

MARKS OF MATURITY

by Paul Caram

1. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY1. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY1. FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

How we handle money will determine whether or not we will go on into maturity in our Christian experience! This is why Jesus speaks about the subject in two-thirds of his parables. The question is not how much money we have, but how well we handle it. Did you know that there are over 2,000 verses in the Bible pertaining to money?

Money and how we handle it will reveal several things about us:

- A. Whether or not we have a good conscience. Prov.3:27-28
- B. If we have discipline in our lives. Eccl.2:10
- C. Where our affections are. Matt.6:19-21
- D. Whether or not we have good judgment. Luke 16:10-11, Prov.30:24-25
- E. What our priorities are. Hag.1:2-11, Jam.5:3
- F. If we have faith or not. Mat.6:25-34, Prov.3:9-10
- G. If we are obedient or not. Mal.3:8-12
- H. Whether we are a person of sacrifice or not. II Cor.8:1-3
- I. How we use our time.
- J. Shows how committed we are to God. Prov.3:9, II Cor.8:4, Mal.1:7-8 & 13-14

Many Christians do not have financial integrity. Christian bookstores know better than to give credit, for often they would not get their money! Bible schools have had to change their policies because too many students have never finished paying their tuition. The new policy has had to be -"NO money....no diploma." Students who pay their bills usually are successful in the ministry. The others who were unfaithful usually do not!

It is unrighteous to owe big bills and then buying fancy clothes, furniture, or an expensive guitar, etc. Pay your bills first! This is the Christian way! Paul commands in Rom.13:8 "Owe no man anything." Is it ethical to eat in fancy restaurants and be extravagant when we have unpaid bills? When people have debts and avoid paying them, hoping they can be written off as "uncollectible" and have no intention of paying; this is stealing. This allows the conscience to become glazed over and insensitive to the Holy Spirit.

(Luke 16:11) If we have not been faithful with "unrighteous mammon" (money), God will never commit to us the true riches (spiritual ministry, revelation, and the deeper things of God).God is saying that if we are not faithful with money, we will not be faithful with spiritual matters wither because it is principle of the heart.(Conscientious vs. Haphazard).God tests us in natural mattes, such as our job, our family, and money. If we have proved ourselves

faithful in these, we would then qualify for spiritual ministry, and the true riches. How we handle money is a big part of the gospel message. It involves conscience, discipline, time, character, faith, and affections. Here are some reasons for financial problems:

THREE MAIN REASONS FOR FINANCIAL BONDAGE

- A. Failure to tithe. (A form of unbelief, selfishness)
- B. Mismanagement of money. (Unwise spending)
- C. Lack of discipline and character. (No self-control)

A. FAILURE TO TITHE-If we do not tithe, we will not be blessed! Prov.3:9-10 commands us to tithe with a promise of being blessed and provided for. Therefore, when we do not tithe we are not obeying God's Word. Also, not tithing is a form of unbelief, saying in effect; "If I give this, I won't have enough for myself!" How can God bless us if we are disobeying his Word, and have unbelief in our hearts? (Josh.1:8) Only if we keep all his commandments we will prosper. (Malachi 3:8-11) We are robbing God if we do not pay tithes. We are also robbing ourselves of the blessing we could have if we were obeying the Word of God. When we honor the Lord with the best of our substance He "Rebuked the devourer". In Malachi insects, worms, and drought were destroying the crops, that was the "devourer" there, but there are other things that devour finances; such as hospital bills, broken machinery, car break-downs, etc. God can make all these things last longer when we honor him with our substance and affection.

In Haggai 1:3-11, the people were neglecting God's house and they were just taking care of their own houses and other interests. Their priorities were not right, so God diminished their works. Crops were failing, machinery was breaking down, they were working overtime only to have devoured by these things. God do not honor his work (tithing, etc.) *God gives his best to those who give him their best!

(Matt.23:23) Jesus upholds tithing for the New Testament age. The people were tithing, but omitting the more important matters of the Law, such as mercy, justice, and the love of God. Jesus commands, "Continue to do this (tithe), but do not forget the other things too".

