

*Gary Palmer*  
U.S. Representative, Alabama

*Psalm 1:1-2*

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# Who Are Your Counselors In The Capitol? (Proverbs)



For some years now, my weekly Bible studies have gone out to thousands of people throughout our country. As you know, I am committed to sending these out each and every week of the year. That means I will send them electronically to your email address even when you are in your district office back home (should, of course, you desire this). It is a good stimulus for continued growth and maturity in Christ—and is an additional ministry to our regular Bible studies on the Hill.

In this week’s written study, “Who are Your Counselors in the Capitol?” I would like to exhaust the Book of Proverbs regarding what Proverbs mentions about choosing *counselors* in your life. What follows is all that Solomon taught Rehoboam, his son, about this subject in preparation for him to become the next governing leader of Israel. Solomon has much to say about a political leader selecting confidants.

Read on, my friend.

Ralph Drollinger

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WEEKLY BIBLE STUDIES

- Governors:** Fridays 9am (EST), Zoom
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PUBLIC SERVANT  
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## Gary Palmer

U.S. Representative, Alabama  
6th Congressional District



“The Capitol Ministries Bible studies provide an opportunity to share fellowship with colleagues who are believers. More importantly, they also challenge us to be more transparent in our faith and more conscious of the fact that we not only represent our districts, but also the body of Christ.”

### I. INTRODUCTION

Successfully living life and forming good public policy depends on many factors: Along with the pillars of *wisdom* (*wisdom* being the skill at living life for God’s glory), a deep-seated attitude of properly fearing the Lord, the pursuit of His *knowledge*, and the *understanding* of His precepts, there is the additional towering need for a public servant to continually receive good *counsel*. Every government leader, support staff member, and lobbyist should surround him- or herself with *wise counselors*; everyone needs excellent confidants. A confidant is someone whom you implicitly trust. A confidant is someone you listen to—a person who cares and protects you at all times. Accordingly, whom you choose as such is a very important matter. Please allow me to attempt to expand your *understanding* of confidants—as other than just several good friends.

Notice first, however, that Proverbs reveals that some individuals, being self-absorbed, don’t even possess good friends as *counselors*:

*Through insolence comes nothing but strife, but wisdom is with those who receive counsel* (13:10).

*Insolence* (in Hebrew, *zadon*) is a word we do not often use today. It means “arrogance; to exaggerate one’s own worth or importance.” It is used here to negatively contrast one who receives *counsel*, i.e., one who possesses trusted confidants. An *insolent* person is characterized by self-centeredness, someone who looks at life through his own limited *knowledge* and perspective. Pride fools this person into thinking outside *counsel* is unnecessary. But notice the fruit of such, states this Proverb, is *strife*. It is not a sign of weakness to ask others about a matter. Quite to the contrary the Bible says that to seek *counsel* is a sign of personal strength and character. King Solomon, the *wisest* man to ever lived (cf. 1 Kings 3:12), believed in seeking *counsel*. He provides

acute insight into those who reject *counsel* in the following Proverbs:

*He who separates himself seeks his own desire; he quarrels against all sound wisdom* (18:1).

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man is he who listens to counsel* (12:15).

Again, these passages make it clear that selfishness is often the mindset of those who refuse to seek the *counsel* of others. Make note of this simple contrast throughout Proverbs:

**Self-centeredness is set in opposition to seeking counsel.**

Always remember that two or three heads are better than one. Furthermore, the larger the decision, the greater should be the *counsel*. Solomon states:

*In abundance of counselors there is victory* (11:14, 24:6).

*Without consultation, plans are frustrated, but with many counselors they succeed* (15:22).

In summary of the introduction,

*Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days. Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand* (19:20–21).

That last stanza implies a key to the matter of *counsel*: Ultimately you must gain *the counsel of the Lord* in order for your decision to *stand* the test of time. It follows that if you must decide on a matter that is not clear cut from Scriptural precepts, how then can you be confident you have obtained *the counsel of the Lord*? May I proffer this in response: by having the right confidants! Beloved, it’s all too easy to be naïve as to the sources of *counsel* God avails to you. Do not lack insight or *wisdom* in



determining how and from whom you will gain **counsel** for indeed there are many foolish **counselors**. How do you choose good confidants? Who should compose your inner circle? Proverbs speaks to this.

