

THIS CHANGES EVERYTHING

"VISION FOR CHANGE"

PROVERBS 29:18

This Week's Core Competency

Authority of the Bible – I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

The authority of the Bible entails the need to know what it says. Bible reading and study is the means to that end and the number one practice that the Spirit uses to transform us. Psalm 1 says as much, and research confirms it! Recent research looked at four stages in what it called "the spiritual growth continuum" and analyzed more than 50 factors thought to have an impact on personal spiritual growth. One goal of the research was to identify those factors, called "catalysts," most responsible for moving people from one stage to the next—from "Growing in Christ" to "Close to Christ" for example. Four kinds of catalysts were identified: (1) spiritual beliefs and attitudes, (2) organized church activities, (3) personal spiritual practices, and (4) spiritual activities with others. Here's what the researchers reported regarding Bible study: "'Reflection on Scripture' is the number one factor across all three movements. But that's only part of the story. When we statistically

"Reflection on Scripture" is more influential than any other personal spiritual practice.

– Cally Parkinson

compare the power of these factors, 'Reflection on Scripture' ('I reflect on the meaning of Scripture in my life') is much more influential than any other personal spiritual practice. In fact, for the most advanced segments—Close to Christ and Christ-Centered—it's twice as catalytic as any other factor" (Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Follow Me: What's Next for You?* 41).

The kind of Bible study that matters to spiritual formation is what the researchers call "reflective;" in other words, Bible study that is *active* rather than passive—Bible *study*, not Bible listening. Too much so-called "Bible study" involves gifted teachers lecturing passive listeners. And while lecture may be an efficient way to disseminate information, it's hardly the most effective way to teach the Bible. People need to encounter God through their own personal reading of God's word. They need to look closely at its details, answer interpretive questions that will lead to recognition of its meaning, and reflect carefully on implications of its message for them personally. They need to do this individually first and then together with others in community.

This kind of "reflective" Bible study provides occasion for Scripture memory and meditation. On the value and practice of these two disciplines one author writes. "Memorization allows us to choose words and images that shape our minds and hearts. It gives the mind somewhere to go when all the media is turned off. Furthermore, memorizing God's Word allows us to access divinely inspired thought and wisdom. And it works in us even when we are not conscious of its doing so . . . To meditate on Scripture choose a verse, chapter or

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book of the Bible. Don't hurry. Listen to the Scripture. Write down your questions. Use your imagination. You may wish to memorize a short part of the text to keep it clearly before you. Like a cow chewing the cud, keep returning to your text with your mind and heart. When you are distracted, gently return to your text. Express once again your desire to pay attention. The impact of meditating on Scripture can show up later in our interactions with others" (Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, 177, 173). To "tune out" the media so you can memorize and meditate go for a quiet walk.

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

Proverbs 29:18

*18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint;
but blessed is he who keeps the law.*

Cf., other translations

*18 Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint;
but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction. (NIV(c)2011)*

*18 When there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint,
but the one who keeps the law, blessed is he! (NET)*

*18 Without revelation people run wild,
but one who listens to instruction will be happy. (HCSB)*

*18 A nation without God's guidance is a nation without order.
Happy are those who keep God's law! (GNT)*

Cf., a corollary passage

Psalm 1:1-6

1 Blessed is the man

*who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
or stand in the way of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.*

*2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
and on his law he meditates day and night.*

*3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.*

Whatever he does prospers.

4 Not so the wicked!

*They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*

*5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

*6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.*

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

- * Circle "revelation" in the first line of Pr 29:18.
- * Underline "people" in the first line.
- * Circle "cast off restraint" in the first line.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in the second line.

- * Circle "blessed is" in the second line.
- * Underline "he" in the second line.
- * Circle "law" in the second line.

