Bob: Lydia Brownback never expected to be an unmarried woman in her 40s. She had different plans; but, as the book of Proverbs says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end is destruction.”

Lydia: Going my own way never worked. Everything that Proverbs warns about happened to me; but I think the thing that really brought me to the end of myself, in that regard, was coming to an understanding that God is my Father. I have everything I need. If I needed something different—like a husband or something else—I would have that. That is up to God to decide for me. He is lovingly sovereign over my life.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Monday, September 23rd. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I'm Bob Lepine. The book of Proverbs is referred to, in the Bible, as wisdom literature. Lydia Brownback joins us today to talk about some of the wisdom she learned when she finally turned her attention to that portion of God’s Word. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us.

Dennis: I’ve got a question for you, Bob.

Bob: Okay; alright.

Dennis: What is your favorite Proverb?

Bob: My favorite Proverb?

Dennis: I’m not talking about African proverbs. [Laughter]

Bob: Of course. Now, I'm trying to run through the entire book of Proverbs to isolate—

Dennis: You have to review it all. It will only take a few seconds—

Bob: Here’s the one that got used around our house probably more than any other Proverb. We made our kids memorize this one early, and it got repeated often: “Like a
madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is the man who deceives his neighbor and then says, ‘I was only kidding.’ That got used over and over again because our kids would do stuff to others and upset them: They’d go: “Stop it!”—“I was just kidding!” “Like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows....” So, they had to memorize that and repeat it. It was one of my favorites.

**Dennis:** Did the kids ever put their hands over their ears and say: “Nah, nah, nah, nah. Don’t say it again, Dad!”

**Bob:** Here’s the other one. I remember my daughter, Katie, coming to me and saying, “I have found my life verse.” I said, “What is it?” She said, “It is here in Proverbs 6: “A little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands to rest....” I go, “Honey, there’s a verse, right after that, and it kind of fits the context because ‘...destruction will come on you.’” She said: “I don’t like that verse. I just like the first half.” [Laughter]

**Dennis:** She likes the sleep!

**Bob:** That’s right!

**Dennis:** Well, mine is Proverbs, Chapter 1, verse 7: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.” I’ve always—well, I had that verse introduced to me—it was kind of like a keyhole into the book of Proverbs.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Dennis:** If you understand that verse, you can better understand the entire book of Proverbs. I’m going to ask our guest, on the broadcast today, before I introduce her to our listening audience. Lydia Brownback, you’ve written a book about Proverbs. The book is called *A Woman’s Wisdom: How the Book of Proverbs Speaks to Everything.* What’s your favorite proverb out of all?

**Lydia:** I was listening to you two talking about that. I don’t know if I can pinpoint a favorite. I love the one that you said—that is the key proverb to understand all the others. I have two others. One is 4:23: “Guard your heart, for out of it are the issues of life.” The other is the perennial favorite of everybody, Proverbs 3:5-6—

**Dennis:** Oh, yes.

**Lydia:** “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make straight your paths.” That seems to be everybody’s favorite proverb.

**Dennis:** I’ll tell you—the book of Proverbs is one of my favorites. It certainly was as Barbara and I were raising our six children. It seems to even grow richer the older I get.
Bob: Well, there’s a reason for that. Proverbs says that: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child” [Laughter] “and the rod of correction”—along with the wisdom of God’s Word—the wisdom of the book of Proverbs—is a part of what drives foolishness out.

Dennis: I’ll tell our listeners today—whether you’re a man or a woman—this book is really a great review of what the Scriptures teach about being a wise person. Whether you woke up this morning and thought about it or not, you just need to be reminded: “You need wisdom.” You and I both need wisdom for handling the issues of life.

Now, I want to introduce Lydia to our audience. Lydia is from Big Orange Country—that’s not the University of Tennessee.

Lydia: No!

Dennis: That’s Syracuse, New York.

Lydia: Go Orange!

Dennis: Go Orange! She is a writer, and a speaker, and as I mentioned, the author of the book, A Woman’s Wisdom. What caused you to write this book, Lydia? What, ultimately, motivated you to pen these words?

Lydia: You know, Dennis, I think it’s my own quest for practical wisdom in day-to-day life and wanting to understand how God’s Word speaks into that. It drove me to Proverbs and wanting to see what wisdom really is and, “How do these biblical truths—that can seem so “ivory tower”—how do they come down and make sense of relationships and day-to-day life at work and all the things that everybody faces—when they’re raising children—?”

I think Proverbs drew me so much. You mentioned how it was big in your house, growing up. I think about how Proverbs was written by an older generation to a younger generation. It was meant to instruct young people in the paths of practical wisdom. What we find, as we get into Proverbs, what the teachers—the wise people—are teaching the young people is how God has designed the world to work.

