

Study Questions for ‘Who Owns Your Heart?’

By Dr. Paul Vallee

Chapter One – The Secret Unlocked

- 1. How does understanding the ‘fear of the Lord,’ impact relational decisions, particularly a commitment to marriage?**
- 2. How does the author explain the nature of biblical wisdom? How do the various nuances of that definition affect your understanding of wisdom? In what ways are you demonstrating biblical wisdom in your life?**
- 3. How does Solomon’s prayer for judicial ability affect your understanding of wisdom and challenge a person to make ethical decisions in a culture of moral relativity?**
- 4. How can an approach to Proverbs as promises create a false expectation and some terrible outcomes? Do you agree that Proverbs are ‘the general principles upon which God governs life, rather than ironclad guarantees?’**
- 5. In what ways does the book of Proverbs guide someone in making good decisions in selecting the people that will influence their lives? What are some criteria that need to be considered?**

Chapter Two- Chasing the Wrong Dream

- 1. Why is obedience to parents such a critical concept in Proverbs and elsewhere in the Bible?**
- 2. What can we anticipate if we forsake the path of wisdom?**
- 3. What caveat does Tremper Longman ask us to consider in the idea of ‘obedience to parents?’**
- 4. Why is having a proper and healthy self-identity critical in overcoming temptation?**
- 5. What is the value or outcome of rejecting temptation by being obedient to God’s word**

Chapter Three- The Upward Path

- 1. Proverbs challenges us to pursue wisdom or a relationship with God with the same intensity as illustrated in the Yukon Gold rush. How does that challenge your approach to ‘knowing God?’**
- 2. What are some of the benefits of acquiring wisdom? What are some of the things that you are doing to acquire wisdom?**
- 3. What are some of the benefits of renewing our minds?**
- 4. If the key to changing our desires is how we can become wise, what is the means of that happening in our lives?**

5. How does following Jesus' path cause us to share in his experiences in life.

Chapter Four- Never Let Go

- 1.
2. What secret to the Christian life did Hudson Taylor discover and am I practicing this kind of trust and rest in God?
3. How does Tremper Longman define 'remembering' as a concept in the O.T. and how does this apply to our lives?
4. What are some of the ways that we are trusting in God? Give some examples in our lives.
5. Paul Koptak defines how God disciplines us, primarily through teaching and correction. Give some examples of moments where learning has corrected your thinking and behavior?
6. How does walking in wisdom bring blessings into our lives? Give some examples.

Chapter Five- Handling Earthly Wealth

1. What does it mean to trust the Lord and not to lean to our own understanding? Apply as it pertains to our finances?
2. Money addresses two key issues. What are those issues and how does money help address those issues? What limitation does money have in addressing these issues?
3. Why is it impossible to serve both God and money?
4. What are some lessons we can learn from Proverbs about money?
5. What is the true secret of 'contentment'?

Chapter Six- Finding a Safe Place

1. What are some of the areas that God's wisdom will spare us from? Can you recall a time when God in his grace spared you from moral failure?
2. How does fear affect the way people relate to one another? How can sudden fear polarize people and cause divergent responses?
3. What are the two major categories of sin, giving examples of how a person may fall into their snare? Which of the two seems to almost go unnoticed?
4. What is envy and why is it so destructive?
5. What is one of the benefits of personal struggles in our lives as it relates to the condition of our heart?
6. Why is it so critical to trust God with all our heart and not to lean to our own understanding?

Chapter Seven- Getting It Together

1. What is the potential danger of 'civility' and 'morality'?

2. How does Earl Palmer describe 'finding the right path'? Which path are you currently walking on?
3. Why is wisdom the principal thing? How does one go about acquiring it?
4. Why is self-reliance such a dangerous approach to life? What are some of the practical ways in which we can rely upon God?
5. Why does God allow spiritual opposition in our lives?
6. What can happen to a person who perpetually engages in sin?
7. What was the biblical understanding of the heart and the need to guard it?

