



## NINE WAYS TO INCREASE THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE

TO: LEGISLATORS

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I would like to underscore how important it is to support strong, serious Bible-teaching ministries in our nation's federal and state Capitols. The existence or absence of such has an inestimable impact on the course of a nation. That conviction is why I am so committed to what we do here in the Capitol. When the civil leader Zerubbabel led Israel's first wave of return from Babylonian captivity he was accompanied by the religious leader Jeshua. Jeshua it appears was not much of a Bible teacher, and in both a literal and proverbial sense, the city of Jerusalem remained in disrepair. In contrast, during the second wave of return, the civil leader Nehemiah was accompanied by the religious leader Ezra. Ezra was a serious and effective Bible expositor whom God used to transform the hearts of the people. Subsequently Jerusalem was rebuilt! The partnership of William Wilberforce and John Newton serves to illustrate the same point in recent history. Today, we should not overlook this principle as we consider how to rebuild America: The violation of it, I believe, is the single reason why the 1994 "Contract with America" imploded. When the Church comes alongside the State first to buoy, mentor, disciple and mature Legislators in Christ, great things result! Not only is God glorified, and His Kingdom expanded—but nations are reformed!

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IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING FIRST-VOTES-BACK  
Capitol Room H324 • Dinner served, Spouses welcome

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## THE BOOK OF PROVERBS: NINE LIFE-GIVING QUALITIES

### I. INTRODUCTION

In studying the book of Proverbs, one ingests many Aphorisms (“a brief statement of a principle”). This is one of the most basic forms of instruction. In the ancient world, where books were few, institutions of learning rare, and peoples’ minds unpracticed in reasoning, and abstract thinking, the use of terse (that is to say, “effectively concise”) striking sentences was (and remains today) a most efficient and effective means of inculcating moral, life-guiding precepts. I like how Charles Bridges summarizes Proverbs in his commentary:

All the beauties of language, and all the force of eloquence are poured forth in the diversified form of earnest expostulation, insinuating tenderness, captivating argument, and sublime allegory, to win [one] to virtue and piety, and to fix him in a steady pursuit of his duties towards God and man....Wisdom is therefore allegorized as a tree of life, yielding delicious shade, fruit, and protection to those that approach her branches; throwing the garland of honour around their shoulders, and decorating their heads with a graceful chaplet, more precious than rubies. She is a sage and eloquent monitor, lifting up her warning voice in the gates and in the squares of the city...

What follow is all that the book of Proverbs has to say regarding life and death. The study will be organized into the ways one can increase or conversely, decrease the length and quality of their life. Proverbs 15:24 reads,

***The path of life leads upward for the wise, that he may keep away from Sheol below.***

Sheol is another name for Hell in the OT; it is a place of death, of no return (Job 7:9), darkness (Psa. 143:3) and torment (Isa. 14:11). Unfortunately, many are those on earth whose destiny is Sheol—due to self-pride, wickedness and debauchery. Herein then is a fitting introduction to a lesson on life and death because of the parallel eternal contrast, meaning the further one walks in heavenly ways the further they distance themselves

from hell on earth. The believer, at the point of justification (or salvation) is seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus (cf. Eph. 2:6) where his or her citizenship lies (cf. Phil. 3:20). Accordingly they are

...Born from above; taught from above; walking above, while they are living on earth. A soaring life indeed! The soul mounts up, looks aloft, enters into the holiest, rises above herself, and finds her resting place in the bosom of her God. A most transcendent life!...not only is this out of reach of carnal men, but beyond the comprehension of all (Job 11:7-9)...The wise in their most favored moments cannot fully conceive their present privileges; how much less the glorious unfolding, when the clouds shall never more be known....The Children of God walk...with a holy loftiness above the debasing pleasure of earth [In contrast] those who mind earthly things, their end is the hell beneath....” (Bridges, p. 214-5).

Proverbs provides at least nine ways to increase the quality of one’s life. As you walk in the power and control of the Holy Spirit ask God to give you an increased sensitivity and awareness of that which follows.

### II. NINE LIFE-GIVING QUALITIES

#### A. BY FEARING THE LORD

***10:27 The fear of the LORD prolongs life, But the years of the wicked will be shortened.***

**The fear of the LORD** is a major theme in Proverbs. It speaks of a reverential awe, admiration and submissive adulation of one’s Creator. Such an attitude is the seedbed for the germination and growth of spiritual knowledge and wisdom. And in a pragmatic sense...

#### **AN ATTITUDE OF HUMILITY TOWARD ONE’S MAKER PROLONGS LIFE**

“The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one’s own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals are exchanged for God’s.” Such is illustrated in Psalm 42:1, “As the deer pants for water, so my

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soul lengthen after Thee.” Conversely, when one rejects Christ, their selfishness and bondage to habitual sins result in premature aging. Other benefits of **fearing the LORD** are listed in the following three Proverbs:

## 1. Victory over Habitual Sin

**14:27** *The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, that one may turn away from the snares of death.*

## 2. Satisfaction and Safety

**19:23** *The fear of the LORD leads to life, So that one may sleep satisfied, untouched by evil.*

## 3. Riches and Honor

**22:4** *The reward for humility and the fear of the LORD is riches, honor and life.*

These are some of the practical virtues that accrue to the life of a believer who walks in awe and humility before his or her Maker.