## II. SEVEN VERY GOOD CONFIDANTS

There are at least seven ways to receive good **counsel**, sources that should be a regular part of the **wise** person's life. They are

### A. THE WORD OF GOD

The **wisdom** of seeking God's ways via His Word, the Bible, is personified in Proverbs, chapter 1. Notice the association of the Word of God (herein personified in Proverbs—a literary device utilized by Solomon) to this week's study on **counsel**:

*“And you neglected all my counsel and did not want my reproof”* (1:25).

*“They would not accept my counsel, they spurned all my reproof”* (1:30).

*“So they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be satiated with their own devices”* (1:31).

These passages serve to teach that those who mock and disdain God's **counsel** become increasingly **satiated with their own devices**. More specifically, these passages relate to unbelievers and indicate that they will grow increasingly hostile toward Christ and will continue to reject His **reproof** the longer they wait. If you are a mocker of God's **counsel**, His Word, please realize that you might not ever be closer to receiving Christ as your Lord and Savior than you are today. These Proverbs indicate that a person who **neglects** and **will not accept** God's **counsel** will become increasingly self-centered and more distant from God over time.

To the contrary, gladly, God's Word is the believer's preeminent **counselor**, and His Word becomes an even greater **counselor** as

spiritual maturity continues. States 6:23 in this regard:

*For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life.*

God's Word is intended to **light** your path and show the way! This truth should motivate the believer to become a life-long student of His Word; we do not want to be naïve of His precepts when making decisions.

What follows is an amazingly powerful Proverb explaining the supremacy of God's **counsel** via His Word in comparison to any other form of input. One commentator on Proverbs has appropriately stated of the following passage:

The decrees and **counsels** of God are firm and adamant; immovable; notwithstanding all human machinations, [His decrees are] no more to be stayed than the course of the sun.<sup>1</sup>

In essence then, all **counsel** that departs from God and His Word at any point or omits the whole **counsel** of God (cf. Acts 20:27) on a matter, is foolish to receive. (Beware of the *eisegetes* [those who interpret the Bible by reading into it their own ideas] who parachute in with scriptural passages ripped from context that can be used to state just the opposite of what God means.) Note this Proverb carefully:

*There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord* (21:30).

Singularly preeminent is His **counsel** above all else! No person's opinion, future poll, scientific discovery or social experiment will ever trump what God's Word now instructs is right! All of the **counsel** you receive from any of the following sources must first square with Scripture to be of value. This is important to distinguish before moving on in this study—lest the preeminence of scriptural authority be undermined.

VERSE OF THE WEEK



## Psalm 1:1–2

*How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, ... But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”*



Choose your confidants wisely.





Patrick Henry



**By siding with God today on an issue, one will never find himself in the embarrassing spot of later needing to change positions.**

Positions determined and based in and on the principles of His Holy Writ are everlasting and unwavering! The Word should be your confidant. Having affirmed that priority in seeking *counsel*, Scripture does not suggest that the Word is your singular source of *counsel*; there are others.

### B. FRIENDS

*A wise man will hear and increase in learning, and a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel* (1:5).

A *wise counselor* is a God-fearing man or woman who knows and lives out the Scripture. No other ingredient in the resume of a person you would seek *counsel* from should loom as important! *Counselors* steeped in other things from public surveys to demographics to psychographics must pale in comparison to the *wisdom* you would receive from a godly *counselor* who bases his advice on a thorough *knowledge* and *understanding* of scriptural precepts. Scripture itself attests to Scripture's preeminence in *counseling* in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*

This passage, along with many others, depicts the sufficiency and supremacy of scriptural authority as the basis for all worthwhile *counseling*. Conversely, it is foolish to receive advice from ungodly individuals who do not depend on His Book. Give pause to your selection in human *counselors*. The following Proverb is reinforcing:

*He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm* (13:20).