(2 Cor.9:7) God loves a cheerful giver, and desires us to give because we desire to and not only because we must. We should give in faith, knowing that God will provide for us. When we give because we have to, it is not out of faith, but out of duty only. Let everything be done out of a love-relationship!

B.MISMANAGEMENT OF MONEY - Why is it that some people who have so little, make it? Others who have more, are always in debt! The problem is mismanagement and poor judgment. Thus the issue is not how much money we have, but how we manage it. Sometimes people have shortages because they have not wisely used what God has provided. We are stewards of the money God gives us. How are we using what God has given us?

Here are few examples of how money can be managed:

- *Bad investments- Getting into things hastily without praying or seeking good counsel from others.
- *Credit cards- Quick, easy money becomes a snare. We tend to be extravagant when money is easily acquired.
- *Borrowing indiscreetly- High interest rates brings bondage. God has a way to pay off building programs without the bondage of big mortgages.
- *Bad timing- Paying too much for something when we could have purchased it for much less had we waited for the right time. Impatience and uncontrolled desires is the problem. the fruit of temperance is lacking.
- *Big phone bills- This is a sign of poor judgment and a lack of discipline. Calls are much less when you dial at the right time or use a better company.
- *Overspending- buying things we don't need and can't afford.
- *Desiring only the best- Jesus was humble and did not require the finest of everything. How much like Christ are we in this matter? Where is our heart?
- *Wasting resources- Lights left on, water running, etc.

C. LACK OF DISCIPLINE AND CHARACTER- (Ecc.2:10)"Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not back from them". Solomon had a tremendous love for the world. Many Christian are "Entangled with the affairs of this life". Solomon had no discipline. Everything he saw he wanted, and he tried to squeeze satisfaction out everything he saw. Happiness must be found in Jesus, not things. (Luke 8:14-cares, pleasures, and the things of the world choke the word, and the reality of the kingdom.) (Luke 10:27) "Love the Lord with ALL thy heart, soul, strength, and mind". Accordingly to Matt.22:36-40, this commandment and loving our brethren as ourselves is the most important of all commandments. In order to do this our time and energy must be given to God. If our life is taken up with "things" and working overtime to pay for thing we do not really need, we cannot fulfill these two great commandments.

MONEY reveals where we place our deepest affections. Money reveals who we are! It is impossible to be spiritual without managing our money the right way. Financial bondage keeps us from doing God's will. Seek to be financially free! THINGS take up time and money, and energy, and affection. Another reason people want money and that is for security, and yet security is a result of being in the center of God's will. People who hoard money and have large bank accounts and clutch onto it never get any real spiritual breakthroughs in their lives.

HOW WELL DO WE MANAGE OUR TIME?HOW WELL DO WE MANAGE OUR TIME?HOW WELL DO WE MANAGE OUR TIME?

Have we made Jesus Lord of our time? Time is God's gift to us. Eternity is not concerned with time, but time is the most valuable thing that God has entrusted to us here on earth. It is a stewardship, and a divine trust! It cannot be bought or borrowed! God will ask us what

we have done with our time!

We putter away so much of our time so that we often waste half of the day. If we kept up this pace we would waste half our life. Wasting time is wasting life! When we run out of time we have run out of life! Time is ticking away. How are we using it? God will give us enough time to do his will, but if this time is squandered we will not be able to fulfill all of his will!

Psalms 90 is a prayer of Moses. His generation had wandered in circles for 40 years. They had wasted most of their lives because of disobedience and hardening of their hearts. He is praying for future generations that we would not waste our lives going in circles, but that God would give us wisdom to know how to use our time wisely. (Ps.90:12) "Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." May God help us to come to the place where everything we do is productive, meaningful, efficient, and has eternal fruit.

Most of us do not need to be busier! The question is: Are the things we are doing productive? "Activity is not necessarily productivity"! In Eph.5:16-17 we are told to "Make the most of every opportunity"..."to redeem the time"

MAKING THE MOST OF OUR TIME

* For most of us, it is not a question of being busy, but, "Are the things we are busy with productive?"

