

REROUTING

"BETWEEN THE DITCHES"

PROVERBS 21:16

This Week's Core Competency

Single-mindedness – I focus on God and his priorities for my life. Matthew 6:33, *But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

When I was around ten years old, the Bulick family decided to vacation in southern California. Ours was the prequel to the Griswold family's trip to Walley World. The four-day drive from Detroit to El Cajon was a major undertaking that required lots of preparation. My mom went to AAA to load up on maps and travel guides; Dad bought a new car, a 1956 Pontiac. I still remember how excited our next-door neighbor was when he first saw Dad's new "Indian." Our mildly politically incorrect neighbor called all Pontiacs "Indians." Political correctness was unheard of in those days.

Three days into the trip we stopped in New Mexico for gas and something to eat. It wasn't dinner time yet, but the car was running on empty, and we needed to stretch our legs. Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act that year, so the first Interstate highway had yet to be built. I remember dad turned off Route 66 onto the first thoroughfare in Tucumcari. An hour or so later, after we refueled and had refueled the Pontiac, we headed for the highway. Maneuvering in and out of the gas station and round about the

***Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight.***

– Proverbs 3:5-6

restaurant parking lot, dad got turned around. When we got to then two-lane 66, he turned onto the highway.

A minute or two later, mom pulled out the TripTik map and said, "Nelson, I think you turned the wrong way. The map says you should have turned left and you turned right."

"I'm sure we're headed in the right direction," dad replied confidently. "AAA must have marked the map wrong."

Remember the scene in which Clark falls asleep at the wheel, strays off the Interstate, and winds up in East St. Louis? Nothing quite so harrowing happened to us.

We drove for twenty or thirty minutes when I noticed the sun was hot on my neck in the back seat and asked, "If we're going west to California, how come the sun is shining in the rear window of the car?"

I don't remember dad saying anything. He just turned around and headed in the opposite direction. The only thing worse than heading in the wrong direction is not knowing it.

The following saying is repeated in the book of Proverbs: "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death" (14:12; 16:25). The truth of this proverb is so widely attested it's archetypal. Take the all too familiar horror movie plot motif, for example. Careless teens take a wrong turn, wind up headed the wrong way on the wrong road, and ultimately end up victims of zombies, vampires, psycho chainsaw killers, or all of the above.

According to Proverbs, constructive wise behavior leads to prolonged life and prosperity. Hear what

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the sage tells his son: "Do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity . . . Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding . . . Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor" (Pr 3:1-2, 13, 16). Destructive *foolish* behavior, on the other hand, leads to poverty and premature death. Hear the sage's warning against foolishness personified as an adulteress: "The lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet do down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave" (Pr 5:3-5). Foolishness talks a good game. However, "keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth and your toil enrich another man's house" (8-9). Foolishness creates losers.

Proverbs 21:16 says it all. "Whoever strays from the path of prudence comes to rest in the company of the dead" (ESV).

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God's word to put yourself in touch with him.

Proverbs 21:16

16 *A man who strays from the path of understanding comes to rest in the company of the dead.*

16 *People who wander from the way of wise living will lie down in the company of corpses. (VOICE)*

Cf., other translations

16 *Whoever strays from the path of prudence comes to rest in the company of the dead. (ESV)*

16 *Death is waiting for anyone who wanders away from good sense. (GNT)*

16 *The person who strays from common sense will end up in the company of the dead. (NLT)*

16 *The one who wanders from the way of wisdom will end up in the company of the departed. (NET)*

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "man," and in the margin write, "Cf., "the person," "whoever," and "anyone."
- * Circle "strays."
- * Circle "path."
- * Bracket "of understanding."
- * Underline "comes to rest."
- * Double underline "in the company of the dead."

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. Explain whether Proverbs 21:16 is gender specific or not and what makes you think so.
2. "Strays" or "wanders." Which translation do you think is best and why?
3. Explain the meaning of the *metaphor* "path."
4. "Understanding" or "prudence." Which translation do you think is best and why? (The NIV 1984 has "understanding;" the NIV 2011 has "prudence.")
5. The "path of understanding." What path is that?
6. Clarify the meaning of "comes to rest" by paraphrasing it.
7. Explain the meaning of the *pleonasm* "company of the dead."
8. Explain whether the writer has *spiritual* death or *physical* death in mind and what makes you think so.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about personal experiences that confirm the truth of the proverb.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of its message to clarify your understanding of the passage.

