

A person in a long brown coat stands on a concrete path leading to a pebbly beach. The ocean is visible in the background under a cloudy sky.

*Proverbs for The Wanna
be Wise*

-www.comingaliveministries.com

Jennifer Hand

www.comingaliveministries.com

Dear friend,

I wanted to welcome you. And share a few things with you before you began reading this.

One, I am so honored that you joined me.

Can you grab a cup of coffee so we can pretend we are having coffee together? I am currently drinking an Americano with steamed cream and sugar free Hazelnut at my favorite coffee shop in Cleveland, Laster's.

Join me ☺

I am so glad you clicked to download this resource. It is copied off my blog posts in October of 2015 where I went through a Proverbs a day.

Here's a few things you should know. I did not have a professional editor—so give me some grace would you ? I am NOT the editing type and I simply copied and pasted these for you. Maybe someday I can have a free resource for you that was professionally edited. But I did not have much time to put this on my web site and I am in the middle of writing a book and so for now, you get the “rough” version.

Designed for you to read a day and then the Proverbs chapter that corresponds to that day.

Something you should know—some days are longer than others. Some were skipped all together (so for those days, just read that chapter on your own—something happened that I did not do Proverbs 15-20!)

Again, thank you for joining and I am praying for you!

Big blessings my friend (plus a hug)

Jenn Hand

Proverbs 1

I think I may have lost my marbles. Or maybe had slightly too much coffee to celebrate National Coffee Day (which I feel really is everyday actually). I decided to join the group of folks who write everyday for the 31 days of October.

I think this is crazy because October is my craziest busiest month for Coming Alive Ministries. But hey, why not throw a little extra crazy in the mix.

So the post title.. 31 days of wisdom (for the wanna be wise)

I am a wanna be wise girl.

I want to make wise decisions. I want the words that come out of my mouth to be wisely chosen. Instead I often wonder why in the world did I just say that?

I want to follow God's plans, not Jenn's ideas.

And so I want to be wise.

This summer I was challenged in a talk to get a scripture buddy and go through a proverb a day for the 31 days of month. I got a scripture buddy and we set off to read Proverbs together. I was so SURPRISED at what the Lord showed me.

True confession time: I had kind of always stayed away from Proverbs because it felt like a series of fortune cookie sayings.

Ok. I said it.

But once I studied them, I realized why it's called a book of Wisdom-- it's full of just that.

So, you want to study a Proverb a day with me for the next month (insert your excited cheers here)?

Since I have rambled and there isn't much time here left before you will leave this post for two many words-- let me just start with Proverbs 1:33 , an awesome promise to chew on.

Whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease without fear of disaster.

Now who cannot tell me those words are not refreshing balm to our souls. (balm, really who uses that word?)

Listening to the Lord and HIS truth gives me this promise-- I will dwell secure and will be at ease without fear.

Makes me sure want to lean in and listen to His words of wisdom-- how about you?

What is one area of your mind you would like to experience ease?



Proverbs 2

Day 2. It's Day 2 of 31 days to wisdom. If you just checked in for today, I lost my marbles and decided to join the #write31days crowd, writing 31 days in October. Our topic here in this cozy little corner.--WISDOM.

Not because I am wise. But because I want to learn to be wiser. (That doesn't feel like it is grammatically correct, but well, I tend to miss things like that so..)

We are going to study Proverbs together in these days. So you guessed it. Proverbs 2 corresponds with Day 2. So take a second, grab your Bible or the Bible on your smart phone and read Proverbs 2. Then come back.

It's taking me a while to get this whole twitter thing. First of all, they limit my characters. I mean, frankly I can get wordy friends. So I have a hard time with that.

I didn't understand the #thing either? Basically you just #mashwordstogetherthatdon'tmakeanysenseifyouaskme

But I want to be trendy-- and with it.. and I think there are awesome people you can follow on twitter. I have even been a part of some twitter parties, which have been super fun.

I I want to invite you to the #wisdom party. I think there are so many categories of things we need wisdom in.

They can range from the very practical to the very important deep emotional questions, like " is He THE one", how do I recover from this emotional baggage, how can I let go of THAT thing, can I ever be free?

Wisdom for things like what job do I take, what church do I go to, what diet do I start on Monday, is it ok for me to have that 700th cup of coffee or should I go on a walk instead?

#helpmeJesus

I love this in Proverbs 2:6, " For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright, he is a shield to those who walk in integrity.

I want wisdom. So I have to choose to follow the Lord like I choose to follow someone on twitter. (I wonder what clever name God would chose for His twitter handle) . And I need to take Him at His word.

James 1:5 promises that if I lack wisdom He gives generously and without reproach. What a gift.