Chapter Eight- Fatal Attraction

1. What is the primary means of seduction and who are the primary targets?
2. How does the bible describe an illicit relationship? What is the problem with illicit relationships?
3. To avoid being entrapped by sexual sins, avoidance is critical. What are some ways to create healthy boundaries?
4. Though God can forgive us our 'sins', there are consequences to them? What are some of the consequences of adultery or sexual promiscuity?
5. What does Proverbs 22:14 teach about adultery and God's judgment upon a life?
6. What is the ultimate motivation for sexual abstinence in the single state and exclusivity in the married state in life?

Chapter Nine- Looking Ahead

1. What is a key virtue in living a life of freedom in the financial and relational areas of life?
2. Give some examples of how our life decisions set the direction and course for the current state that we are living in?
3. Should there be a difference in our response to those who are 'unable' or 'incapable' of working and those who are able but unwilling? Is this the line between caring and enabling destructive behavior?
4. What is the key to addressing character issues? What is the root cause of the problem?
5. Why is adultery worse than stealing to satisfy 'physical hunger'?

Chapter Ten- The Seductive Power of Folly

1. What does seduction promise that makes it so appealing?
2. Why is it unrealistic to suppress desire? How should desire be harnessed toward the right objectives?
3. How is true freedom acquired and what are its benefits?
4. If our 'heart' is the key issue, then how can we guard our hearts?
5. Lady Folly has a form of godliness. How is this expressed in the biblical text?

Chapter Eleven- The Lady is Calling

- 1. What are the intrinsic dangers of making decisions simply based upon perceived economic benefits alone?**
- 2. What is one of the reasons that God allows tests to arise in our lives?**
- 3. What is the subtle temptation in our lives challenging the call of Lady wisdom upon our lives? How are all the ‘other’ options a disguise for the opposite path leading to destruction in our souls?**
- 4. How does Lady Wisdom appeal to all who will listen to her call?**
- 5. Why is it so important that those in civic leadership should have previously embraced Lady Wisdom? How does that affect their effectiveness to those they lead?**
- 6. Why are lies so destructive to relationships and community building?**

Chapter Twelve- Listen to the Lady

- 1. What we do comes from who we are. How can we fulfill God’s design for our lives?**
- 2. What are some of the reasons that we should obey the voice of Lady Wisdom?**
- 3. What is the reason why God created us? Is it about us or God?**
- 4. What is the difference between change from our inner being rather than just outward conformity to God’s standards? In other words, why does outward conformity lead to legalism, rather than to ‘abundant life?’**
- 5. Why is fulfillment found in listening to the voice of Lady Wisdom?**

Chapter Thirteen- Battle for the Heart

- 1. What worldview are you embracing and how is that shaping your life?**
- 2. What is the significance of the banquet motif?**
- 3. Why is embracing the call to Lady Wisdom in effect a turning away from the simple ways? What does that mean in your life? What wrong path do you need to turn from?**
- 4. Why is having ‘a right attitude’ toward correction so important in our spiritual development?**
- 5. What is Lady Wisdom’s last word, and how does it cause us to make a choice?**
- 6. Why is Lady Folly a foil for helping us see the value of wisdom?**

Chapter Fourteen- As Good as It Gets

- 1. What is one safeguard that we need to understand in reading the Proverbs as black and white absolutes?**
- 2. Who are the people who benefit from people who live in a right relationship with God? Give some examples of how others are helped by the righteous.**
- 3. In a general sense, why is what we say a mirror to the condition of our hearts?**

4. What are some of the benefits outlined in Proverbs 10 to those who walk in righteousness?
5. What are some biblical examples of trouble passing over the lives of the righteous? Can you think of a time when trouble passed over you because of God's grace?

Chapter Fifteen- What Giving is all About

1. How is hoarding indicative about our confidence in God?
2. Give a few reasons why the book of Proverbs encourages us to cultivate generosity in our lives?
3. Where should generosity begin in our lives? How are we expressing that generosity to others?
4. Aside from finances, what are some other ways to express generosity?
5. How do you see giving in your life? How do you practice giving?

