A Prudent Life
Proverbs 1 & 2

Objective: Instruct on how to attain and live a prudent life.


Memory: Proverb 1:7, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,”

Introduction:
1. Why are some folks always in trouble? Why are they surrounded by strife? How come things never seem to work for them? Why do they seem to make so many bad choices?
2. Lord, help me to live a more prudent and disciplined life. Teach me, guide me, instruct me.

We need to know how to make good choices to live a prudent life. (HOW)

This is the theme of the first three chapters of the Book of Proverbs. Here are tidbits of insight on how to avoid constant trouble in life. Oh, there will be difficulties. Even trying to live righteously, itself, can bring persecutions and trouble, but here is guidance in how to avoid unnecessary hassles in this life. As the wise, divinely inspired author communicates here, three things stand out to guide us to prudent living. Three keys to prudent living.

The very first step in living a prudent life is to

I. Seek Wisdom.

A. Wisdom is the application of knowledge.
   1. Wisdom and knowledge relate.
   2. Get some “knowledge” get some facts, some truths, some understanding, then when you can apply these things to making good choices in real life situations, this is wisdom.
   3. Such application of knowledge / wisdom is also what makes for good family leaders and enables each to work their way through their own life in prudent fashion.
   4. Such wise application of godly principles is what makes for a good and blessed life.

B. Wisdom starts with respect for God.
   1. Proverb 1:7, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”
   2. To stand in awe of God is where prudence and blessing all begins.
   3. There is a God. Created all. Set all up. Controls all.
   4. If you are not yet amazed, astounded by the concept of God, now is the time to begin to seek. Now is the time to begin to look around and ask, to look for evidence of the Presence!
   5. He is Present in the birth of a fawn. Present in the unfurling of a rose. Present in the compassion of a mother for her child. In the charitable response of some people for others.
   6. Feel him in the expanse of the sky at night or the power of a storm.
   7. Feel Him identify with you and know you and relate to you as you read the Scriptures. Feel His very Spirit as it works on your own soul, calling and entreatling you. Open the Book and read about yourself and read secret things about yourself that even you weren’t aware of. Realize there is a God Who knows you!
   8. Psalm 53:1, “The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” Of course there is a God! And it is wise for anyone to pay attention because He cares. And He is watching! Psalm 53:2, “God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.”
   9. To have a good and prudent life, know that there is a God and act like it. Fear Him, love Him, pay attention to Him. Go to Him for help and direction.

C. Seek wisdom from God.
   1. For a prudence in life, learn from the Maker of life!
   2. Proverb 2:3-6, “… if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”
   3. The Lord is willing, even eager to share wisdom. But expects us to be serious about finding it.
   4. James 1:5, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all
without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”

5. Proverb 2:9-11, “Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path. For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.” Here is the secret of a prudent life.

6. Prudent living means that you make good choices and decisions. About where to live. Which job to take. How to relate to people. Who to date, marry, hang around with. Ask for wisdom.

Those who acquire wisdom know that it is beneficial to

II. Accept Correction. (Nobody likes to be corrected, but the wise realize that...)

A. Correction is a source of knowledge.
   1. I can see how this was wrong! If I’m corrected, I don’t continue in the same mistake. I don’t keep going down a wrong path.
      a. Wow, that cost me a lot of money. I won’t do that again.
      b. Wow, that sure made trouble with the law, I won’t do that gain.
      c. Wow, that didn’t accomplish anything, I’ll try something else next time.
   2. Correction is often for protection. We know it is given to help us make good choices.
      a. Dad teaches it you use lawn mower that way, you’ll cut off your toe! Do you learn?
      b. Why does the Driver Education teacher scold when you fail to check your blind spots?? Do you accept his rebuke? Why?
      c. Why does Hunter Safety Instructor rebuke students when they walk around with finger on trigger and safety in firing position? What will happen if students don’t accept correction? Are they “wise” who refuse to learn from sage advice or tragedies of others?
   3. Proverb 12:1, “Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.” It is given to help and protect and make one wise. To bring understanding.
   4. God says in Proverb 1:23, “If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.” Accept God’s rebuke in order to learn from Him. Open your heart to God–given discipline in order to come to know God’s thoughts! Be taught of God. Be trained by the Father!

B. Fools despise discipline.
   1. Proverb 1:7, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”
   2. You correct your kids for their well being – because you love them and want them to learn! If they ridicule and ignore your disciplining, you know they will get hurt and get into trouble.
   3. Proverb 3:11-12, “My son, do not despise the LORD’S discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.”
   4. He offers correction, disciplining and teaching in things ranging from how to relate to loved ones to how to relate to enemies. From what things it is beneficial to think about to what things to keep our minds away from. From things to help us physically to things to give us life spiritually. It is vitally important to pay attention to His disciplining.
   5. Read Proverb 1:23-33. Ignoring that which God offers for our help will lead to loss of that help.

