

settle into this book, and give yourself into this book, the more of his character you will take on in his ways. Now this evening, we're going to do a brief detour, an excursion. We've been on the carnival cruise ship Proverbs, and we've been sailing along, going through chapters 1 and 2. But every now and then, I want to take a stop on an island, and just sort of get a lay of the land, and go over the whole book, and look at it as a subject, subject-wise, and not just verse by verse by verse. And so tonight, we're going to stop at an island, and have an excursion. And tonight's port of call, where we're stopping, and looking at, is this doctrine of God. What does the Bible, or what does the book of Proverbs teach us about who

God is? And we're going to go through all the book, and we're going to pluck out some truth, and we're going to hopefully put it into a good order for us to understand. Every book of the Bible emphasizes particular and different things about who God is, and not every book is the same.

They're all interconnected. They're all interwoven. They add layers. But each of the layers can be very distinct, and the book of Proverbs is no different. And so we want to sort of tease out, what does the book of Proverbs say about who God is? How do we live wisely with Him?

So the most famous verse, I think, in all of Proverbs is coming up probably next week. It's Proverbs 3, trust in the Lord with all of your heart. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.

[7 : 20] Well, that's wisdom. That's heart-shaping, character-building wisdom. To trust the Lord is wisdom. But who is this God? Who is this Lord that it is so wise to trust Him?

That's what our island excursion is about tonight. Now, the book of Proverbs highlights four characteristics or four attributes, four particular wisdom-giving truths about who God is.

And so we're going to see that God is relational. We're going to see that God is the creator, and that God is transcendent, and God is eminent. So those are some big words. Relational, creator, transcendent, eminent. So first, God is a relational God. God is a covenant-making, covenant-keeping God. And covenant is just a way of describing a relationship.

A hundred times in the book of Proverbs, God is mentioned. That's over 10% of every verse, of all the verses, mentions God. And by far the most common name for God, 87 times out of the, I think, 100 times, is the name Lord. Capital O, capital O, R, capital L, capital O, capital R, capital D, Lord, Yahweh. That's the name God took to Himself when He appeared in the bush to Moses.

Now, Proverbs, the book of Proverbs, is grounded, is rooted like a bush in the ground with its roots there in this reality that there is a God, that He is self-sufficient. He is the great I Am. He is of Himself. He is by Himself. He is for Himself. He is, I am who I am. I am apart from anything and anyone else. So who, He's the I Am that took Israel to Himself, that showed Himself to Abraham and Isaac and to Jacob. He's the God who enters into relationship with His people and who's for His people.

[9 : 57] So He not only sends Moses, He goes with Moses to deliver His people, to be with His people, who binds Himself to His people. So the name Lord is God's covenant name.

That's who He is. That's who He was to His people. So do you want wisdom? Do you want wisdom? And I'll just give you a second to think about that question. Do you want to be wise?

Do you want wisdom? Well, knowing God is where it begins. Knowing God as your God, as your Lord.

How can you ever be wise if you don't know Him, the only wise God, who is before all creation, who is beyond all of creation, who is behind all of creation, and who came close to His people, who comes close to His people with love, with steadfast love and faithfulness. 87 times the book of Proverbs connects wisdom with the Lord, with knowing Yahweh. So who is Yahweh? He passed in front of Moses proclaiming the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. And yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

That's who the God of wisdom is. And that's what the book of Proverbs is interested in making you. That's who the book of Proverbs is interested in making you into His image. That's who the God of wisdom is.

[12 : 04] That's who the God of Proverbs is. And you say, well, of course I know that. But I want you to see that that is not just of course. Knowing God, living in covenant and relationship with the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So remember chapter 2. We just went through it. If you turn your ear to wisdom, if you apply your heart to understanding and call out for insight, then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and you will find the knowledge of God. The fear of the Lord is nothing less than living in light of who

God is and in right relationship with Him. And in Proverbs, He's the Lord that comes down to men and saves them and rescues them and leads them, that is involved and connected to them, that their whole life, is lived with Him. And so He's the God who invites men to live with Him. He is as their God, and they as His people. And that is so different than five quick, easy, how to have a good marriage tips.

