligent, even hateful, and an abomination to God?
4. While we recognize that ancient Israel was far from perfectly obedient to God's law, what was unique about their situation and their relationship with God? What made them "holy" or "set apart" from other nations? Why did God choose them? Was it to bless all mankind?
5. It would not take a long time for a reasonably intelligent person to memorize the Ten Commandments. Is that all we need to know about God's law? When Solomon—whom the Scriptures point out as the wisest man who ever lived—became king, he asked God for wisdom even though he was very aware of the Ten Commandments. (1 Kings 3:9) What are the relationships among wisdom, God's law, and our behavior?
6. Are Christian's lives made easier and better when they try to observe God's law?
7. In his very pointed letter to the Galatians, Paul said that the purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ. (Galatians 3:24) He went on to say that it was added because we needed it. What is implied by those words? Is the primary purpose of God's law to teach us about Himself?

What is implied by the expression, “the law is a transcript of God’s character”?

We have only glimmering light in regard to the exceeding breadth of the law of God. **The law spoken from Sinai is a transcript of God’s character.** Many who claim to be teachers of the truth have no conception of what they are handling when they are presenting the law to the people, because they have not studied it; they have not put their mental powers to the task of understanding its significance. (*Review and Herald*, February 4, 1890 par. 1)

The law of love is the foundation of God’s government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to heaven. God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate his character, and therefore with ability to love him and to choose his service. So long as created beings worshiped God they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. **As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God’s character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies.** (*Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893 par. 1)

**Christ says definitely, I came not to destroy the law. It is a transcript of God’s character, and I came to carry out its every specification.** I came to vindicate it by living it in human nature, giving an example of perfect obedience. (*Signs of the Times*, June 13, 1900 par. 7)

God’s character is revealed in the precepts of His law. This is the reason why Satan wishes this law to be made of none effect. But notwithstanding all his efforts, the law stands forth holy and unchanged. **It is a transcript of God’s character. It cannot be impeached or altered.** (*Signs of the Times*, November 30, 1904 par. 6; *14MR* 347.20) [Bold type is added.]

8. Would it be correct to say that the whole purpose of the Bible is to teach us about God and His character? That requires thinking, learning, and intelligence on our part.
9. Does God intend for faith to be a rational expression? Is faith supposed to be logical?

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith.

It is impossible for finite minds fully to comprehend the character or the works of the Infinite One. To the keenest intellect, the most highly educated mind, that holy Being must ever remain clothed in mystery. “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?” Job 11:7, 8. (*Steps to Christ* 105.2-3)

10. Read 1 John 2:15-17. In these verses we see a stark contrast between the world and all its ways which are passing away and those who do God’s will who will live forever.
11. Proverbs 28 gives us several suggestions about true wealth.
  1. Do not get rich at the expense of the poor. (Proverbs 28:8)

2. Be generous with the poor. (Proverbs 28:27)
3. Wealth should come from honest, hard work. (Proverbs 28:19)
4. Do not use any dishonest means for gaining wealth. (Proverbs 28:20,22,24)
12. Money has come to be the dominant force in our world. How can we avoid the deceitfulness of riches? (Mark 4:19)
13. In light of a world constantly fighting over keeping up with the Joneses, how do we keep God uppermost in our thinking? One sage said: "Money isn't everything; but, it is way ahead of whatever is in second place!"
14. Read Proverbs 29:13. The ultimate reason why we should be respectful of both rich and poor is that we were all created equal in the eyes of God. We are brothers and sisters; all are children of the same Father.
15. Read Proverbs 28:3. If we recognize that we are all created by God, we need to act in love toward God and toward our fellow brothers and sisters and always act responsibly.
16. Read Proverbs 28:6. Do you agree that honesty and righteousness always trump riches? Traditionally, it has been believed that if you are righteous, God will bless you, and you will be rich. (See Deuteronomy 7; 28; Leviticus 26.) Poverty is supposed to come only upon the lazy or the wicked. (Proverbs 24:34) But, we know that in our world things are not that simple. Have you ever been tempted to compromise your principles for material gain?
17. One of the biggest challenges for parents is to teach these important lessons about material matters to their children. It is an eternal disaster to raise children who "receive not the love of the truth." (2 Thessalonians 2:10) Ultimately, that truth is the truth about Jesus and His Father. Are we teaching our children to obey and love the truth?

