

Why Proverbs Matters

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good evening. Thank you for praying for us while we were on vacation. I trust your prayers were answered.! Before the preaching of God's word, let's pray and ask for his blessing on that preaching. Pray with me. Lord, we need your word. We need you, Holy Spirit, to come and teach us. So would you come and open up our ears and make us receptive, open up our hearts and make them soft. And I pray that you would give us your desires for us, that the things that are in your heart and mind for us would be impressed upon us.

Help me now as I preach, and I pray that you would bring yourself honor as we take on more and more the likeness of Jesus Christ. We pray this for his sake. Amen.

Amen. Well, Wisdom is a beautiful woman, elegant, a woman of means, of style, of class, but she's not naive. She's no flighty princess. Wisdom has built her house.

She's hewn out at seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine. She has also set her table. She has sent her maids and she calls from the highest point of the city.

Let all who are simple. Let all who are simple. That is naive. Who lack understanding. Let all those come in here. Come eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.

[1 : 4 7] Leave your simple ways and you will live. Walk in the way of understanding. So she's a beautiful woman, elegant, style, class, but she doesn't think she's too good for us.

She invites us to dine with her, to become like her. She invites us to take her as our sister, as our close friend, even as our spouse.

She graciously moves toward us. Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets. She raises her voice.

The market was the place where all of the streets of the city met and people bustled in and out. She moves towards us in the paths of our lives, in the crossroads, in the intersections where we live.

And in those places, the places where we live and work and raise our families, she offers real help.

[2 : 5 7] Now there are a lot of voices. The internet and the airwaves are full of people speaking, giving us their ideas, their opinions.

There are entire news programs where people do nothing but tell you what to think. And it's in those places that wisdom meets us and cries out to be heard.

And so we're all on a path. We're all going somewhere. To live is to walk. And we're not just going to some place. We're becoming something.

And God cares very much about the some things that we are becoming. Wise or foolish. And every step we take in our lives takes us closer, further down the road to that something.

That character, that condition. And so wisdom meets us before we go any further and says, come into my house and listen to me. I'll tell you the way to go.

[4 : 10] She isn't reluctant to show herself. She isn't reluctant to speak. But she isn't going to fall in our lap either.

She isn't going to show up at our door and look for. She's not going to be found by those who won't bother to search for her. And so again and again in the book of Proverbs, it says, look for her.

Cry out for her. She's crying out to you. You cry out for God to have an open heart and open mind that you would receive her. Search for her.

Are you doing that? Are you searching for wisdom? Young people, are you doing that? Older people, are you doing that?

Wisdom has something for both the young and the old. We're going to see that as we go on. But she's in all the streets. But you'll have to find her.

[5 : 11] You'll have to find her. Wisdom is not inevitably the birthright of the old. Old people can be old fools.

And so don't say, I'm old, so of course I'm wise. The very thought suggests otherwise. Young people, and listen to me young people, I don't know how many of you are watching, but young people, you can be wise.

You can be wise 14 year olds, 13 year olds, 15, 16, 17, 20, 25 year olds. Old people can be old fools, and young people can be young, wise men and women.

And so wisdom is calling both to the old and to the young, and both can find her if they are willing to look. And that is one of my heart's desires and goals for this series that we're going to begin on the book of Proverbs for our young people, for our teens, for our college age students, that they would be wise.

That they would really take on board the book of Proverbs. To call wisdom your friend, your spouse, your sister.

[6 : 31] To write it on your heart, to wear it around your neck. And it would be a glory to God to have you be wise young people.

Now your peers, it's really true of any age group, but your peers, young people, so many of them are full of nonsense.

And you are becoming people. You are making decisions right now that will affect you for the rest of your life. And so how I want you to be wise.

Solomon's glory was his wisdom. And I think even Solomon's greater glory was given the chance. When God said, Solomon, you can have anything you want.

Riches, long life, whatever. Solomon said, make me wise. Make me wise. And I pray that that would be the desire of your heart. That as young people, you would say, make me wise.

[7 : 40] wise. And so, as I said, we're starting this new series on the book of Proverbs. And my goal this evening, my one point, my purpose this evening is to tempt you, to encourage you, to say with Solomon, make me wise.

To get you to see there is a treasure in the book of Proverbs, a treasure to be found. A treasure to be eagerly and energetically sought by both old and young.

