

#9: Reading the Book of Proverbs with a Praying Spirit

So That It Will Render Us Nuggets and Gems to

Strengthen Our Life of Pursuing Christ for the

Fulfillment of God's Economy 3/29-4/4

OL Summary: **I.** Proverbs is a collection of the words of the wise; it stresses the wisdom that man receives of God through his contacting of God, and it teaches man how to behave and build up his character in his human life: **A.** Since the proverbs were collected mainly by two kings (Solomon and Hezekiah) in the age of the law, the book of Proverbs may be considered a subsidiary to the law. **B.** The law is the portrait of God; as such, it demands that God's people keep it so that they may be made copies of God for His expression and glorification. **C.** Proverbs, as a subsidiary to the law, instructs people how to behave and how to build themselves up according to God's attributes, that is, according to what God is.

II. Proverbs has a particular character; that is, it presents to us the words of wisdom by many ancient wise men, which is unanimously considered good by all the people who read it; but we have to realize that what the book of Proverbs is to us depends upon what kind of persons we are and by what way we take it: **A.** If we are ethical persons with a strong mind and have a desire to be perfect as genuine moral persons, surely this book would help us to make a success in our pursuit of perfection; however, it would not help us to be persons who live in our spirit according to the Spirit of God. **B.** When we come to the book of Proverbs, we need to turn ourselves from the mind to the spirit by praying in our spirit; if we come to Proverbs in this way, we will be touching the Word by the new man, and we will live a life not by our natural man, by our old man, and by our self but by the Lord Jesus, who is our life and person living in our spirit. **C.** We must reject self-cultivation, condemn the building up of the natural man in the old creation, and come to Proverbs as a regenerated man in the new creation by exercising our spirit with the Spirit to contact the word in the spirit of prayer so that the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us. **D.** As New Testament believers, we should believe that Proverbs is a part of the holy word in God's Holy Scriptures; the psalmist says, "I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love" (Psa. 119:48); to lift up our hand unto the word of God is to indicate that we receive it warmly and gladly and that we say Amen to it. **E.** Proverbs is the breath of God for us to breathe in that we may receive the life supply from God; the Bible is God's exhaling; when we read any verse by means of all prayer, this pray-reading becomes our inhaling of God's breath. **F.** We should read Proverbs by being filled with the fullness of God in our spirit; furthermore, we should read Proverbs in the New Testament Spirit of life, with our regenerated spirit, and by mingling prayer with our reading in order to mingle the words with spirit and life.

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III. According to God's economy, the big proverbs, like nuggets, and the small ones, like gems, are not for us to build up our old man; rather, they are for us to build up our new man to strengthen our life of pursuing Christ for the fulfillment of God's economy in producing and building up the Body of Christ, which consummates the New Jerusalem as God's heart's desire and ultimate goal: **A.** We need to receive the living and operative word of God with a praying spirit so that we can build up our new man and so that we may be able to discern our spirit from our soul. **B.** We should not come to Proverbs as a letter-keeper but as a God-seeker; we should be those who seek God with all our heart, who seek God's favor by entreating His countenance, who ask God to cause His face to shine upon us, and who walk in God's presence.

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IV. Ephesians 4:22-24 tells us clearly that a believer in Christ has two men—the old man and the new man; the old man is of Adam through our natural birth, and the new man is of Christ by a new birth, regeneration; we need to live a life of putting off the old man and putting on the new man; according to God's economy, Proverbs should not be used to cultivate and build up our old man but to cultivate and build up our regenerated new man:

A. In order to enter into the intrinsic significance of the book of Proverbs according to God's economy, we need to be those who are living according to the new creation; the old creation is our old man in Adam, our natural being by birth, without God's life and the divine nature; the new creation is the new man in Christ, our being that is regenerated by the Spirit, having God's life and the divine nature wrought into it, having Christ as its constituent, and having become a new constitution.

B. In our spirit there is the marvelous, wonderful, processed, all-inclusive, sevenfold intensified, life-giving Spirit; when we exercise our spirit to contact Christ as the living Word of God in the written word of God, He becomes the applied word of God as the Spirit to us; then our reading of any word in the Bible will become spirit and life to us to revive us. **C.** We need to turn the Bible from a book that apparently teaches us to cultivate the self and to build up the natural man into a book that actually is full of light, life, spirit, and spiritual nourishment by receiving it in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer; this will tear down our self, break our natural man, and supply us with the consummated Spirit of the Triune God.

V. We must be persons who love the Lord and pursue Christ, not self-perfection, and who love the Lord's word in the entire Bible and read it with a praying spirit, not to seek the doctrine of letters but to seek the Spirit and word of life; we should read Proverbs not to gain any help for self-cultivation but to nourish our spirit so that we may live a Christian life that is perfect in the divine virtues, which are the expressions of the divine attributes.