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. Hebrew poetry employs *parallelism* that uses synonymous or antithetical lines to compare ideas' similarities or differences. Describe the lines in Proverbs 28:19.
2. To what does the word "revelation" refer?
3. Put the first idea in the verse in your own words.
4. To what does the word "law" refer?
5. Explain the *contrast* in this proverb.
6. **Psalm 1:1** describes a truly happy person. Put the psalmist's three-fold description in your own words.
7. Explain the *contrast* in verse 2.
8. How can anyone meditate on God's law day and night?
9. Explain the *comparison* in verse 3.
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the relationship of Proverbs 28:19 to Psalm 1.

day 3

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

The gist of Proverbs 29:18 is obvious enough, but its exact meaning eludes interpreters. Its exact meaning rests on the precise meaning of the Hebrew words [*hazon* and *yippara*] translated "revelation" and "cast off restraint" in the NIV. The KJV translates them "vision" and "perish," leading to the popular notion that advance planning is essential to success. While that is no doubt true, that is not the meaning of the proverb, as most modern English translations indicate. The disputed terms likely refer to *revelation* (e.g., word, message, guidance) from God that comes through visions given Old Testament prophets and *anarchy* that inevitably follows when people are left to their own devices (cf., Ex 32:25). The NKJV translates the colon: "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint" (cf., NIV).

The proverb employs *antithetical* parallelism using *contrast* to make its point—as the word "but" indicates. On one hand, people bereft of divine guidance run wild. But on the other, "blessed is he who keeps the law." The KJV does a better job translating this colon: "but he that keepeth the law, happy is he." The NKJV's translation is essentially the same: "But happy is he who keeps the law." The interpretive issue here involves the meaning of "law." Does it refer specifically to the law, the Pentateuch, or more generally, to God's word? The parallelism suggests that the proverb's two key terms should either be taken as *specific* references to prophecy and the law or as *general* references to revelation and God's word. In either case, the meaning is essentially the same. Perhaps the gist of the proverb can be put this way: People bereft of divine guidance run wild, but anyone who obeys God's word finds happiness.

Correlation is the final step in Bible study after observation, interpretation, and application. Correlation asks the question: "Where does it fit?" In other words, where does this passage fit what other passages say about the same thing? Psalm 1 is a corollary passage that describes two ways: the way of the righteous that delight in the law of the LORD, and the way of the wicked that scoff at his law preferring to delight in their own counsel. Verses 1-3 describe the way that prospers. Verses 4-5 describe the way that doesn't. Verse 6 describes the parting of the ways for both. There "the two ways, and there is no third,

part for ever" (Derek Kidner, *Psalms 1-71*, Proverbs, TOTC, 66).

"O the happiness of the one," exclaims the psalmist, who refuses to think like the ungodly. He doesn't "walk in the counsel of the wicked." Neither does he act like the ungodly. He doesn't "stand in the way [pathway] of sinners." Nor does he hang out with the ungodly. He doesn't "sit in the seat of mockers." The main point of this threefold picture is to show that the one who is blessed does not follow the godless way of life. Instead, he delights in the law of the LORD so much so that he "meditates" on it all the time—it's always on his mind. The Hebrew verb is interesting. It means literally to "mutter." "This same verb *h-g-h* is used of a young lion growling over his prey (Isa. 31:4), of the moaning of a dove (Isa. 38:14), and as a synonym of 'to speak' (37:30; 71:24). 'He meditates' may mean in our context 'he reads to himself [or recites to himself] in a low tone', and the purpose of this activity is clear from Jos. 1:8: '. . . you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous . . .' So this 'meditation' is not merely an intellectual exercise but, above all, it is a study of the will of God for the purpose of doing it" (A. A. Anderson, *The Book of Psalms*, NCBC, 1:60). As a result, he is "like a tree planted" or "transplanted" by "streams of water" (lit., "irrigation channels") that provide a reliable source of life-giving water in an arid environment. The same imagery is used by Jeremiah to describe the man who trusts in the LORD. "He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit" (17:7, 8). The word "transplanted" in verse 3 suggests that what the man does prospers not because of fortuitous circumstances but because of God.