*"Activity is not necessarily productivity". We need to make every punch count! This involves being in the right places, meeting the right people, saying the right things, and being led by the Spirit even in small details.

*Are we rightly delegating responsibilities to the proper people? Do not try to do everything yourself. Even Jesus knew he could not be everywhere and do everything, so he deposited his mission and ministry into other men who could.

*If we say we cannot crowd everything in a twenty-four hour day...we are too busy. Remember, God knew what he was doing when he made twenty-four hour days.

*Do we need to have two jobs to pay for things we do not really need? This takes our time and energy, so that we will not have time for God and for family, and the souls of others.

*Am I afraid to turn down invitations, often thinking I might hurt someone's feelings? Learn to say No graciously. There is a way, so why not ask God to help us!

*Take inventory. Are all these things I am doing absolutely necessary? (trips, activities, favors, etc.) After we have made a list, choose only that which is the most important!

*What we want is eternal fruit. Let us pray that God will give us wisdom to help us use our time efficiently, and only for the things that really matter! In some of the Lord's parables, He

requires us to answer to him for what we have done with our time. Time is short, it is running out!

CAN WE HANDLE FAILURE?CAN WE HANDLE FAILURE?CAN WE HANDLE FAILURE?

Are you ready to quit when you fail? God Himself looked like a failure when He was upon the cross. Failure is necessary in order to experience the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. (Phil.3:10). In times of failure we need that violence of spirit mentioned in Matthew 11:12, that Holy Ghost aggressiveness and determination that refuses to give up.

Have you ever felt like God allowed you to make a mistake or make a fool out of yourself, and then you found yourself saying; "If that's the way it is, I quit! Here I thought the Lord revealed something to me, and I carefully enquired of Him to make sure I was right. I asked God for confirmations too, and I felt he gave me many. I was honest and transparent before Him. And then I found out that the whole thing was wrong. If that's the way it is, I quit!" God did not let you down. Ask God for much grace to conquer feelings of being let down by God.

In the economy of God, there are time when it is better for us to fail than to succeed. Mellowness and mercy grow out of our acute failures if we respond the right way to them. Also hardness and criticism of others is removed! Pride and attitudes of infallibility are great temptations to those who have special spiritual gifts. Failure helps to deal a death-blow to pride and feelings of infallibility.

Peter failed! He cursed and swore, and denied the Lord. It was a bitter failure for him. By his own pride and boasting he had set himself up for an unnecessary temptation. His daring and rash statement, "Though all men forsake you, I will never", invited Satan to put him to the test. It was like waving a red flag to a bull. (Satan is allowed to test us when we make cocky declarations.) Fear struck Peter's heart. He had opened himself to temptation. The failure was so crushing to Peter's ego that he was about to quit the ministry. Jesus graciously lifted him from the pit of despair.

We need the ability to bounce back from failure! Moses did, and his greatness is shown in his ability to handle failure in a mature manner. Moses did not fold up when he failed! Failure did not make him sink into the depths of depression. We read of his failure in Numbers 20:7-12. On this occasion Moses was instructed by God to speak to the Rock, but in his frustration for the moment, he struck the Rock. (Ps. 106:32-33) Moses had lost control!

Moses had just broken an eternal type of the crucifixion. That Rock he had just struck for the second time, represented Christ.(1 Cor.10:4). Striking the Rock the first time represented Christ the Rock being smitten of God (on the cross), and the water that flowed out represented His life flowing out to the thirsty souls of men everywhere. Striking the

Rock a second time meant that Christ needed to die twice. The broken type was so serious to God that He restricted Moses from going into the Promised Land, and the whole nation knew why! This was very difficult for Moses because he was only a few steps from going into the land after being in the wilderness for forty years.

Moses recounts the story in Deuteronomy 3:23-29. He appealed to the Lord to change his mind and let him go into the Promised Land. God replied, "No, Do not ask me again!" The reaction of Moses to this is found in Deut.4:1.

CAN WE HANDLE SUCCESS?CAN WE HANDLE SUCCESS?CAN WE HANDLE SUCCESS?

