

Walking Wisely in a Foolish World

PROVERBS



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STRONG

curriculum

A world weak on truth needs a strong, trustworthy message. STRONG Curriculum builds stronger churches by teaching all Scripture to produce spiritually mature believers who measure up to the stature of Christ.

A Plan You Can Trust








The Bible has the answers to what adult learners need most. No other book or philosophy contains God's power to save and transform lives. Because of this, we've made it our unwavering commitment to build Strong Adults upon the sure foundation of God's Word. With this curriculum, your church can develop adults who will be strong defenders of the faith.

Strong Adults is designed around the seven teaching aims Jesus modeled in His ministry. Those aims are listed in the box to the right. Note that the first letter of each aim spells out **BuildUP**, a word that captures the curriculum's overall aim to build stronger churches through God's Word.

Every session in the Strong Adults courses addresses one of Jesus' seven teaching aims. Since the **BuildUP** aims are Jesus' aims, you can be confident in their importance and effectiveness. Take time to familiarize yourself with each of the aims. And plan to introduce them to your learners. Look for the **BuildUP** icons in the table of contents and on the first page of each lesson.

The Strong Adults scope and sequence covers every Bible book, the major doctrines, and important topics. The Bible books alternate between Old Testament and New Testament, going in order of their appearance in the Bible. The scope and sequence will begin with the courses on Philipians and Job and proceed to the end of each testament before starting over with Genesis and Matthew.

JESUS' TEACHING AIMS

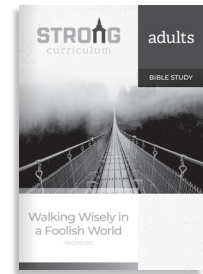
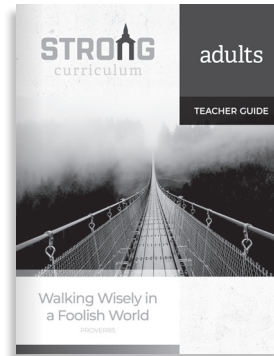
-  **BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.** Jesus taught His students to trust in Him alone for salvation and to share the gospel with others. This aim is obviously fundamental to all the rest
-  **UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ETHICS.** Jesus instructed His students to live according to moral values. These values provided them with the tools to make wise decisions.
-  **INTERNALIZE GODLINESS.** Jesus taught His followers to be godly on the inside. He warned them not to become like the Pharisees, with a mere outward appearance of godliness.
-  **LEARN DOCTRINE.** Jesus knew the importance of teaching His students the truth and identified doctrine as one of the means for spiritual growth. Wishy-washy doctrine leads to faulty practice.
-  **DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS.** Jesus taught His followers to meet life's challenges in a way that honored and glorified God. He gave them the skills to navigate those challenges successfully.
-  **UPLIFT OTHERS.** Jesus' life was all about others. Leading by example, He taught His followers to be all about others too.
-  **PREPARE TO SERVE.** Jesus prepared His followers to serve in the context of local churches that were established soon after His ascension. He emphasized sacrifice and dedication.

STRONG[®] curriculum

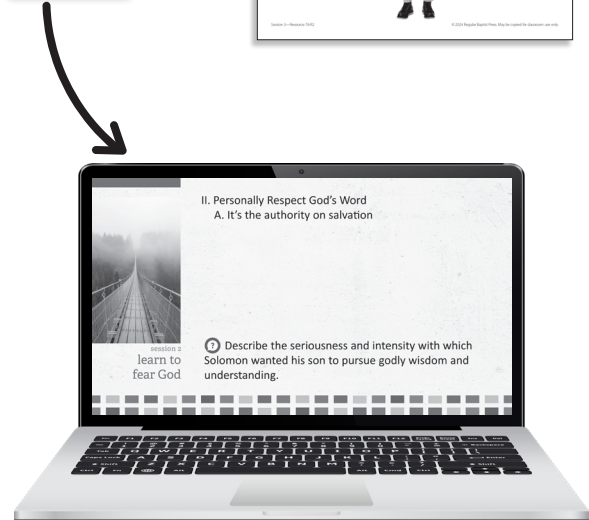
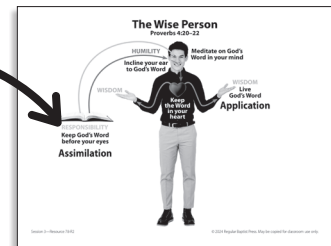
Kit Contents