"Not so the wicked!" declares the psalmist. In stark contrast to the godly person whose life has substance, worth, gravitas if you will, the ungodly person has none of these. The ungodly are like "chaff" carried away by the wind in contrast to the lush tree that no wind can uproot. Therefore, in the judgment they haven't a leg to stand on and are denied access to

"the assembly of the righteous." They don't belong with God's people in God's presence either now or in the future.

"The LORD watches over" the righteous but not the wicked, and so they are destined to part company.

"The only mention of divine action in this psalm is withheld until the last verse. On the surface, the fates of the righteous and the wicked have appeared to be determined by natural law: the former go the way of

a tree planted by streams of water, and the latter the way of chaff. But the process is not automatic. The enigmatic word choice in verse 3 may hint that the mysterious 'transplanter' and 'irrigator' is revealed now in verse 6" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 43). The LORD acts on behalf of the righteous, but he lets the wicked perish. Life lived apart from the LORD and his law is doomed.

The Message of the Passage

*True happiness belongs to those who obey God's word,
not those who run wild without it.*

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 3 "living questions" 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?

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

v. 18 **revelation** Lit., "vision" (NASB); cf., "prophetic vision" (ESV, NET). "The meaning of without (*b^een*; see 5:23) revelation (*hazon*) is disputed. *Hazon* has been rendered 'vision' (KJV), 'authority' (REB), 'prophecy' (Vulg., NRSV), and many other things. The KJV a, Vulgate, and NRSV probably based their renditions on the noun's consistent association with the prophet who 'sees in a vision or hears in an audition' (e.g., Hos. 12:10 [11])" (Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 15-31*, NICOT, 445-46). "Two of the words have distinct theological relevance: 'vision' and 'law.' Whether they retain this nuance in the book of Proverbs is a matter of debate. In prophetic literature especially, *hazon* designates the vision of the prophet, but it occurs only here in Proverbs. Still, it could be a reflection on the social situation in which prophets are disregarded, or are lacking; cf. the famine for the word of the Lord in Amos 8:11-12. The parallel term [*torah*], 'law,' occurs elsewhere, especially in Prov 28:7, for the command of the sage, or possibly the priests. If it is strictly parallel to the prophetic 'vision,' it may refer to the greater 'law' of the Pentateuch. In a broad sense the terms indicate at least the teaching and instruction of the sage, but usually their words are directed to an individual or a class. Here, the 'people' are involved. Moreover, it is less common to use the beatitude formula of a 'people'; it is more frequent with an individual" (Roland E. Murphy, *Word Biblical Commentary*, vol. 22, *Proverbs*, 222-23). While some commentators take *hazon* to refer "to the sage's inspired revelation of wisdom" (Waltke, 446), most take it to refer more generally to special revelation (cf., 1Sa 3:1), e.g., scripture (Derek Kidner, *Proverbs*, TOTC, 175-76). In a nutshell, the Hebrew word refers to divine communication and "not to individual goals or plans" (the NET Bible, 56^{tn} on Pr 19:18).

v. 18 **cast off** "Perish (AV): rather, 'run wild'. The verb means to let loose, e.g. to let one's hair down, whether literally (Lv. 13:45; Nu. 5:18; ?Jdg. 5:2) or figuratively (especially Ex. 32:25 (twice): RV 'broken loose', etc.)" (Kidner, 175-76). "A nation left to its own devices can *run wild* just as an individual (see 29:15b)" (Waltke, 446, italics added).

v. 18 **blessed is he** "Its [*run wild*] imprecise parallel *blessed is he* (see 3:13; 14:21), implies 'People are only truly happy when they earnestly and willingly subordinate themselves to the word of God which they possess and have the opportunity of hearing'" (Waltke, 447).

v. 18 **law** The corresponding term in the parallel line is "revelation" suggesting that the two terms are near synonyms even though the parallelism may be imprecise. For example, one commentator sees an allusion to the scriptures in this proverb. "The Hebrew word is used specifically of God's medium for the communication of His will through a prophet, and it may well be intended here as a term for the prophetic literature as distinct from Torah, the first of the three divisions of the Scriptures. 'The meaning of this verse, therefore, is that if the prophetic Books are not read and acted upon the people run riot morally; if, on the other hand, the law of Moses, as contained in the Pentateuch, is followed—which implies, of course, that the five Books are studied—it will bring happiness' (Oesterley)" (A. Cohen, *Proverbs*, Soncino Books of the Bible, 197).

