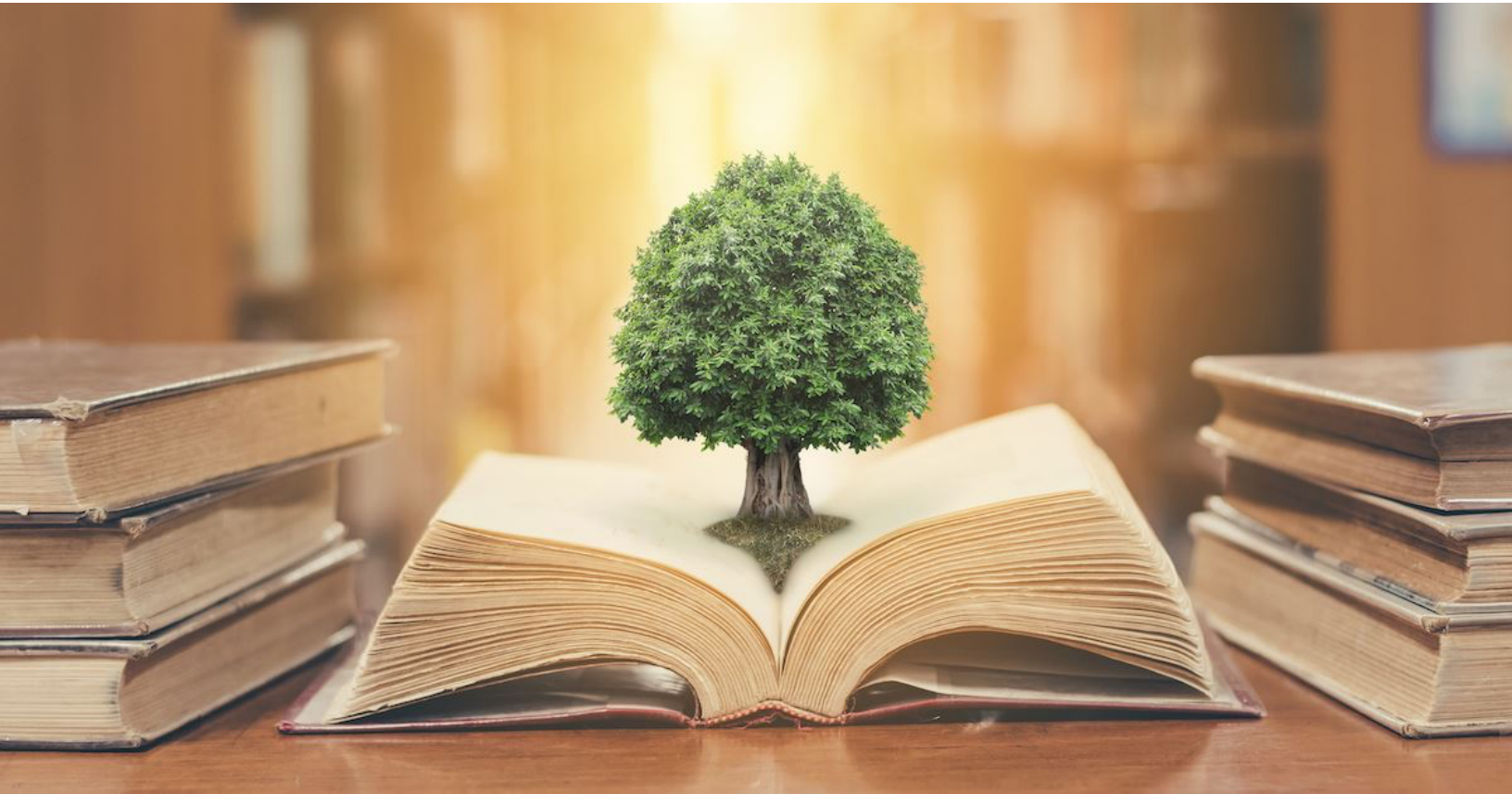


THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS

**Second Baptist Church
Summer Curriculum Series**



July 2020

WEEK FIVE

Proverbs 5:1-14

One of the best illustrations of how we should treat temptation I've seen comes from a youth camp pastor named Greg Boone. He would pick the biggest, strongest teenager in camp and call him on stage. Greg would stand the kid towards the back of the stage and, with all of his might, try to drag him off the front of the stage and into the crowd. He could never do it. Then he would ask his volunteer to come to the very front of the stage, right where it ends and hang his toes off the edge. With very little effort, he bumped the kid who then fell right off the edge. The illustration was meant to show how our distance from temptation determines our ability to resist it. When we are far from sin and its trappings, it's easy to resist when temptation comes calling. It's those times that we draw near, that we get right at the edge of temptation that Satan only needs to exert minimal effort to get us to fall into sin.