In Proverbs a *fool* is set in contrast to one who has a reverence for, and a healthy fear of God (cf. 1:7; 14:1–27). In other words, if you hang with the ungodly and gain their *counsel* you *will suffer harm*. For instance, if you choose confidants known to break God's precepts or government's laws, such attitudes and action will eventually affect their *counsel*. Diplomatically and expediently rid yourself of disloyal, insubordinate, or law-breaking advisors.

The *fool* believes his own mind is the actual source of truth. "I'm sure whatever I'm thinking is correct," he ponders with pride. In a secular sense, this person worships on the altar of Humanistic Rationalism. In a "spiritual" sense, this person worships at the altar of Neo-Orthodoxy. For the *fool*, truth stems not from objective scriptural exegesis, but from subjective personal conjecture. Be careful from whom you receive *counsel*, even from those who are perceived to be godly. Have an active mind that is trained in relationship to the command of 2 Corinthians 10:5: *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*. Consistently sort through the ideological forts of people's *counsel* and ascertain what is and is not scriptural. Gain and practice spiritual discernment! The world is full of false thoughts, ideas, speculations, reasonings, philosophies, and false religions—all of which run antithetical to God. Do not be *fooled* by bad advice! Your confidants should be godly people who are reliant upon and steeped in God's Word.

**Do not let anyone who cannot base his counsel in Scriptural truth to influence your mind.**

*He who walks with wise men will be wise. Whereas "Bad company corrupts good*

**"Righteousness alone can exalt [America] as a nation ... Whoever thou art, remember this; and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself, and encourage it in others."**

— Patrick Henry, revolutionary general, legislator, "The Voice of Liberty," ratifier of the U.S. Constitution, governor of Virginia.

Patrick Henry, Patrick Henry: *Life, Correspondence and Speeches*, William Wirt Henry, editor (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891), Vol. II, 632, addendum to his resolutions against the Stamp Act, May 29, 1765.



*morals*” (Proverbs 13:20 and 1 Corinthians 15:33 respectively).

### C. PARENTS

Generally speaking, one’s parents are a wonderful source of *counsel*. In Ephesians 6:2, Paul writes, **HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise)** (cf. Exodus 20:12). There are, however, exceptions to this rule. While this does not suggest listening to all of the *counsel* a parent provides, it does command that one possess an attitude of *honor* toward his parents throughout life, without respect to a parent’s behavior. Unconditional *honor* preserves the unity of the family, an institution ordained by God. Solomon, in his fatherly role to Rehoboam regarding parental influence, states:

*When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk to you* (6:22).

The repetitive mention of *they* in this Proverb relates to the commands of Rehoboam’s father and mother (cf. 6:20). Parents know their children best and have the accumulative advantage of knowing their strengths and weaknesses, thereby potentially providing the best perceptions and accordant human *counsel*. In addition, keep in mind that parents have lived life much longer, and can often provide excellent perspectives. States dad to son with this biblical truth in mind:

*Listen to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old* (23:22).

*Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, to make you know the certainty of the words of truth that you may correctly answer him who send to you?* (22:20–21).

Solomon not only wanted to make sure that he carefully and accurately communi-

cated *truths* to his son, but he wanted to make sure Rehoboam would be accurate in his *counsel* to others. (In Israel the king was also a judge who heard cases.)

In a familial sense, a parent needs to make sure to help his children master biblical *truths* so that they may communicate them to others, especially one’s grandchildren (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2). One’s parents should remain as one’s confidants (admittedly to a lesser extent, but to some degree) even after the child leaves and cleaves.

### D. PRAYER

The epistle of James states, *But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him* (1:5). As you face trials in life and wonder what to do, allow such trials to create a more intimate dependence on God. Seek God in desperation with all your passion and intensity. This passage assures the believer of God’s direct guidance: it’s there for the asking.

### E. HOLY SPIRIT

**Old Testament believers did not have the aid of the indwelling Holy Spirit as do New Testament Christians. Accordingly, this form of counsel is not depicted in Proverbs.**

Directly asking God for *counsel* and expecting His direction is a proper activity since the third member of the Trinity actually indwells the repentant and contrite who have placed their trust in the cross of Christ (cf. Romans 8:9).