Chapter Sixteen- Tell it Like it is

1. Who is described as the father of lies, and why is lying such a detrimental and destructive behavior?
2. Can you think of a situation in which a lie created a serious problem in a relationship?
3. What happens to a person who makes lying a way of life?
4. What are some of the benefits of speaking the truth?
5. Why is it important to handle criticism wisely?
6. Why is the condition of our hearts critical in relationships? Can you think of an example where a lack of integrity or integration of life affected a relationship in your life?

Chapter Seventeen- Figuring It Out

1. Why is discipline such an important ingredient in our development as a person?
2. Do you agree that 'desire' is the fuel that helps foster self-discipline in a person's life? If so, give an example from your life. If not, what do you believe to be the fuel of self-discipline?
3. What areas of our life does discipline affect and how does it affect those areas?
4. Contentment does not necessarily mean that life is easy. Do you agree with Larry Crabb's assessment of a longing for more than what this life can offer us? How does this readjust your expectations?
5. What are some of the factors that affect our lives?

Chapter Eighteen- The Road Less Traveled

1. What kind of a life do you aspire to live? How do you plan to accomplish that kind of a life?

2. **What is a worldview? How is your worldview shaping your life?**
3. **What kind of a person are you aiming to become? How are your decisions moving you closer to being that kind of person?**
4. **Can you think of some time in your life where your preferred timetable and God's differed? What did you do and what was the outcome? What can we learn from King's Saul's example?**
5. **What is one danger of trusting in ourselves rather than God?**
6. **What kind of a heart is God looking for? How can we cultivate 'a right heart' attitude?**

Chapter Nineteen- Foot-In-Mouth Disease

1. **Communication is critical in relationships, so how can our speech either enhance or detract from a healthy relationship? Examine how you verbalize in your next conflict in a relationship. What was your attitude and the words spoken?**
2. **Do you agree or disagree that words reflect what is transpiring in our innermost being? Give an example.**
3. **What is the key to changing how we communicate with others? What do we need to address in our lives for that change to occur?**
4. **What are the elements that comprise a worldview? Who is shaping your worldview?**
5. **Why is embracing correction so critical in our spiritual development?**
6. **When we are tempted to speak harshly, Paul Koptak challenges us to examine the motives of our hearts. Do you take time to reflect on why and how you communicate in confrontational situations?**
7. **Why is the condition of our heart critical in relating to God? What kind of attitude needs to be cultivated in our lives?**

Chapter Twenty- Between Caesar and God

1. **What are some guiding principles that can help guide us in times of tension between human governance and God's word? How can Christian help curb civil unrest that could lead to anarchy?**
2. **What can we be assured of when we disagree with those in authority?**
3. **Why should it not surprise us that leaders can make bad decisions?**
4. **What can we learn from the example of Nebuchadnezzar, an absolute dictator, and God's sovereignty? How should this affect confidence despite having ungodly leaders rule over us?**
5. **What lessons should we learn from the various activities of different leaders? What do we learn from the Assyrian and Babylonian kings versus the Persians ones?**
6. **Who are leaders ultimately accountable to? How does that affect our democratic understanding?**

7. Are there exceptions to obedience to human governance? What are they and what should people expect when they practice civil disobedience?

Chapter Twenty-One- Learning to Get Along

1. How is the book of Proverbs an answer to the prayer, ‘to teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom?’
2. What are some of the values that wisdom teaches us in having healthy relationships?
3. Do you agree or disagree that conflict is often a result of personal dissatisfaction within one’s own soul? How does having an inner peace within affect our peace with others? Where does this inner peace come from?
4. How does laying aside our rights affect others and us? How can a person come to this conclusion and behavior in their life? What would motivate a person to lay down their rights?
5. What is one source of anxiety and what can be done to limit this source in our lives?

Chapter Twenty-Two- Of Words and Wealth

1. Give some examples of how communication either builds up or destroys relationships?
2. What may be the underlying reason why people do not really listen to what others have to say? If we are guilty of not listening to understand, what are some measures to address that in our lives?
3. How can speaking negatively affect the person who is the speaker?
4. What is the danger of trusting in riches rather than in God? How did Ezekiel explain that danger in relationship with Israel’s covenant with God?
5. Why is it more important to place a greater value on relationships than material things? How should this priority affect time spent with those we love?
6. According to Henri Nouwen’s observation in the Netherlands after WWII, what negative aspects emerge in a prospering culture as it pertains to relationships?