#glory

Proverbs 3

The title of Proverbs 3 is trust in the Lord with all of your heart. I don't know about you, but for me, sometimes the all of my heart gets a little tricky.

I trust a little bit. Sometimes even more than a little. But putting all of my trust in the Lord can be well, a challenge. Not because He is not trustworthy, but because I forget He is.

My trusting can sometimes look more like this:

If I do this, God will do this. As if what God can and will do rests on what I do.

Or my trusting can look like this: If God will do this, I will do this.

The famous Proverbs 3:5-6 tells us to trust and not lean on our own understanding. Why do I even think I can begin to understand the intricate and amazing ways of God?

Our creator made everything. From the zebra to the fruit fly. Maybe I am thinking about fruit flies because I may or may not be obsessed with watching them die right now in the bowl of rice

wine vinegar with one drop of dish soap in the bowl. They swoop in and they die. And I am happy (don't be calling animal protective services on me, those fruit flies they are pesky) (I was going to insert a picture of a fruit fly but I will spare you!)

This awesome creator promises me that if I lean not on my own understanding and acknowledge Him, He will direct my paths.

So in order to lean not on my own understanding, I need to lean on Him.

And what a place of intimacy that can be.

I don't know if you needed this reminder as much as I did tonight, but our God is trustworthy. The paths He has for us He will lead us.

Proverbs 3:19 The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open and the clouds drop down dew.

I posted the quote " what a pity to plan on the things we can do ourselves-- Tozer" at the beginning of the blog because I was having a come to Jesus meeting in the shower and I needed this quote reminder. See, it's a busy week for my ministry. We have our Celebration Dessert banquet/ fundraiser Thursday night, then a Bloom conference, which I play event planner and keynote speaker for this weekend.

These are moments when the enemy often whispers (or shouts) you cannot do this ministry thing-- it will fail, you will fail, you should get a real normal job.

But the truth is God does not fail. And I can trust Him.

What are you trusting Him in today?

Proverbs 4

Proverbs 4:23 will always make me giggle and smile a little bigger. Why?

I once was asked to lead worship on a youth retreat. That was my one and only stint as a worship leader folks. I mean, I love to sing. I love to praise Jesus (usually pretty loud not on purpose I just get excited)

I took choir and was a pretend soprano because I couldn't quite figure out how to find harmony as an alto, but for sure couldn't hit the high notes of a soprano.

But on this retreat- I got the chance to lead worship. And I was terrified. And that year, they wrote a song with these exact words in it to sing every time before a speaker came, which was 5 times a day.

The song sounded great when the guys who wrote it sang it. But me-- oh the key of that song was nowhere near one I could sing .

And so I sounded like a dying cat. It made me giggle every time, along with my friend who was worship leading with me. It was her first time also.

The only part I could sing was the last part and I would sing it with gusto.

Wellspring of life.

I want my heart to spring out wells of living water.

Jesus promised He is the living water and when we drink of His water we never thirst again.

Guard my heart. What does that even mean?

I want to guard my heart with the truth of God. Proclaiming and knowing His word. Standing on Who HE is and who He says I am.

Proverbs 4:9 says , “She will place on your head a graceful garland, she will place on your head a beautiful crown.”

Here's some fancy English for you-- She is being used as personification-- making the characteristic of wisdom into a noun. (I feel so smart right now)

I have never won or participated in a beauty pageant, but I know those who win and wear crowns have to hold their head quite high and poised to carry their crown.

If I am walking in wisdom-- studying the truth of God, then I am crowned with it. And as I walk, I walk different. I walk with my head high, steady, my eyes confident and up. (maybe a slight princess wave also)

Friends, let's walk in that wisdom. Let's seek that wisdom.

And let's guard our hearts from the enemy and his lies and the things we falsely believe will satisfy deeper than the deep love of God.

Let's let the wellspring of life flow and our crowns hold.

Proverbs Five

Honestly Proverbs 5 was a bit hard for me to figure out what to write about.

There are some stern warnings from a father to a son about guarding himself from adultery. The reminders that one bad choice can bring you to utter ruin.

But the end of Proverbs 5:23 is what stuck out to me.

He dies from lack of discipline and because of his great folly He is led astray.

Whew. Those are some strong words. I don't know about you but I struggle with discipline in my life. Sometimes (or more than sometimes) I want to take the easy road. Even the word discipline is hard for my free spirit out of the box thinking.

But I do not want to be led astray by "great folly". I want to walk in the path of wisdom that is talked about all through Proverbs. I want my soul to live free because I am walking in the discipline God has set forth for my protection and freedom.