So go on a date night. Talk it out. Be friends first. Keep kids in their place. Don't sweat the small stuff. Five tips for a good marriage. And all good as far as they go.

I got those five tips from Rachel Hollis, who was and is a self-help guru.

She made her living, makes her living selling herself, her life, her wisdom. And the proof of the value of her tips was her life.

[14:12] And so she had all these pictures of herself and kissing her husband and them laughing together and, you know, selling this picture of herself and her advice.

Saying, here, this is how I have a great marriage and you can too. Well, you can find her books anywhere. I was walking through Target two weeks ago and saw two of her books right there on the shelf.

And she gave women this advice. And so I just copied those five bits and pieces off of her website. Now, so she's been hawking, she's been selling her advice for wisdom and for kids and for work and for business, all this stuff for years.

And then two months ago, she announced with her husband that they are now getting a divorce. They've been having trouble in their marriage for years now and they just couldn't make it work. Well, of course, you can imagine the blowback that she is receiving from everything that she's done.

[15:29] And in a way, it is such a sad tragedy. But her five quick tips weren't enough for her.

It wasn't enough to save her marriage. It was a fake bill of goods. It was false hope and people drank it up. And again, there's nothing particularly wrong with her advice.

But five quick tips is not marriage wisdom. What did she and her husband need?

Well, they needed the same thing I need and you need. I need a relationship, a living, vital relationship with Yahweh, the Lord, who exists and who relates to his people.

They needed. And you and I need deeper, more personal wisdom. And that's who Proverbs says.

[16:49] That's who God is. That's who he is for us. Yes, we need wisdom, but God is not going to give us wisdom separated from himself. He's going to give himself to us.

And as we receive and believe and live upon him, and we live and receive Jesus Christ, we receive the wisdom of God. We can never, in any situation, divide Christ from the benefits that he gives us. We can't divide him from the wisdom that we need. And so God is keenly interested.

He wants to grow us in wisdom, but he does that by giving us himself. And we receive it by living in connection with him all of the time.

That's the fear of the Lord. And so as we know him, we grow in wisdom. And the more we know him, the more our hearts settle into him, the more that mountain lake reflects the surrounding mountains, their grandeur is reflected in our hearts.

[18:08] His way of understanding becomes more our way of understanding. His way of doing things becomes more our way of doing things. And then we become the kind of people that creates good marriages, that makes good decisions, where to go to school, and who should I marry, and what should I do?

We become the kind of people that make wise decisions. Well, that's where Proverbs starts. He is the Lord. So trust in the Lord with all of your heart.

Again, those are marriage words, relational words, deep, mutual, self-giving words. He is yours.

He is yours. Trust him. Trust him. Well, that's first. Now, second, who is the Lord? He's the creator.

So he's not only relational, he's the creator. Remember our definition of wisdom is, the wisdom is understanding the fabric of God's world and living in harmony with it.

[19:20] But also knowing you'll never completely understand it. And so this is my father's world. We understand the fabric of God's world.

This is my father's world. This is rock bottom where what you need to know to become wise. So again, shot through the whole book of Proverbs is this idea that God is the creator of the cosmos, the world, and everything in it, and of people.

So in chapter three and chapter eight, there are poems about creation, about God creating everything. 3.10, Proverbs 3.10, by wisdom, the Lord laid the earth's foundations. We have men in our congregation that lay foundations. The Lord was the first one and he laid the foundations and the foundations of the earth. And by understanding, he set the heavens in place. So the world is stable. It has foundations. He set the heavens in place. So God, the creator, made a world and the world isn't one thing one day and another thing the other day.