A treasure to be found. And if you're older, and you're probably even older than I am, which some of you think I'm young, but if you're older, maybe you remember the ensemble comedy called It's a Mad, Mad, Mad World.

And the movie begins with Jimmy Durante crashing over a hillside. And as he lay dying, he has the longest deathbed speech ever.

But he tells everyone gathered there that there is \$350,000 buried under a giant W. giant W. And \$350,000 whatever, 50 years ago when this movie began was a lot of money.

[9 : 07] And then he dies. And he literally kicks a bucket when he does. And that's the beginning of the movie. And the rest of the movie is this mad rush after this treasure to dig up the money.

And so they're driving through the California mountains, passing each other on hairpin turns, and more and more people are joining this mad, raving group of people as they're all looking for the same treasure.

It's an incredibly energetic movie. Now, is that silly? Is there anything to learn there? Well, I hope so because that's why I'm talking to you about a 50-year-old comedy.

Because that is the something of the heart, the character, the way you should be looking at the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 2.4.

If you look for it as for silver and search for it as hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord. And then you'll understand wisdom. If you look for it like hidden treasure, how would you look for hidden treasure?

[10 : 17] If you knew it was there. In fact, you should want it more than hidden treasure because wisdom, Proverbs says, yields better returns than gold. It's better to have wisdom than to have gold.

A long time ago, a nation in Babylon, the richest man in Babylon, Arkad, sent his son, Nomasir, away with a bag of Babylonian gold and a tablet of wisdom.

And he sent his son to the city of Nineveh to earn a living. And he said, come back in 10 years and if you are worthy, you'll receive all of my wealth.

And so Nomasir traveled to Nineveh and in six months he lost all of his money. He was chasing schemes to get rich.

Before he even got to the city of Nineveh, he had lost half of his money. And only when he was dead broke did he finally take out his father's tablet of wisdom and begin to read it.

[11 : 29] His father sent him away with a bag of gold and a tablet of wisdom. He quickly lost the gold and all he had left was this tablet of wisdom and he began to read it.

And then you fast forward 10 years and Nomasir goes home to Babylon and he laid at his father's feet three bags of gold.

And he said one bag is to repay you father for the bag of gold that you gave me. And then he said you gave me a tablet of wisdom and for that tablet I give you two bags of gold.

and in this way I prove to you how much greater value I consider your wisdom than your gold. Who can measure who can measure in bags of gold the value of wisdom?

Without wisdom gold is quickly lost but with wisdom gold can be found by those who don't have it. Proverbs is saying wisdom is better than buried treasure.

[12 : 35] Long life is in her right hand and in her left hand are riches and honor and all of her paths are peace. They're pleasant. And so we're all becoming more wise or we're all becoming more foolish.

You are becoming something. And God cares very much about that something that you are becoming. So in the book of Proverbs he speaks to us.

He teaches you wisdom. And so young people are you listening? He's showing you the way of life.

How to enjoy life. How to live a skillful good life. To live a life that is just like Lady Wisdom herself.

Elegant and graceful and strong. To live a life that honors God. that speaks well of him to a watching world.

[13 : 39] So why should you study the book of Proverbs? Why does this book matter? Well, three more things. And the first is because your life matters.

Your life matters. God cares about your life. Everywhere in the book of Proverbs Solomon assumes, in the book of Proverbs assumes, that you think life is important.

He assumes you want to enjoy life. He assumes you want a life that is solid and pleasant and secure. He assumes you want something important out of your life.

Now, everywhere in our culture, people are amusing themselves to the grave. and the internet is full of the most absolute mind-numbing trivia.

And it's not just the internet, but the internet seems to have heightened it. It seems to have magnified it. So now you can watch hour and after hour of other people playing video games.

[14 : 49] Not only are you, it's not that you're wasting your life playing video games, you're watching other people play video games. And you know what? A little bit of that is fine.

But God made you for more than that. He made you for more than that. Now, the pressure, parents, the pressure on our young people to think that their life is nothing important is immense.

The pressure for them to think that their life doesn't matter, it doesn't count, it's crushing it's overwhelming in this culture, it is a tidal wave of the sense that there is nothing to do with your life.