For each one of us this may look different. But I want to seek the Lord and ask Him, what discipline do you want me to implement in my life?

Lately, I have been spending too much time on social media. Not that social media is at all a bad thing-- but I don't want it to be a consuming thing. I don't want to be so undisciplined in my use of it that I miss what God is doing in my real life now. I want His voice to be the first one that I listen for in the morning when I wake up instead of automatically reaching for my phone.

What about you? What discipline could God be wanting you to implement so your soul can live?

Proverbs 6

The other day my family and I were on a random drive and found ourselves at a Bible theme park. There was a life size model of the 10 commandments . And lots and lots of steps leading to a giant Bible .

Yes , this is where we found ourselves when we got lost in the Blue Ridge mountains yesterday and ended up at a basically deserted Bible theme park .

I imagine it's hay day was a few years past .

However we loved it . There were so many So so many steps leading up by the 10 commandments to the Bible .

I could not help but think of this as I read Proverbs 6:23-24, “ For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is a light and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life .”

Those steps were hard work !! I mean sweating and wondering if you would ever make it to the top . My sister even asked if this was some sort of torture pilgrimage.

But the view at top was so worth it !

Following the wisdom of Gods commandments is not always an easy adventure.

But they are worth it . They preserve us from evil (Proverbs 6:24)

I am so grateful that we also have the Holy Spirit with us to help us .

Sometimes even to carry us when we get out of breath and weary .

Romans 8:11: if the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead lives in you , He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you

Proverbs 7

I had a very vivid dream last night that I was walking down a hiking trail with rows of trees with deep red leaves on them. It felt real and beautiful and peaceful.

I had no idea where I was going in the dream or where the path led, but I was just happily walking down the path enjoying the beauty of the trail.

I woke up and was wishing that I could find that trail.

I googled an image called fall and this picture came up. I was so happy. So , maybe I didn't get to walk the actual trail, but hey, I can pretend right.

Proverbs 7 again has some pretty strong wording against falling prey to the trap of the "forbidden woman." This is a path that may look good at times it Proverbs 7:23 says , "it can even cost us our life.

The enemy so wants us to go down paths that will lead to shame and regret. He comes to steal kill and destroy so of course that would make him happy.

Also, we cannot blame Satan for everything. We can claim our sin and our flesh and how sometimes we follow after the shiny thing that seems to represent life instead of the REAL thing that is the path of Life God has for us.

For me it can be trying to figure things out on my own. Pretending I have to be independent and in control-- when truthfully I just need to follow Jesus in obedience, walking down His path, enjoying the beauty of the trail. Even when the hike gets tiring at times.

Or I take the wrong path (I may or may not be known to get lost while hiking in real life. I may or may not have gotten a whole group of people who followed me lost once , or twice)

There are strong warnings in Proverbs 7. Although they are about not following after an adulteress woman, I am going to think about what that represents for me? I don't want to follow the easy path because it seems to make sense. I don't want to follow after man's approval, accolades, or be performance driven. That is my shiny object that I can follow before I realize the path I have gone down.

I start to look for my worth in my work for God instead of my worship of God.

I can think I know the path.

Proverbs 7:2 tells me how to really REALLY live. Keep my commandments and LIVE.

Proverbs 8

I will never forget the first time I got a glimpse of them. The Himalayan mountains.

I had moved to Nepal in August and had just expected to see them. After all, they were giant mountains -- surely they could not be missed. See, I had expected I would be able to see them everyday.

Not the case.

The clouds of fuel and pollution hang in the valley in such a way that a fog covers those mountains. But at just the right time, when the air was just perfect, the fog would clear and you could see them. You could see the mountain range that was there the whole time, but had been hidden beneath the clouds.

When I saw it, it took my breath away. Literally I almost had to fall to my knees and shout glory (I may actually have, and my neighbors may have thought I was crazy)

I love Proverbs 8. It's all about the blessing of wisdom. (well frankly all of Proverbs is .. there is your cliff note version)

But Proverbs 8 talks a great deal about how wisdom was there when God created the heavens and the earth.

Proverbs 8:27-36, “ When He established the heavens I was there; when He made firm the skies above, when He established the fountains of the deep, when He assigned the sea to its limit , when He marked out the foundation of the earth.”

The same wisdom from God that was available at creation, as discussed in Proverbs 8-- is available to us.

Wow.

The same creator that created the Himalayan mountains is creating a story in Me.

And if I will seek after HIS wisdom, Proverbs 8 tells me I will be blessed.

Proverbs 8:35 , “Whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord.”

I want to seek after wisdom the same way I sought after seeing those beautiful Himalayan mountains. I even got up super early once to watch the sunrise over them.

