

# A TIME OF GUIDED PRAYER

PROVERBS AS WISDOM FOR CHURCH AND NATION



## FOR PREPARATION

[Crown Him with Many Crowns](#)

Matthew Bridges (1851)

## OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, to you all hearts are open, all desires known, and from you no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy Name; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

-Thomas Cranmer (1662)

## AS OUR FOUNDATION

[Proverbs 8](#) (NIV)

## TO KEEP IN MIND

At its' core, that is the message of Proverbs. We are far too easily pleased with the lies and allurements of folly. Seeking out wisdom means refusing to settle for second best and the cheap substitutes that the world offers us. Instead, pursuing relentlessly our greatest joy and design – which we find ultimately in the restored humanity that Christ has brought about through his death, burial, and resurrection.

- Shane Morris

## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Recurring story of “the no’s” when speaking with non-Christians – those who view Christianity “as a big fat ‘No’ to all that’s going to make them happy.” Proverbs can often feel like an extension of that “No,” and as a focal point of the Bible’s “browbeating.”
- Folly is built into the nature of every one of us – even and especially present in children. However, we adults can still find those “No” statements to be difficult. Kids – and adults – who hate hearing godly no’s think that we have the whole world and the whole situation figured out.
- At the heart of it, our reluctance to listen to instruction is a belief that our “instructors” really do not know what they are talking about. Like children – but at our own adult level – we often offer the very same resistance.
- Proverbs opens with a plea to get past this youthful folly – to just listen for a moment – to the voice of the Father, who is offering something more precious than rubies, diamonds, or gold.
- Two symbolic women in Proverbs: Wisdom and the Wayward Woman. A “yes” from the wayward woman leads to death. However, we receive a lavish counter invitation from Lady Wisdom – who portrays herself as the source of perfect happiness – an organizing principle of creation itself.
- The power, majesty, and effusiveness of Proverbs’ invitation should strike us – because this is a “YES.” It is not – at its’ heart – a big fat “no.”
- The lavishness and volume here celebrate “the big yes” of the Christian faith. All of Christianity’s “no’s” are only in order to clear the way for this big and beautiful “yes.”
- When we invite people into this way of seeing the world, it is actually an invitation to full humanity, to full joy, and to full life in the work of Christ.

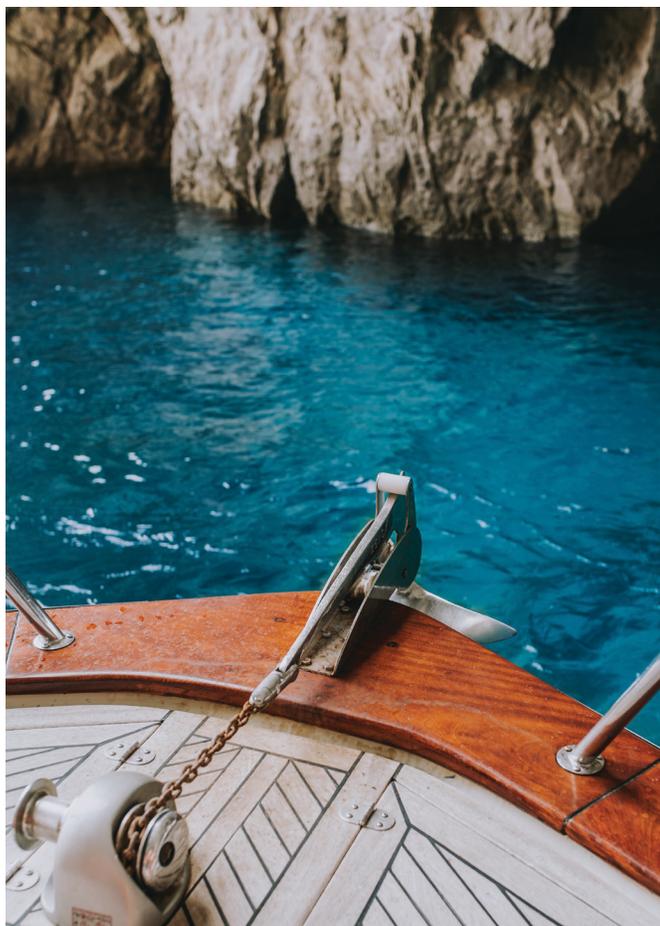
- *Those who most relentlessly pursue joy, ultimate happiness, and even pleasure are going to follow Christ. They won't settle for anything less for a substitute. Their ultimate desire and fulfillment will be in God, as embodied in the person of Christ. That relentless pursuit of joy is just another name for wisdom and virtue – John Piper.*
- *Instead of seeking our own way, wisdom seeks insight into the way the world actually works – the way we were created to be. It calls us back to our original design – and teaches us how to avoid the cheap and corrosive counterfeits that this world often offers.*
- *From C.S. Lewis and The Great Divorce – it provides a beautiful illustration of what God is calling us to with His grand and spectacular “yes.” He wants us to be fully real – he wants us to be solid – he wants us to find true and overwhelming joy. In the face of that joy, the substitutes that this world offers – the allure of the adulterous women and the Lady Folly that we meet in Proverbs – pales in comparison. It cannot stand up to the offer of true and pure joy that we are giving in Christianity.*
- *From C.S. Lewis and The Weight of Glory – Our desires in sin – in the “yeses” that we choose – are just pathetic, cheap, and dirty substitutes. “Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak! We are half-hearted creatures – fooling about with drink, and sex, and ambition – when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mudpies in the slums because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”*
- *That is the “YES!” that we should present to people – in lieu of the “no’s” that they perceive Christianity to be giving them. The “no’s” are important – we must get those false answers (those “mudpies”) out of the way. But ultimately, the no’s are only in order to get to the yes.”*

