

10  
MINUTE

MOMENTS ⌚

smart  
stuff



EXPLORING  
PROVERBS  
10 MINUTES  
AT A TIME

 simply for students

KURT  
JOHNSTON

### **10-Minute Moments: Smart Stuff**

Exploring Proverbs 10 Minutes At a Time

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# INTRODUCTION

## Hey!

I probably don't know you, but I am proud of you. The fact that you are reading this little book means that you are interested in spending a few minutes with God every day. Be warned—even 10 minutes a day reading the Bible and talking to God will have a radical effect on your life! And because you are open to that idea, I am proud of you.

I like fortune cookies—I like them a lot! Now to clarify, I don't like the way fortune cookies taste (how could anybody like the way they taste unless you like the taste of cardboard). I like what's inside fortune cookies. Every single fortune cookie contains a wonderful little word of wisdom or prediction of the future—some sort of “fortune” for the person lucky enough to crack open the cookie!

Can I tell you a secret? Even though I like reading the fortunes, I know they usually aren't true—I certainly don't believe some dude in a cookie factory knows my future! The truth is, the main reason I like fortune cookies is because it's fun to add “at my grandma's house” at the end of each fortune: “You will find riches and fame sometime soon...at my grandma's house.” “The wise person speaks slowly...at my grandma's house!”

What if I were to tell you that there is a book in the Bible that is made up almost entirely of short, interesting, and 100 percent true words of wisdom? Well guess what? The book of Proverbs is like a collection of God's fortune cookies—without having to eat cardboard!

In Smart Stuff, my friend Josh Pease and I picked 30 verses from the book of Proverbs that we think will challenge you, stretch your faith, encourage you, and make you a little smarter as you try to live a life that pleases God. Our hope is that by spending 10 minutes each day reading a proverb, reflecting on it, and talking to God about it, you will learn more about his ways and grow in your relationship with him.

Each proverb is God's voice speaking directly to you. (How awesome is that!) I hope you will let God's truth speak to you as you read each little chapter of Smart Stuff. And by the way, feel free to add “at my grandma's house” after each one if you want, because God's Word is true everywhere—even at your grandma's house!

Praying for you,



**Kurt Johnston**

# Day 1

## GOD: THE ULTIMATE GPS SYSTEM!

In my opinion, one of the best inventions in the history of humanity (other than donuts) are those GPS directional things that help you find your way around. I'm talking about the ones with the little voice that talks to you and tells you exactly when to make each turn. I'm pretty bad at finding my way around, so those things are great. Wouldn't it be awesome if life were like that? Imagine if we had someone giving us perfect advice for almost every decision we face. How awesome would that be? Well, believe it or not, that is exactly how God sees himself, and he wants us to see him that way, too!

Check out this first verse as we start our 30-day journey through the book of Proverbs.

**2 MINUTES**

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

**5 MINUTES**

- What do you think it means to trust someone with “all your heart?” Have you ever trusted someone that much? What does it mean to trust God that way?
- What do you think it means to “not depend on your own understanding”?

- Notice that it doesn't say, "seek God's will with whatever's bothering you" OR "with whatever you want." How does this verse encourage us to seek God's will? What does it say will happen if we do that?
- What is one area of your life where you don't trust God or where you know you aren't following God's plan? How could you work on that this week?

## 3 MINUTES

Spend a few minutes talking to God about what you just learned. If you need to, use the ideas below to get started:

- If there are things in your life that you know don't make God happy, tell him about those areas. Ask for God's help in living the way he wants you to live.
- If you're going through something tough and you don't know what to do, or you're facing a situation that seems really overwhelming, spend a few minutes talking to God about that. Ask him to give you directions during the day on how to deal with this situation.

## Day 2

### JUST WHEN I THOUGHT I WAS GETTING AWAY WITH IT

I'm not proud of this, but when I was in junior high I went through a little season of doing all kinds of stuff that I knew I shouldn't do—stuff that would get me in tons of trouble if I ever got caught. But the reality is, I never got caught! At the time, I thought I was getting away with stuff so I just kept right on doing it. But eventually I learned that just because I had never technically been “caught” didn't mean I was getting away with it either. My behavior was causing all kinds of problems for me and my friends. Because I had never read today's verse, I had no idea that God's wisdom and truth were being played out in my life!