And it was worth it. But like the fog that covers the mountains-- the mountains are still there, I just could not always see it.

My vision was clouded.

God's wisdom is always available, I just may not always see it. My sin may have clouded my vision. My lack of faith may be hindering what I see. I do not want anything to cloud my view of the wisdom God has available for me.

I also want to see and celebrate the unique way God created me. He created me differently from any other. Even my own identical twin sister. The story He has written for her is she is an amazing wife for 10 years and mom to 3 awesome kiddos. It's fall break and anytime there is a school break she turns their home into a mini VBS . This week they are doing all kinds of activities that involve fruit and talking about the fruits of the Spirit.

This is her.

I on the other hand am single, and love to travel the world for Jesus. She would never go to Nepal alone.

This is me.

That is her.

Both stories are crafted by the God who crafted us.

I am so glad the God who created the earth is creating His story in Me, For His glory!

.Proverbs 9

Today I am thinking of building a house. Frankly, I have never built a house. I have lived in rented apartments -- which might I add have each had a little bit of their own sort of character.

There was the guacamole ghetto which had avocado colored appliances and shag carpet EVERYWHERE including the bathroom and kitchen.

Or the cozy cottage which was so small that me and my roomie gave it that name to help with the, shall we say Cozy feel.

I have heard that building a house can be stressful. It involves picking out all kinds of tiny details like what kind of light fixtures and cabinet handles you want. I cannot imagine all the dreaming, planning and deciding that goes into building that house.

Last night I was around a delightful fire pit. It was beautiful. The only thing is the rock is not grouted together yet (that word grouted may not be the right word at all I just picked it , so if it's not, please forgive me!) because it's a new fire pit and it has been raining.

So the rock seems stable, but when you kick your feet up by it, it falls off.

I think sometimes we build the foundations of our heart houses on things that we think seem stable, or steady. Firm places we think we can put our feet up on and rest.

The truth is the only solid rock is Christ.

If I am building my life on the wisdom of God, then I have a firm foundation.

Proverbs 9 :1 says , “wisdom has built her house and she invites us in.”

You may be asking, how do I find this wisdom? Sometimes it sure does feel illusive in situations doesn't it?

I need wisdom about _____ and I wish God would give me wisdom by writing in the clouds, or at least on Facebook.

Proverbs 9:10 tells us the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. That word fear can trick us up. But it basically means : Standing in awe and reverence, acknowledging who God is and worshiping Him with our lives-- this is the beginning of wisdom.

I want to build my house (or apartment) on this foundation!

Proverbs 10



It's Saturday so I am going to keep this short and sweet. (**side note it was Saturday when I posted this blog**)

I hope you are spending your Saturday doing something fun and playing. I believe there is something spiritual about taking time to play.

I wanted to leave you with a picture of the verse that stuck out to me so much in Proverbs 10.

The lips of the righteous feed many (Proverbs 10:21)

I want my lips to speak words of life. Words of wisdom. Words that feed people's souls with the truth of who God is and who He says they are.

I don't want to have my lips speaking words that leave people drained, or hungry or worn out.

I want to feed souls with the words of life I speak. There is so much in Proverbs about the words our mouths speak.

I admit, I can get myself in the most sin struggles with my mouth.

It's so easy to gossip rather than to lift up.

It's easy to express frustrations rather than turn into expressions of prayer.

I want my lips to feed many with LIFE.

How about you?

Proverbs 11

Proverbs 11:10 , “ The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.”

Wow. I want my life to be like a tree of life for people. I want to be a place where people can sit and rest. And find shelter and shade.

I used to go to my aunt's house every summer and I absolutely LOVED this one tree that was at her house. It was easy to climb on for one thing, without worrying about breaking all of your limbs.

Or the trees limbs.

My sister and I would crawl and climb all over that tree. I have the best memories of that tree. It was fun. It was safe. And it provided shade for those hot Georgia summer days.

The way my life can be a tree of life for people is when I am connected to the one who is THE true of life.

He is the vine, I am the branches.

Psalms 1:1-3 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinner, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither.

*THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS
IS A TREE
OF LIFE
- PROVERBS 11:10*



Proverbs 12

I just feel like God speaks louder at a coffee shop. At least to me. So pour yourself a cup and let's enjoy some coffee together.

Today, on this beautiful Monday, to be honest, I have been in a bit of a Monday mood. I am not typically like that. But for some reason I could not seem to shake the Mondays.

I found myself frustrated about things all day. I kept trying to take my thoughts captive and remind myself of truth, thinking about the things I am thankful for.

Maybe the allergy medicine I took that left my brain in a fog was not helping. But I was having a hard time feeling thankful today.

