All people want to be happy. We go to great lengths, in fact, to seek happiness. Some people think that if they could just get the person they like to like them back, then they would find happiness. Others think that happiness comes from being popular, respected, or successful. Still others look to entertainment—video games, books, or TV—to make them happy. While each of these things can certainly be a source of happiness in our lives, none of them are everlasting. Today we will see that God offers a deeper, more fulfilling type of happiness to those who look to Him for the strength they need to walk in wisdom. We will also see the dangers of rejecting God’s wisdom. Following God’s wisdom leads to joy, while failing to do so leads to grief.

Following God’s wisdom leads to joy, while failing to do so leads to grief.
8 The sensible person’s wisdom is to consider his way,  
    but the stupidity of fools deceives them.
9 Fools mock at making reparation,  
    but there is goodwill among the upright.
10 The heart knows its own bitterness,  
    and no outsider shares in its joy.
11 The house of the wicked will be destroyed,  
    but the tent of the upright will flourish.
12 There is a way that seems right to a person,  
    but its end is the way to death.
13 Even in laughter a heart may be sad,  
    and joy may end in grief.
14 The disloyal one will get what his conduct deserves,  
    and a good one, what his deeds deserve.
15 The inexperienced one believes anything,  
    but the sensible one watches his steps.
Proverbs 14:8,15

.03 COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE WISE PERSON WITH THE FOOL IN THESE TWO VERSES. WHAT DOES EACH THINK ABOUT AND NOT THINK ABOUT?

.04 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO WATCH YOUR STEPS AND CONSIDER YOUR WAYS? WHAT KEEPS US FROM DOING THESE THINGS?

Proverbs 14:9-10,13-14

.05 WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO MAKE REPARATIONS (V. 9)? WHAT DOES THE FACT THAT WE NEED TO DO THIS TELL US ABOUT OURSELVES?

.06 WHY IS MAKING REPARATIONS ANIMPORTANT ATTRIBUTE OF A CHRIST FOLLOWER? HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO LOYALTY (V. 14)?

CULTURAL CONTEXT
The primary focus of Proverbs is to inform how its readers think and live. This implies that we don’t possess perfect wisdom already—we need wisdom from God because we are sinners who often fail to give careful thought to our actions. People in Solomon’s day faced the same temptation we face today—to make decisions based on what will make us happier, wealthier, more influential, or more powerful. While this might seem sensible to most, Proverbs confronts us with the counter cultural notion that the only life worth living is the one dedicated to God’s glory and the good of the world.
WHAT DO VERSES 10 AND 13 TELL US ABOUT GRIEF?

WHAT DO VERSES 10 AND 13 TELL US ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD INTERACT WITH THOSE WHO ARE EXPERIENCING GRIEF?

WHAT DO THESE TWO VERSES WARN US AGAINST? WHY DO WE NEED THIS WARNING?

WHY ARE WE OFTEN TEMPTED TO RELY ON OURSELVES RATHER THAN THE LORD WHEN IT COMES TO THE PLANS AND DECISIONS WE MAKE? HOW CAN WE FIGHT THIS TENDENCY?

Proverbs 14:11-12

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“Tent” and “house” in verse 12 refer to one’s entire family. The wicked are referred to as dwelling in a house and the upright in tents. This is a reminder that those who appear to be blessed may actually be under God’s judgment and vice versa. In ancient Israel, a family’s name was deeply valued (Gen. 19:32; Num. 27:1-4) and according to verse 11, it is the conduct before God of each family that determines its ultimate end. While we do not value names in the same way ancient Israelites did, we need the reminder to submit to God’s wisdom and live in a manner that honors Him.
NOW WHAT?

11. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE JOY OF OBEDIENCE?

12. HOW HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE GRIEF OF DISOBEDIENCE? WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM EACH?

13. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT THAT WE STRIVE TO UNDERSTAND AND RESPECT THE EMOTIONS OF THE PEOPLE AROUND US?