- Teacher Guide
- 6 Bible Study Books
Order one book for each learner
- Digital Access Download Code
Gives you access to downloadable PowerPoint presentations, Prezis, visuals, promotional materials, and more.
- Posters

Solomon wrote that fearing God is the beginning of wisdom. Proverbs is for those who respect God and desire to live for Him. Believers who study the book will find practical instructions for life in a foolish world. This course helps students with fearing God, purity, work, generosity, speech, honesty, and friendship.



Digital Access Card



Ordering Information

All materials are available from Regular Baptist Press.

- Web: www.StrongCurriculum.com
- E-mail: orders@rbpstore.org
- Toll-free orders in the United States: 1-800-727-4440
- Fax: 1-847-843-3757
- Canada: Contact your distributor.

The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

How to Teach **STRONG** adults Lessons

Leading a Student to Christ

STRONG ADULTS has been designed to help you clearly present God's Word to your students. Each lesson will guide students through the Bible, encouraging them to interact with the material and apply it to their lives.

Familiarize yourself with the teaching resources so you can maximize your effectiveness in the classroom. Find the download card in your kit. Follow the instructions on the card to gain access to the teaching resources you will need throughout the course. The downloadable resources include a PowerPoint for each session, a Prezi presentation for select sessions, visual resources, and promotional materials.

Encourage students to do their Bible study book lessons before class so they are ready to interact when you ask the questions during your lesson. Note that the questions and commentary in this leader's guide match those in the Bible study books.

Some of the PowerPoint presentations contain additional slides that obviously tie into the teacher guide lessons. Make sure you review the PowerPoint presentations before teaching.

Before Each Lesson

- Read the **Scripture Focus** passage several times. Read and ponder the **Teacher Preparation** section on the first page of the lesson.
- Read the **BuildUP Theme, Measurable Response, and Session Summary** to get an overview of the lesson. Work on the **Memory Verse**.
- Read the **Bible Study** and the passages referenced in the lesson. Read the questions and answers. Consider additional questions and answers to add to the session.
- Plan how to use the PowerPoint or the Prezi. Practice using them along with the lesson.
- Prepare any materials you will need for the **Session Starters**.
- Read the steps and questions in the **Session Application** section of the lesson. Consider how to personalize the application.
- Pray for yourself, your students, and your lesson.

AS A TEACHER, your most important concern is the personal salvation of your learners. Talk to them about whether they know Jesus Christ as their Savior. Consider giving your students several minutes to write out an answer to a question like, How can a person get to Heaven? Collect their answers and read them during the following week. Talk to any of your students who seem confused about salvation. Present the gospel to them and provide the opportunity for them to trust in Christ. If possible, deal with students individually.

The Plan of Salvation

- Everyone is a sinner. No one can live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23).
- Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23).
- God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- When people place their trust in Jesus' payment for sins, Christ becomes their Savior. God forgives their sins and grants them eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24). Everlasting life begins the moment we trust in Jesus (John 3:36).
- Once people are saved, they are always saved. Nothing could take them out of God's hand; they are secure (John 10:27–29).
- The experience of the new birth (being born into God's family) is not based on a feeling, but on confidence in God's Word (1 John 5:11, 12).

Encourage students to pray, but explain that prayer does not save a person. Prayer is how we communicate our inward thoughts to God. Ask new believers to explain what they have done and what has happened to them.

Discipleship

Give new believers guidance in reading the Bible and explain the importance of prayer. Connect them to someone to who can invest in teaching them how to live the Christian life. Your goal is for the new believer to become a disciple maker him- or herself.

set Biblical priorities

SCRIPTURE FOCUS

Exod. 20:20; Deut. 10:12; Josh. 1:8; Eccles. 1:7, 12–18; 2:1–11, 18–23; 12:1, 13; 2 Cor. 5:9–11; Eph. 1–6

BUILDUP THEME



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS

God calls us to worship and obey Him so we might fulfill our purpose of glorifying Him.