Psalms 1:1 blessed Lit., "O the happiness of the man," or "How blessed is the one" (the NET Bible; cf., NASB). The word 'happy' is a good rendition of 'blessed' provided one keeps in mind that the condition of 'bliss' is not merely a feeling. Even when the righteous do not feel happy, they are still considered 'blessed' from God's perspective. He bestows the gift on them. Neither negative feelings nor adverse conditions can take away his blessing" (Willem A. VanGemeren, *Psalms*, TEBC, rev. ed., 5:78, 79; cf., "O, how very happy is the man!" H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of the Psalms*, 34).

v. 2 **delight** "The positive portrayal of the blessed defines that person by what 'turns him on' (his delight) and by what preoccupies him (he meditates day and night)—in other words, by what he truly values" (Craig C. Broyles, *Psalms*, NIBC, 42).

v. 2 **law of the LORD** The term is nearly synonymous with the "word of God" (Leupold, 35).

v. 2 **meditates** "The Hebrew verb means literally 'to mutter.' It is somewhat analogous to 'reading' (Remember that silent reading is a relatively recent invention), but it also connotes the notion of 'mulling' something over and over. It thus comes to have the derived mental notion of 'pondering'" (Broyles, 42).

v. 3 **like a tree** "This word choice implies that the tree is able to transcend natural circumstances, but not because of its natural or inherent abilities" [cf., v.6] (Broyles, 43).

v. 4 **like chaff** "Chaff is, in such a setting, the ultimate in what is rootless, weightless (cf. the 'vain and light persons' of Judg. 9:4, AV) and useless" (Kidner, 65).

v. 6 **watches over** Lit., "knows." The verse can have two slightly different nuances: 1) "the LORD rewards the behavior of the godly" or 2) "the LORD watches over the destiny of the godly" (the NET Bible, 28^{tn} on v. 6).

Family Talk

Encouragement from one parent's heart to another

A mission statement is a statement of the purpose of a company, organization or person-its reason for existing. It is a written declaration of an organization's core purpose and focus that normally remains unchanged over time. Properly crafted mission statements (1) serve as filters to separate what is important from what is not, (2) clearly state which markets will be served and how, and (3) communicate a sense of intended direction to the entire organization. Every successful business has a mission statement. But what about our families? Do we have a clearly stated goal of where we want our families to go, be and do? In his book, Family ID - Intentional Directions, Greg Gunn explains that a family mission statement founded in God's Word will do 3 things. First, it will serve as a compass and give you godly direction. Second, it will act as a rudder and steer your family in the right direction. Third, it will act as a telescope, giving vision for the near and distant future. A family mission statement has the power to change the course of your family and create a new heritage for generations to come. Take some time this week to pray with your family and ask God to show you what He wants for your family. What will your mission be? Write it down and post it for everyone to see and follow daily!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Read Proverbs 29:18 and Psalm 1

1. What happens when there is no revelation from God?
2. Who is blessed?
3. In Psalm 1, what does the blessed man delight in?

What Do You Think

The person who mediates on and obeys God's Word is like a tree planted by streams of water. The tree is healthy and strong and can withstand strong winds. It houses birds and squirrels and provides fruit and shade. Take some time to think about your spiritual walk with the Lord. Is it healthy like this tree?

What R U Going To Do

Psalm 1 describes a beautiful tree planted by a stream. Draw a picture of the tree by the stream. Keep it in or near your Bible this week so you will be reminded that in order for our faith to be strong, we must be planted in God's Word.

MEMORY TIME

Core Comp

Authority of the Bible - I believe the Bible is God's book that tells me what to believe and do.

Memory Verse

Pr 29:18 - *Where there is no revelation; the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.*

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

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 Psalm 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 Psalm 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 Psalm 95:1-7

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

Prayer Psalm 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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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.