



## HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Firstly, you will notice that at the start of each lesson there are three important bits of information. These will be the basic tools you need to lead the study.

All Scripture will appear in this BLUE colour. All Scripture references are taken from the NIV version of the Bible unless otherwise stated.

All discussion questions are in this GREEN colour. These discussion questions are meant to help open up times of sharing in your group.

Occasionally you will see text in RED. Red text are some ideas and thoughts that you may want to use for your group.

The bulk of the text will be in BLACK. This is the script and information for your lesson. However, please do not stick to the script word for word. The information is there just to serve as a guideline. Please feel free to lead or facilitate the discussion in the way which GOD is leading you.

**Proverbs – The Two Things to Ask For**  
**Pastor Andrew Gardener**  
**5 August 2018**

This study is our last one on the book of Proverbs. Through studying the Proverbs, we have learned how to listen to God's wisdom in order to live lives that are flourishing. I hope that the different topics that we have covered in this series will help you to stay on the path of wisdom.

Our final study on the book of Proverbs looks at the topic of stress and anxiety. It's no secret that people who live in Hong Kong face a high amount of stress and anxiety. An online article from the South China Morning Post reported that "one in three young Hongkongers suffers from stress, anxiety or depression."<sup>1</sup>

God, in His wisdom, has given us guidance on how to handle stress and anxiety in our lives. Out of the many things in life that can stop our lives from flourishing, stress and anxiety definitely pose as one of the biggest threats.

**This is not an easy topic to talk about. I encourage you to take some time to pray specifically for guidance in leading this study.**

**Opening Discussion Questions:**

- What causes you stress?
- How do you deal with stress?
- Do you struggle with anxiety? What does that feel like?
- How does anxiety prevent you from living your life to its fullest?

Unfortunately, stress and anxiety are somethings that we can all relate to. If we do not learn how to deal with these things, they can threaten to overwhelm our lives.

Pastor Andrew shared with us in his sermon that the answer to finding freedom from stress and anxiety is through prayer.

1 Peter 5:7 says: [Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.](#)

Philippians 4:6 says: [Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.](#)

God is concerned about our stress and what makes us anxious. He wants to help us to find freedom from these things.

There is also a prayer in the book of Proverbs which guides us on how we pray to God to help us out of stress and anxiety. Let's look at this Proverb together:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/health-environment/article/2149403/one-three-young-hongkongers-suffers-stress-anxiety>

Read – Proverbs 30:7-9

<sup>7</sup>“Two things I ask of you, Lord;  
do not refuse me before I die:

<sup>8</sup> Keep falsehood and lies far from me;  
give me neither poverty nor riches,  
but give me only my daily bread.

<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you  
and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’  
Or I may become poor and steal,  
and so dishonour the name of my God.

- If you were granted three wishes, what would you wish for and why?
- How do you talk to God when you pray?
- What have you been asking God for lately?

If you grew up in a Christian home, the idea of talking to God through prayer will probably not be strange for you. However, have you ever thought about what is really happening when we pray? Are we just talking to thin air? Is it just wishful thinking? Does God really hear our prayers?

Read [Proverbs 30:7-9](#) again with a **confident** tone because this is how this prayer is supposed to sound.

As Ps Andrew said in his sermon this is a bold and demanding prayer to God, a prayer that expects a response. This is what prayer should be! Ps Andrew defined prayer as:

**“Giving expression to your interior; it is naming what lies within you”**

Why is the prayer so powerful? Let’s take a deeper look at see what it has to say.

**Proverbs 30:8**

***Keep falsehood and lies far from me;***

- What is the first thing that the writer of this Proverb asks God for? [Answer: Keep falsehood and lies far from me]
- What are some falsehoods and lies that you commonly hear?

Falsehoods and lies come from two sources, they can come from words that **other people speak over us**, but they can also come from **words that we speak over ourselves**. Whether they are spoken over us or if we speak them over ourselves, these lies and falsehoods become a source of stress and anxiety in our lives.

- What are some lies that have been spoken over you?
- What are some lies that you believe about yourself?

*Pray for each other regarding these lies. Pray that God would reveal His truth in the lives of the people these lies are affecting.*

The Bible describes Satan as the father of lies, as it says in [John 8:44](#)

“You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. **When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.**”

Therefore, lies are not from God and we should not listen or pay attention to them.

Just as the source of the lies come from two different places (lies you believe about yourself and lies others say about you), the content of the lies also take different forms.

Sometimes the lies sound like words of failure and unworthiness. These are the lies that say you will never amount to anything.

Sometimes the lies sound like words of pride and arrogance. These are the lies that say that you are more important than everyone else.

- Which of the two kinds of lies mentioned above do you struggle with more often?
- What is the truth about how God sees us?

Read [Proverbs 30:8](#)

**Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.**

The desire to get rich and to avoid poverty is a great source of anxiety for many people. We always want to have more things and we fear losing the things that we already have. The stress of wanting more and more for our future can easily rob us from enjoying what God has for us today.

- How much of your stress and anxiety is based upon worrying about what **could** happen to you in the future?
- What is **the worst** thing that could happen to you?
- Where else in Scripture do we see people asking for their daily bread?
- In what ways is it difficult to trust God with your future?

Jesus tells us in [Matthew 6:34](#)

[Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.](#)

This doesn’t mean that we do not need to plan ahead. It means that we live as Ps Andrew says in his sermon, ‘*in the beautiful reality of God’s good provision here and now*’. God is faithful and He will never let us down. No matter what we are facing we need to pray to God and put our faith in Him.

In fact, the writer of this Proverb seems to be saying that the knowledge of knowing that God will provide for us each day is the wisest way to live. Why?

Read Proverbs 30:9a

**Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the Lord?'**

- Have you ever seen people get rich only to walk away from God?
- What are some things that people would be tempted to do in order to gain more riches?

When we have plenty, it is easy to forget that God is the ultimate provider! Without Him, we would have nothing. In his sermon Ps Andrew reminded us about the dangers of entitlement. Entitlement is the feeling that tells us that we are owed something. We need to remember that **everything** we have is a gift from God. We must maintain a thankful attitude.

- Do you find it easy to remember to give thanks to God?
- What stops you from expressing gratitude to God?

Read Proverbs 30:9b

**Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God.**

- Would you be willing to give up if you have ever stolen anything? What was that experience like?
- What usually happens when we act out of panic and desperation?

If we have too little, it can also lead us to blame God for our lack. Because we are lacking we are in danger of doing things that dishonour the name of God so that we can have more. In other words, we stop trusting that God will keep His promise of giving us our daily bread and take things into our own hands. We stop relying on God and we begin to steal from others because we think this is the only way to make ends meet. We need to remember that God has always been and will always be faithful, the fact that you are still living and breathing right now is proof that God will always provide. Even in our most desperate of times, God is always there to provide for us.

## Conclusion

Stress and anxiety are two very REAL issues that people face. At times, we may need to get professional help to help us deal with these issues. However, through this study I hope we have learned that **prayer** will also play a major part in how we deal with this issue. The good news is that prayer is FREE! and you can literally do it anytime and anywhere.

If we are wise, we will pray that God keeps us from believing lies and continues to provide for our needs. If we know the truth about who we are and we know the truth that God is always going to provide for us – this puts us in the perfect position to live the life of flourishing that God meant for us to live.

*N.B If there is anyone in the group who is seeking help; you can guide them towards receiving pastoral care or professional counselling. For more details please visit <http://vinechurch.life/care/#counselling>.*

Pray and End