Chapter Twenty-Three- The Shaping of Wisdom

1. How do people stray from following the way of wisdom? What can be done to keep us from straying? What are some of the things that help us in this endeavor?
2. What does a godly life look like and how can we facilitate that development in our life?
3. Poverty is filled with complexity, from being disadvantaged, disabilities, and circumstances beyond a person’s control to character issues. What is a biblical response to the poor and needy?

4. **Why is accepting instruction and correction critical in developing a godly character?**
5. **Why is motivation such a key component in spiritual growth and development? Where does that motivation come from?**

Chapter Twenty-Four- Holding or Folding?

1. **What are some of the things that Proverbs challenge us to avoid? Why are these aspects of life so dangerous to our spiritual health?**
2. **What are some of the biblically stated outcomes of alcohol abuse? Why does the book of Proverbs state that leaders should avoid alcohol consumption completely?**
3. **What are some characteristics of wise people? Why are these elements so important in relating to others and in the development of character?**
4. **Why is displacing bad behavior so important in bringing about change in our character?**
5. **What are some of the qualities that godly people need to embrace to grow in their spiritual life?**
6. **How does the book of Proverbs address the entitlement mentality? What are the recommendations from various proverbs as it relates to being diligent?**
7. **What is the best way to address wrongs in our lives?**

Chapter Twenty-Five- Writing Your Own Eulogy

1. **What are people saying about you and what will they say at your memorial service?**
2. **How is it possible to have a wrong perception about yourself? How do you perceive yourself?**
3. **Do you agree or disagree with Larry Crabb's assessment of an unfilled ache within the human heart that can only be fully satisfied once we enter God's eternal presence in heaven? Why or why not?**
4. **Who are some of the people and opportunities that have shaped you to become the person you are?**
5. **How do desires shape the eulogy that we are writing?**

Chapter Twenty-Six- What Music are You Dancing To?

1. **What is the key to addressing the fears, anxieties, and insecurities in our life?**
2. **What did Will Durant conveying to us when he writes: "From barbarism to civilization requires a century; from civilization to barbarism needs but a day?"**
3. **What is needed to rightly understand the course of human affairs accurately?**
4. **How does our emotional response to life reveal what we believe about God?**
5. **How do you feel about the idea that God's uses even ungodly leaders to fulfill his purposes including discipline of his people?**

6. If we trust that God is sovereign, how should we respond?
7. What are the ways in which you consider the future when making decisions in your life?
8. How does pursuing the 'right things' bring about genuine happiness?

Chapter Twenty-Seven- Will the Real You Please Stand Up?

1. When you consider someone to have a 'good name' what does that mean in our society? What did it mean in a biblical context?
2. Is there irony in that Solomon, who wrote many of the proverbs, was a man who ended up losing his 'good name'? How did that come about?
3. Why is it that people often value people for their economic assets rather than their intrinsic value? What does that say about that kind of evaluation?
4. Why is it unwise to choose a career path based primarily on economic gains?
5. What is the danger in interpreting Proverbs 22:6 as a ironclad promise rather than a life principle? Who is ultimately responsible for their life?
6. Why are we to distance ourselves from mockers? What problems do mockers create in the arena of relationships?

Chapter Twenty-Eight- Don't Kiss the Frog

1. What makes the book of Proverbs unique among the Wisdom literature of the ancient near east?
2. What are some of the things that we are admonished to avoid?
3. What paradox occurs on behalf of the poor if someone is taking advantage of them? What is the danger of exploiting others financially?
4. Why is it so important to wisely choose those we associate with in life?
5. What are some of the things we need to consider before we become a guarantor for a loan?
6. What are some things we need to embrace and why should we embrace them?
7. Why is historical revisionism a danger to our society?