The same wisdom is found in Proverbs 5. Once again, the father is advising his son on how to stay out of the way of temptation and the clutches of sin.

Proverbs 5:1-6 For the lips of a forbidden woman drip with honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol; she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.

The initial warning comes that **the lips of a forbidden woman drip with honey, and her speech is smoother than oil**. The "other woman" described here is a woman of flattery. The woman says exactly what the son wants to hear, knowing how to entice him into sin with only a few seemingly innocent words. Satan can use simple words to entrap us in sin. No one ever said sin wasn't fun or that it won't momentarily fulfill felt needs. Satan's words sound great and feed into our desires. That's the warning here. Once the son lends his ear to her flattering words he is turning himself over to something far darker.

Falling into sin is a gradual process. When it comes to extramarital affairs, I don't believe people just set out one day to cheat on their spouse. They don't wake up one day and consciously decide out of nowhere that they want to have an affair. It begins slowly. As Pastor Justin taught in June, it can start with seemingly innocent conversations at work. It can start as shared

experiences with members of the opposite sex. Out of those small interactions Satan can begin to draw the net. We have to be mindful of what we allow in our lives.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS THAT YOU CAN INTERACT WITH ANOTHER PERSON THAT CAN LEAD TO TEMPTATION? WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE TO AVOID THOSE INTERACTIONS?

Perhaps the gravest warning comes in pointing out that **she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.** She is making it up as she goes, living with no direction or guidance. Life is difficult enough when we have direction and try to follow the path towards a goal. The forbidden woman does neither. She wanders through life. The life of sin follows the same path. It tempts us with what we think we need for the moment, with no consideration of the future. God provides wise direction through His Word and His Holy Spirit. The other woman follows neither. For us to not fall into the trap of sin, we must be deliberate in seeking God's guidance for our path. We must make sure we are walking the path of righteousness every day. Jesus says in Luke 9:23, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." See the word "daily"? If we are not daily denying ourselves and following Christ, if we even take our eyes off of him for one day, that could be the day temptation comes. Satan is looking for the right opportunity to strike and he's watching to see what day you leave your cross at home!

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE IN YOUR LIFE TO DENY YOURSELF AND DAILY TAKE UP JESUS' CROSS? HOW ARE MAKING SURE TO DAILY WALK THE PATH OF RIGHTEOUSNESS?

For the woman, **in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol.** If we consider the future outcome of sin, the momentary temptation shouldn't be as strong. Scripture is teaching that to us right now. It may sound good, the sin you're being tempted with may feel good, but the future outcome is only destruction. In this passage that temptation is adultery. The forbidden woman is literally the "other woman;" as in, not the wife of the son. Affairs may be tempting. They may satisfy a temporary need you have that you no longer look to your spouse for, but it only leads to destruction. Destruction of your marriage. Destruction of your family. Potentially destruction of your career. Worst of all, destruction of your Christian witness. No good ever comes from an extra-marital affair. Let me repeat that: NO GOOD EVER COMES FROM AN EXTRA-MARITAL AFFAIR. Does that step on your toes? GOOD! That is the intention of this passage and my intention in this study!

Proverbs 5:7-8 And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house,

Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house. What is the best way to keep yourself from falling into temptation? Stay away! In sexual temptation, this means avoiding the person or persons that are tempting you. If it's sinful activity online, walk away from the computer, block the website, unfriend the person. Substance abuse? Avoid areas that trigger the itch. Gossip? If you know your friend group is going to devolve into a gossip session, then stay away from that friend group. Put as much space possible between you and whatever is in your life that is drawing you to sin.

Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 18:8-9, "And if your hand or your foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire." Needless to say, Jesus took temptation pretty seriously! Whatever it is that is drawing you to sin, stay as far away from it as possible. As my youth camp illustration at the beginning of this lesson shows, the farther away from temptation you get, the stronger you are to resist it!

ARE THERE AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT TEMPT YOU THAT YOU NEED TO WALK AWAY FROM? ASK GOD TO BRING TO MIND THINGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT YOU NEED TO KEEP FAR AWAY FROM.