14. HOW CAN WE FIGHT THE TEMPTATION TO DO WHAT SEEMS RIGHT TO US?
Choose five days this week to set aside time to dig deeper into God’s Word with these devotions. We hope you’ll make this a priority and encourage others in your group to do so as well.

Dwell

These two verses compare and contrast the way the wise person and foolish person each think about the path they’re on. The wise person is patient, and gives careful thought to their choices before acting. They want to make sure their actions glorify God and don’t cause harm to themselves or their neighbors. The foolish person, on the other hand, is impatient and gullible, rushing into decisions and believing anything they’re told without thought.

.01 How does experience help us be more thoughtful about our actions?

.02 Can you think of a time you unwisely believed something without thinking it through first?

Memorize

Write Proverbs 12:22 on a Post-It note and stick it somewhere you’ll see it every day, like your bathroom mirror, a notebook, or inside your locker. Read it to yourself each time you see it.

Pray

Say a prayer to God asking for His help in making wise, thoughtful decisions this week.
Dwell

.01 “REPARATION” MEANS TO MAKE THINGS RIGHT. WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR THE FOOLISH TO “MOCK AT REPARATION” (V. 9)?

.02 HOW SHOULD YOU ACT WHEN YOUR ACTIONS CAUSE ANOTHER PERSON HARM?

God cares deeply about how we relate to other people. Reparation means to make things right. Wise people know that when they do wrong, they need to not only apologize, but to also do everything they can to fix their mistake and make things better for the person they wronged. They know that in the end, God will honor their good actions.

Memorize

Set Proverbs 12:22 as a text or calendar notification to yourself one or two times a day. When you see the notification, read the verse silently or aloud a few times.

Pray

Pray that God would help you to treat others with goodwill and respect.

Dwell

Sometimes a person can seem happy due to how they act and speak, while deep down they are struggling with sadness, fear, or anger. These verses teach us that the emotions we share with others and the emotions we feel aren’t always the same thing, and likewise, we never truly know what’s going on in another person’s heart. Even our joy can be difficult to fully explain to others in a way they will fully understand.

.01 CAN YOU REMEMBER A TIME WHEN YOU TOLD OTHERS THAT YOU WERE HAPPY OR “FINE,” BUT YOU WERE ACTUALLY UNHAPPY?

.02 WHY ARE THESE VERSES IMPORTANT GUIDES FOR HOW WE SHOULD INTERACT WITH OTHERS?

Memorize

Use your phone or computer to record yourself reading Proverbs 12:22, and play it back to yourself throughout the week.

Pray

Thank God that no matter what we’re going through, He understands us fully and cares about all of our emotions.
The way of wisdom also involves using words wisely. An old children’s saying goes, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me.” According to these verses, however, unwise words can and do hurt both the person speaking and those toward whom the words are directed. Just like every other part of our lives, our words should be used to honor God and treat others well.

**WHAT CAN WISE SPEECH DO ACCORDING TO THESE VERSES? HOW IS FOOLISH SPEECH DESCRIBED?**

**IN EPHESIANS 4:15, WE ARE COMMANDED TO “SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE.” HOW DO THESE VERSES FROM PROVERBS HELP US TO UNDERSTAND THIS COMMANDMENT?**

As human beings, we tend to think that we don’t need to turn to God or other people for advice. We like to solve our own problems and do things our own way. These verses say that this path leads to death and destruction. The way of wisdom involves having the humility to recognize that we don’t have all the answers and that we need God’s understanding and guidance.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “UPRIGHT”?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK THE PERSON WHO “FOLLOWS THE WAY THAT SEEMS RIGHT” TO THEM IS CALLED “WICKED” IN VERSE 11?**

Write Proverbs 12:22 on a notecard or piece of paper and carry it with you. Read it to yourself word by word until you can recite it from memory.

Thank God for always being ready to provide wisdom and answers so that we don’t need to rely on our own limited understanding.

**MEMORIZE**

**PRAY**

Practice reciting Proverbs 12:22 from memory with a friend or family member. Ask them to follow along as you recite, and prompt you with words from the verse if you need help remembering.

Ask God to help you practice wise speech that honors Him this week.

**PRAY**