There's no one to live for, there's nothing worth living for, there's nothing worth dying for, there's nothing worth taking absolutely seriously, and moms and dads, we need to help them to see that there is so much more to life than throwing it away on inane foolish babble.

And so moms, dads, grandmas, grandpas, we need to see that for ourselves, I need to see that more, I need to have that impressed upon my heart, don't we need that? I doubt many of you are going to watch hours and hours of Twitch streaming, and if you don't know what that is, ask the 10 year old, ask the 14 year old in your life.

[16 : 18] But YouTube is great because I can find whatever I want to find, and you might throw your life away one way, and I can do it another.

So I can watch as much news as I want, and of course I can watch Michael Jordan highlights, because I definitely, certainly need convinced again and again that he is the greatest of all time, don't I?

I need to see this, don't I? Well, the Bible and God takes our lives here and now, in this world, on this earth, seriously.

And Proverbs says, do you want a life that is beautiful, that is strong, that is graceful, and all the best senses of those words.

Do you want a life that counts? God is showing you how in the book of Proverbs. He's showing you, showing us that we don't just exist as entertainment consumers, but as images of the living God, as sons and daughters of the living God, as people who, like Adam and Eve, were given dominion, royal sons and daughters.

[17 : 43] this is Psalm 8, you've made man, you made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him ruler over the works of your hands and you put everything under his feet.

That status is what Jesus regains for us. That is one reason that Jesus died, in order to bring us out of the depths and bring us into the status of royal sons again, to redeem us, to give us the sense again, for us to achieve again, this image, that we are the image bearers of God and creation, that we, that God makes his glory, his dominion, his reign, known in the world through us.

Now sin has thwarted that and sin has perverted that. And man has taken his dominion and twisted it under the power of Satan and under the rule of Satan, but Jesus has redeemed it.

He's made us a nation of kings and priests to our God. Would you want to see a king or a priest throwing their life away on trivia?

Aren't those the worst kind of kings? The ones that don't take their rules seriously? They just waste their lives? Well, that's why Proverbs matters.

[19 : 09] It teaches us how to live as image bearers of God, to rule for God, to live as regents in this world. And so in our everyday life, to express something of the goodness of his kingdom.

Now, folly turns our lives into these just dead ends. folly turns God's grand design for man into a dead end. And Proverbs, though, shows us how to live like it matters in the everyday to the glory of God, to live substantial, weighty, beautiful lives that count.

So why does Proverbs matter? Because secondly, the details matter. matter. The details matter. In Jeremiah chapter 18, you can see three ways that God spoke to Israel.

Three ways that God taught Israel. I'm not going to ask you to turn there now, but you can turn there and you can look these verses up. I'm going to read it.

But there were three ways that God had dealings with Israel. In Jeremiah 18, Jeremiah says all of these ways have been made crooked, have been perverted.

[20 : 37] They're twisted, they're ruined. And this is what some of these people are saying. They say, come, let's make plans against Jeremiah.

Let's attack the prophet. For the teaching of the law by the priest will not be lost, nor will the counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet.

If we attack Jeremiah, God will still talk to us in the ways that he's always talked to us. And so how did God reveal himself to Israel? How did God make his mind known to the people of Israel?

Well, the priest taught the law. And then the prophets took the law and said, thus saith the Lord. You've done this or that. They were prosecuting attorneys, saying, you've done something wrong, and so now this is what is going to happen.

And the prophets also talked about this restoration that will come after the punishment. The prophets and the priests talked about big, nation-sized, important stuff.

[21 : 50] But Jeremiah also says, and also brings up this counsel of the wise, not just priests, not just prophets, but God spoke to Israel through the wise men, the sages.

Derek Kidner says in his little commentary on the book of Proverbs, there are details of character. character. There are details of character small enough to escape the mesh of the law and the broad sides of the prophets, and yet they are decisive in personal dealings.

There's stuff too fine for the law and the prophets to catch, and yet they are decisive. they're important. Paul Troop says that 99% of our lives is lived in the mundane, in the details.

Life isn't an action movie where you go from one set piece of huge action thriller to another. Life isn't made up of those big dramatic moments.

Life is not made up of the explosions, it's a walk with a thousand steps. It's a thousand words along the way, an interaction here, an interaction there.