Apart from some mystical impression or expectation that God will literally speak to you, He will guide you via impressing scriptural *truths* on your mind or leading you to another believer who is mature and can

provide insights from Scripture and life experiences.

Keep in mind too that He can also direct you in His providence: God’s superintending activity over human actions and human history. He can superintend the matters surrounding that for which you have concerns and make known His will to you. Whatever the case, James promises *counsel* directly from God upon request! The infinite and personal God of the universe should be your confidant through prayer (cf. Galatians 4:6).

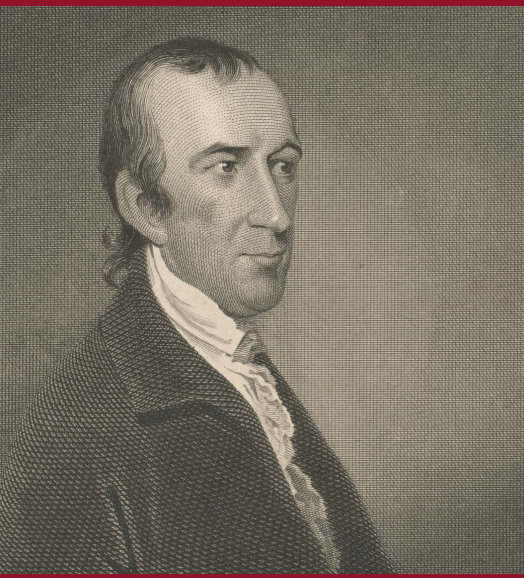
### F. CONSCIENCE

Another related means of God’s *counsel* is the human conscience. God will often pique your conscience during prayer. Learn to sense His still small voice; become increasingly sensitive to His sometimes immediate impressions. God’s equipping of mankind with this mechanism is for the purpose of contemplating actions and making accurate moral self-evaluations; herein is the innate ability to sense right from wrong. This is not to be equated with or suggest the literal voice of God. Rather, it is that self-possessed faculty that allows one to judge actions and attitudes based on the highest standards perceived. Often it is the Holy Spirit bringing to your mind specific passages from His Word. Likened to a weight trainer or athlete, the conscience is akin to a moral muscle that we program and strengthen (hopefully) over time. In the Book of Romans, chapter one, the Apostle Paul speaks to the opposite: a person can sear his conscience, destroying this gift from God for guidance (cf. 1:28).

The conscience can be likened to a moral compass, an inner *counselor* precisely pointing to morality’s “magnetic north.” If trained properly by the believer, it can become an enormous aid in decision making, a *counselor* of sorts who almost unfailingly can determine the right direction to head. Paul states, *God has not given us [believers] a spirit of fear, but of power and love*



Thomas Stone



“Shun all giddy, loose, and wicked company; they will corrupt and lead you into vice and bring you to ruin. Seek the company of sober, virtuous and good people ... which will lead [you] to solid happiness.”

— Thomas Stone, signer of the Declaration of Independence, selected as a delegate to the Constitutional Convention, lawyer, member of the committee that formed the Articles of Confederation in 1777, served as President of Congress in 1784.

John Sanderson, *Biography of the Signers to the Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia: R. W. Pomeroy, 1824), Vol. IX, 333, Thomas Stone to his son, October 1787.

*and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7, NKJ). Be sure of this, our Maker has granted His followers a sound mind, one that possesses a compass, and it should be one’s confidant!

### G. PERSONAL WISDOM

One who is *wise*, skilled at living life, is one who understands and employs these first five confidants as a way of life. With a continual healthy reverence of God, he or she becomes a reliable personal *counselor* to self. Good judgment is a character quality that separates the mature from the novice. In Proverbs chapter eight, Solomon again incorporates a literary device in which *wisdom* itself is depicted as a person. With this in mind, notice the following Proverb specifically pertaining to the *counsel* of personal *wisdom*:

“*Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, power is mine. By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, all who judge rightly. I love those who love me; and those who diligently seek me will find me*” (8:14–17).