Paradoxical as it may seem, difficulties are easier to handle than blessing. Trouble makes man look to God for help and grace, but after being on the mountain-top for a while...look out! Pride creeps in! (Deut. 17:20,2 Cor.12:6-10). Great blessing, unusual gifts and talents, and success tempts man to think that he in himself is extraordinary or favored of God above all others. (Prosperity can make us forget God. - Deut.6:10-13,8:7-20). Left to himself man becomes haughty almost overnight, and no one is exempt from this. Great success prompts a preacher to boast that his church or work is the fastest growing in the country. When a man lowers himself to remarks such as these, we know that he has drifted away from the real goal and that is to glorify God, to stay out of the picture, and to walk humbly with the Lord. May God help us to never lose sight of the goal. Young converts especially susceptible to pride. This is why God is slow to give us our inheritances. (Prov.20:21, 1 Tim.3:6). God waits until we are mature.(1 Pet.5:6). In the Book of Acts, every time a man did a miracle, he got beaten up soon after. Pain is necessary for power. Without pain, we'll become haughty when God uses us.

HOW WELL DO WE HANDLE PAINFUL DELAYS?

This again is another vital proof of how dedicated we are to God, and whether or not we are a person of strength. Delays and how we handle them reveal whether we are following God only for what we can get out of Him, or if we are following Him simply because we love Him and desire to do His will. What is your response to God when He detains a quick answer to your request? Exodus 32:1-9 is a testimony of what many believers do when things are not happening fast enough...they turn their backs on God and go their own way.

Perhaps you have prayed and longed for years for an answer to a difficult situation and still there is no clear word or deliverance from God. The mature Christian understands that if God is delaying the answer, He is doing so for some very good reasons. He also realizes that God will be faithful to him and speak when it is precisely the right time. The Lord waits so that He may be gracious unto us. (Isaiah 30:18). Painful delays work something out in our hearts that nothing else could.

The committed Christian does not deliver God any ultimatums or deadlines. The immature believer draws a line and gives a charge to God saying; "I have prayed about this for two years now and if you do not give me my request right now, I will leave you and go my own way." Real Christians are bent on doing the will of God, not their own, regardless of the cost or delays. In times of delay they will say to God; Give me grace Lord, and bring me through and perform all you must in my life during this time of delay. This is an attitude of strength and nobility. Waiting for God's time in our proof that we love him. (Read Isaiah 64:4), 1 Cor.2:9). Failure to wait for God's time could result in a loss of inheritance, and it could upset God's plan for our life. (Prov.20:21).

HOW WELL DO WE REACT TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE HURT US? HOW WELL DO WE REACT TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE HURT US? HOW WELL DO WE REACT TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE HURT US?

One of the first things we should consider is, "Are we an over-sensitive person; are we easily hurt?" Most of us are! God is against injustices, and yet He might be more interested in our reaction to an offense, than the offense itself. When evil responses arise because of an offense, God is after our reaction. Jesus had not evil reactions. He was a Lamb, a Servant! (1 Pet.2:23, Isaiah 53:7). Most of our real problems are not outside of us (what someone said or did). Our real problems are within ourselves, in our hearts and minds. (No peace, no joy, guilt, fears, confusion, over sensitiveness, insecurities, grudges, etc.). The problem is that we are not strong within. It takes a strong person not to react! I am not suggesting that we should be stoic or emotionless (this is a hardened heart). But we do need a Spirit-controlled temperament. As we grow spiritually (more wisdom, understanding, joy, peace, love, longsuffering, mercy, patience), we will be able to handle and respond to people and situations the way Jesus did.

Are we any different than most unbelievers? Paul said the Corinthian believers were scarcely any different than the world (1 Cor.3;1-3). The Lord Himself said that if we only love those who love us, or if we are only kind to those who are kind to us, for what are we to be praised? Even the unbelievers can do this! (Luke 6:32). There can be no real power over Satan if we act just like him. The baptism in the Holy Spirit gives a believer power to cast out devils, but to have power over the bigger principalities and powers, it requires the self-life to be crucified. This was the key to the power Jesus had.(1 Pet.2:23). He did not act like Satan, therefore he had power over him.

