



*Small Group Discussion Guide*



## PREPARATION

### ❑ STUDY

Spend the week studying Proverbs 19:11. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

### ❑ DETERMINE

Determine which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

### ❑ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

### ❑ LANDING POINT

Help me to forgive and guard my heart against offense.



## GROUP DISCUSSION

❑ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

❑ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

❑ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

❑ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



## INTRODUCTION

*As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

# WALKING IN A MINEFIELD

Last week your group discussed the nature and effects of offense. Offense can be dangerous because it can lead us to sin or make us a stumbling block for others. It also makes us defensive and causes division in relationships. We live in a culture of offense. As Christians, it's essential that we engage our culture and respond to offense with joy, patience, love and gentleness. We are to live our lives in the context of the gospel story. When we live this way, we start to look like Jesus.

Let's continue to look at the dangers of offense. Why? Because dealing with offense is like walking in a minefield. It can be treacherous. A wrong response to offense can be explosive and cause great damage to you and others. Thankfully, God gives us His wisdom to know how to respond to an offense. With God's wisdom as your guide, you can respond differently to offense.

**Q:** *What are some explosive ways to respond to offense? Be specific.*

**Q:** *Recall a time when you responded to an offense in a way that was helpful or damaging.*



## LEARN

Select 2–3 questions to discuss as a group.

# A FOUNDATION OF WISDOM

The Book of Proverbs is about how to live a successful life. The Bible doesn't view success the way the world does. Ultimately, you don't measure success by your family, career or accomplishments. Proverbs tells us that "success is found in living wisely in the fear of the Lord. To live wisely is to live beautifully—that is, to live a life that counts."<sup>1</sup> Success is about living your life in light of God's wisdom, which He gives generously (James 1:5).

Proverbs 19:11 tells us that wisdom helps a person respond to offense with discretion. This word "discretion" can be understood as insight, understanding or good sense. Wisdom allows you to look at any situation in life and see it for what it really is. Wisdom helps you deal with the day-to-day difficult questions and relationships everyone faces in life. When you have God's wisdom, you stand on a firm foundation.

🗣️: *How does our culture measure success? How are those measures different than the Bible's?*

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# WISDOM LIVED OUT

Wisdom gives you discretion. When you have discretion, you respond to offense differently. In other words, discretion helps you live wisely. Proverbs 19:11 tells us that discretion allows us to do two things. First, discretion makes us slow to anger. There are two sides to anger. On one side there is righteous anger. This is good anger. It's the kind of anger that takes offense to sin. We *should* be angry about sin. Sin goes against God and destroys lives. Jesus expressed anger against sin. We are right to be angry about sin.

On the other hand, there is sinful anger. Sinful anger is when you are personally wounded and you respond by exploding. This anger comes from your feelings of being personally attacked, wronged or disobeyed. We get frustrated with a co-worker and make a cutting remark. We lash out at our kids because they don't listen. Discretion allows us to be slow to anger so we can determine whether we're responding with good or sinful anger.

Second, discretion lets us overlook an offense. Instead of personally taking offense, discretion allows you to let things roll off your back. Offenses don't stick because you see the offense differently. You see it with spiritual eyes. You have the Holy Spirit to help you look past an offense. When someone goes on the offensive, you feel protected and kept in your relationship with God. A person's words and actions don't give you an occasion for sin. On the contrary, they give you an occasion to respond in love and forgiveness. That kind of response gives God glory and makes you honorable to Him and others.

Q: *When is it ever good to be angry? What are healthy expressions of this kind of anger?*

Q: *Why is it hard to overlook an offense and forgive someone?*



LIVE

Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

## REAL SUCCESS

The Bible helps us fear the Lord. That's what wisdom is, and it leads to successful living. What does successful living look like? Living by God's wisdom doesn't mean you won't encounter failure, hardship or disappointment in life. It's not always as simple as "obey this rule and this will always be the result." Life is more complicated in a fallen world. What it does mean is that God has given you the tools to respond to life—and to offense—with His wisdom and be successful in His eyes, which is all that really matters (2 Peter 1:3).