Proverbs 5:9-14 Lest you give your honor to others and your years to the merciless, lest strangers take their fill of your strength, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner, and at the end of your life you groan, when your flesh and body are consumed, and you say, "How I hated discipline, and my heart despised reproof! I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors. I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.

The warning for not going near the adulterous woman includes the results of ignoring the wisdom. To give into the adulterous woman is to **give your honor to others and your years to the merciless**. Your reputation is ruined in an adulterous act. Think of how devastating that is. You spend your life building your reputation, proving your witness, guarding your testimony. Then, in a moment of temptation, you throw away that reputation that took you years to

establish. He emphasizes this in the final verse saying **I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation**. Think of examples of leaders who had productive careers that are now simply identified as someone who threw it all away on an affair. The weight of this thought should be heavy upon you as you face temptation. You must think beyond the here and now moment and consider the great consequences that come from giving into temptation.

Now, that's not to say that if you have fallen into the temptation of an affair in the past that you are defined by that affair. As a Christian, God gifts us His grace. If you have repented of that sin and sought forgiveness from God and your spouse, then you have done the work of reconciliation. However, as Pastor Justin recently said, "While all sin is equally damning, not all sin is equally damaging." Adultery does great damage to the marriage and the reputation. Both can be rebuilt, but the warning in Proverbs is to prevent having to rebuild it in the first place.

PERSONAL STUDY

While the first half of Proverbs 5 deals with the negative side of how to approach temptation, the second half deals with the positive actions you can take to resist temptations. As you read Proverbs 5:15-23 consider the following questions:

- **What are some ways that these verses encourage the son to resist temptation?**
- **What role does contentment have in our fight against temptation?**

WEEK SIX

PROVERBS 6:1-11

Remember Aesop's Fable about the Ant and the Grasshopper? During the summer, the ant works hard storing food for the winter. All the while, the Grasshopper sings and plays his fiddle, encouraging the ant to stop working and enjoy the summer. As the seasons change, the grasshopper finds himself hungry. He approaches the ant asking for food and the ant asks why he hasn't stored enough food for himself. The grasshopper realizes that he'd spent the summer playing and singing and found no time to plan for the winter. The ant scolds him for his lack of forethought and turns his back on him.

Now I realize the ant's reaction at the end of the story isn't a great Christian example. Turning our backs on the hungry for any reason is wrong. But the principle of the need to think ahead, plan for winter, and store food is a good principle to explore. It's also the subject of our Proverb lesson this week.

Proverbs 6:1-5 My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger, if you are snared in the words of your mouth, caught in the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and save yourself, for you have come into the hand of your neighbor: go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor. Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber; save yourself like a gazelle from the hand of the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

What is it to **put up security for your neighbor** or **give your pledge for a stranger**? In its basic form it is like cosigning a loan. It is putting up your personal wealth as collateral for another. This is a common practice today. When I bought my first car, I bought it from my Uncle Benjy. Since it was my first car purchase and since my dad's credit wasn't ideal, Uncle Benjy recruited my grandmother to cosign the loan. He explained to me that if I fail to pay my car note that she would be responsible. As a loving grandson, that was motivation for me to make sure payment was made early every month. But honestly, as a 20 year old I was monetarily irresponsible and shouldn't have been given the loan in the first place. My grandmother's fixed income was in the hands of a dumb kid. It wasn't wise.

The principle behind the call to not put up security is to not tie yourself legally to someone over which you have no control. Your livelihood, your credit, and your assets shouldn't be put in the

hands of someone other than yourself or spouse. The advice is so strong that God says to **plead urgently with your neighbor, give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber.** Do not let a day go by without getting your word back from your neighbor. Do not sleep until your good name is back under your own control. If you are contractually bound to someone over which you have no authority or control, now is the time to figure out how to get yourself out from underneath that bondage.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN FINANCIALLY AFFECTED BY SOMEONE ELSE'S ACTIONS? IN WHAT WAYS COULD YOU HAVE PREVENTED IT?