CPI: When we exercise our mingled spirit and come to the word, the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us

OL1: In the Old Testament Job was satisfied with his integrity, with his pursuit of human perfection, but that was not what God wanted of him; rather, it replaced what God wanted of him, and it became an enemy of God, frustrating Job as a man created by God to fulfill God's purpose. God's purpose was for Job to gain Him for the glorification of God, the expression of God; the highest service that we can render to God is for us to gain God to the uttermost, to be filled with God, in order to express God for His glory. OL2: We must reject self-cultivation, condemn the building up of the natural man in the old creation, and come to Proverbs as a regenerated man in the new creation by exercising our spirit with the Spirit to contact the word in the spirit of prayer so that the word in Proverbs will become spirit and life to us. Prov. 1:1-4 The proverbs of Solomon...: For knowing wisdom and instruction; for discerning words of understanding; for receiving instruction in wise conduct, righteousness, justice, and equity; for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young man. Psa. 119:48 And I will lift up my hand to Your commandments, which I love... 2 Tim. 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work. John 6:63 It is the Spirit who gives life;...the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.

Most Christians today have made the New Testament of the Spirit and of life the Old Testament of letters. To Paul the apostle even the Old Testament was like the New Testament, of the Spirit and of life. Too many Christians have made the New Testament proverbs, precepts, exhortations, and instructions of letters. Our life-studies have made all of the Old Testament, as the Word of God, books of the Spirit and of life. By this we have to realize that what the book of Proverbs would be to us depends upon what kind of persons we are and by what way we take it.

As New Testament believers, we should believe that Proverbs is a part of the holy word in God's Holy Scriptures. We should realize that Proverbs is the breath of God for us to breathe in that we may receive the life supply from God. Next, we should read Proverbs by being filled with the fullness of God in our spirit, in the New Testament Spirit of life, with our regenerated spirit, and by pray-reading to mingle it with spirit and life.

I can testify that after just a few minutes of fellowship with the Lord, I am fed, nourished, and stirred up. Then when I come to the Bible, every word becomes a gem. We all need to read the book of Proverbs in this way. Then every word of Proverbs will become spirit and life to us. Every word will be living and become a gem to strengthen our life of pursuing Christ for the fulfillment of God's economy in producing and building up the Body of Christ.

Application to New Ones, Youth and College Students

Brother's testimony: When I was saved, I thought that the Lord would help me to become a good moral person. And I thought I had to work harder in order to become a good person. I did not understand that it was not God's economy for me to become a good person.

The church took us college students to Taiwan for blending every year. The brothers and sisters of the churches in Taiwan were strong in spirit, rejoiced in the spirit, and expressed the Lord in a natural way. I thought to myself, "Why is it so different?" When I returned to Japan, I thought, "We could be just like them, if we change something." Because it was strange that the brothers and sisters in Taiwan could do it and we in Japan could not. However, I was not able to find the answer then.

At that time, I had the opportunity to stay with the brother's house in Los Angeles for a month. That time, I participated in a meeting of junior and senior high students. Young junior and senior high students enjoyed the following hymn of the Triune God. I was trying hard to understand the Triune God, but they just praised out loud and enjoyed the hymn.

1. The Son with the Father by the Spirit
O what mystery! The fullness of all the Godhead dwells in Him bodily.
Wonderful One, Son with the Father, Wonderful One, Son by the Spirit, Wonderful Jesus Christ, Wonderful Triune, Wonderful Triune God.
7. And in his enthronement as Head over all things,
The processed God is He, Dispensing Himself as the life-giving Spirit, producing His Body.
The Triune God is not for doctrine.
The Trinity is for dispensing. He's now dispensing, And we're enjoying, and we're enjoying Him.

It was at this point that I began to recognize that God's economy was for me to enjoy Christ. When one enjoys the Lord, expressing Him and functioning for Him will all come naturally. However, I was serving without much enjoyment, and I was often in pain and at a standstill.

2 Cor. 13:14 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

FN: This verse is strong proof that the trinity of the Godhead is not for the doctrinal understanding of systematic theology but for the dispensing of God Himself in His trinity into His chosen and redeemed people.

Prayer: Oh Lord Jesus, God's ordained will is for me to possess Him, to manifest His glory, and to express Him. To do that, I need to enjoy the word of God every day. When reading the Bible, I do not read it as if reading the written law, but exercise my spirit and come to the Word with the spirit of prayer. At that time, even the words of the Old Testament shall become spirit and life to me. I exercise my spirit to call on the name of the Lord, and sing the hymns out loud. Make me a person that is always joyful in the Lord. Amen!