That is until I finally sat down to write and study our Proverbs for today.

I love the way Proverbs 12: 28 ends. In the path of righteousness is LIFE.

As a girl with a ministry named Coming Alive, I am slightly obsessed with the word LIFE.

I want to live fully alive.

Even on a Monday.

So I got excited about this reminder that in the path of righteousness is life. I am righteous, not because of anything right inside of me, but because CHRIST died for ME.

I am so grateful that we have a Jesus who came to offer us life.

There is another awesome promise in Proverbs for the righteous.

(again let's just shout glory and remind ourselves that if we are in Christ, having accepted His offer of love and forgiveness then we are wrapped up in His righteousness)

Proverbs 12:3 the Root of the righteous will never be moved.

That just really got me excited today. I am in the process of moving. I am only moving one apartment over, but packing and moving is such an annoying process to be honest. Although it is a good reason to clean out and clean up.

But as I was packing today, I was thankful when I read that verse.

It doesn't matter where God takes me today, tomorrow or the next day.

The root of the righteous will never be moved. The Message version says, " life rooted in God stands firm."

Yesterday I went to a craft fair (I can't help it. I love these southern gems. Lots of fried yummy food, lots of clogging and gospel music, and crafts that I don't buy but I enjoy looking at).

There was tons of mud and the ground was slippery. You had to be super careful where you stepped, or you would either slip or stick.

Today I am grateful that when my life is rooted in God, **I stand on FIRM footing.**

I am letting go of my case of Monday's and today taking on praise that when my life is rooted in God, I stand in firm footing.

Rooted and free.

Proverbs 13

There are so many other verses I wanted to talk about in this 31 days of Wisdom (Chapter a day from Proverbs) series when I got to this chapter.

But, I knew God wanted me to talk about this verse. Yup. This one. Although I would much rather talk about Proverbs 13:14 the teaching of the wise is a fountain of life!

Frankly, I used to be quiet and shy. For those of you that know me, I know you cannot believe it.

But once I got over that and came out of my shell, I pretty much never STOP talking. Which means, my mouth can become my main instrument of sin.

Whoops, I said what I should not have again.

I should be speaking words of life, but I spoke words of death instead.

My pastor Jon Teague (www.2rc.org) did a sermon Sunday on how we should lovingly walk out conflict Biblically (PS: I HATE conflict.. hate it.)

The main point for me: If I will stop my words in the first place, not "venting frustrations" or "sharing concerns" about someone else with others (which truthfully usually is about me getting

an army around me that will want to see my point of view, all in Christian love of course.) --If I will guard my lips and go to the person I am struggling with in love—how different would true Christian community look?

But often I don't guard my lips.

I will never forget the time I called my pastor at the time, Sterling, Stupid-- not to His face of course. But I was mad at him for a misunderstanding, (that was not grounded in reality by the way) (will you guys please not judge me lol.. we are all sinners in need of grace) and so I texted my sister something that said in it, " Well sometimes Sterling is just stupid".

I don't ever use the words stupid.

That is a mean and nasty thing to call someone .

Guess what. I accidentally sent "stupid sterling" the text instead of my sister.

Stupid Jenn.

And praise the Lord my pastor was so gracious and loving about it, and we actually ended up having a great laugh about it-- that is after I practically threw up over my shame-- one is NOT supposed to call your pastor Stupid.

We still joke about it today. That Sunday happened to be where He was discussing the power of the tongue from the passage in James that talks about the power of our words.

He also mentioned from the pulpit with a twinkle in His eye the power of the text.

So this is not something I can tell you I have down pat all the time at all. But it is something I am wanting to grow in daily.

Lord may I guard my mouth Proverbs 13:3 style.

Proverbs 14

Truth be told, I have not tent camped in a while. The last time I remember tent camping was in the grassy area by our church chaperoning an overnight youth camp out. That involved lots of staying awake, smores, and making sure youth were not sneaking off to make out.

It also involved a giant rain storm and a leaky tent. I woke up with my head in a river, which thankfully was not my own slobber.

My sister and her husband went tent camping last year with their 3 kids (super brave and they had a super great time). They had bought a new tent at Walmart and had an issue. A Squirrel came and ate a giant piece out of their tent. My brother-in-law actually went back to Walmart, told them the story and they gave them a brand new tent.

Proverbs 14 is full of lots of wonderful trinkets of wisdom. But I was struck by this in Proverbs 14:11. **“The house of the wicked will be destroyed but the tent of the upright will flourish.”**

Contrasting a tent and a house and saying the tent flourishes versus the house is interesting. I mean, I am not signing up anytime soon to live out of a tent. Tents leak. Tents are fabric versus bricks and foundations. Tents are often small.