Q: *How is life complicated in a fallen world? Why is it important to remember this in regard to Proverbs?*

Q: *How would you live differently if you valued being successful in God's eyes above all else?*

# NAVIGATE THE DANGERS

Living by God's wisdom is more of an art than a science. Wisdom is something you learn in the everyday experiences of life. As you live by God's wisdom, you become more adept in the art of handling offense.

Here are some ways you can navigate the dangers of offense in your life:

- *Avoid.* As much as it is in your power, stay away from offensive people and things. Avoid those who intentionally seek to hurt you or cause you harm. Be wise about removing anything from your life that would cause you to sin (Matthew 5:29–30).
- *Remain.* The cry of Proverbs is to seek wisdom with everything you have. Value wisdom as something more precious than gold and silver. The more you spend time in God's Word, in prayer and in community, the more you will grow in wisdom. Jesus commands His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1–11). Spend time with Jesus like you would with a treasured friend. Linger and cherish those moments with Him.
- *Trust.* Trust that God can use every hurt and offense in your life to bring about good. Joseph was hurt and betrayed by his brothers. He encountered setbacks, temptations to sin and long years of waiting in chains. But Joseph was faithful and responded to each situation with bold trust in His God. God used his story to bring about good and the salvation of many (Genesis 50:17–21). Jesus was hurt and betrayed by others. He was tempted to sin and forsake God's plan. But He responded to offense with trust in the Father. God used something as deplorable as the death of a truly innocent man to bring about good and a greater salvation.

🗨️: *What advice would you give someone hoping to be wise in responding to an offense?*

🗨️: *Write a short Statement of Trust that you can remember the next time someone hurts or offends you.*



## LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

# WISDOM IN A PERSON

Wisdom may be expressed in words but it is ultimately found in a Person. Colossians 2:3 tells us that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in Christ. In Him you have everything you need to live a wise and successful life. In Him you can withstand any offense with *discretion* to see things as they truly are. And in Him you can find the *love* and *grace* to forgive an offender.

You can't get wisdom without humility. Admit that you need a humble heart more than you realize. You can't navigate the many dangers of offense without understanding that you are a man or woman in need of God's transforming grace. He can change your heart to make it humble and to desire wisdom as the precious, life-giving gift it is.

Q: *Why is humility essential to gaining wisdom?*

Q: *What's one practical thing you can start doing to value God's wisdom in your life?*



## PRAY

Pray for God to give you discretion to see situations and relationships in life as they truly are, and to respond to offense with a love and grace that forgives.



## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read John 15:1–11 and consider how you can more fully abide in Jesus.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



**PURPOSE OF PROVERBS** “The book of Proverbs looks beyond Solomon to Christ, who is greater than Solomon (Matt. 12:41–42). While Solomon failed to live according to the wisdom God gave him, Jesus is Wisdom personified (8:22–31; 1 Cor. 1:24, 30; Col. 2:3). It is in relation to Jesus Christ that we are able to live according to the wisdom about which Solomon writes.”<sup>2</sup>

God’s wisdom is more than helpful principles by which to live. It directs us to something beyond moralism and behavioral change. It directs us to Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s wisdom. Only in Him can we have hope of real change at the heart level.

**HONOR IN FORGIVENESS** “In many cultures, any sign of disrespect to a man is a challenge to his honor, and he can regain it only by fighting whoever insults him. Here, patience and overlooking slights bring honor to a man.”<sup>3</sup> “God’s wisdom is that ‘it is to a man’s honor to avoid strife’ (Prov. 20:3) not to court it.”<sup>4</sup>

**DEFINING DISCRETION** “The Hebrew word used here, *sekhel*, refers to good sense or discretion, a characteristic of the wise. A person with good sense is level headed and can defuse conflict (Prov. 15:18). Elsewhere, the person who is patient or self-controlled is said to be better than the mighty (16:32).”<sup>5</sup>

**ENDNOTES:**

1. Jim Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 10.
2. Jim Newheiser, *Opening up Proverbs, Opening Up Commentary* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2008), 12..
3. Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 1167.
4. Eric Lane, *Proverbs: Everyday Wisdom for Everyone, Focus on the Bible Commentary* (Great Britain: Christian Focus Publications, 2000), 246..
5. John D. Barry et al., *Faithlife Study Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012, 2016), Pr 19:11.