MEASURABLE RESPONSE

The students will evaluate their personal priorities in light of Biblical priorities.

MEMORY VERSE

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). NKJV

“The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). ESV

Teacher Preparation

- What is your life’s purpose? How does your purpose affect your priorities?
- Read Ecclesiastes 12:13. Solomon wrote this verse to conclude his quest to find a meaningful purpose in life. The book of Ecclesiastes is the summary of his experiences. The book makes clear that he could not find joy and contentment apart from making God’s glory his life’s purpose.
- The rest of the Bible supports Solomon’s conclusion that God created people to glorify Him. The Bible also makes clear that we must make worshiping and obeying God our priorities if we are to live to glorify God.
- This session will challenge you and your students to consider their purpose for life and the priorities they have set to meet that purpose. Such consideration will set your class up to study Proverbs, a book that will help you appreciate living with Biblical priorities.

Session Summary

God established priorities for Israel that apply to us today. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon addressed the humanistic pursuit of priorities. He concluded his book by identifying the Biblical priorities of worshiping and obeying God. Believers who enjoy God’s blessings order their lives according to Biblical priorities. Understanding the Biblical priorities from Ecclesiastes is foundational to understanding the book of Proverbs.

Session Starters

Option 1—Created with Purpose

Gather

- Play-Doh.

Steps

1. Give each student a portion of a can of Play-Doh.
2. Students mold their Play-Doh into something that represents their lives.
3. Students display their creations as other students comment on what the creation says about its creator. If you have a large class, have students do this step in small groups.
4. Transition to the Bible study.

A study of Proverbs needs to begin with a look at key passages in Ecclesiastes, another of Solomon's books. Ecclesiastes presents the thesis of inappropriate priorities sought at the expense of a relationship with God. Solomon concludes the book with an appeal to remember God our creator (Eccles. 12:1). This session calls us to examine our priorities. Do we, like your sculptures, reflect and glorify our creator? Or do we have priorities that ignore our creator and focus on pleasing ourselves.

Option 2—Cathedral in Milan

Steps

1. Introduce the theme of priorities.

A cathedral in Milan offers access through one of three doors. Above each is an inscription. The inscription over the right-hand door reads, "All that pleases is but for a moment." The inscription over the left-hand door is similar, "All that troubles is but for a moment." The door in the center reminds all who enter the cathedral, "Nothing is important save that which is eternal." These brief, pithy inscriptions are a constant reminder to worshipers to establish personal priorities carefully and properly.

In our fast-paced society, emphasis on priorities is not novel. More and more demands are made on individuals for their time, energy, and money. As a result, evaluating and establishing one's priorities is essential!

ASK: Why might some people want to avoid the question of their priorities? (Q1)

ASK: Do you think some people use busyness as a shield from considering their priorities? Explain. (Q2)

2. Transition to the Bible study.

A study of Proverbs is greatly enhanced with an understanding of the message of Ecclesiastes. Solomon wrote both inspired books. The books stand in contrast. Ecclesiastes presents the thesis of inappropriate priorities sought at the expense of a relationship with God. Solomon concludes the book with an appeal to remember God (Eccles. 12:1). The book of Proverbs presents rightly aligned personal priorities. Solomon wrote the book as one who “had his act together.” He anticipated that his son would have his act together too.

Bible Study

I. Recognize Purpose and Priority Problems

Failure to properly establish personal priorities can have a crippling effect on an individual. People living with competing priorities will feel the pressure to meet high demands until they become frustrated. Failure to eliminate competing priorities leads to exhaustion, even for well-meaning believers.

Others live in a chaos of confused priorities. They seem unable to make choices, and their circumstances control them. An inability to make decisions by design results in decisions made by default. Bewilderment and the more serious effect of depression often characterize people with confused priorities. Responses such as oversleeping, increasing screen time, and developing an eating disorder function only as means of escape but offer no help for living without clear priorities.