**2 MINUTES**

*An evil man is held captive by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him (Proverbs 5:22).*

**5 MINUTES**

- Has there ever been a time in the past when you got caught doing something wrong? What was the punishment?
- Just because you get away with something (don't get caught) do you think there is a different kind of consequence? What are the consequences for a kid who DOESN'T get caught?
- What's one thing in your life that you know isn't what God wants for you? Why do you think it doesn't make God happy? What are some of the consequences he wants to protect you from?

## 3 MINUTES

Spend a few minutes talking to God about what you just learned. If you need to, use the ideas below to get started:

- The Bible says that God's power working through us is greater than any temptation or bad habit. Is there an area of your life that comes to mind? Ask God for his help.
- Usually part of the way God helps us get out from bad choices is through the help of other people. Ask God to show you one person who could help you—one person you could talk to about the area where you're struggling.
- Remember that no matter what you've done, God unconditionally loves you. Thank him for always being with you no matter what.

## Day 3

# THIS VERSE BUGS ME!

I'm not really a "bug" guy. I prefer to avoid most of them. Spiders kind of creep me out. Roaches are my archenemy. I HATE roaches! In fact, just typing the word "roach" makes me squirm. But according to the Bible bugs aren't all bad. Today's passage even says we can learn a thing or two from them—not from roaches, though. They're evil.

**2 MINUTES**

*Take a lesson from the ants, you lazybones. Learn from their ways and become wise! Though they have no prince or governor or ruler to make them work, they labor hard all summer, gathering food for the winter. But you, lazybones, how long will you sleep? When will you wake up? A little extra sleep, a little more slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—then poverty will pounce on you like a bandit; scarcity will attack you like an armed robber (Proverbs 6:6-11).*

**5 MINUTES**

- According to this passage, what can you learn from observing ants?
- Did you know before now that the Bible actually uses the word "lazybones"? Twice in this passage alone! Why do you think God gets so frustrated with lazy people?
- This verse talks about how ants don't have some boss making them work. Are you good about getting stuff done on your own, or do you always need a parent or teacher putting pressure on you?
- On a scale of 1-10, how much do you struggle with being lazy?

- The truth is that God has created each of us to do GREAT things. Every person has been given gifts and abilities to make our mark on the world around us. And when we're lazy we WASTE those gifts! That's why it's such a big deal to God.

## 3 MINUTES

Spend a few minutes talking to God about what you just learned. If you need to, use the idea below to get started:

- If there's an area of your life where you know you could be working harder, ask God to help you see that area of your life like HE sees it. Ask God to give you the motivation today to do your best.

## Day 4

# BURIED DEEP

Have you ever noticed how it's easy to memorize some things, but really hard to memorize others? For instance, I can still remember all the words to songs I learned in second grade, but I can't remember the names of people I met yesterday. In fact just yesterday I looked at my son and said, "Who are you?" OK, that's not true, but at my age it's probably gonna happen any day now!

I hate to admit this, but for me memorizing Bible verses usually falls into that second category of "hard to do." But it doesn't have to be. And because it's so important, I'm working on ways to get better at it.

### 2 MINUTES

*Follow my advice, my son; always treasure my commands. Obey my commands and live! Guard my instructions as you guard your own eyes. Tie them on your fingers as a reminder. Write them deep within your heart (Proverbs 7:1-3).*

### 5 MINUTES

- According to this verse, why is it important to obey God's commands? (The answer is right before the exclamation mark.)
- According to this verse, what are a couple ways to always remember God's commands?
- Since you probably won't tie Bible verses to your fingers, what is another way or two that might help you remember more of God's Word?

- What do you think it means to write something “deep within your heart?”