But this promises us the tent of the upright will flourish.

I don't know about you, but I don't always feel so upright.

But we are promised that IN CHRIST His Spirit dwells in us.

1 Corinthians 6:19, “Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you.”

Wow. Sometimes it's easy to forget the Holy Spirit is in us.

But if my body is holding the Holy Spirit, then my tent will stand. It will withstand the storms of life. It will not be shaken.

Even when people come and try to eat holes in "my tent", or the enemies lies try to cause my tent to feel unstable--when I recognize that my life is lived with the Holy Spirit of God inside of me, it is possible to know my tent will flourish.

I also love Proverbs 14:26, “ In the Fear of the Lord one has strong confidence.”

Do you need some strong confidence? Some hope that no matter what storms come, what rains pour in, what the enemy tries to do to try to steal , kill and destroy-- that you can stand in strong confidence.

Not confidence in your own ability, own strength, own possibility of doing this life right.

Confidence in who God is and does what He says He can do.

How are you feeling about your tent right now?

Proverbs 15

It's Proverbs 15 today. I loved Proverbs 15:19, “ the path of the upright is a level highway.”

I just recently got a fitbit from a friend. I am IN love with it. I am not competitive (I didn't think) but I am loving it. I am obsessed with my step count (I am sure by next week I wont be anymore but oh well).

It's so easy in our lives to compare our steps with the steps of others.

This weekend I am at a blogger/writing conference. It is so easy in a room full of woman doing what you do to slide more to the anxiety side, than the enjoy the adventure side of it.

But I love this reminder, “ the path of the upright is a level highway.”

We can enjoy the adventure of our callings without comparing the path of another. It's a LEVEL highway. We are all truly heading the same direction-- our upward calling in Christ Jesus.

So I am going to enjoy this adventure without the anxiety of comparing myself thinking someone else's highway should be the highway I am on.

Not counting the "steps" it took me to get to where I am versus their own steps.

I am going to enjoy the adventure of our level highway.

The Cross. The way the truth and the life.

Proverbs 20

I am a dreamer. And I am so glad that God created me to dream. Too dream big. Most of the times that is a HUGE blessing. Sometimes it can be a curse. Those moments when the dream feels so big and I make God small in my mind.

God given dreams are never bigger than our very Big God.

Lately I have been struggling with a concept. I want to believe Big. I want to pray Big Bold prayers because I want Big faith.

But how do I find the balance in believing God to be Big, praying Bold, and yet not missing the small?

I am going to be completely honest here. I love what I do with Coming Alive Ministries. And this year God has blown me away by the ministry doors He has opened for me. And I have had a blast.

But a couple of weeks ago, the enemy really wanted to trip me up. The Coming Alive Board of Directors and I had put a great deal of work into our Coming Alive Dessert Banquet/Ministry Celebration. We had sent out tons of invitations and were so excited for that night, which was not only going to celebrate our ministry that year, but be our fundraising for the rest of the year. We set the table, had lots of cute decorations and waited for the people to come. And Waited. And waited.

When only four people came I must admit, I was devastated. Not that I was not appreciative of those four people. But I had an idea in my mind of what success for my BIG dream meant.

I forget that God is bigger still. And I believe in that moment, and then that next weekend when we had a very small turnout to our first fall Bloom conference-- that God was trying to teach me to celebrate the small because nothing is small when our Big God is doing it!

Do I really believe Proverbs 20:24, “ A man's steps are from the Lord”.

My steps are from the Lord?

This weekend I had the BLESSING of attending an amazing blogging conference called Allume. God taught me so much and blessed my heart. This was my first time at this conference, but not my first time at a writer/speaker conference. This was so well done. I felt like a princess the

whole weekend, especially as I toted around our free swag bag which was PACKED with awesome free books (I left with about 20).

I was learning so much. I was feeling refueled. But I was also feeling small. In a room with bloggers who have BIG numbers, big audiences, have sold BIG numbers of books have had BIG publishers take on their books, are seeing God do BIG things.

It could be easy to slip into small. I know the enemy wanted nothing more.

But the freeing thing I am learning-- **I can celebrate small when I slip myself into the Big God is doing.**

As I learned so many things that gave way to more BIG ideas I have for Coming Alive Ministries in the coming days , so much information, I asked God to boil it down to one takeaway for me to chew on. And He did in a wonderful session led by Melanie Dell.

Her session was so freeing-- about how we just need to be us. She came presenting in her pj's even. And she was her, and I felt free to be me.

And this is what was my transforming moment for the weekend.

Dream Big, work small

My salvation and honor depend on God.

Pray Big. Believe Big. Celebrate Small .