[23 : 28] How do you treat the cashier at the store? How do you respond to your child when they do something wrong? How do you sit down and have a conversation with someone?

And when they do something right with your child, what do you say? Children, and young people, how do you talk to your mother? And when your dad is talking to you, what should your attitude be?

What should that conversation look like? Those are the details where life is lived out. And Proverbs talks about the details.

God brought this up a couple of weeks ago. Don't bless someone loudly in the morning. That is not the 11th commandment. The priest never sat down and talked about that with the people.

Elijah never went into the court of King Ahab and said, King, you're too loud and too cheerful in the morning. You need to dial it back a little bit. But every morning, we want people to know that, don't we?

[24 : 41] Every morning, I want my wife and Cademan to know that. And one of them does, and one of them is learning. But the details matter. We need God's help moment by moment.

We need God's help to make those decisions of our lives. Where there's no hard and fast law. Where God does not say, you should do this.

this. Or that. Or you shouldn't do this or that. So, should I marry this woman? What kind of woman should I be looking for?

Or man should I be looking for? How should I spend my money? What college should I go to? Proverbs is coaching us through those details.

goals. And as an aside, God doesn't get us to those decisions by our feelings. He doesn't lead us by hunches and by our feelings or nudges.

[25 : 53] He does it through making us wise. He changes our character. He changes our thinking so that we want and we understand the right decision.

The goal, again, the goal is not just getting us to the right place or to the right person. it's for us to become the right kind of people.

He isn't looking to make us into these finely tuned sensitive spiritual wind socks that somehow catch God's perfect will for us.

He doesn't turn us into these finely tuned spiritual radars that somehow are able to detect God's so-called perfect will for us.

But he is very interested in making us sons and daughters in his image. Wise and good. Exercising our minds parts that are like his heart with his priorities, with his clarity and understanding.

[27 : 01] The goal is that in the details we become more like him. In the everyday conversations, in the everyday interactions, in the everyday decisions where we reflect his wisdom, his goodness, his strength, his character, Proverbs is about that everyday godliness, everyday living, everyday living to the glory of God.

So whether you eat or you drink or whatever you do, you do it to the glory of God. Proverbs helps us to do that.

That's why Proverbs matters. Now the last reason that I hope you're eager and I want you to be eager and that I'm trying to tempt you to study the book of Proverbs is because it's a good news book.

It's a gospel book. It's full of God's grace for us in this world. There's hope.

There's help in the book of Proverbs. There's life here. Jesus lived this book. And he has become for us the wisdom from God.

[28 : 25] The wisdom of God. And everything in the book of Proverbs is good for us. And so you can go to the very beginning in your mind, the very first couple of verses of Hebrews.

In the past, God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways. But in these last days, he has spoken to us by his son. Jesus was this climactic final fulfillment of God's revelation to us.

Everything that the Old Testament was, everything that the Old Testament revealed, Jesus fulfilled. So Jesus was the last lawgiver, the one that was the prophet that Moses promised, the greater than Moses, who fulfilled the law.

Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the prophets. Peter, in his first letter, says the prophets knew that at least in some way, they were talking about the Messiah.

Concerning the salvation, the prophets who foretold the grace to come to you searched and investigated carefully, trying to determine the time and the setting to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

[29 : 49] The prophets were all about the sufferings and the glories of the Messiah. But you remember Jeremiah 18?

God didn't just speak through the law and the priests and the prophets. He spoke through the wisdom of the wise men. And Jesus came as the greater than Solomon.

I said this a few weeks ago. The Old Testament word proverb when it was translated into Greek, when it was translated into the New Testament language, it's translated as parable.

Jesus' parables are the teaching of a wise man. Again, he captures life. He captures truth and he puts it into a small picture, into a small package.

It's a snapshot that people can instantly grab a hold of if they want to. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, it's not the righteous and the unrighteous.

[31 : 02] It is the wise man built his house upon the rock and the foolish man built his house upon the sand. Jesus is saying, wise men, listen to me.

My words are the very wisdom of God and those who are wise have open ears and hope and hearts. This is the way to life. And so Jesus came as the wise man, this final wise man, this final sage, showing us the way to live life, not only for eternity but here and now.

But more than that, he has become for us the wisdom of God. He has in himself, in his person, in his salvation, he has become everything that the book of Proverbs holds out and promises to us.