## 3 MINUTES

Basically, these verses are saying to surround yourself with God's commands where you can always see them (write them on your finger) and then memorize them and live them out so that they become a part of who you are (write them within your heart). Now, I know memorizing sounds a) boring and b) well, boring. So start with an easy one! Try this verse that we talked about a couple days ago: *Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding (Proverbs 3:5).*

That's it—just two sentences! Now write this verse down on a note card or a spare piece of paper. Figure out a way that you can carry it around with you today so that you'll see it, and when you do just repeat it to yourself a couple times. Try to eventually do it without looking. And after you read it just say a short prayer to God—something like, “God, help me to trust you today. Help me to believe YOUR way is better.”

As a matter of fact, instead of having some prayer thoughts right now, make the process of memorizing this verse your prayer to God today. And by tomorrow you can have a new verse buried deep in your heart!

**Day 5**

**ALL YOU NEED  
IS LOVE**

I'm sure you've noticed that there's a lot of fighting in the world. As I write this, the United States is currently fighting people in two different countries. There are reports of fighting and deaths within other countries in the Middle East and South America. Countries like North Korea are building massive weapons that could instantly wipe out millions. This is nothing new—history is marked by countries being in conflict.

But there's also fighting on a much smaller scale. There's conflict between different groups at school—maybe between people of different races or ideas, or even conflict between people who just dress differently. There's conflict between friends. Between enemies. Between families. There's even conflict between my son's comb and his hair! There's LOTS of fighting around. What can we DO about all of that?

**2 MINUTES**

*Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love makes up for all offenses  
(Proverbs 10:12).*

## 5 MINUTES

- According to this verse what causes fighting?
- What makes up for all offenses?
- What do you think love is—is it mostly a feeling or a choice? How do you put it into action?
- Who are some people in your life that you're experiencing conflict with? How did things get to this place? What could you do to make it better?

The reason most conflicts don't go away is because we're convinced the other side is wrong and owes us something. We feel disrespected or hurt or cheated, so we treat other people poorly—we fight, lie, cheat, gossip, or steal right back—to “get even.” But getting even never works—as a matter of fact it usually only makes things worse. What this verse says is that to make conflicts go away you have to stop making things all about you, and start choosing to love other people by forgiving them. I know—it's way easier said than done, but it's worth aiming for.

## 3 MINUTES

You can start today. If there's someone in your life you need to forgive, then start by talking to God—use the rest of this space to write a quick note to God, asking him to help you forgive the person you're struggling to love.

**Day 6**

**GOSSIP GIRL:  
THIS GOES FOR  
GUYS, TOO**

Let's be honest about this—it's really fun to be the first to know something. I love giving people the scoop on something they know nothing about. Sometimes this is harmless—like being the first to see the new blockbuster movie and telling all your friends about it the next day. But sometimes there's a really dark side to this...

**2 MINUTES**

*A gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence (Proverbs 11:13).*

*A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don't hang around with chatterers (Proverbs 20:19).*

**5 MINUTES**

- Do you know people who are famous (in a bad way) for being gossips? What kind of reputation do they have?
- Have you ever spread a rumor about someone, knowing it would hurt that person? What made you decide to do that?
- Why do you think gossiping can be so fun? Why is NOT gossiping so hard?
- How does the second verse say to avoid gossip?

The truth is that it's SO easy to get sucked into the gossip game. People are talking bad about someone, and the next thing you know, you are, too. Or maybe YOU'RE the person deliberately spreading rumors about other people.

Whatever role you play in gossiping, the Bible is clear that we're supposed to be the kind of people who can be trusted—that we won't go around sharing stuff with people they don't need to know! If somebody shares something with us, we should be trusted to keep it to ourselves. (Of course, some secrets shouldn't be kept—like the kind that could lead to somebody getting hurt or doing something dangerous.)

## 3 MINUTES

Spend some time praying today about gossiping:

- If you are currently caught in a pattern of gossiping, ask God to help you change.
- Pray for the courage to not talk about other people, even when everyone else is doing it.
- Ask God to help you have HIS perspective on the people who are the targets of gossip.
- Ask that God would make you the kind of person known as trustworthy and kind.