In a nutshell, the book of Proverbs teaches that the quality of one's life depends on how wisely one lives. Living wisely leads to prolonged life and prosperity; living foolishly leads to poverty and premature death. *The NIV Study Bible* puts it this way: "According to the prologue, Proverbs was written to give 'prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young' (1:4), and to make wise men wiser (1:5). The frequent references to 'my son' (1:8, 10; 2:1; 3:1; 4:1; 5:1) emphasize instructing the young and guiding them into a happy and prosperous life. Acquiring wisdom and knowing how to avoid the pitfalls of folly will lead to health and success" (*The NIV Study Bible*, 943).

And what exactly is wisdom, biblically speaking? Simply put, "'Wisdom is the ability to make godly choices in life.' You achieve this goal by applying God's truth to your life, so that your choices will indeed be godly" (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed., 233). The book of Proverbs presents these godly choices in proverbial form. Such proverbs are memorable aphorisms (maxims) people can use to help themselves make responsible choices in life. For example, "The man of integrity walks securely, but he who takes crooked paths will be found out" (10:9), or "The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short" (10:27). As brief maxims, the book's proverbs are distilled, to-the-point sentences about life. They boil down, crystallize, and condense the experiences and observations of God-fearing sages regarding what life is like and how life should be lived. In terse, no-words-wasted fashion, some proverbs relate what is commonly observed in life; others recommend how life should be lived. They express what is *generally* true, not necessarily what is *absolutely* true. Proverbs are not *promises*. Fee and Stuart explain: "Proverbs set forth a wise way to approach certain selected practical goals, but do so in terms that cannot be treated like a divine guarantee of success. The particular blessings, rewards, and opportunities [or their converse] mentioned in Proverbs are *likely* to follow if one will choose the wise courses of action outlined in the poetic, figurative language of the book. But nowhere does Proverbs teach *automatic*

success [or failure]" (243).

Proverbs 21:16 employs a familiar biblical metaphor to warn that death awaits anyone who doesn't live wisely—likely a reference to premature physical death (Pr 3:16). "Path" or "way" is commonly used to refer to one's way of life. Life is pictured in terms of a journey; the path one follows refers to the way one lives. The metaphor is familiar to readers of the New Testament. With reference to his former life, Paul says of Christ followers, "I persecuted the followers of this Way" (Ac 22:4); moreover, the Greek word *peripateo* (lit., "walk") is often used figuratively to refer to one's way of life and thus translated "live" (see Ro 6:4; 8:4 NIV; cf., NASB). The phrase "of understanding" identifies the path as the one marked by "understanding," i.e., the way of living prescribed by wisdom. Anyone who "strays" off this path or "wanders" from this way is doomed to die. "Comes to rest" and "the company of the dead" are both *pleonasms*, figures of speech that entail using more words than necessary for literary effect. The first simply means "ends up." The second simply means "dead." Put prosaically, the proverb might be rendered, "Anyone who doesn't live wisely will end up dead." One version offers the vivid translation, "People who wander from the way of wise living will lie down in the company of corpses" (VOICE).

The proverb captures the point made repeatedly in chapters 1-9:

"Blessed is the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gains understanding,
for she is more profitable than silver
and yields better returns than gold.
She is more precious than rubies;
nothing you desire can compare with her.
Long life is in her right hand,
in her left hand are riches and honor.
Her ways are pleasant ways,
and all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to those who embrace her;
those who lay hold of her will be blessed" (3:13-18).

The Message of the Passage

Live wisely if you want to get the most out of life.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you through his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James teaches in James 1:22. Reflect on the three "living questions" below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your answers to the following *living* questions:**

–How is God making himself known to you?

–How does God want to change you?

–How is God calling you to change your world?