A third group of individuals live with constantly changing or conditional priorities. These well-meaning individuals understand the need to set some priorities, but they seem unable to stick with their priorities. As their circumstances change, so do their priorities. As a result, they experience instability and a sense of defeat.

Solomon, the writer of the book of Proverbs, had his priorities straight. His success, however, did not come without a struggle. The book of Ecclesiastes reveals his struggle and explains how he came to understand a person’s ultimate priorities. In his book of Ecclesiastes, he rehearsed his philosophical journey, reiterating often the fact that people’s understanding of the purpose of life influences their priorities.

READ: Ecclesiastes 1:2. **ASK:** What characterizes the life of anyone without a clear Biblical purpose and priorities? (Q3) *Life seems vain, meaning it seems empty, pointless, and fruitless.*

II. Identify a Biblical Purpose for Living

A. Humanistic purposes

BIBLE STUDY: Organize the students into three groups. Assign each group one of the following passages in Ecclesiastes that describe Solomon's search for purpose in life: Eccles. 1:12–18 (wisdom); 2:1–11 (pleasure); 2:18–23 (working for wealth). Each group should identify its assigned purpose for living and discuss the following questions: (1) What are the advantages of having this purpose in life? (2) What are the disadvantages? (Note: Purposes are given in parentheses above.) Supplement students' answers from the text below.

Ecclesiastes opens with an examination of humanistic approaches to life, beginning with gaining wisdom (1:12–18). Those who seek wisdom seek education, degrees, and academic status. Seeking wisdom is not wrong. Even Jesus "increased in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). But letting one's life become consumed with gaining wisdom is unwise.

ASK: What might be some perceived advantages of making wisdom one's priority? (Q4) *The person could be rewarded with a good-paying job and extra money to help others. The person could gain respect and be given new and greater opportunities to influence the world.*

ASK: What might be some consequences of having wisdom as one's highest priority? (Q5) *There is always more to learn, meaning the person could become consumed with gaining wisdom to the detriment of building relationships. The inability to learn everything can lead to a sense of failure and dissatisfaction with life. A lifetime of pursuing knowledge can lead to a sense of emptiness and deep regret.*

The writer of Ecclesiastes concluded that the pursuit of wisdom through education is ultimately a disappointing and burdensome task. He concluded that increasing in wisdom and knowledge doesn't bring a person happiness and fulfillment (Eccles. 1:18). Solomon observed that seeking wisdom was like vainly grasping at the wind (1:14).

READ: Ecclesiastes 1:18. **ASK:** What are some examples of people who spent their lives seeking to know more only to be disappointed by their pursuit? (Q6)

Next, Solomon decided that pleasure is a worthy purpose for living (2:1–11). His priorities became the indulgence of his appetites for amusement and entertainment. He gave himself to laughter and wine, but he discovered that such indulgences left him empty and sad. So, he pursued pleasure through the ownership of more goods. He acquired

possessions, improved property, purchased slaves and increased his flocks. His bank account grew, and, for a time, he gained pleasure from counting his money. But when the novelty wore off, his sense of emptiness and sadness returned. Pleasure again left him grasping at the wind (2:11).

ASK: What might be some perceived advantages of having pleasure as a priority? (Q7) *A person might think he will be happy all the time if he pursues pleasure. He might think that his problems will go away if he drowns himself in self-indulgence.*

ASK: What might be some consequences of having pleasure as a priority? (Q8) *The desire to find elusive satisfaction drives a person deeper into self-indulgence. He loses the ability to handle his problems that grow rather than go away. His pursuit of pleasure leads to depression and deep dissatisfaction. He longs for lasting happiness and contentment but cannot find it.*

Pleasure is fleeting. It may entertain and satisfy its pursuer for a moment, but the laughter it brings wears thin, and possessions that seem so attractive soon lose their appeal. Servants get old; flocks and herds die.

ASK: When did you receive a Christmas present that you were sure was the present to end all presents? Was it? (Q9)

Solomon next considered wealth as a priority (2:18–23). His pursuit led him to dedicate himself to work.