**Day 7**

# **MONEY MONEY MONEY**

Have you ever heard the saying, “money makes the world go ‘round”? I’m no scientist, but I think there are some other factors in the universe that actually cause the world to spin around! But I would agree that sometimes it seems as if this world revolves around money—it sure seems to be a big part of what we all focus on. And to some degree it makes sense. We need money to buy food, we need money to buy clothes, we need money to download songs, we need money to go to the movies, we need money to pay our friends (wait, am I the only one who has to pay my friends to hang out with me?), and the list goes on and on. It’s no wonder so many people are so stressed out when it comes to money. In today’s verse God warns us about putting too much trust in money or letting it become too important.

**2 MINUTES**

*Trust in your money and down you go! But the godly flourish like leaves in spring (Proverbs 11:28).*

**5 MINUTES**

- What does the first half of this verse mean?
- The second half of this verse says “the godly flourish.” What do you think that means?
- If trusting in money gets people in trouble, what are godly people trusting in?
- If tomorrow you had to give up every possession that you own, what would be the hardest thing to get rid of, and why?

God doesn't want us to get caught in the trap of trusting in STUFF to make us happy, because ultimately stuff will always let us down. Stuff breaks. It gets old, outdated, and boring. Think about Christmas when you were 5 years old. Can you even remember what toy you wanted more than anything else? If you were lucky enough to find it under your Christmas tree, do you still have it? Probably not.

## 3 MINUTES

Do you have some "stuff" that you're a little too attached to? What would it be like to give it up for one week? If there's something that comes to mind for you, write it in the space below. Then write one or two sentences about your plan to give it up for the week. After that, say a short prayer to God, asking him to help you focus on him instead of stuff. Remember, we're doing all of this so that we can learn to lean on God and discover how much he loves us!

## Day 8

# WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE INSULTS YOUR MOM (SORTA)

OK, today's moment doesn't really have anything to do with your mom being insulted, but it **DOES** have to do with dealing with insults.

I don't know about you, but I don't handle being insulted very well. If I feel like someone is talking down to me, or making fun of me, or not giving me the respect I think I deserve, I tend to get angry—but according to today's verse, that's not how people who love God are supposed to respond.

**2 MINUTES**

*A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted (Proverbs 12:16).*

**5 MINUTES**

- What does it mean to be quick-tempered? How would you describe that in your own words?
- According to this verse, what does a wise person do when insulted? Why does a wise person respond that way?
- Think back to a time when someone made fun of you, or criticized you, or a time you felt disrespected. How did you react—and why did you react that way?
- Why is it so hard not to lash out at others when they insult us? Why do we usually feel the need to “get even?”

If we're honest with ourselves, the reason it's so hard to be calm when we're insulted is because what other people think of us REALLY IS important to us! We don't like to admit that sometimes, but it's true. But the cool thing about being a child of God is that our value comes from the fact that God loves us, not from what other people think. The more you and I can accept that love, the less we will worry about what other people think.

## 3 MINUTES

In the space below, write a short paragraph prayer to God. Maybe you'll want to focus on not being angry at other people. Or maybe you'll want to ask God to help you know his love better. Or maybe you'll just want to thank God for how much he loves you. Whatever you do, go through today remembering that because of how much God loves you, you don't have to worry so much about what other people think.

Oh, and don't even think about insulting my mom! Oops...maybe I need to reread what I just wrote.

**Day 9**

**BE HEALED**

If you've ever read the book (or seen the movie) *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (part of a series of books known as *The Chronicles of Narnia*) then you'll remember that little Lucy, the youngest of the children, was given a very special gift by Aslan the Lion—the power to heal. Using a little vial full of a magical liquid, Lucy was able to heal the deepest of wounds.

How awesome would that be, if you could go up to someone who just wiped out on a skateboard, throw some water on them, and magically all the scrapes would go away! Well, today's verse says that we actually DO have the power to heal. It might not be outside wounds (that's what Band-Aids are for), but we DO have the power to heal wounds people have in their hearts.

