

Get Smarter Study 3

The Good Life

Wisdom in Action

Someone said recently that people are no longer interested in living a 'good life' – their only concern is to live a 'good lifestyle.' Is it true? The promise of Proverbs is to teach us the sort of wisdom that leads to "a prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair." (Prov 1:3 - See study 1)

But what does 'right' and 'just' and 'fair' look like? Can we just make up definitions to suit ourselves? Or is there a content and shape to 'the good life' that Proverbs can help us to understand?

As you read through proverbs, you'll meet two very different kinds of people -the righteous, and the wicked. One group 'fears God' (study 2), and lives the good life, with character that the Lord delights in; the other wants nothing to do with God's wisdom, and the results are disastrous.

**The Lord detests men of perverse heart... but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.
Prov 11:20**

We're going to flick through Proverbs and get a feel for the kind of things God has a heart for... that should shape our hearts as well.

The character of God

Some Proverbs describe the kinds of actions, behaviours and motives that God loves; some describe things that God hates. Take note of these:

a) Proverbs 11:20; 15:29; 21:3

Loves:

Hates:

b) Proverbs 11:1; 16:11; 20:23; 29:26

Loves:

Hates:

Pause and Reflect: God is interested both the state of your heart, and the honesty of your scales. In more general terms, that means the fairness you trade with, your integrity in business, and the way you advertise your second-hand car. How much do you think these character traits are valued in today's society?

The character of Man

The great thing about Proverbs is that it doesn't just tell us what the character of God is - it gives us examples of what the character of man should and shouldn't be like, and what things will lead to the Good life.

Work through these Proverbs and compile a character sheet of those who God would consider Righteous, and those who God would consider Unrighteous.

	Righteous	Unrighteous
e)	11:3	
f)	13:5	
g)	14:2	
h)	14:16	
i)	14:21	
j)	14:31	
k)	15:28	
l)	17:5	
m)	22:22-23	
n)	29:7	
o)	31:8-9	

p) What are the characteristics and concerns that keep surfacing in these Proverbs?

These characteristics aren't only in Proverbs – they're echoed through the whole Bible. The prophet Micah, summarises for Israel what it is that God requires.

**He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
Micah 6:8**

Pause and Reflect: Which of these issues do you personally struggle with? Do you find it easy to cut corners and stretch the truth? Do you find it easier to manipulate people than to be open and honest? Do you find it easier to ignore the poor than to be generous? Do you act justly? Do you love mercy? Do you walk humbly with your God?

The security of the Righteous

Maybe it sometimes seems it's costly to be honest, just and generous. If you're 'lifestyle driven,' you'll always opt for whatever is best for the financial bottom line rather than whatever is most honest and just. The nation of Israel was the same.

r) From the very beginning of their history as a nation, the Israelites were warned that their place in the promised land was contingent. In other words, it always depended on them fearing God, and living in righteousness under God's rule. How does Proverbs 2:21-22 summarise this?

s) As time went on and Israel prospered financially, their hearts went way off track. According to Amos 2:6-16, what is Israel guilty of, and what will happen as a result?

t) How should Israel have been warned by the following proverbs:

* 10:2; 11:4; 12:28;

* 12:3; 19:23

* 28:1

In Conclusion: Feeling Thirsty?

Jesus came to Israel preaching a similar message – and holding out a remarkable promise... “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” And the promise extended far beyond the borders of Israel. If you realize you don’t really measure up to God’s definition of righteousness, but you’re thirsty for it, when you come to Jesus you’ve come to the right place! By the Spirit, he transforms ordinary unrighteous people into exactly the kind of people God delights in.

Read Galatians 5:19-26.

a) What are the ‘fruit of the Spirit’ that characterise a righteous life?

b) Are these the characteristics you long to have? What is it that gets in the way?

If you’re a follower of Jesus, a righteous life isn’t something that we can either choose to pursue or not – it’s what we’ve been called to. But this doesn’t mean that it’s easy, or that we won’t fall short from time to time.

And it's this reason that God has given us his Spirit and his Word, so that we might know what a righteous life looks like, and that we might have the strength to live out what we have been called to – the Good Life.

Pick 2 or 3 of the Proverbs we looked at this week and memorise them. Pray that God might produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life.

**The fear of the Lord leads to life:
Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.
Prov 19:23**

Final Reflections: Do you consider righteousness a benefit in your life? Why or why not? Is it something you strive for, or something that holds you back from achieving your potential?

For the coming week...

Remember...



MPC Family Camp
23-25 March

Read...

Proverbs 16-22:16