CP2:Receive the word of God by means of prayer and petition and learn to stand on the word of God and pray accordingly like Nehemiah

OL1:All the words in Proverbs are God's breathing, which is altogether embodied in Christ; as we read Proverbs, we need to inhale all that God has exhaled, all that He has breathed out; by inhaling the divine breath in Proverbs, the more we receive the breath of the speaking God, the more we will enjoy Christ. **OL2:** Whereas the children of Israel were charged to keep the commandments, statutes, and ordinances, we today need to keep Christ; by taking Christ, keeping Christ, and holding fast to Him, we will gain Him, enjoy Him, and live Him; we need to love Christ, keep Christ, teach Christ, wear Christ, and write Christ. **OL3:** Because the Scriptures are the breathing out of God, the exhaling of God, we should inhale the Scriptures by receiving the word of God, including the book of Proverbs, by means of all prayer; as we are teaching the Bible, we should be exhaling God into people. [Eph. 4:22-24](#) ...Put off, as regards your former manner of life, the old man, which is being corrupted according to the lusts of the deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind and put on the new man, which was created according to God in righteousness and holiness of the reality. [2 Tim. 3:16](#) All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. [Eph. 6:17-18](#) And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit and watching unto this in all perseverance and petition concerning all the saints.

We need to have this realization when we come to the Bible. We may study the Bible either by the old man or by the new man. Many Christians study the Word in a natural way, according to their old man.... If we merely exercise our mind to get knowledge from the Word, we are reading it by the old man. To read the Bible by the new man is very different. Even before coming to the Bible, a person in the new man exercises his spirit to contact the Lord. He may confess, saying, "Lord, I am sorry that I live so much in my old man, not exercising my spirit to contact You, to live by my new man, as one of Your new creation. Lord, forgive this sin." When we approach the Bible in this way, exercising our spirit, we have the deep feeling and sense that we are approaching, touching, and contacting God. By this I do not mean that the Bible is God but that in coming to the Bible we are coming to contact God.

For example, I remember reading John 3:16 and praying, "O God, thank You. You loved the world so much. O God my Father, You loved me so much that You gave Your Son, the Only Begotten, to me." I had the feeling that I had touched God and that He had touched me. Through my prayer John 3:16 became Spirit and life to me.

Application to the serving ones

[2 Cor. 3:6](#) Who has also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, ministers not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. If you think of the Bible as a book of law that regulates people, the letter of the Bible will kill you. But if you exercise your spirit and touch the Spirit in the Bible, the Bible becomes Spirit and gives life to you. [Eph. 6:17](#) And receive the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which Spirit is the word of God, [18](#) By means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit. This verse shows us that the best way to receive the words of the Bible is through prayer and petition. Pray-reading is receiving the Word of God in the spirit while praying. The following is an example of Nehemiah's pray-reading. When Nehemiah prayed to God, he stood on God's word and prayed according to it. And God was bound by His own word. [Nehemiah 1:8](#) Remember now the word that You commanded Moses Your servant, saying, If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the peoples; [9](#) But if you return to Me and keep My commandments and perform them, though your outcasts are under the ends of heaven, from there I will gather them and bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell. [10](#) Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power and by Your strong hand. [11](#) I beseech You, O Lord, let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant and to the prayer of Your servants, who take delight in fearing Your name; and cause Your servant to prosper today, and grant him to find compassion before this man.

The following is an example of Daniel's pray-reading. He understood Jeremiah's prophecy that the captivity would last 70 years, and he prayed. [Daniel 9:2](#) I, Daniel, understood by means of the Scriptures the number of the years, which came as the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah the prophet, for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, that is, seventy years. [17](#) And now hear, O our God, the prayer of Your servant and his supplications, and cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary that has been desolated, for the Lord's sake. [18](#) O my God, incline Your ear and hear; open Your eyes and see our desolations and the city that is called by Your name; for we are not presenting our supplications before You based upon any righteous doings that we have done, but based upon Your great compassion. [19](#) O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and take action! Do not delay, for Your own sake, O my God; for Your city and Your people are called by Your own name.

Prayer: Oh Lord Jesus, the best way to receive the word of the Bible is through prayer and petition. Let me learn to exercise my spirit, to pray read the Bible in a way that touches the spirit in the Bible, and to pray in a way that touches God's will. When Nehemiah prayed to God, he stood on the word of God and prayed according to it. And God was bound by His own word. Like Nehemiah, I pray read the word of God, touch the will of God, and pray for the fulfillment of His will. Amen!

CP3: Our greatest problem is our mixture of soul and spirit.
God's word can divide the soul and the spirit.