First Corinthians 13:1-3 is a picture of a Christian with gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit. The way to know where a man is at, ourselves included, is to observe how much of the fruit of the Spirit he has in his life.(Gal.5:22-23). A man could be a great preacher, teacher, a fabulous musician, an administrator, and have extraordinary gifts, and still be a weak Christian and fail. We know a man by his fruits, not by his talents, abilities or gifts. (Read Matt.7:20, 7:20-23).

HOW MUCH OF A SERVANT'S SPIRIT DO WE HAVE?HOW MUCH OF A SERVANT'S SPIRIT DO WE HAVE?HOW MUCH OF A SERVANT'S SPIRIT DO WE HAVE?

According to the words of the Lord, greatness is determined by how much of a servant's heart we have. (Mark 9:33-35) Jesus himself was a Servant of all servants. What is a true servant?

A SERVANT IS:

- * Someone who is devoted to another- dedicated to the welfare, interests, and comfort of others. It is the opposite of one who is selfish, self-willed, or self-centered.
- * Not demanding-Does not insist on his own rights or equality. He accepts what is given to him and is thankful. (Matt.5:3)
- * Not independent-One who puts up with inconvenience and difficulties. "I will endure all things for the elect's sake". And not like the fallen nature; "I don't have to put up with this". (1 Cor.9:19, 2 Tim.2:10)
- * One with no reputation to defend-He is just like our Model Servant. (Phil.2:6-8) Jesus never had any "identity" or individuality problems. He was seeking the honor of another-His Father. The Lord was not out to make a name for Himself.
- * One who is not proud-Therefore he is not easily offended or quick to anger.
- * One who will do over and above his duty-Yet does not require a "thank you" or pat on the back. (Luke 17:7-10)
- * One who has the presence of the Lord-God walks with the lowly servant for he is also a servant. (Isa.57:15). He loves to walk with those who are like Himself and compatible with Himself.

Having a servant's heart is the key for getting along with others, especially at home. The true servant fulfills the law of love, which is...TOTAL UNSELFISHNESS. (1 Corinthians 13)

HOW MUCH CONTENTMENT DO WE HAVE?HOW MUCH CONTENTMENT DO WE HAVE?HOW MUCH CONTENTMENT DO WE HAVE?

According to 1 Tim.6:6, contentment is one of God's greatest treasures. It is gain! Contentment is owned by the mature and by those who, like King David, have had their desires reduced down to one main thing, the Lord himself. (Ps.27:4). David said he had found fullness of joy in God's presence. (Ps.16:11) Paul had learned to find contentment in any state. (Phil.4:11). He did not have the comfort of an understanding wife, a beautiful house, nice clothes, or any of the other luxuries of life. He had suffered the loss of all things, including his past positions and titles, and the acclaim of man. (Phil.3:7-10). Yet the presence of the Lord fully sustained and satisfied his soul. He had discovered that he could be "complete in Him," even though he had been sitting in prison for 4 years when he made

these declarations of victory. (see Col.2:10). Many believers drink from the wrong source and turn to worldly things to try to satisfy their thirsty souls, instead of drinking from the Lord who is named, "The Fountain of Living Waters". (Jer.2:13) But for those like Paul who have tapped in Him, find life, even if they possess little of this world's goods.

HOW WELL DO WE GET ALONG WITH OTHERS?

Christianity involves us with people! It is unscriptural to be a lone Christian. Being unattached to a body of believers is almost always a sign of unresolved conflicts such as hurts, distrust, and indifference. Sometimes it may seem easier not to get involved with people but deep-rooted problems never really get dealt with when we are alone. We need each other for balance and growth. Maturity is not possible without each other! (John 17:11,21,23).