“Between the Ditches”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 16 **man** The proverb is not intended to be gender specific, hence the translations: "anyone" (GNT), "whoever" (ESV), and "the person" (NLT).

v. 16 **strays** Here the Heb. word *to'eh* means to "go astray" or "wander off" the right path. "It is used for wandering in the sense of being lost or in search of a place of rest in Gen 21:14; Exod 23:4; Isa 53:6; etc." (Duane A. Garrett, *Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC, 182). "The image of 'wandering off the path' signifies leaving a life of knowledge, prudence, and discipline" (The NET Bible, 48^{tn} on Pr 21:16).

v. 16 **path of** Cf., "way of understanding" (NASB); "path of prudence" (NIV 2011). Life is pictured as a journey; "path of understanding" is used metaphorically to refer to life lived in obedience to wisdom. Using the metaphor of "way," v. 16a presents the foolish journey of a person who strays from the path of prudence. As every action has its outcome, so every journey has its end, and this foolish journey ends not in peace and prosperity but in death (see Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, NICOT, 180). "There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death" (14:12; cf., 16:25; 19:16).

v. 16 **rest** The Heb. term translated "rest" has favorable nuances; here it is used ironically. "Every word of the second line is charged with irony. The rebel, who must roam at will, is only hastening to lose his mobility (*shall rest*, RV), his independence (*in the congregation*, AV, RV) and his life (*of the dead*)" (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC, 144). "The Hebrew word does not here carry any of the connotations of comforting repose in death that the righteous enjoy; it simply means 'to remain; to reside; to dwell.' The choice of this verb might have an ironic twist to it, reminding the wicked what might have been" (The NET Bible, 50^{tn} on Pr 21:16).

v. 16 **the dead** Lit., "shades" or "ghosts" (BDB, s.v., *rephaim*, 952); "the ghost-like character of the dead is not so clear. Really, as the term refers to dead persons, the translation 'dead ones' would fit very well in all cases" (TWOT, s.v., *rephaim*, 2198c, 2:858). To wind up "in the company of the dead" is to wind up dead—a reference to physical death; cf., "the company of corpses" (VOICE). The expression is an example of pleonasm, a figure of speech that involves using more words than necessary in order to make an impact (cf., "a land flowing with milk and honey" to refer to Canaan). "The departed are the Shades (the *Rephaim*). The literal expression 'will rest among the Shades' means 'will be numbered among the dead.' So once again physical death is presented as the punishment for folly" (the NET Bible, 51^{sn} on Pr 21:16).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

PantegoKids values scripture memory. For each series, kids are asked to memorize verses. Most of the time the verses for each week in a series are connected into one longer passage. During this four-week series we are learning Hebrews 12:1-2. This is one of the passages I memorized as a kid. It's amazing to me how many of these verses I can still recall. Most research concludes that memorization skills deteriorate with age. I believe it. It is much harder for me to learn verses now than when I was a child. For that reason, I am determined to help kids at PBC memorize key verses this year. Here are some ideas for you to help your child learn to memorize verses. (1) Say the verse out loud several times a day. (2) Write it down and put it somewhere you will see it and read it often. (3) Turn it into a song or chant. Music is a great way to memorize! (4) Review. Review. Review. Keep verses in a certain place so you can back to them often. (5) Do it together! Don't get discouraged if they are learning faster. They will stay motivated if they see you working hard too. Bonus tip: Go to www.seedsfamilyworship.com for great songs that are totally scripture based. I'm looking forward to seeing how many verses we learn together this year! It's such a blessing to partner with you!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Proverbs 21:16

1. What is the definition of a proverb? (you may need a parent's help or a dictionary)
2. Why is being wise important?
3. What happens to the man who strays from the path of understanding?

What Do You Think

Sometimes it's hard to follow all of the instructions we are given. Can you think of a time you followed instructions and were glad you did? Can you think of a time you didn't follow instructions and there were consequences?

What R U Going To Do

It's time to develop a memorization plan for scripture this year. Keep a running list of how many passages you memorize throughout the year! Post the list in your room somewhere so you can watch your progress.

Core Comp

Single-mindedness - I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

Memory Verse

Heb 12:1 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized my verse _____, completed Scrolls _____, brought Bible _____, brought a friend _____.

Series Discipleship Challenge located in KidPix Store.

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn 1 token by completing the PantegoKids Bible study and another token by reciting the memory verse.
Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Wendy Hollabaugh (B.S.W. University of Texas at Arlington) is the Children's Minister at Pantego Bible Church. Wendy has over ten years of experience in Children's Ministry. She has a passion for leading families to connect with God and each other. She enjoys creating compelling environments where kids fall in love with God and His Truth. Wendy and her husband, Greg, are also involved in their own personal youth ministry as they are training their three teenagers, Hannah, Aaron and Noah.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.