And that's why Paul says he has become for us the wisdom of God. We need to say more than he was the wisest of all men. We need to say that.

The theologian Dallas Willis said one time that we don't think about that very often, but Jesus Christ was the smartest man to ever live.

[32 : 22] Smarter than Einstein, smarter than Fermi, smarter than any political scientist, any pundit, the smartest man to ever live.

We cannot patronize Jesus and call him a nice man, a good religious man, a good preacher, and then go elsewhere looking for advice.

As if Jesus doesn't have anything to say. As if his advice isn't worth listening to. We can't call Jesus Lord and then go looking for the experts to give us wisdom.

He was the smartest man to ever live. but we need to say more than that. He was the very wisdom of God.

He is the fulfillment of everything that you find in the book of Proverbs. And those who have Christ, they've captured, they've got a hold of him.

[33 : 32] They are now on the path of obtaining everything that the book of Proverbs promises. Again and again, wisdom in the book of Proverbs, wisdom says, I am the way.

She is the path to life. You will go in safety and your foot will not stumble. You understand wisdom and you will understand what is right and just and fair, every good path.

You will walk and your steps will not be hampered. When you run, you will not stumble. Wisdom is saying, this is the way, this is the way to run, this is the way to freedom.

Wisdom is the truth in Proverbs. Wicked men pursue hidden paths. Proverbs is full of talk about crooked paths and perverted paths and twisted paths.

Wisdom's way, though, is truth. It's a straight line. Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. You'll walk with sure steps and they'll be sure, they'll be reliable because they are true.

[34 : 34] Wisdom's the way and wisdom is the truth and wisdom. Again and again, more than anything else, says, I'm the life. He who finds me finds life.

Proverbs 835. The wise father's words to his son in Proverbs 422 are life to those who find them. Proverbs 322, sound judgment and discernment will be life for you.

the teaching of the wise is the fountain of life. Do you want life? Proverbs is saying wisdom is the way to life.

So wisdom in the book of Proverbs is the way, it's the truth, it's the life. And so all the sages are saying the same thing.

Solomon and everyone else who contributed to the book of Proverbs says you find wisdom and you have found the way, the truth, and the life.

[35 : 37] Now is that a part? Is that a part? Is that some sort of separate way, truth, and life than what is in Jesus in some other way? No, Proverbs is pointing to Christ.

Proverbs is pointing to what we find in Jesus Christ because Christ has become for us the wisdom of God. Wisdom is what Christ gives you when you come to him.

Wisdom is what you grow up as, grow up into, as you grow up into Christ. When you become a Christian, when you come to Jesus Christ in faith and humility and repentance, you're on the road of wisdom.

Everything the book of Proverbs is painting before us is showing us what we become in Jesus. Why does Proverbs matter?

Because it's here where we see and where we meet Jesus himself. the first ten chapters of the book of Proverbs is full of a father speaking to a son, pleading with the son to take on his wisdom.

[37 : 07] Jesus was that son that did it perfectly. here's where we find the kind of life that Jesus lived. You know, Solomon said a lot of great things, but then he didn't live them.

But in Jesus, we can become everything that Proverbs promises. So Proverbs matters, the book, because it's a good news book.

It's grace lavished on us. Here we may meet Jesus. Here God gives us the help and the teaching and the instruction and the encouragement and the warnings that we need to have Christ formed in us, the hope of glory.

And so there's grace in this book, mercy in this book to make us beautiful, to make us strong. Grace for the details.

Grace to live lives that matter. matter. And so young people, I beg you, read Proverbs and do more than read it, live in it, wallow in it, spend so much time with it, that it becomes a part of you.

[38 : 32] And the whole time, read it with Christ beside you. Read it looking for him. and if you do, you'll find him. Let's pray.

Oh my God, that is my prayer, my request for my children and for the young people of our church and even for the older folks of our church, church.

That we would all take on this book with hope, of hope of finding Jesus here, hope that here we will meet our risen Savior and he will come as this wise man to teach us.

Thank you that in Jesus, the fullness of the spirit of counsel and understanding has been poured out upon him and now we have full access to the wisdom of God.

So let us ask for it. Help us, give us a desire to become wise, to take the grace that you have given us in this book and to live in it.

[39 : 43] I pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.