Solomon is stating that the governmental leaders of Israel should conduct their work via God’s *wisdom* and justice. Many, however, did not abide by this *counsel*. Sadly, even Rehoboam would reject his *wisdom*. This principle remains true for leaders today. Our *wisdom*, based on the study and application of God’s Word, should become a guiding force in personal leadership and decision-making. The greater the *knowledge* and incorporation of the Word of God that a leader garners, the better personal *wisdom* he is apt to possess. The converse is true also. How many leaders have fallen from office? To lack God’s *wisdom* is to lack effective self-*counsel*. Be trained by the Word. Start today! This is one reason why the in-depth study of the Bible is necessary and why I labor and strive at teaching the Scriptures in the Capitol. What could possibly be more important or serious? Al-

though one might think otherwise, one lacks *wisdom* until God’s *counsel* becomes his basis for judgments.

*The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the crookedness of the treacherous will destroy them* (11:3).

Your personal *wisdom*, stemming from God’s, should be your continually available, cumulative, strong, always-reliable confidant.

### III. ONE VERY BAD CONFIDANT

*The thoughts of the righteous are just, but the counsels of the wicked are deceitful* (12:5).

Again, be discerning regarding who you choose as a *counselor*. Are your confidants godly (scriptural), or are they *wicked* (from the Hebrew word *rasha* meaning “an offender”)? Do not be *deceived* by bad advice and end up paying for it. The Hebrew word for *deceived* (*mirmah*) has the idea of “inculcating of one so that he takes the false as true, the unreal as existent, the spurious as genuine” (*Merriam-Webster*). The chilling idea conveyed by this word is that one does not realize he is being duped by another, a *deceiver*. Ahithophel gave bad *counsel* to Absalom in 2 Samuel 15:30–31;17:23, and things ended in terrible ruin. *Do not be deceived*, writes Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:33, “*bad company corrupts good morals.*” In the NT, the Greek word for *deceived* (*planao*) means “to cause to wander.” And again, the implication of the meaning is that one does not realize it’s happening to him. This word is synonymous with the English words “beguile” and “delude.” This form of *wickedness* is akin to a frog in a slowly heating kettle, a supposedly ever “warming” relationship but the end therein is deadly. Be very careful who you cozy up to. Let not *wicked* people be your confidants! Ask yourself, “is what this person saying based in Scripture?”



**Diplomatically and expediently rid yourself from false confidants who manifest disloyalty or insubordination, who break God’s or man’s laws.**

As a public servant in the public eye, one cannot afford to take such risks. In the end bad *counsel* will attempt to harm God’s intended purpose for your life; *wicked counselors* are poison!

#### IV. BEING A GOOD CONFIDANT

Proverbs speaks not only about receiving *counsel*, both good and bad forms, but it also looks at the other side of it—the benefits of being a godly *counselor* to others:

*Deceit is in the heart of those who devise evil, but counselors of peace have joy (12:20).*

In this Proverb the bad *counselor* (previously developed in the aforementioned point) who is characterized by *deception* is counterpoised with the godly *counselor* who is in personal possession of *joy*; an inner *joy* for being a good *counselor* is his reward. What a blessing it is to possess an overflowing inner *joy*!

Godly *counseling* is a major ingredient in disciple-making (Matthew 28:19–20). Disciple making is the very reason believers are left in this world after Christ has redeemed them. Those who give themselves to the spiritual maturation of another will find great *joy* in life (as do I!). States Luke 9:24, *“For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.”* The irony of this passage is this: when believers give their lives away serving others for God’s Kingdom, they will possess the greatest life of all! They will possess great *joy* as they *regard one another as more important than [themselves]* (Philippians 2:3). Work to *counsel* others to grow in Christ likeness, to

seek biblically sensitive policy, to forsake the darkness of their old ways. What *joy* will result!

#### V. BENEFITS FROM GOOD CONFIDANTS

There are two additional arguments from Scripture that are persuasive as to why one should be careful to select good *counselors*. The first relates to your *time*, the second to your reward.