ASK: What might be some perceived advantages of prioritizing wealth through work? (Q10) *The person might think his dedication to his job will bring him satisfaction, financial reward, and happiness.*

ASK: What might be some consequences of prioritizing wealth through work? (Q11) *A fixation with work leads to heightened expectations for advancement and higher pay. Whether they come or not, the worker is ultimately disappointed.*

The pursuit of wealth produces an addiction to work. But the work doesn't satisfy.

READ: Ecclesiastes 2:18. **ASK:** Can you identify with Solomon's conclusion concerning work? Explain. (Q12)

Solomon gave his attention and energy to work. And as he anticipated the end of his labor, he was stricken with the thought that all he had accumulated would be left to his heirs. He also realized that being wealthy brings its own grief. He was crippled by the fear he would lose his wealth to thieves.

As he reflected on his endeavors, Solomon concluded that humanistic purposes and their accompanying priorities leave a person empty and unfulfilled (2:22, 23).

B. The Biblical purpose

Solomon summarized his answer to the quest for life's purpose and priorities.

READ: Ecclesiastes 12:1. **ASK:** What is Solomon implying about God by calling Him our "creator"? (Q13) *That we are responsible to God and that God gave us a purpose to fulfill.*

Those who ignore that God is their creator will miss His purpose for their lives and will squander their lives on inferior or selfish goals. Paul expanded on Solomon's point. He wrote that only a commitment to glorify God brings meaning to our existence (1 Cor. 10:31). To glorify God means to talk about His greatness and goodness and to live in such a way that others recognize God's greatness and goodness through our lives.

If we don't know where to aim our lives, we will certainly miss the target. So, knowing God's purpose for our lives is the first step in fulfilling it. At times Solomon lived to glorify God. When he did, he enjoyed life and made God's name great.

II. Set Biblical Priorities for Living

A. Solomon's conclusion concerning priorities

A person's purpose for living affects his or her priorities. People who seek wisdom will prioritize getting educated. People who seek pleasure will prioritize indulgence and gratification. People who seek wealth will prioritize work. People who seek to glorify God will adjust their priorities accordingly. Solomon identified two ultimate priorities of the person who commits himself to the goal of glorifying God.

READ: Ecclesiastes 12:13. **ASK:** What is the connection between fearing God and obeying His commandments? (Q14) *A person who fears God believes God is Who He says He is and does what He says He does. He stands in awe of God. That awe leads a person to obey God out of appreciation and respect for God.*

After all the considerations Solomon had weighed, he came to a sure conclusion. He announced, in effect, "This ends the discussion!" We glorify God by worshiping and obeying Him.

B. The Bible's consistency concerning priorities

1. Adam and Eve in the Garden

In the Garden of Eden, Adam's original purpose was to glorify God.

So, he committed himself to two priorities: (1) to worship God in His presence each evening and (2) to obey God's commands to care for the garden and to avoid the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:15–17). Adam enjoyed worshiping God and found it motivated him to obey God.

READ: Genesis 3:1–6.

Satan challenged Adam's purpose for existence and convinced both Adam and Eve that they could be like God. When Adam and Eve shifted their purpose for living from glorifying God to glorifying themselves, they changed their priorities. Selfishness replaced worship of God, and gratification replaced obedience to God. They sinned against God.

God extended grace to Adam and Eve. He shed blood for their sin, dealt with the shame their nakedness caused, and restored their fellowship with Him. Later, God accepted a sacrifice from Abel, Adam's son, revealing that Adam and Eve had renewed their priorities of worship and obedience despite the ongoing effects of sin (Gen. 4:4).

2. Israel at Mount Sinai

Many centuries later, the children of Israel came out of Egypt and stood at the foot of Mount Sinai. God gave them the Ten Commandments as part of His law (Mosaic Covenant). God's law reveals that God set worship and obedience as Israel's priorities for glorifying Him (Exod. 20:1–17).

READ: Exodus 20:20. **ASK:** What connection between worship and obedience did God want the Israelites to recognize? (Q15) *That they would obey God as they feared (respected) and worshiped Him.*

Leviticus 26, written primarily to Israel's priests, presents both worship and obedience as Israel's priorities. The chapter opens with God's call to Israel to worship Him exclusively (26:1, 2) and quickly moves to God's command for obedience (26:3). Next is God's promises of blessing if Israel obeys Him (26:4–13) and His promises of troubles if they don't (26:14–39). The chapter ends with God's promise to remember the Abrahamic Covenant in which He promised Abraham a great nation and a bountiful land (26:40–46). God's message is that He will always be faithful to His promises, so He is worthy of worship and obedience.