[20 : 33] It's not constantly changing. So you can't know it. You can't understand it. You can't grasp what's going on because tomorrow's going to be different than today. He put it on foundations and that's why we can know it.

So wisdom is seeing that there is an order. There are laws that he put into it. The most common law, so to speak, in the book of Proverbs is you reap what you sow. That consequences come from your character and from your actions. your character produces your actions and those actions are going to have consequences. And he's the creator. God put that into the world. And so he knows best how the world works, how you work.

He knows best for how to help you, how to make you to live a successful life in biblical terms in that world.

[21 : 48] Now we waylay ourselves with a thousand problems and heartaches because we think we're smarter than God.

Don't lean on your own understanding and all your ways acknowledge him. But what we lean on our own understanding and what I'm saying is is we waylay ourselves. We hijack our own lives because we think we're smarter than God or we ignore what he has to say about the way things are.

Things are a certain way. And if we ignore it, what we're doing is we're shooting at our own troops. We're hijacking the airplane that we are on and we are crashing it into the ground.

Chapter 8 says wisdom rejoiced at his side when she saw all that he was doing. Wisdom is shot through this creation and that's why Jesus when he came to teach he could look into every nook and cranny of non-human and human existence to get lessons.

to get lessons because birds and vines and grain and trees and people God created them all with wonderful wisdom and he created man too.

[23 : 18] 20 verse 12 ears that hear and eyes that see the Lord made them both. Now you have ears and you have eyes and those God gave you to make your way through this world.

It means that he sees and he hears you. If he made ears and eyes then well he certainly can hear and see and he gave you those ears and those eyes in order that you might look into the world and pursue and find wisdom.

Why shouldn't the rich oppress the poor? One of the most common answers in the book of Proverbs is not to do with righteousness or injustice.

That is a big part of it but one of the other arguments is 22.2 Rich and poor have this in common The Lord is the maker of them all.

29.13 The poor man and the oppressor have this in common The Lord gave sight to the eyes of both. Why shouldn't you oppress the poor?

[24 : 29] Why can't we ignore the cry for help for justice? Why can't we pretend like we don't see it? And why can't we just think we're above them or oppress them?

It's because you aren't special or above them. God created you both. The poor man is as much a special creation as you are as the rich man.

And that's why wise people don't even mock the poor. And maybe I need to hear that. Maybe you need to hear this. 17.5 He who mocks the poor shows contempt for their maker.

I mock them and I'm showing contempt for their creator. God's their creator. So shut your mouth is what Proverbs is saying.

Instead of mocking them you should be generous to them. He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their maker but whoever is kind to the needy honors God. wise people remember that rich and poor both are God's creation and they fear him and so they don't even so much as speak ill a mocking word to the poor.

[25 : 53] And so do you see the picture God is the creator and that affects that affects everything about how we live in this world and how we do things in our world.

And so the more Genesis 1 and 2 lives in our hearts and in our minds the wiser will become. But fools forget their creator.

Fools think that they can make themselves that they're creating themselves and they can create their own world and however they want it to be.

Remember C.S. Lewis, I quoted him a couple of weeks ago, for the wise men of old the cardinal problem had been how to conform the soul to reality. So what needed conformed?

What needed shaped? What needed bent? Well the soul needed bent to reality. And the answer was how do you do that? The answer was wisdom. But now the problem is how to subdue reality to the wishes of men.

[27 : 07] The book of Proverbs is saying again and again, you'll never, you can't be, you just can't be wise if you're always wishing to subdue God and the creation to your wishes, to yourself.

No, in coming to God, you come to him as your creator, as someone who is far above you and you're living in his world. He set the foundations, he set heavens in place, you would sooner push a house off the foundation.

So kids, you can go home and try that, or you are at home, you can go outside and try that. If you can push your house off of its foundations, you'll have a better chance of that than changing the way God's world works.

You and your situation are not the exception. whatever you're thinking, you and your situation are not the exception.