**2 MINUTES**

*Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing (Proverbs 12:18).*

**5 MINUTES**

- What does it mean to “make cutting remarks?” What's another way of saying that?
- How can “the words of the wise bring healing?” What do you think that means?
- Can you remember a time when someone said something that made you feel great? What did that person say? Why did it feel so good?

- Think about your own life. Do you tend to say more words that cut down or words that heal?

The truth is that your words have a LOT of power. You can tear people down or build them up. You can make them feel like less of a person, or you can make them feel valued and loved.

## 3 MINUTES

So how can you today use your words to build up and heal people instead of tearing down and hurting people? Spend some time praying that God would help you become someone who uses kind words, then make a list of people you can think of who need “healing” through your words. Maybe it’s someone you said something mean to recently, and you need to apologize to that person. Maybe it’s just someone who could use an encouraging note, or maybe you can think of something kind to say to somebody who gets teased a lot. Before you’re done today write down the name of one person who could use some kind words. Then pray that God would use your words to bring some healing.

## Day 10

### KURT THE RUBBER KNIFE THIEF

In my entire life, I have only stolen one thing. I was 5, and my neighbor had a really cool collection of rubber knives. Looking back on it, I'm not sure why a 5-year-old kid would have a rubber knife collection, but my buddy did. He had lots of rubber knives; certainly he wouldn't miss one, would he? So one day when he wasn't looking I grabbed the biggest, baddest rubber knife in his collection and snuck it out of his house.

Sadly, I didn't have much time to enjoy it. As soon as I set it on my nightstand to admire it, I was overwhelmed with guilt. How could I take something that wasn't mine? What would my mom and dad say when they found out? Why would I do something like this to my friend? Is Jesus going to zap me with lightning when I go to sleep tonight?

Guilt is an interesting thing. It can be bad if it causes you to dwell on the past or to not forgive yourself. But it can also be really, really good. Look at today's verse:

**2 MINUTES**

*Fools make fun of guilt, but the godly acknowledge it and seek reconciliation (Proverbs 14:9).*

**5 MINUTES**

- What does it mean to “acknowledge” something?

- Why do you think it says that godly people acknowledge guilt? What does that mean?

Basically, this verse says there are two responses to feeling guilty: making fun of it or responding to it. The truth is that sometimes guilt is a good thing. If you rob a bank or hit your sister, then feeling guilty is the right reaction. If you rob a bank then go home and hit your sister, then you should really feel guilty! And the right way to respond to guilt is to make things right: Give back the money and apologize to your sister (that's what reconciliation means—to make something right).

- Have you ever felt bad about something you did that was wrong, but then someone else told you “it's no big deal?” What does this verse say about that?
- When we do something wrong, who is the main person we need to make things right (reconcile) with?

## 3 MINUTES

Guilt can be a good thing because it moves us to make things right with God. HE is the first person we always have to make things right with. And what's cool about God is that he doesn't stay mad at us—the Bible says that the moment we confess what we've done, God wipes it away and doesn't remember it anymore. It even says that for those of us who have decided to follow Jesus, he has already forgiven everything—we just have to admit to what we did and accept God's immediate forgiveness!

- Is there something you've done that is making you feel guilty? How can you make that right with God? Spend some time praying to him about this.
- Is there something in life that you did a long time ago, and have already made right, but **STILL** feel guilty about? If so then talk to God about that, and know that he **DOESN'T** want for you to beat yourself up over the past. Ask him to help you know you're forgiven.

smart  
stuff

If you've got 10 minutes (and I bet you can find them lying around), then you've got enough time to hang out with God. 10-Minute Moments: The Smart Stuff is a 30-day devotional that gets you into the book of Proverbs—aka "The Smart Stuff"—and encourages you to live God's way. Each day you'll look at a short passage, spend a few minutes thinking about it, answer a few questions, and then get some ideas for prayer. It's totally portable—do 'em on the bus, in the car, or in your room—and easy to understand.



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