Deuteronomy is Moses' rehearsal of the law for the generation of Israelites that would inherit the Promised Land after their ancestors died in the wilderness.

READ: Deuteronomy 10:12. **ASK:** Where do you see the priorities of worship and obedience in this verse? (Q16) *Worship: Fear and love God. Obedience: Walk in God's ways and serve the Lord.*

3. Joshua on the doorstep of the Promised Land

God appointed Joshua to lead the Children of Israel into the Promised Land. As God prepared him for service, He reminded him of his priorities

READ: Joshua 1:8. **ASK:** What is the connection between worship and obedience in this verse? (Q17) *If Joshua worshiped God by meditating on His Word, then he would be obedient to God's commands.*

4. Jesus with His followers

In the New Testament, Jesus urged His disciples to set right priorities by seeking first the kingdom of God (Matt. 6:33). In response to a questioning scribe, He acknowledged that the greatest commandments prioritize worship and obedience (Mark 12:30, 31). And following Jesus' resurrection, Jesus' disciples worshiped Him before He commanded them to obey Him by making disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20).

After the Church Age began, Christ challenged Saul on the road to Damascus and then changed Saul's priorities to worship and obedience. Smitten by a great light and knocked to the ground, Saul heard Christ speak. Using the worshipful term "Lord," Saul asked Him to identify Himself (Acts 22:8). Christ replied that He was the object of Saul's persecution.

Realizing that the risen Lord was staking a claim to his life, Saul immediately recognized obedience to God as his new priority for life. He asked the Lord what he should do (22:10). Years later, Paul identified his priorities in his second letter to Corinth.

READ: 2 Corinthians 5:9–11. **ASK:** What priorities did Paul share in verse 11? (Q18) *He said that knowing the terror of the Lord (worship), he persuades men to trust and obey the Lord (obedience).*

5. Paul's letter to Ephesus

Paul's letter to the Ephesians provides the crown jewel in this discussion of the Biblical purpose for living and the corresponding priorities. Throughout the epistle, Paul firmly established the glory of God as the purpose of living. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 emphasize the believer's priority of worship; chapters 4, 5, and 6 emphasize the believer's priority of obedience.

BIBLE STUDY: Have half the learners survey Ephesians 1—3 and list subjects that reflect worship. (Q19) *Redemption in Christ; God's mercy, love, and grace; reconciliation to God; peace with God; citizenship; riches of Christ; the indwelling Spirit.* Have the rest of the learners survey Ephesians 4—6 and list subjects that reflect

obedience. (Q20) *Walking in unity; spiritual gifts; putting off the old man and putting on the new; treating each other with kindness and respect; walking in love, light, and wisdom; marriage, family, and work relationships; putting on the armor of God.*

God's Word challenges us to check whether our purpose for living is to glorify God. Similarly, our ultimate priorities must be to worship and obey God. When we worship God and obey Him, we will pursue education with the right motives, enjoy pleasure with a pure heart, work as part of our sacred responsibility, and use money as a means for serving God rather than self.

Session Application

Steps

1. Challenge you students to consider their purpose for living.

Ecclesiastes is especially helpful in guiding us to the Biblical priorities of worshiping and obeying God. The book of Proverbs will help us to appreciate living to glorify God by worshiping and obeying Him. Take time to reflect on your life. Ask yourself, "What am I living for?" (Q21) Your answer will reveal your purpose(s) for living. Remember that what you want to live for and what you actually live for might be two different things. God doesn't applaud good intentions. He wants our whole hearts.

2. Encourage your students to assess their priorities.

Take some time to examine how you spend your time, energy, and money. Your answer will reveal your priorities. Consider whether your priorities need adjusted. (Q22)

3. Ask God to guide you and your class in understanding and adjusting your priorities for life.