So wisdom is to say, God, you are the creator. I am the creation. Your will be done, not mine.

[28 : 17] Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. God is transcendent.

So that's second. Now the third is God is transcendent. That's a big word and it means he's exalted. He's over.

He's the high and the holy one. And as creator, he is before all things, before time and space and matter. he is before all of those things and beyond all that he has made and nothing is hidden from his searching eyes.

From on high, he looks down upon men. Isn't it the book of Isaiah? He is looking and all the men are like grasshoppers on the earth.

Nothing is hidden from his searching eyes and the wise know it and they take it to heart. And that's why you maintain sexual purity. That's one of the reasons you maintain sexual purity is Proverbs 5.21 For man's ways are in full view of the Lord and he examines all his paths.

[29 : 37] Nothing obscures God's vision. The shut door, the lock, the delete history, whatever it is, nothing obscures God's vision. eyes of the Lord are everywhere keeping watch on the wicked and the good.

He's above, he's beyond, and he sees all of his creation. And it's not just here on earth and among men, God can see into the mysterious depths of the land of death and hell.

1511, death and destruction lie open before the Lord. How much more the hearts of men. Death and hell are naked before him.

And your heart is as naked as an open grave before him. He sees right into the hearts of men. He knows the motives of men's hearts even when they don't know their own motives.

173, the Lord tests the heart. Sometimes we don't even know why we're doing what we're doing and we're afraid of our motives.

[30 : 43] If we're wise, we're afraid of our motives sometimes. But the Lord knows how to take out our hearts so to speak and to weigh it and to examine it. And it's because he's above us.

He's beyond us. He is exalted and that means he's sovereign. That means he in every place he is Lord. He has ultimate authority and he reigns.

so the lot is cast into the lap, but it's every decision is from the Lord. Things that seem so random are under his control.

That's what I mean when I say he's transcendent. He's sovereign. And the wise trust him for it.

That's why the wise are able to maintain calm.

You know, there's all those promises about the paths of the wise being peaceful and pleasant. How can you have such pleasant, peaceful, calm in such chaotic times?

[31 : 57] Well, it's because they know God is on high. The Lord is connected to us, is on high and he's working his will. Forgive me if I've been using illustration from my life so much lately.

But this last month has felt like such a whirlwind and it seemed like there was so much chance, randomness, baked into so much of everything we went through.

We came back from a two-week vacation and sort of like on a whim almost, it seemed like, I mean, no definitive solid reason anyway, for sure reason, you know, I decided to look at houses the morning after getting home from vacation and that's kind of a weird thing.

Kind of been thinking about it, but to actually do it is kind of peculiar. And to see the house that we're now living in on the market and had been on the market for one day at that point just seemed kind of like happenstance.

And two days later on Monday morning to look at it again and say, yeah, I think that's something we might be interested in. And I told Steph, maybe I'll call the realtor sometime this week and we can go look at it later.

[33 : 17] And Steph said, well, why not call now? And why wait? Which, if you know Steph, if you really know her like I do know her, Steph, that's really out of character for her.

Nine out of ten times she'd rather wait than be decisive or make a big decision about something like that. And that's really good of her, wise of her.

But she sort of randomly said, no, why don't you go call? And if I hadn't called and she didn't say something, we would have missed out because there were already two offers on the house and there were more coming in and they were going to decide the next or all the offers had to be in the next day.

And then everyone is bidding and you don't know what they're offering and so you just sort of hazard a guess, a number out there and you know, you don't know how things stand.

and what I'm saying is like all this strange, weird happenstance, chance, we would say, from our view.

[34 : 38] But God is over it all and he's involved in it all. And so when you're in circumstances like that, and I think we're in those circumstances more than we would probably realize, where you just don't know and random things from our perspective happen.

And you're in the storm and you say, whoa, what is going on here? How can you be calm and make good decisions? Well, it's not because we're so smart.

It's not because you're so smart. It's not because you can see into the depths of all the reasons and the wherefores and the whys of everything that has happened.