**B. BY OBEYING ONE’S PARENTS**

**3:1-2** *My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your heart keep my commandments; For length of days and years of life And peace they will add to you.*

The Hebrew word for **teaching** as used in this context refers to Solomon’s instruction of his son Rehoboam. Notice the direct promise of a longer life—if one is obedient to the instruction of their father and mother (cf. 1:8). This promise is also stated in the NT book of Ephesians 6:1-3:

**Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH.**

The Apostle Paul is quoting from the sixth of the Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20:12; cf. Exo. 21:15, 17). (The Updated New American Standard

Bible NT always references the OT with capital letters). The biblical idea of **honoring** relates primarily to one’s attitude toward their parents. It is a principle repeatedly mentioned in Proverbs in many different ways (cf. 1:8; 3:1; 4:1-4; 7:1-3; 10:1; 17:21; 19:13, 26; 28:24) and speaks to the high regard one should have for those who brought him or her into this world with personal sacrifice...

**4:10-13** *Hear, my son, and accept my sayings and the years of your life will be many. I have directed you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in upright paths. When you walk, your steps will not be impeded; and if you run, you will not stumble. Take hold of instruction; do not let go. Guard her, for she is your life.*

The benefits of cherishing one’s parents and wisdom are further elaborated on in Proverbs 3:8:

***It will be healing to your body And refreshment to your bones***

Contextually, to the one who obeys their father and mother and lives wisely, God gives (in principle not promise) physical well-being. A great illustration in an opposite sense is provided by the account of David with Bathsheba. Prior to David’s confession of his sin, he said in Psalm 32:3...

***When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer.***

In a NT sense of this principle, Paul said that the reason some believers were sick or dead was their lack of obedience to God’s ways, in that believers partook of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy way. As a result, “many are weak and sick among you, and many asleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). Obedience and disobedience to God’s ways are sometimes directly related to life and death in both the Old and New Testaments (cf. Acts 5:9). It follows therefore that Solomon would state repeatedly the importance of keeping the teaching of one’s parents and godly



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wisdom when he says, “Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life” (4:13). And in 4:21-23...

***Do not let them [my instructions] depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issue of life.***

Solomon is saying that from the mind—and what one has programmed into it—will be the determination of one’s speech, sight and conduct (cf. 4:24-27). Moreover, from the mind will be one’s determinations regarding sexual purity or sin (cf. 6:20-35; 7:1-27).

### WHAT DO THE PARENTS OF LEGISLATORS THINK WHEN THEIR SON OR DAUGHTER CAST VOTES FOR THINGS THAT ARE UNBIBLICAL?

How would policies differ if legislators honored their parents' counsel over other influences? This nation would be a different, better place.

#### C. BY FINDING WISDOM

The prerequisite for wisdom in the book of Proverbs and throughout Scripture is repentance and placing one’s faith in the Messiah. Note Proverbs 9:10 & 11 in this regard,

***9:10-11 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied; And years of life will be added to you.***

The means by which one has multiplied days and years of life **multiplied** is by first placing their faith in God for salvation. Notice the following Proverbs in 3:13-18 related to gaining a long and quality-based life here on earth:

***How blessed is the man who finds wisdom; And the man who gains understanding.***

***For her profit is better than the profit of silver; And her gain better than fine gold. She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares 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 take hold of her; And happy are all who hold her fast.***

Even though this study relates to gaining a long and quality life (v. 16a; 18), notice from this passage the other benefits and treasures that accrue to the one who acquires and seeks after wisdom:

1. Profitability and gain (14)
2. Riches (16b)
3. Honor (16b)
4. Pleasantness (17a)
5. Peace (17b)
6. Life (18a)
7. Happiness (18b)

These seven characteristics are the pursuit of most, if not all Americans. Few of us, however, seem to invest in the right place. States Solomon in 8:35 & 36, as he personifies wisdom,

***For he who finds me [wisdom] finds life and obtains favor from the LORD. But he who sins against me [wisdom] injures himself; all those who hate me love death.***

The pursuit of wisdom is the proper priority of life. Remember the prayer of Solomon in 1Kings 3:6-14? Wisdom was his highest priority—that which he asked God for above all else—and as a result, God blessed him with all of the aforementioned. Do you seek first God’s wisdom (cf. Matthew 6:33)? Whereas wisdom was personified by Solomon in the above passage (a literary device) in the following Proverb he summarily refers to wisdom as God’s commandment. In essence, the book of Proverbs is, and contains, the application and implication of all of God’s moral law: Notice Proverbs 19:16,



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***Whoever keeps the commandment keeps his life; he who despises his ways will die.***

It is crucial to note the relationship of wisdom to the inner person or one's soul:

***3:22 So they [wisdom] will be life to your soul And adornment to your neck***

Wise people are seen throughout Proverbs as spiritual people and spiritual people as wise. They go hand-in-hand. The result is that wisdom **adorns** one's life and others will judge your wisdom as being beautiful, depicted here allegorically (def. "symbolically representational") by its manifestation existing so to speak, **to your neck**. The honorable will honor your pursuit of wisdom, and life will be wreathed with beauty.