Basically, it’s saying that: “If you plug in ‘A’, you’re going to get ‘B’. So, if you follow God’s ways, these are the results for doing so.” Of course, that’s not a guarantee. It doesn’t always work that way; but for the most part, this book of Proverbs shows us how God has designed the world to work.

Bob: That’s a key point that you brought up there because some people will read Proverbs and interpret it as a promise rather than as a precept. Explain why we need to look at this as a precept rather than a promise.
Lydia: Exactly. A lot of people will go there—they'll point to a verse and say, “This is how my life will work. If I just do this, this is what I'm guaranteed.”

Bob: “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Lydia: Right. So, children grow up, and they're not walking with the Lord, and they're in all kinds of trouble—people assume that Scripture isn't accurate then—not reliable. That is understanding what Proverbs is about—these are not promises. They are observations of how God’s ways play out in day-to-day life. For the most part, in general, these are observations of what will happen—that's what I mean: “If you plug in ‘A’, you’re going to get ‘B’.”

Of course, we have to keep that in balance with all that Scripture teaches about God’s purposes in allowing us to suffer—the whole theology of suffering that we see all throughout Scripture. Sometimes—that's why Proverbs isn't a guarantee to the good life. You can’t—it's not a how-to manual.

Bob: Right.

Lydia: If we look at it that way, we're going to be disappointed because it’s forgetting that, sometimes, God doesn't want things to go well for us.

Dennis: Lydia, I hinted at this at the beginning of the broadcast when I introduced you. I mentioned that we all need wisdom, whether or not we woke up this morning and thought about it. We really desperately need wisdom. I just kind of want to assume nothing. Explain to our listeners the benefits of wisdom for them in everyday living.

Lydia: It really depends on how we define wisdom. We all need wisdom. There are all kinds of wisdom we can lay hold of. We can lay hold of, if we choose, the world’s wisdom—which isn't going to get us very far. Or we can choose to say: “I want biblical wisdom. That’s what I’m after.”

In order to lay hold of it, we have to understand what it is. That’s the verse you read in the beginning: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.” In Chapter 9 of Proverbs, it flips it around and says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” In those two verses there, there’s the link: “The fear of the Lord…”—that is wisdom. That’s the kind of wisdom we all need.

Dennis: As I thought about it—I thought: “We come into this world not-skilled. We're not fully-trained in living life as God intended it to be lived.” That’s why, as you said earlier, this book, as written by a father to a son, really equips that son with the skill he is going to need to be able to live life around the major issues of life—finances, circumstances, relating to the opposite sex, his or her own sexuality. This book tackles some of the great topics that human beings face over their lifetime.
Bob: Well, I think it’s interesting because you contrast—in the book—wisdom with folly—which is—the book of Proverbs contrasts those two. There’s a difference between wisdom and knowledge. The opposite of knowledge is ignorance; but the opposite of wisdom is foolishness or folly. So, a person, who is acting wisely, is going to be contrasted with a person who is making choices—that are not ignorant choices, necessarily—but foolish choices. What’s at the core of whether it’s wise or foolish is whether it’s God-centered or whether it’s self-centered; right?

Lydia: Exactly; exactly. That’s something Proverbs makes very clear. Fools can be some of the brightest—in terms of intellect—some of the brightest people around. So, it’s not about brain power. It’s about all the traits, that go into wisdom, are then applied to these practical areas of day-to-day life.

Some of those traits of wisdom; for example are: humility—that’s a huge one. That’s part of the fear of the Lord. It’s humility to recognize that God is sovereign over everything, and we are not. It’s seeing us in relation to God. That’s humility—and to admit that and acknowledge it. It’s to reverence God and love Him. That is the foundation of the book; whereas, fools, on the other hand—they want their own way. That’s what it means to “not fear the Lord”—it means to be autonomous. It means to say, “I want to do things my way."

Bob: Yes.

Lydia: And, you know, “I know the Bible says to do it this way and other people I know are doing it the way that the Bible says, but I’m going to try doing things my own way.” It never works. It is the height of folly.

Bob: Fools think they know better than God.

Lydia: Yes.

Bob: They think they know better than God’s Word. They think that—whatever their impulse is—is the right impulse.

Lydia: They won’t take advice; right. They refuse to take advice. They don’t listen to godly counsel. They don’t immerse themselves in Scripture. They’re not informed by the Word of God.

Dennis: One thing that you did—in the book—that I thought was really interesting—you compared what the book of Proverbs does, in contrasting wisdom and folly, to a young couple walking into a jewelry store. Share that illustration with our listeners because I think this book does that. It really does contrast.
Lydia: Well, if you think about it, when a newly-engaged couple walks into a jewelry store to pick out an engagement ring, what does the jeweler do? The jeweler takes, out of the case, a display of diamond rings, and will take one off, and set it on a dark velvet background—

Bob: Yes.