C. Prudence accepts correction from any legitimate source.
   1. From anyone who is right and true. From parents. From God. From experience!
   2. The point is to learn so you can walk wisely.
      a. Learn when your life course has led to a failure. Correct it.
      b. When your behavior drives a wedge between you and spouse, learn from it.
      c. When you get speeding ticket, when drinking gets you in trouble, when slothful habits lead to ruin and failure, learn something and correct it.
      d. When you have an outburst of anger and experience the problems it brings, learn from it!
   3. To keep doing the same thing, expecting different results is not stubborn, it’s foolish! It is unwise!

Learning and benefiting from wisdom and correction necessitate that we actually

III. Practice Discipline. (if we’re wise, we know we need to discipline ourselves, but how to do it?)

A. Motivation for self-discipline stems from fear of the Lord.
   1. Because I fear, respect the Lord, I am moved to do what He says. To “do” or to “not do”.


2. Actually it's better to practice such things out of love. *1 John 4:18.* "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." If my love for God has matured and is real, I am moved to obey.

3. So, such discipline actually correlates with "faith". If I forget about God caring, guiding, if I block that out of my mind, if I lose that fear, that respect, that *love*, then I can get slothful again.

B. Practice of discipline stems from knowledge.
   1. Discipline is self-control. Learn from mistakes. Child learns the stove is hot, needs to enforce that knowledge by not touching the stove. Same is true in spiritual realm and in every day life!
   2. I now know too much to do this. God has taught me to not respond harshly or with vengeance and malice, but to give a gentle answer.
   3. I now know too much to fail to do this! God has taught me that life comes from the Spirit and that spiritual strength comes from spiritual fellowship with other Christians. I know too much to make it a habit of missing the assembly!
   4. He has taught me that evil companions corrupt good morals. I know too much to hang around with that crowd that I used to hang around with.

C. Discipline can be an effort away from certain things.
   1. Resist what you know is not good. There are things we should stubbornly avoid!
   2. *Proverbs 1:10.* "My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them."
   3. *Proverbs 1:15.* "my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths;" Resist temptation
   4. *1 Thessalonians 5:21-22.* "Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil."
   5. Slothfulness? Gluttony? Irritable answers? Television shows that affect your spirit with lusts and thoughts that are spiritually destructive.

D. Discipline can be a positive effort toward certain things.
   1. Self discipline is not easy – generally involves work and effort!
   2. There are good practices and good habits we need to work at developing! Force yourself to do what is beneficial.
   3. Like good eating habits or good exercise. I know it is good for me to walk a mile every day – but it won't happen by accident. It will take some self-control, some personal discipline.
   4. Do you remember that such self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit; *Galatians 5:22.* "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."
   5. If one is going to grow spiritually, they have to start somewhere. Why not pick something and begin to practice discipline; 
      a. Determine to read one chapter of Bible before sleep – dwelling on it at night.
      b. Determine to have a kind word for your spouse in the AM instead of starting grumpy.
      c. Determine to quietly step away when they share dirty jokes at work.
      d. Start somewhere and grow.

So What?
As you look around, you can see a lot of lives that are being ruined. Some are running toward their own destruction. Some are being mislead. Some are simply wandering around like sheep without a shepherd. It doesn't have to be so for you. You know the source of wisdom and life. *You have the secret to a good and prudent life.*

Closing Prayer:
We need to know how to make good choices to live a prudent life.

Three keys to prudent living.

I. Seek Wisdom.
   A. Wisdom is the application of knowledge.
   
   B. Wisdom starts with respect for God.
   Proverb 1:7   Psalm 53:1   Psalm 53:2

   C. Seek wisdom from God.
   Proverb 2:3-6   James 1:5   Proverb 2:9-11

II. Accept Correction.
   A. Correction is a source of knowledge.
   Proverb 12:1   Proverb 1:23

   B. Fools despise discipline.
   Proverb 1:7   Proverb 3:11-12   Proverb 1:23-33

   C. Prudence accepts correction from any legitimate source.

III. Practice Discipline.
   A. Motivation for self-discipline stems from fear of the Lord.
   1 John 4:18

   B. Practice of discipline stems from knowledge.

   C. Discipline can be an effort away from certain things.
   Proverb 1:10   Proverb 1:15   1 Thessalonians 5:21-22

   D. Discipline can be a positive effort toward certain things.
   Galatians 5:22

So What?
You have the secret to a good and prudent life.