OL1: The enemy's strategy is always to mix our spirit up with our soul; our greatest problem is our mixture; the more we know God by being filled with His light, His presence, the more we will treasure purity over power. **OL2:** The way to purge such mixture is through the revelation of the Holy Spirit; the dividing of the soul and the spirit occurs when God's word illuminates us, shining within us to reveal the thoughts and intentions of our heart. **OL3:** Whatever we see under the shining of God from the word of God is killed by the light; the greatest thing in the Christian experience is the killing that comes from light; the dividing of the soul and the spirit comes from the shining. Heb. 4:12 For the word of God is living and operative and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit,...able to discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart. FN **the dividing of soul and spirit:** Our soul is our very self. In following the Lord we must deny our soul, our very self. Our spirit is the deepest part of our being, a spiritual organ with which we contact God. It is in our spirit that we are regenerated. It is in our spirit that the Holy Spirit dwells and works. It is in our spirit that we enjoy Christ and His grace. Hence, the writer of this book advised the Hebrew believers not to stagger in the wandering of their soul, which soul they had to deny but to press on into their spirit to enjoy Him. **OL4:** Revelation is seeing what God sees; it is God opening our eyes to see our intentions and the deepest thoughts in our being as God sees them; as soon as God exposes our thoughts and shows us the intentions of our heart, our soul will be separated, divided, from our spirit. **OL5:** Apart from pray-reading, the book of Proverbs is merely a collection of proverbs, but when we read Proverbs prayerfully, that is, when we pray-read Proverbs, our pray-reading causes all the proverbs to become words of spirit and life to us. **OL6:** In our spirit there is the marvelous, wonderful, processed, all-inclusive, sevenfold intensified, life-giving Spirit; when we exercise our spirit to contact Christ as the living Word of God in the written word of God, He becomes the applied word of God as the Spirit to us; then our reading of any word in the Bible will become spirit and life to us to revive us. 2 Tim. 1:6-7 For which cause I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you...For God has not given us a spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of sobermindedness. John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. **OL7:** We need to turn the Bible from a book that apparently teaches us to cultivate the self and to build up the natural man into a book that actually is full of light, life, spirit, and spiritual nourishment by receiving it in a spirit and atmosphere of prayer; this will tear down our self, break our natural man, and supply us with the consummated Spirit of the Triune God.

Application to Business person & Serving ones

You need to pray-read the word of God to divide your spirit from your soul, be illuminated and killed by the light.

For example, there are people you do not like in your company or in the service of the church. You should treat that person "With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace (Eph.4:2-3)." In order to do this, you must first expose and kill the factors in your soul that prevent you from reconciling with others and divide you, such as anger, contempt, jealousy, and competitiveness, by the light of the Word. You need to open to the light of the Lord and confess your sins. Then, after experiencing the killing of the cross, comes the dispensing of the Spirit. All the human virtues of lowliness, meekness, with long-suffering, bearing one another in love, being diligent to keep the oneness of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace in Eph.4:2-3 need to be strengthened and uplifted by the divine attributes as they enter into them. All the divine attributes are in the Spirit. So in these situations, please call on the name of the Lord and receive the divine dispensing to improve your human relationships. Satan's principle is division, but God's principle is Oneness. Since the church has the uniting bond of peace, experience the power of reconciliation and unity at work and in the service of church. When you use the spirit to pray-read the Word, you are touched, illuminated, killed by the Spirit and receive dispensing in the Word. Then we can experience the transfers **from misunderstanding to understanding, from rejection to acceptance, from anger to compassion, from pride to lowliness, from friction to reconciliation, from impatience to patience, and from division to the uniting bond of peace.**

Brother's Testimony: From the age of 33 to 57, I worked for foreign pharmaceutical and medical device companies. The business of medical devices are regulated by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW). The Japanese value regulations so much that there is little flexibility in regulation. For this reason, US medical device companies used to strongly criticize the MHLW. Also, the MHLW did not trust foreign companies very much. Under these circumstances, the executives in pharmaceutical affairs at the Japanese company were not functioning properly, criticizing the MHLW to the US headquarters and criticizing the US headquarters to the MHLW. I did the opposite and encouraged both parties to work together. To the US headquarters, I gave good report about the MHLW, and to the MHLW, I gave good report about the U.S. headquarters, explaining "The ultimate goal is the same in improving medical care in Japan." I was able to extract a large investment from the U.S. headquarters, and was able to conduct several clinical trials that the MHLW had wanted. In the end, with the cooperation of the MHLW, we were able to make the company the best in Japan by introducing new medical technology three years after I joined the company. This was the result of applying the "uniting bonds of peace" that I carry out in the church life to business. **Prayer:** Oh Lord Jesus, there are factors in me that make me unreconciled to others, factors that divide me: anger, contempt, jealousy, and competitiveness. When these are exposed by the light of the Word, I confess my sins and receive the divine dispensing. Pray-read the Word by exercising the spirit, and touch the Spirit and be illuminated, and killed by the Spirit in the Word, receive the dispensing, and experience the transfer from misunderstanding to understanding, from rejection to acceptance, from anger to compassion, from pride to lowliness, from friction to reconciliation, from impatience to patience, from division to the uniting bond of peace, and improve human relationships. Amen!