##### A. THE BENEFIT OF TIME

The first argument stems from Ephesians 5:15–16. Paul states a principle that can be related to *counsel*:

*Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.*

This passage equates personal *wisdom* to *time* management. If there is any group that better understands the importance of *time* management than do public servants, I have yet to meet them. It follows that you carefully select your confidants if only for the sake of *time* limitations. You must have the best *counsel*—not mediocre *counsel*! One lesson I learned in seminary was to build a great theological library with the best commentators and their commentaries, as I have not the *time* to read those who are substandard. My point is that you need to get the best from the best.

##### B. THE BENEFIT OF REWARD

The second argument pertains to the manifest blessings from God for having chosen the proper confidants. Carefully note all the ingredients and progressions found in the following four verses from Proverbs:

*By wisdom a house is built and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power.*



NOW AVAILABLE

The book of Acts records how a small band of men—the apostles—in very short order *turned the world upside down* (Acts 17:6, KJV) during the first century in which they lived. This small team of uneducated, common men were not elite leaders, so how were they able to saturate the world with the gospel—changing lives, changing culture, and eventually changing the Roman Empire?

Scripture provides the answer: not only did they fulfill the Great Commission one soul at a time through a ministry of geometric evangelism and discipleship, but they succeeded *by concentrating on and impacting a particular element of society, specifically kings and all who are in authority* (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

*All in Authority: Reigniting the Bible’s Top-Down Missions Strategy* provides the biblical exegesis for this missional strategy that is found in both the Old and New Testaments. The book provides a clarion call for the Church to make political public servants a priority mission field in our nation today. Request your complimentary copy at [capmin.org](http://capmin.org).



*For by wise guidance you will wage war, and in abundance of counselors there is victory (24:3–6).*

Allow me to attempt to organize the numerous principles, thoughts, and blessings elucidated in this passage (from the original Hebrew poetic form to Western outline form). The **wise** government leader **builds** his personal life, **house**, and nation via the foundational under girders of always pursuing and gaining godly **understanding** and **knowledge** (think of these as two of the staples of Proverbs, akin to rebar and concrete). What results is **wisdom**. From the custody of **wisdom** flows the selection and cultivation of seven proper personal **counselors** which we have briefly studied herein:

1. *The Word of God*
2. *Trustworthy Friends*
3. *Parents*
4. *Prayer*
5. *Holy Spirit*
6. *Conscience*
7. *Personal Wisdom*

These are the **abundance of counselors** mentioned in this passage. Together—amalgamated—these **counselors** greatly aid one’s life, reaping many, continual **victories** over the course of time. Think of these ensuing **victories** in the realms of personal, familial, and national interests.

In addition to the foundational relationships and progression of thought previously explicated, **wisdom** leads to the characteristic personal benefits of **strength** and **power** (in the humble, reverential sense of those meanings). In addition, possessing **wisdom** also manifests in the personal rewards of **precious** and **pleasant riches** (in much more than a physical sense of those meanings). All are unspeakably wonderful blessings from the Lord God Almighty!

## VI. SUMMARY

Choose your confidants **wisely**. As a consequence, you will become **strong** and **powerful** and reap the fruit of **precious** and **pleasant riches**. Psalm 1:1 is a fitting capstone: **How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked.** Amen.

1. Charles Bridges, (1847). *Exposition of the Book of Proverbs*, NY: Robert Carter. 331.

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  - Atlanta Georgia
  - Augusta Maine
  - Austin Texas
  - Bismarck North Dakota
  - Boise Idaho
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  - Dover Delaware
  - Carson City Nevada
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  - Columbia South Carolina
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- Accra Ghana
- Conakry Guinea
- Tegucigalpa Honduras
- Rome Italy
- Nairobi Kenya
- Monrovia Liberia
- Antananarivo Madagascar
- Lilongwe Malawi
- Mexico City Mexico
- Chisinau Moldova
- Maputo Mozambique
- Nauru
- Abuja Nigeria
- Port Moresby Papua New Guinea
- Brazzaville Republic of the Congo
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- Honiara Solomon Islands
- Pretoria South Africa
- Dodoma Tanzania
- Nuku'alofa Tonga
- Kyiv Ukraine
- Washington, D.C. USA
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- Port Vila Vanuatu
- Lusaka Zambia
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