So your dreams may be totally different. It may be you are wanting to go upward in your company. You may want to step out and be a stay-at-home mom. You may be anxiously awaiting the man of your dreams. You may want to start a ministry at church or have the boldness to say no to a ministry at church.

Whatever it is today, would you have the courage to dream big, start small. Believe big celebrate the seemingly small.

Proverbs 21

Matthew 6:33

I think this may have been one of the first verses besides John 3:16 that I was challenged to memorize as a kid.

Can I just tell you , I am so grateful for all I learned about Jesus while I was a kid. A great deal of it I learned from Psalty the Singing Songbook and Adventures in Odyssey. I hope you know

what those things are. In fact, I decided I wanted to become a Christian listening to Psalty sing about heaven and mansions, and I wanted to go there.

I remember memorizing Matthew 6:33. "Seek first the kingdom of heaven and all these things will be added unto you."

That verse came to my mind and heart as I was studying Proverbs 21

Proverbs 21:21, "Whoever pursues righteousness and kindness, will find life, righteousness and honor."

Sometimes we make things so complicated don't we? This pretty much boils it down simply.

Pursue righteousness find righteousness.

Pursue kindness, find honor.

And in the middle it promises us that we will find LIFE. You know @comingaliveJenn here gets excited anytime I see the word life , and it is found a lot in Proverbs.

The word life here is the Hebrew word Chay. It means living, alive, remain alive, sustain live, live prosperously, be quickened-- and my favorite, revived from sickness, discouragement, or even death.

Today I went shopping for the RIGHT outfit for the conference I am speaking at this weekend. I was on a mission. I had in mind what I wanted to find. (Side note, I did not find it). I tell you what, those dressing room mirrors and lights are not the most flattering things. I wish you could have seen me in one of my dressing room experiences.

It was an outfit with a couple of different pieces to it , including a belt. I somehow got stuck in the middle piece with the belt wrapped around my head so tight. I was in there by myself , and having this stuck in my clothing emergency. I started giggling, then laughing, then not being able to breathe-- all the while stuck in this outfit.

Very stuck.

And of course I had to pee.

So I had to call out Help! Hilarious. Who has to call help in a dressing room?

I decided that outfit was not for me.

All that to say, I was busy pursuing the perfect outfit, doing everything I could do find it. I ended up calling for help and still not finding THE outfit.

But when I call on Jesus for help as I pursue righteousness and kindness, I will find righteousness and honor.

When I seek first the kingdom of heaven all these things will be added to me.

Why do I waste time seeking first other things.

Lord please help me today to remember to seek YOU first. In you is life and life abundantly.

Proverbs 22

God asked me this question as I was preparing to write this post.

Jenn what if you let the one who loved you enough to die for you be the one who validates you?

Who tells you who you are.

Who tells you of your worth.

The definition of validation is : demonstrate or prove the value of.

Who or what am I asking to prove the value of me?

I remember in high school thinking so badly I would feel valued if I just went on a date, or had a boyfriend.

I had one in my head, He just didn't know we were together. I was convinced He secretly loved me and was too shy to show it. He didn't know we had a love song either, that happened to be playing while we were in the church van together. Granted He was four rows back from me, but in my mind it was OUR song.

I thought that a boy would validate and prove the value of me.

At 33, I am still boy-friendless, but I have to say God has shown me so much about how this does not de-value me.

The God of the universe valued me so much He died for me.

Now I don't so much look for that boyfriend to validate me, and someday if I have a future husband out there I am sure He will be glad not to have that pressure.

But I can quickly slip into performance validation.

Almost like the old notes that used to get passed way back in the day in school (like old school pen and paper style).

Do you like me? Check yes or no?

Do you want to be my BFF? Yes or no?

Is my ministry work worthy? Am I enough ? Is my writing of worth? My speaking? Is God using me enough and do I look good enough is this trendy outfit?

I love that I can go to Jesus who has already validated my value to Him-- I was worth Him dying for. That's how much He wanted relationship with me, and with you.

I love the simple truth in Proverbs 22:19, “ that your trust may be in the Lord.”

I want to trust who God is and who He says I am -- trusting enough in that, so that I don't have to walk up to anyone or anything else and say Do you like me? Check yes or no.

I can walk around with my needs of value and love already answers and fulfilled so everything out of that is an overflow.

Proverbs 22:4 , “ The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honor (value) and life.

I simply have to humbly worship the Lord for Who He is and He will show me my value and life.

Proverbs 26

So Proverbs 26-- INTENSE.

Lot's of strong warnings about fools, sluggards, and pride.

But the verse that stuck out to me the most was verse 20, "For lack of wood the fire goes out and when there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases."