It is unscriptural and dangerous to be alone! The enemy talks more often to those who are off by themselves. The whole Bible involves us with people. Evidence of how spiritual we are depends on how well we can adjust socially, and how well get along with other Christians, people in the world, our boss, those in authority, and especially our family. These are the real heart issues of life. (Matt.22:36-40)

True Christianity involves us with people! Scripture tells us to love one another, have fellowship one with another, exhort one another, edify one another, serve one another, forgive one another, and to be knit together in love, etc. Real Christianity puts people together into families. (Psalm 68:6) This is for our safety and growth. Satan attacks the ones who are alone, not those in groups so much. How scriptural is your Christianity? (Is 1 Thess.5:12-13, Heb.10:25, 13:17 being violated?) Are we accountable to anyone?

HOW WELL DO WE CONTROL OUR TONGUE? (James 3:2)

The man who controls his tongue is a perfect man! This again is a heart issue, for "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Luke 6:45). God will not deliver us from our trial until our conversation straightens up. (Ps.50:23, Job 42)

HERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS WHERE WE NEED TO CONTROL OUR TONGUE:

A. KEEP SECRETS- (Prov. 11:13) "A talebearer reveals secrets". Restrain yourself to not reveal the confidential things of others. God reproved Ham for exposing the "nakedness" of his father. (Gen.9:20-27)

B. NO NEGATIVE CONFESSIONS- (Unbelief). These are contagious, and can affect our brethren. The negative confession of the ten spies discouraged the whole congregation, and caused them to murmur and harden themselves against the promises of God. (See Num.13:26-33, 14:10, Deut.1:28)

C. NO VERBAL RETALIATION-When someone does something to hurt you, pray for

grace and don't fight back with your mouth. (Is. 53:7,1 Pet.2:22-23) This is meekness! Argumentation brings hardness and sin into our hearts. A furious man can be disarmed if we learn to reply back in softness. (Prov.15:1)

D. AVOID FOOLISH TALK-Discern the difference between foolishness and the joy of the Lord. (Eph.4:29, Prov.26:4, Titus 3:9) Avoid foolish questions...they will induce us to give a foolish answer. Avoid stupid topics.

E. NO FEIGNED LIPS...(Psalm 17:1-3,120:2). Pray that the Lord will keep you out of situations where you are forced to say things you don't mean! Do not be deceitful or filled with rationalizations. (John 1:47) be "without guile" as Nathanael. Those who are closest to the Lord in heaven have a clean tongue. (Rev.14:5) God hates deceit.

F. NO FLATTERY-Flattery is an evil spirit and it is a snare. Satan is a flatterer. People get hooked by the words of another. Young girls are easily sweet-talked into sin. Warn them! A sincere compliment or encouraging word means a lot, but flattery is different; it overdoes something and the motive is not right. (Prov.26:28) flattery is a tactic of the coming antichrist, and he will ensnare many by means of flattery.

G. CAREFUL OF COMMITMENTS- (Prov.6:23) "Thou art snared by the words of thy mouth". (Ecc.5:1-6)The mouth can cause our flesh to sin by giving promises, vows and/or commitments we wish we had not made and cannot keep. This then causes us to compromise. Exercise caution.

H. CLEAN ILLUSTRATIONS- Never use unclean graphic illustrations. Our words paint pictures in people's minds. Do not talk about unsavory things (testimonies of past sins, people's personal things, etc.) for this can actually create uncleanness in those who listen. (1 Thess.2:3, Eph.5:12).Words produce fruit.

I. NO DISCORD-The words we sow in others' ears will germinate. The result is bitterness and bad fruit. (Prov.6:19) God hates it. Judas infected the other disciples. (John 12:4-6,Mark 14:4-5)Satan is a slanderer. The most damage Satan does is with his mouth.(Rev.12:10)That goes for us, also! Most sins we commit are with the tongue. When a man judges and criticizes another, he brings the same upon himself. (Matt.7:1-2).

J. HOW WE SPEAK TO GOD- (Mal.3:13)"Your words have been stout(hard or bold)against Me".(Job 27:2, Num.14:3)We must be careful how we speak to God and about God. He will deal with us accordingly. (Num.14:28) We need to experience Isaiah 6:5-7.Our lips need purging!

HOW STEADFAST ARE WE?