Lydia: —usually, a black velvet background. The reason for that is that the black velvet, behind the diamond, will show the sparkle of the diamond in its full glory and radiance. That’s exactly what Proverbs is doing. We see so much in there about what wise people do right next to a comparison of what fools do and what the outcome for either path is going to be.

Wisdom makes the most sense to us when we see it in comparison to what: “If you follow this path, it’s going to go well. This is what happens to fools who follow their own path. It’s not going to go well; it’s going to be dark.”

Dennis: I so like that because the assignment of a mom and a dad, even though it sounds harsh, is to really point out to their children the way of a fool and the outcome of that life compared with—again, back to your illustration—to the way of a wise person and how their lives are full of peace, security, and richness because they’re living life as God designed it. I think, sometimes, we kind of shy away from the word, “fool” or “folly”, because it seems like a harsh word; but the reality is—it describes how people are living today. There are real consequences for living a life of folly.

Lydia: There are. I think also, on the flip side of that, is that the term, “fool”, can be seen as a joke. We talk about fools as court jesters in Shakespeare plays. We have April Fool’s Day. It’s sort of a light-hearted term in some ways. So, we use it loosely: “Oh, she’s a fool,” “He’s a fool.” What we should really be saying—the way Proverbs uses “fool” is to say—I’m trying to think of an even stronger word.

Bob: “Imbecile”.

Lydia: An imbecile; yes: “That person is an idiot.”

Dennis: Without understanding.

Lydia: Without understanding, yes.

Bob: There was a season in your life when you were a fool; wasn’t there?

Lydia: Oh, there’ve been many seasons when I—[Laughter]

Bob: There was a time, before you came to faith, when life was not about living for God for you; right?
Lydia: Well, you know, I have to say that I became a believer as a young person; but I would say that the most foolish things I’ve done, actually, were after I became a Christian. They were always times when I did the very thing we read in Proverbs not to do. That was when I wanted what I wanted when I wanted it. I decided that pursuing my own course was going to be better. I wanted the Lord, but I also wanted what I wanted and I tried to have both.

Bob: Can you give me an example of one of those times?

Lydia: Yes. I’m a single woman, and I’ve always been single. That was very difficult for me, back in my 20s. I didn’t understand why God wasn’t giving me a husband—the way He was giving all of my friends a husband.

Bob: Yes.

Lydia: So, I ended up getting involved with men who weren’t viable marriage candidates—in terms of what the Bible would call good choices.

Bob: Not godly guys?

Lydia: No. I tried to make that work. I think so many young women can do that. They panic and think: “I’m left behind. God isn’t blessing me in this area of my life. So, I’ll help God out. I’ll bring this guy along and make him fit the biblical model so I can marry him. Then, I can have God and have what I want.” It never works. That was my area where I took steps down the path of folly.

Bob: And how did you come to wisdom, out of that foolishness?

Lydia: That’s a great question. One, it never worked. The book of Proverbs—I was just reading this morning a proverb in Chapter 30. It said, “The words of the Lord always prove true.” Everything it warned about—everything Proverbs warns about—happened to me; but I think the thing that really brought me to the end of myself, in that regard, was coming to an understanding that God is my Father. Because He has undertaken that for me, in Christ Jesus, I have everything I need. If I needed something different—like a husband or something else—I would have that. That is up to God to decide for me.

He is lovingly sovereign over my life. Once I let go of the demand that life work the way I thought it should work—which is the opposite of humility—to understand that the Lord is sovereign, and loving, and good—He’s always good! We’re never going to trust Him if we don’t believe He’s good. The two go hand in hand. I got to that place of trust—which made me realize how good He is to me. Therefore, I discovered that I have everything I need.
**Dennis:** Wisdom is, ultimately, a choice—and a decision to obey.

**Lydia:** Yes.

**Dennis:** You have a story that you tell about Pastor Donald Gray Barnhouse and his daughter who came to ask him for something.

**Lydia:** Yes.

**Dennis:** I think it’s really cute; but it illustrates what, I think, is really the human malady here—just our human condition of how we fight being obedient to what God calls us to do.

**Lydia:** Yes. This is a great story. He was working in his study one day, preparing a sermon. His daughter—I think she was a teenager at the time—came in and explained to him something she wanted to do. She wanted his permission to go do whatever this activity was. She told him all about it. He listened. When she was finished, he looked at her and said, “No, I don’t want you to do that.”

Then, he picked up his notes, and went back to his sermon preparation. He was startled, a few minutes later, when he looked up from his work and saw his daughter standing at the end of his desk. He had assumed she had left the room. He said, “What are you doing?” She said, “Dad, I’m waiting for you to tell me what to do.” He said: “No, that’s not what you’re doing. I’ve already told you what I want you to do. What you’re doing is you are waiting to get me to change my mind.”