I love bonfires, campfires, smores-- all of the above. Or fireplaces.

They just are so cozy and fun to sit around.

They bring community.

I remember a time I was at my friend's house and she wanted to build a fire in her fireplace but the wood was a bit wet and she didn't have a fire starter.

I got the idea to dip some q-tips in fingernail polish remover and add that to the fire to start it.

Start it -- it sure did. Flames were HUGE.

The idea of a fire without wood is crazy. You cannot have fire without something causing it to burn, to fuel it.

It's so easy to use our words to fuel fires of gossip.

Shall I make it personal and say it can be so easy for me to use my words to fuel fires of gossip.

To take on other people's situations when they are not mine.

To fuel fires instead of putting them out.

Fires of gossip do not spread community... they spread division, frustration and sin.

I can easily find myself slipping into being a fire starter.

This verse reminds me-- where I am not adding my own whispers, quarreling can cease.

The sound you hear now is my toes being stepped on.

Proverbs 27

Rise and shine and give God the glory glory. I have so many memories of that song. Mostly of me wanting to kill my twin sister as she sang it loudly at me when it was time to wake up.

She is a morning person. I am more of a night gal. Or at least give me a little while to get my bearings in the morning person.

We shared a room up until after college, and I loved every minute. After all, we had been wombmates so it makes sense that we would be great roommates.

I thought of this as I was reading Proverbs 27:1, “ Whoever blesses His neighbor with a loud voice, rising early in the morning will be counted as cursing.”

This makes me giggle.

Truthfully though, I love how my sister woke up each morning with Joy, reading to take on whatever God had for her that day.

Proverbs 27:1 says, “ Do not boast about tomorrow for you do not know what a day may bring.”

But what we can do is from the moment we Rise and Shine , we can work to give God the glory glory.

We can rejoice in what God is doing in that day.

I can rejoice that His mercies are new for me that day.

I can rest that the God of today has already gone before me into my tomorrow.

And the God of tomorrow has already written the story and knows the end, it truly is happily ever after.

Matthew 6:34, “ Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow.”

Rise and shine and give God the glory glory!

Proverbs 28

Proverbs 28:1 The wicked flee when no one pursues but the righteous are as bold as lion.

I do not know much about lions to be honest, but I have heard them called the king of the jungle. Or maybe that is just because I am thinking of the movie the Lion King.

One thing I know, if a lion is running after me in a field, I am RUNNING. They are the big dogs. Or shall I say the Big cats.

Every year I ask God to give me a word to guide that year. Every year God gives me a different word, and I remember in 2011 it was the word bold.

That year truthfully ended up being a tough year, and I was pretty ready to get a new word and a new year.

I was continually placed in situations where I needed bold faith, bold belief in God to be who He promised He was.

I was placed in situations where, the girl who HATES conflict (like will do anything to avoid it) was shoved into some big conflicts which centered around me. In the midst of the enemy trying to use those situations, I had to learn to be bold.

Not the kind of boldness that is brash and makes people not want to be around you because you think you are always right.

But the kind of boldness that stood for who I was in Christ and stood up for truth bravely (or maybe not so bravely).

The kind of bold prayers for desperate miracles. (this was the year of my Dad's first cancer diagnosis)

The kind of boldly going to the throne of grace with confidence.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us that the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to destroy.

What if I am as bold as a lion back at him? Bold because of Jesus and that He lives inside of me.

Bold because He has declared me righteous because of the righteousness of Christ Jesus.

Not fleeing from the enemy but fighting Satan and his lies with truth.

Bold as a lion.

Proverbs 29

Dear friend , I wonder how often you go to the people you interact with and ask a question, "love me or love me not ? "

Maybe you do not verbally ask that question. But, without realizing it, I think we spend a great deal of time trying to get that question answered.

Which really is a result of a bunch of other questions . Do you notice me ? Am I important to you? Am I known by you ?

Is my performance enough for you?

I loved performing as a kid . Granted I got kicked out of ballet because I was always put in the corner for talking in class. I admit, I am way to clumsy to be a ballerina . So I took up the not quite as popular but oh so fun clogging .

Big poofy dress with pantelloons, Crinlan and red checkered pattern .

So cool . I loved to perform and be noticed .

I still can find myself liking to perform and be noticed . Maybe without the tap shoes and dress .. But with a will you notice my performance ? Will you like me for a job well done ? Will I be enough for you ?

Do you love me ? You love me, you love me not .

Before I know it I have slipped into asking people to answer those questions . And I put pleasing people before anything else.

Proverbs 29:25 says, “ The fear of man lays a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.”

He loves me .

He never loves me not (God that is)

Living out of being loved allows me to freely love !