Whatever line of investigation we pursue, with a sincere purpose to arrive at truth, we are brought in touch with the unseen, mighty Intelligence that is working in and through all. The mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite. The effect of such communion on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate.—Ellen G. White, *Education* 14.2; *CT* 16.2; *ML* 264.2.

18. Proverbs goes on to talk about the fact that discipline requires more than just words. (Proverbs 29:15,19) What are the most appropriate ways for disciplining children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are spankings still appropriate? What about time-outs? Leaving our children to do what they want to do without disciplining them is a recipe for disaster. Children need—perhaps most of all—to know that boundaries exist, and they need to stay within those boundaries. Undisciplined children will be a shame to their parents and even to the children themselves when they become adults. Someone has said that "a pat on the back is useful if it is applied early enough, often enough, and low enough!"

**Any child that is permitted to have his own way will dishonor God and bring his father and mother to shame. Light has been shining from the word of God and the testimonies of His Spirit so that none need err in regard to their duty.** God requires parents to bring up their children to know Him and to [326] respect His claims; they are to train their little ones, as the younger members of the Lord's family, to have beautiful characters and lovely tempers, that they may be fitted to shine in the heavenly courts. **By neglecting their duty and indulging their children in wrong, parents close to them the gates of the city of God.**—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*

19. So, in all of this, how do we come to know and love the truth?
20. Do most Christians that you know including yourself think of God's law as a blessing? Do we think of it as the "perfect law of liberty"? Or, as restrictive of our freedom? Why? It restricts us from doing wrong. Satan is always trying to get us to think only about the short term "benefits" of disobeying the law. He never wants us to think of the longer-term results.
21. Many of our Christian friends teach that the law was done away with by being nailed to the cross. What is the best way to correct that misunderstanding? What is implied by Matthew 5:17-18? Is there any evidence in Scripture that any of the apostles during the times of the New Testament disobeyed or set aside any of the commandments?
22. Does God ever ask us to do or believe anything that is not for our best good in the long term?
23. Why do so many modern thinkers believe that the time has come to leave behind the ancient, outdated constraints of the Word of God? Are those "ancient, outdated constraints" still appropriate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
24. Many scientists would have us believe that man is constantly gaining new and better knowledge and wisdom. Will the Bible then become unnecessary?
25. Is it obvious even with a superficial look at the Ten Commandments that they are describing God's love? Or, do they sometimes seem a little like a strait jacket? Read in context, we should understand that the Ten Commandments were given after the children of Israel were released from Egyptian bondage. Would it be correct to say that obedience to law comes after the promise of salvation? Is salvation supposed to lead to obedience?
26. Is coming to know God through Jesus Christ the most important thing in our lives? Surely, we must recognize that despite our best efforts, we can have only a very limited view of God while here on this earth. We will have eternity to learn more and more about Him. Try to imagine what it was like for Adam and Eve to converse with God in the Garden of Eden. What do you think they thought about God's wisdom? Do you think they looked forward to those times with Him?
27. We cannot spend time with Him visibly and in person. So, what do we think about spending time with God's Word? Do we really believe that God's Word is the ultimate source of wisdom? Not only human wisdom but also God's wisdom?
28. When we read the Bible, do we look at each story and ask what it says to us about God? The Bible is not primarily about Adam, Noah, Moses, David, and Paul; it is about God!
29. A careful look at the book of Deuteronomy along with our study of Proverbs will show us that there are many similar sentiments expressed. Does that suggest to us that the Bible has only one real Author?
30. Our world seems to be coming apart at the seams. Desperate things are happening all the time with people dying and being killed. There are terrible natural disasters. Why are all those things happening? Is there anything that we as Christians can do in this setting that might make a difference? Does living Christ-like lives as witnesses to the truth about God say anything to the world? (Matthew 5:16) Do you know anyone who is doing that?

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