But because we have a God who is over all. And so in our case, you know, whoever gets the house is finally up to him.

It's not up to us. It's finally everything is in his hands and not ours. God controls the hearts of kings. So how much more does he control the hearts of everyone else?

[35 : 50] God is transcendent. He's ruling over all and to live wisely with him is to recognize that and to trust him for it.

Well, what else? His transcendence means something else in Proverbs. And this is something very important for us to understand. His transcendence, it means that we are not going to understand everything he does.

That is wisdom too. To accept that I'm not going to see the fabric of God's world perfectly here and now.

Remember our definition of wisdom is it's knowing and understanding the fabric of God's world and living in harmony with it. And also knowing you're never going to completely understand it.

And that last little bit there is important because it's going to save you so much heartache. It's going to save you so much, I've got to figure like endless analysis.

[37 : 07] A man's steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way? God is directing your steps.

Sometimes you're going to be in places that you just don't understand how you got where you are. And maybe that's your life. You say, I just can't make all these things compute.

I kind of get the vague picture, but this is hard. God is exalted. And that means he is inscrutable. he's past finding out. He's past backing into a corner and fully comprehending him. He does plant his footsteps in the sea.

And the point is you can't see footsteps in the sea. 25-2 Proverbs 25-2 It is the glory of God to conceal a matter.

[38 : 06] To search out a matter is the glory of kings. So for a king, it is glorious for him to search out a matter within his kingdom.

To get down, to drill down, to figure out what is going on, how things stand in his kingdom. That is his glory. A king that is able to understand and figure out what is actually going on in his kingdom, that is glorious.

The king that is oblivious to what is going on is not glorious. But God's glory is seen in a different way. It's seen in putting things past finding out.

He's so far above us, and his kingdom rules over all, that men can't figure out everything that is going on. God is truly the God who hides himself, who takes strange, dark paths sometimes. And to know that, to live in that reality, that we can know him, but we're never going to figure him all out. That is wisdom. That's a great deal of what Ecclesiastes and the great deal of what Job is about.

[39 : 15] We can know him, but we're never going to figure out all of his ways. And your life will never make sense if you don't see it in the light of both God's knowability and his inscrutability.

That we can know some things, and some things we're not going to know. And we have to figure out, and wisdom is relating to both aspects of that. So, this book, the book of Proverbs, is not going to make any sense to you either, if you don't understand that about God.

Because, again and again, there are Proverbs that almost seem to promise justice against the wicked, and that do promise justice for the wicked.

wicked. That God is going to punish them. That God is going to bless the righteous. And then we look into the world and we say, I don't see it so much of the time. Well, how do you solve that riddle?

Well, you could say, yes, the Proverbs are just generally true, and there are exceptions, and that is certainly true. But another aspect of that answer is, you don't know exactly what God is doing.

[40 : 26] Sometimes his categories, of blessing and punishment look far different than what our categories of blessing and punishment look like. So, who knows what God is doing? He'll punish the wicked, but it's going to be in his own way, in his own time, in his own place.

And so, right now, Romans 1, 18 says, the wrath of God is being revealed against all godlessness and wickedness. His wrath is being revealed. You can see it in the cursed, half-life, that the sinner leads.

That is part of the punishment. And as they go further and further into sin, and they reap more and more of the bitter fruit of sin, God is punishing them. His wrath is being displayed.

God sometimes paves the road to hell with ease. And so, you don't want him? Well, he'll give you what you want.

God, I'm going to give you what you want. But you just don't know. We just don't know everything he's doing. And that's our God.

[41 : 35] And we can either endlessly analyze and wrestle with that, or we could do what Job did and get to the place where we humble ourselves and we put our hand over our mouth and say, God, your ways are far above ours.

You're the only wise God. That is the God of Proverbs. And to know him and to live with him and to trust him, that is wisdom.