Chapter Twenty-Nine- Trapped in a Golden Cage

1. Why is self-control so critical in experiencing true freedom?
2. How do table manners cause others to assess our abilities in social situations? What can be some of the outcomes of exhibiting a lack of self-restraint?
3. Why is desire such a powerful element in our lives? What are some of the destinations that a wrong desire can lead to?
4. What is the book of Proverbs teaching about discipline? Why is it necessary? Why do people avoid disciplining those they are responsible for? What is the outcome of a society that neglects to discipline their children?
5. What are the attitudes and actions that lead us to God?

Chapter Thirty- Serving God and Country

- 1. What kind of a trap is envy in one's life? How does having the right attitude deliver from the trap of envy?**
- 2. How do you emotionally respond to life's injustices? How does that affect your attitude and actions?**
- 3. The book of Malachi speaks to the issue of people struggling with materialism. What were some of the warnings from that book and how does it apply to these proverbial warnings found in Proverbs chapter 24?**
- 4. What paradigm shift needs to happen within our souls that moves us away from the continual desire to acquire things?**
- 5. How does wisdom build a house? What are the rare and beautiful treasures that are suggested that enrich the lives of others?**
- 6. Why is it that the wise have hope despite the many challenges that life presents?**
- 7. How does Robert Alden reconcile the idea that we are not to gloat over our enemy's downfall with the rejoicing of having been delivered?**
- 8. What is one danger of becoming so disillusioned with those in authority?**

Chapter Thirty-One- Shortcuts that lead to Dead Ends

- 1. Why is showing impartiality in relationships critical in maintaining a healthy relationship, not only with other people, but also with God?**
- 2. How does the Scripture explain dealing with judicial injustice between believers? Why is this so difficult to practice?**
- 3. What should our response be when we are wronged? Why is it critical that we respond in a biblical manner to injustice? What are the consequences when we do not obey the biblical approach to the offense?**
- 4. Why is negligence and laziness so devastating? What were the seven deadly sins listed in the Middle Ages and why were they deemed as such? What can laziness breed in a person's life if not addressed?**
- 5. Why did Jesus bring such critical remarks regarding the person who neglected their bag of gold? Does this response shock you? If so, why? If not, why not?**
- 6. Why is it important to produce before consuming? How is the opposite attitude and actions reflected in much of our current society as it relates to debt?**

Chapter Thirty-Two- Whose Influencing You?

- 1. What are some of the ways that we are being influenced by society? How do relationships influence our decision making?**
- 2. How does following one's heart possibly lead to poor decisions? What is a better approach in making decisions?**
- 3. What is the primary role or responsibility of leadership? What is one of the most susceptible temptations of leadership?**

4. What is one thing that is more dangerous than a leader who is abusing their calling?
Why is anarchy such a dangerous realm to be living in?
5. Fear of what others may think, say, or do is one reason why people disobey God?
What kind of things may happen when we allow fear to govern our lives?
6. Give some examples of how words can both damage but also build up others?

Chapter Thirty-Three- Don't Get Burned

1. Why is 'moral restraint,' or exercising self-control so critical in living in a social context and building healthy communities?
2. What are the four-character sketches of behaviour that we should avoid in Proverbs 26? How should we address them in our own lives and in the lives of those we encounter?
3. Why is underdeveloped character a morally crippling state? What are some of the things that Proverbs 26 states a fool will affect?
4. Why is laziness an immoral behavior and how does it negatively impact both the individual and society as a whole?
5. How does Proverbs 26:17 speak to the issue of embracing issues that are not fully researched and validated problematic, especially in our communication age?
6. Why is gossip and slander so deadly? Who is responsible for addressing the gossip and slanderer? What happens when it is left unchecked?
7. Why do people hate those they injure, even though they do not have a reason to injure them?
8. In what ways should we respond to those who are fools, sluggards, mischief-makers, and deceivers?

Chapter Thirty-Four- A Friend Indeed

1. Why is friendship such a key component to living a successful life?
2. Why are relationships challenging? What are some of the challenges that happen in relationships?
3. Why is envy and jealousy more dangerous than anger and fury?
4. What can be the value of friendship in a time of discouragement? Reflect on some examples from your own life?
5. How does God use relationships to help fashion our character?

Chapter Thirty-Five- Taking Care of Business

1. What is one key to a successful life at work? Why is developing skills in this area so critical?
2. Why is it important to know the state of the people we are working with?