A mature Christian is judged to be so by his stability. Scripture has much to say about being "rooted." The up and down Christian is one who is still dominated by his feelings and mood swings. The mature Christian is not governed by his emotions or by how things look,

but rather is governed by what God has said. Paul said: "We walk by faith and not by sight."(2 Cor.5:7). The Israelites were most unstable! (Psalm 78:37). They could praise the Lord one day and turn against Him the next.

Paul's life was consistent, no matter what his circumstances. (Acts 20:18) He said; "You know after what manner I have been with you at all seasons; serving the Lord with all humility of mind and with many tears." Paul remained steadfast when things were difficult as well as when they were good. It was no up and down situation with Paul. He had caught a heavenly vision. A new vision makes us live differently. Ask God for a new vision of what He wants to do in and through you. The difference between a stable and unstable Christian is vision. Those without an ongoing vision dwell carelessly. (See Prov.29:18). Everyone needs a mark to press towards!

HOW MUCH WISDOM DO WE HAVE?

Wisdom is the difference between the mature and the immature. In Prov.4:7 we are told to get wisdom because "Wisdom is the principle thing". Wisdom transforms the simple (or child-like) into a discerning adult. (Luke 2:52) Jesus grew in wisdom which caused him to grow in favor with God and man, and wisdom caused him to grow strong in spirit.(Luke 2:40).

WISDOM is incorporated into it the following: prudence, discernment, insight, foresight, good judgment, skill, experience, depth, purity, peace and gentleness, and more.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS was written to produce wisdom! Proverbs was written by a king, for a king, to produce all the excellent virtues of a king in the reader. We are called to be kings. (1 Pet.2:9, Rev.5:10). This is the theme of Proverbs-"The making of a king". As God transforms us into kings, he will send us to stand before kings. In a sense we can have "power over the nations", even now in this life as God dispatches some of us to stand before leaders and dignitaries, our lives influencing the decrees they make over their domains. (Rev.2:26). All the promises are to the overcome. The question then arises, "What do we have to overcome?"

IMPORTANT THEMES OF PROVERBS essential for the making of a king:

- * Rightly discipline a child. (The making of a king begins at birth).
- * Inner cleansing and right motives. (Not despising the corrections of the Lord)
- * Having the fear of the Lord. (It is the beginning of wisdom).
- * Having the right friends (not to envy the wicked or desire to be with them).
- * Giving our hearts (affections) to God. "My son, give me your heart"!
- * Guarding against vice (Moderation, temperance, and self-control)
- * Watching for the snare of flattery.
- * Cautions against rash commitments and sinning with the mouth.
- * Power of the tongue for good or evil.
- * On hearing (Key words- retain, keep, forget not) remembering what we already

know.

- * Against bribes or wrong use of money in any way.
- * Against waste, time as well as substance. Also warns of procrastination.
- * Diligence vs. slothfulness.
- * Pride and arrogance condemned.
- * Exaltation of humility ("Before honor is humility")
- * Warning against greed. (True riches defined).
- * Right treatment of the poor (against oppression of any kind).
- * Traits of the good woman and evil woman compared.
- * The personality of wisdom (pure, peaceable, gentle, etc.)
- * Moral purity and how to be spared. (Stain of adultery)
- * Pursuing for wisdom relentlessly.
- * Against scorning (a form of bitterness and contempt).
- * Repentance- (a change of mind which results in a change of lifestyle).
- * Equality (No partiality in judgment).
- * Hating simplicity (Consequences of rejecting instruction and wisdom).
- * Problems in the spirit and soul, which affect the body.
- * Add your own.

WHAT IS TRUE WISDOM?

Wisdom is ability but is also has a personality. Those who possess true wisdom in their lives also have the nature and disposition of wisdom. (Pure, peaceable, gentle, etc.) In Proverbs, wisdom is likened unto a virtuous young woman. Often wisdom is referred to in the feminine...her, she. (Prov.3:13-18) "Happy is the man that finds wisdom...she is more precious than rubies; her ways are of pleasantness and peace".(Prov.4:5-9) "Wisdom is the principle thing... exalt her and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her..."In Proverbs the Virtuous Woman (wisdom) and the Strange Woman(folly)are compared.