### D. BY ACCEPTING DISCIPLINE

***6:23 For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life***

***10:17 He is on the path of life who heeds instruction; But he who ignores reproof goes astray.***

***15:10 There is a severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.***

The grand NT passage on God's discipline of His children is found in Hebrews 12:5-11. It is well worth one's time to meditate on this insightful passage. Discipline yields the "peaceful fruit of righteousness" (12:11) which is life indeed.

### E. BY PURSUING RIGHTEOUSNESS

***10:2 Ill-gotten gains do not profit, But righteousness delivers from death.***

***10:16-17 The wages of the righteous is life, The income of the wicked, punishment. The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; He who watches his way preserves his life.***

The **highway** simile is used to express the habitual course of the upright. When one stays in this road they are safe and **preserve** the quality of their life. This is a good place to note that...

**THE PROPENSITY TO SIN OFTEN OCCURS WHEN PEOPLE GET OUT OF THEIR INDUSTRIOUS ROUTINE AND HAVE FREE TIME ON THEIR HANDS**

This is evident also in the life of David with Bathsheba, (2Samuel 11:2). States Proverbs...

***12:28 In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death.***

***21:21 He who pursues righteousness and loyalty; Finds life, righteousness and honor.***

In the NT Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said in the beatitudinal section, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be satisfied" (Mt. 5:6). Notice the construction of this passage—and Proverbs 21:21 above, related to the pursuit of righteousness—satisfaction in life is not born from the pursuit of satisfaction. Rather, it is a consequence of the pursuit of righteousness.

### F. BY EVANGELIZING THE LOST

***11:30 The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; And he who is wise wins souls.***

The metaphoric phrase **tree of life** as it recurs throughout Psalms and Proverbs refers to temporal spiritual nourishment, healing and refreshment (see the Bridges quote in the opening section). A righteous person then, becomes a giver of life to others, and when we serve to upgrade another's quality of life, our life is equally blessed. Furthermore, when the righteous evangelize, they help the sinner in the ultimate sense of their real need—delivering them from Hell to Heaven. 1Cor. 9:22 underscores this truth in the NT. Paul states regarding his own ministry methodology, "I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some." That is to say, without



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compromising scriptural truths or principles, the wise believer is to adapt, in order to relate to, and pursue various means in attempting to save others. Evangelizing others invigorates and stimulates one's life like nothing else. There is no greater joy than to learn of other legislators coming to Christ in the Capitol! It gives everyone great joy and life!

### G. BY CHECKING ONE'S SPEECH

***13:3 The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; The one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.***

Evil words provoke violence against oneself. States James in the NT, "the tongue...is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison..." (3:8). Therefore James counsels, "be quick to hear and slow to speak" (1:19). Cultivate the habit of being a person of few words (cf. Eccl. 5:2). Proverbs 10:8 states...

***The wise of heart will receive commands, but a babbling fool will be ruined.***

To the contrary, Proverbs 13:3 says,

***The one who guards his mouth preserves his life; [whereas] the one who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.***

A sage once said that God designed man with two ears and one mouth, suggesting one listen twice as much as he talk. Remember Proverbs 18:21,

***Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.***

Negative in-person tone and body language, or clandestine postings to the internet (especially with misinformation) have a boomerang effect—particularly in the Capital where most everyone possesses "communications radar" equipped with a sophisticated listening device. One's tongue can very easily depreciate one's life. Note 15:4 and be careful...

***A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.***

### H. BY DISCIPLINING ONE'S CHILDREN

***19:18 Discipline your son while there is hope; And do not desire his death.***

Proverbs 13:24 gives further clarification to disciplining a child: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him takes care to chastise him." One who fails to discipline their child produces the same kind of results as one who hates their offspring. Both actions (a failure to discipline and hatred) produce the same kind of child: one who is either spoiled, rebellious or both. Proverbs is replete with the biblical formula for raising children. It not only involves corporal punishment (physical spanking when rebellion is present) (cf. 10:13; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15, 17) but love and kindness. Discipline is necessary in parenting due to the latent Adamic sin which exists in every child (1Cor. 15:22). This corporeal discipline must have the right motivation (Heb. 12:5-11) and the appropriate severity (Eph. 6:4). The more lessons a child learns at home, the better his or her life will be—and yours too!

### I. BY FORMING REPRESENTATIVE-DEMOCRACY GOVERNMENTS

***16:14 The fury of a king is like messengers of death; But a wise man will appease it.***

The vast power of despotic ancient (and present for that matter) Eastern Kings is here in view; life and death lie in the caprice of such a despot. His will is law; the executioner performs his warrant without delay or trial. It is wisdom, states Solomon, to attempt to **appease** or pacify such tyrannical **fury**. States Proverbs 20:2 in regards to one's quality of life around despots...

***The terror of a king is like the growling of a lion; He who provokes him to anger forfeits his own life.***

### III. CONCLUSION

All nine qualities will create a better life for you!