3. What is the difference between an ‘ownership mentality’ and a ‘stewardship mentality’?
4. What is the difference between ‘sustainable resources’ and ‘hoarding wealth?’
5. Do you agree that when we do good to others, we are doing good for ourselves? Why or why not?
6. How are you taking care of God’s business?

Chapter Thirty-Six- What’s Your Price?

1. What is the outcome of a culture that abandons God? What is lost in the process?
2. What are the three areas that shape the direction of a culture?
3. How do leaders set a moral tone for a country?
4. Why are finances such a powerful barometer assessing our spiritual condition?
5. Why is the ‘Fear of God’ a greater source of security than earthly wealth?
6. What are a few improper attitudes toward acquiring wealth?
7. What is the antidote to greed? How do we foster that antidote in our lives?
8. Why is fear such a problematic emotion that motivates many people’s lives?

Chapter Thirty-Seven- Don’t Lose Your Cool

1. How can being in control be both positive and negative?
2. Why is it critical for people in leadership roles to govern themselves first before they can effectively help others develop self-control in their lives? How is this particularly critical for parents?
3. Why is a lack of self-control such a dangerous state to be in? What are some unwanted intruders that dominate our lives as a result?
4. Why is it considered wisdom to be ‘slow to speak, quick to listen, and slow to become angry?’ What happens when we disregard this advice?
5. Why is doing what is right so critical to the wellbeing of a community? What are the outcomes of righteousness in governance?
6. What are some of the outcomes of neglecting both correction and discipline toward those whom God has entrusted to us as authority figures, such as parents and employers?
7. Do you agree with Robert Alden, that “a nation that ignores God’s word can expect spiritual and political anarchy? Why or why not? What would that anarchy look like?

Chapter Thirty-Eight- Finding Our Way Home

1. What are the two ideas forwarded in understanding what it requires to secure God’s wisdom in our lives?
2. How does our view of God shape our response to Him?
3. What is one subtle temptation or consequence of evil?

4. Which is more damaging to our lives, self-deception or the deception from others? Give an example of both? In terms of the long term which is more deadly?
5. What is one possible outcome of an affluent lifestyle that biblical wisdom warns against?
6. Why is showing respect for the elderly and the past such an important attitude in society? What happens when that stops occurring and disrespect toward the past becomes normative?
7. Biblical wisdom teaches us to live with understanding. What are some of the things that are expressed here in chapter 30 that gives us an understanding of God's ways?

Chapter Thirty-Nine- Straighten Up and Fly Right

1. Do you agree or disagree with Wilberforce's assessment that "a people grossly corrupt are incapable of liberty?" Why or why not? Give some examples of your agreement or disagreement.
2. How does political reform need to coincide with a change in the hearts and minds of the people being governed?
3. What are some of the pitfalls that people in places of influence, such as parents, ought to avoid?
4. Why are godly mothers such a great sounding board for their children's development? How did the Queen mother in the Canaanites world shape the future king?
5. What are the two areas that we are warned to avoid? How are these two specific areas destructive in having influence in the lives of those who follow? How do they affect a nation or a family?
6. The issue of separation of church and state is often quoted to remove any vestige of religion in public life. This phrase was coined in the American Bill of Rights, but what was the original intention? Do you feel that it is being exercised in that manner today? How should religion and morality play a role in the political life of a nation?

Chapter Forty- Sing Her Praises

1. This description of the noble women is an 'idealized' person? Or is it a description of 'Lady Wisdom', in other words a portrait of what biblical wisdom produces through a life embracing her values?
2. How does biblical wisdom help us prepare for whatever future season we will experience in life?
3. If generosity is one expression of biblical wisdom, how are you manifesting this spirit and activity in ministering to others who are less fortunate?
4. Part of maturing is learning to appreciate what was done for us by those who have mentored, cared for, and helped shape our lives. How do you show your

appreciation for those who helped you grow and develop as a person? Who were the most significant shapers of your life?

- 5. How does superficiality in our lives diminish beauty from our lives?**
- 6. What kind of beauty is really being advocated here in Proverbs 31:10-31?**