(Prov.4:8-9) True wisdom produces Godly fruit in our lives. Wisdom will bring grace and glory, promotion and honor. In James 3:13-18, there is a comparison between worldly wisdom and heavenly wisdom, and the fruit that each one produces. Some of the believers that James was writing to were filled with worldly wisdom, and this was the reason for all the dissention among them. There were debates, deceit, arguing, and a competitive spirit in the brethren. Divine wisdom produces exactly the opposite! James tells us that heavenly wisdom has seven attributes:

THE PERSONALITY OF DIVINE WISDOM: (The exact opposite of earthly wisdom)

1.PURE (pure motives.) No spirit of competition; not trying to out do another or trying to exalt self. Worldly wisdom promotes ambition and getting the top, and will use any means to get there, including stepping on others.

2.PEACEABLE (at peace with God and man, and with himself.)Wisdom produces peace. Peace and unity mean exactly the same thing in the original language. When a man has a

united heart he has peace within himself. If his heart is divided he then is torn between loyalties and has no peace. Argument is a sign that wisdom is lacking. Wisdom has the nature of peace. Solomon had wisdom, and wisdom promoted peace during his reign.

3.GENTLE(a sweet reasonableness) One who is gentle will listen to another, and is willing to see another's point of view; One who is not rigid. Rigidness is the result of a closed mind, and is evidence that wisdom is lacking. "This is the way it is and there is no other way" is the opposite of wisdom. Wisdom allows for latitude, and shows us how to give people more space. Wisdom can defer to another's point of view.

4.EASILY ENTREATED (opposite of stubbornness.) This is the person who is easy to flow with; one who is "Skilled in knowing when it is best to yield". Wisdom dictates when it is best to be firm, and when it is best to let it go. When one pushes and shoves to get his point across, he is unwise. Wisdom does not strive and contend. (See 2 Tim.2:24-26, Prov.25:15)"And the servant of the Lord must not strive."

5.FULL OF MERCY (and full of good fruits). Divine mercy is much higher than man's mercy. Divine mercy shows compassion for someone who is in trouble, even when it is his own fault. This is the kind of mercy God has shown to us, and the kind He expects us to show to others. ("The merciful shall obtain mercy"). This is the kind of mercy we need to show to people who have "blown it", though they were warned and warned...Mercy that has no "I told you so" attitude. Don't always bring up past failures and mistakes to your mate, or others. Mercy reaches down to the fallen one and tries to pick up the pieces as best he can, rather than condemn. Real mercy is "full of good fruits" and practical good deeds. When God described Himself to Moses, the first thing he said was; I Am Merciful. (Ex.34:6). This is the first thing God wants to be known as. We are called to be just like Him too.

6.NO PARTIALITY (no favoritism.) Our emotions are very partial but this is not wisdom. Isaac and Rebecca had favorites in their home. Isaac loved Esau, but Rebecca loved Jacob, and this ruined their home. (Gen.25:28) Rebecca taught her favorite son to lie and use deceit. Partiality causes deceit and such things. Here was a marriage that did not work well, even though God had ordained it. Even though a marriage is of God, it still will not work if people won't allow God to deal with areas of the heart. Favoritism is carnal love and it bears evil fruit.

7.NO HYPOCRISY (no pretence or falsehood of any kind.) Jesus preached more against hypocrisy than any other heart issue. (Matt.7:1-5) According to the words of Jesus, hypocrisy is when a person is hard and critical of others but the same problem they are accusing others of is in them too, and even worse. Hypocrisy therefore is blindness. People who have true wisdom have light within them and are not critical or hard with others, because they know what man is constituted of, and the propensity of their own heart. Therefore they are gracious to others.

Proverbs 9:1 "Wisdom hath build her house, she hath hewn her seven pillars." Above are the seven pillars of wisdom. A home and marriage is built upon these seven aspects of

wisdom. If any of these pillars are missing, the foundation will be shaky. Start building your marriage on these 7 pillars of wisdom. Wisdom builds a house!