When your ways are dark, you hold on to him. Fourth, and finally, so we've seen he's relational, he's the creator, he's transcendent, and very quickly, he's imminent.

And that means he's close. Exalted, yes, but not absent. Not unavailable, close. You can see his closeness and his interaction and his nearness all over the book of Proverbs.

You see it in the way he reacts with delight to the prayers of the righteous. And he detests the sacrifice of the wicked. You see it in the things that he abominates, he detests.

[42 : 54] That word is like he has a visceral reaction. This is not some president reading a report in black and white from some distance and saying, oh, that doesn't make me happy.

This is, he's there and he sees it and he has a visceral disgust reaction toward what men do here. And so it's this delight or this disgust.

Well, that shows that he's near. He's not far away. That old line, if God is so big, I know he wouldn't care about what goes on here. That's just a lie.

That's human thinking. Because we have limited attention and we, so we think God has limited attention. And we think when we're big, we don't care about the people under us.

But God is so big that he does care. He has infinite attention to give to everyone. And he is so big and so great that he can pay attention to all of the details.

[44 : 01] And so he delights in justice, but he detests the perverse man, the crooked man. So how close is he? 1917, he who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and he will reward him for what he has done.

That envelope of money that you put in the box in the foyer for the family at church, that bag of Christmas presents that you left on the porch of the family down the street, you put that into the Lord's hand.

You put it on his porch. You gave it to him. And he took it from you. Just like you would borrow something from your neighbor.

Your neighbor comes over and asks for your weed whacker and you bring it over to his garage. That's the closeness in which the Lord lives in his creation.

Our neighbor, the one we give to and borrow from. you put it in the Lord's hand. You put it on his porch. He's that close hand to hand.

[45 : 18] God's intimately involved with us. We're going to see in chapter three, he disciplines his children, the children that he loves. 312.

That's intimate, isn't it? You go behind closed doors and you have a quiet word with your son or your daughter, and it's hand to hand, skin to skin, eye to eye, discipline.

Maybe that's a spanking, or maybe that's just a word. That's involved, that's our God, he's close to us. Oh, he's close to us, and isn't it how wonderful that he's so close?

More than that, Proverbs 3.32, the Lord takes the upright into his confidence. And that's in the next chapter we're going to see, the Lord takes the upright into his confidence.

Oh, what a beautiful picture. I don't call you servants anymore, I call you friends. Abraham was his friend. friend. Enoch walked with God. That's the God of Proverbs.

[46 : 28] The God who's willing to walk with you. God who's willing to walk with you. And in Jesus Christ, he came close.

He came close. And he comes again in the book of Proverbs through wisdom. He says, I'll make you wise. And wisdom herself says, I'll make you wise.

If you want me, if you want to love me and learn from me, then here I am. Take me. I'll live with you like a new bride lives with her young bridegroom.

That's what God is offering in Jesus Christ. You can take him. You can have peace with God. God. And he'll take you into his confidence.

You'll be his friend. It's not just for Enoch and Abraham. It's for all of his people. So therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

[47 : 38] That is the gospel. And that's what the gospel according to Proverbs is. this great big God transcended.

The creator comes close to his people and offers you peace. Shalom. Offers you life. Offers you friendship.

So what should you do? Trust in the Lord with all your heart. He has good will for you. Give yourself to him.

Pursue him. Receive him. Live with him. Let's pray. Lord, what a wonderful, wonderful privilege it is to be your people.

And I know that there are going to be some watching tonight who don't know you, who are disconnected, who are trying to make their way in a dark and confusing world, a scary world without you, to be their friend and to be their guide.

[48 : 48] Oh, you say you're the God of compassion and pity. Have compassion upon them. And for my brothers and sisters, make us all wise.

as we look into this book, change us, deepen our character, take out more of sin and selfishness, and put more of Jesus Christ into us.

Heal our waywardness, heal our hearts, heal our minds, and make us to walk with you. Pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.