That is exactly what we do with God. We know what He’s told us to do. We have it—the Word of God, right there. Sometimes, in our own minds—what we think is confusion or God is not telling us—is really our unwillingness to hear it.

**Bob:** Yes. It reminds me of one time when Elisabeth Elliot said—that people who say they’re struggling with an issue: “Struggling” she said, “is just delayed obedience.”

**Lydia:** She’s exactly right!

**Bob:** I thought, “Oh! Just another little arrow, from Elisabeth, right to the soul;” you know?

**Lydia:** Yes.

**Dennis:** But we don’t think about this book really calling us out to take God at His Word when He does call us to humility—when He calls us to seek wisdom and hearing it cry in the streets. Proverbs, Chapter 2, almost speaks of wisdom like a person. In fact, you refer to wisdom being a person, who is crying out to us.
Lydia: Yes, and in Chapters 8 and 9, especially, of Proverbs, wisdom is personified—which means taking on the role of human qualities—and speaking to us, and telling us, calling us, drawing us—and saying, “Come feast at my table!” We are invited to partake of wisdom. What is so amazing is that God—the God of the universe—Who didn’t have to tell us anything about what would lead to a blessed path for us—has, actually, condescended to cry out to say: “Come! Find out how to get blessed!”—

Bob: Hmmm.

Lydia: —and almost pleads with us to come and get the blessings He longs to give to us.

Dennis: The bottom line is: “Every one of us is born in need of being trained in godly skill in everyday living.”

Bob: Well, we’re all born foolish.

Dennis: We are!

Lydia: Right.

Dennis: Yes. And for some of us, we had to have the rod drive it far from us.

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: I got some spankings, growing up.

Bob: And you deserved them.

Dennis: I deserved every one of them.

Bob: That’s right.

Dennis: And several that I didn’t get, [Laughter] but we need to be fully-trained in living life as God designed it to be lived. This book is not an option. I heard, at some point, that Billy Graham—

Bob: You’re talking about the book of Proverbs—

Dennis: Yes.

Bob: —not Lydia’s book—because her book is—

Lydia: My book is optional; yes! [Laughter]
Dennis: Well, I would say that every woman ought to get a copy of this and ought to consider how to apply it with her children; but I was referring back to Billy Graham starting every day reading five Psalms and one Proverb. He shared that that’s how he started every day.

I’ve done that in different years—started my days doing that. You know, there’s something about filling your mind with words of wisdom about what godly skill in everyday living really looks like. We all need it.

Bob: And I can imagine a lot of women who would profit from getting together with other women and looking, together, at what God’s Word has to say about wisdom in the book of Proverbs. That’s—I know, what you had in mind, Lydia, when you wrote the book, A Woman’s Wisdom: How the Book of Proverbs Speaks to Everything. We’ve got copies of that book in our FamilyLife Today Resource Center. Go online at FamilyLifeToday.com for information on how you can get a copy of Lydia’s book, A Woman’s Wisdom. Again, the website is FamilyLifeToday.com. You can also call to order: 1-800-FL-TODAY is our number. That’s 1-800-358-6329: 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY”.

You know, almost every day, we are receiving letters, notes, and phone calls from listeners—who are getting in touch with us and often sharing about how God is using the ministry of FamilyLife Today in their lives, or how He has used a resource we’ve made available, or how attending one of our events has been life-changing for them. We are grateful when a listener takes time out to share with us how God has used this ministry in his or her life. We often will share that with other teammates, here at FamilyLife—just for their encouragement.

We’re also grateful when you get in touch with us to help support what we’re doing here. We could not do what we do without listeners, like you, who, periodically, get in touch with us to provide a donation to help cover the cost of producing and syndicating this daily radio program. We’d like to say, “Thank you,” this month, if you’re able to help with a donation to support this ministry, by sending you a copy of a conversation we had, not long ago, with a mom named Joanne Kraft, who took her family on what she called a “Radical Sabbatical”. It was a one-year hiatus on all extracurricular activities for the family. It was designed to bring a little sanity back into their schedule.

Along with the CD of our conversation with Joanne Kraft, we’d like to send along a copy of Dr. Tim Kimmel’s book, Little House on the Freeway. We’re hoping these resources can help you get a grip on the whole issue of busyness in your family. We’re making these two resources available if you can support the ministry with a donation of $25 or more this month.

Go to FamilyLifeToday.com and click the button that says, “I CARE”, to make an online donation; or call 1-800-FL-TODAY to make your donation over the phone. Just ask for the “Busyness Bundle” when you get in touch with us. Or you can write a check and
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Tomorrow, we’re going to continue to talk about the wisdom found in Proverbs and how that can apply in a woman’s life. I hope you can tune in for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

FamilyLife Today is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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