## **HERE'S HOW YOU CAN PRAY AND LIVE THIS WEEK**

- *Thank you, Father, for the gift that is Proverbs – for the riches of wisdom that it unfolds.*
- *We repent for the way we have allowed your beautiful invitation to be tarnished and talked down, and that we've allowed the spectacular and life-giving “yes” of the Gospel to become nothing but a harsh “no” in the eyes of the world.*
- *Help us be the emissaries of life – but that our words would not have the aroma of death about them, but of life.*
- *Help us, like Lady Wisdom, to climb to the highest tower – and to shout the invitation to all who will listen – “Come and find understanding and true joy!”*



- *Let us never look at anyone as being outside the reach of your mighty arm of salvation*
- *We repent of our own weak and foolish desires. Even for those of us who call ourselves Christians and profess to dine at Lady Wisdom's table, too often, we trail Lady Folly down the steps of death. Like our first parents, we take and eat what is forbidden – and leads only to death.*
- *Help us to recognize that you love us with such unfathomable depth that no one else is more committed to our ultimate good, eternal joy, and perfect happiness. Help us to remember and live by that. Help us to put down our mudpies and listen to your invitation to go to the beach!*
- *We repent of so seldom taking these things to you in prayer as we should – and so seldom soaking our hearts in your holy word. You have given us your word, but how often have we walked past our Bibles – leaving them completely unopened.*
- *Teach us to love your word, to be students of your law, and to dine on the feast of truth that you lay out in front of us between those covers.*
- *Fill our hearts and minds with your Holy Spirit – who enables us to see the embodiment of wisdom – Christ our savior, who died and rose for foolish men and women like us – and redeemed us from the death we had chosen.*
- *Thank you that in Him, all your good promises and Proverbs are “yes” and amen.*



## **BENEDICTION**

- *Closing Prayer*  
Blessed Lord, who hast caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning; grant that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy Word, we may embrace, and ever hold fast, the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.  
- Thomas Cranmer (1662)
- *Closing Worship*  
*-O Sacred Head Now Wounded-* Gerhardt / Alexander (1829)  
*-All Glory, Laud and Honor-* Neale / Teschner (1854)

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

- [Shane's Upstream Podcast](#)
- [Colson Center's National Time of Guided Prayer](#)
- [The Colson Center for Christian Worldview](#)
- [BreakPoint](#)
- [Wilberforce Weekend '21](#)
- [Josh Bales](#)

*True prayer is neither a mere mental exercise nor a vocal performance.  
It is far deeper than that. It is spiritual transaction with  
the Creator of Heaven and Earth. - Charles Spurgeon*