Proverbs 6:6-11 Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

The second warning is against laziness. Here, God contrasts the lazy man and the tiny ant. He calls on the sluggard to observe the ant and **consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest.** The ant, without direct supervision, motivates herself. The ant is a self-starter. In the church, the greatest source of ministry opportunities and ideas come from the congregation. I have found in my ministry, that the best ideas weren't always mine or a senior pastors; instead the best ideas came from God's guidance in a church member's life. There are great opportunities all around you in your daily life. You may have an idea for a ministry in the community around you. You don't have to wait on one of the pastoral staff to tell you it's ok to serve in that ministry. Now, we are here to support and equip you in anyway that we can, but we are not here to stand over you and direct every ministerial move in your life. Like the ant, every church member has a calling on their life to serve the people in their sphere of influence. Take the initiative to begin that ministry. Share the idea with your class. Seek out others to work alongside you, and do ministry!

WHAT ARE SOME IDEAS YOU HAVE FOR MINISTERING TO THE PEOPLE IN YOUR CIRCLE OF INFLUENCE?

The ant also works hard. Scripture says **she prepares her bread in summer.** It's during the hot summer months that the ant does her hardest work. For us, it's in the most difficult times of

our lives that we can accomplish the most for the kingdom. Bro. Russell says to never waste a trial. What he means is God has something for you to learn in every trial and suffering in life. There are opportunities for your spiritual walk with God to grow stronger and deeper through the toughest times in life. Instead of seeing the trial as a reason to stop growing spiritually, see it as an opportunity to grow stronger and better prepared for the next trial of life.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU GROWN DURING TIMES OF SUFFERING? WHAT CAN YOU LEARN FROM A CURRENT TRIAL YOU ARE GOING THROUGH?

Thirdly, the ant **gathers her food in harvest**. The ant plans ahead. Knowing the winter is coming, the ant gathers and prepares for the difficult months on the horizon. It would be easy for the ant to look at the abundance around her and not worry about storing anything, but she knows that just because food is plentiful today doesn't mean it will be plentiful in the future. Remember Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream in Genesis 41? First he saw seven plump cows come out of the Nile to eat, then seven thin cows came out of the Nile and ate the plump cows. Joseph recognized that Egypt would have seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. With this foreknowledge, Joseph set about to store supplies during the seven years of plenty in order to survive the seven years of famine. While we don't receive those visions as Pharaoh did, we can still apply the actions today. If you are going through a time of contentment or a time of plenty, now is the time to prepare.

The principle behind this is that each of us should have the foresight to plan ahead. Does this mean you go complete Doomsday Prepper and stockpile your home with astronaut food and thousands of rounds of ammunition? Of course not. Instead, you make sure you are being smart with your wealth. After you tithe, are you putting any money in savings? When you are grocery shopping, are you making sure to buy dry goods that would last? Ultimately, are you thinking beyond this moment?

IN WHAT WAYS ARE YOU THINKING AND PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE? WHAT ACTIONS CAN YOU TAKE TO BE BETTER PREPARED FOR WHAT MAY COME?

Having forethought benefits us in more than just physical ways. Thinking ahead also draws our minds off of the here and now. Why is that important? Because when we focus on the here and now, we're more likely to be drawn into temptation. As we learned last week, while sin may gratify a short term desire, it comes with long term consequences. If we think ahead, then we

can look beyond the instant gratification of sin, recognize the long term consequences, and then make the wise choice to turn from temptation.

Forethought also guides us in our relationships with one another. When we think beyond the moment and focus instead on the eternal impact we can have on someone, then our behavior towards them changes. When you become angry with a coworker and take a moment to focus on eternity, then your behavior towards them in that moment should change. Instead of acting out of anger, perhaps you act out of grace. You realize that while angrily yelling at your coworker might feel good in the moment, it will ruin your ability to reach them for Christ. And which one is most important? We must step back in every moment and consider the longterm effects of our every decision. Like the ant, gather in the harvest!

HAS THERE BEEN A MOMENT WHERE YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT THE ETERNAL IMPACT YOU COULD HAVE ON A PERSON AND CHANGED YOUR BEHAVIOR BECAUSE OF THAT THOUGHT? HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU BLOWN IT ETERNALLY BECAUSE OF A MOMENTARY OUTBURST?

PERSONAL STUDY

Consider these questions as you read Proverbs 6:12-19

- **While there is a Godly side to planning ahead, there is also an evil side to planning ahead. In verse 14, what is one example of evil planning?**
- **How might you have in the past participated in the same evil planning in these verses?**
- **These verses name 7 things are abominations to God. How many of them do you participate in?**

WEEK SEVEN

PROVERBS 8:12-31

Does every husband have a favorite shirt that his wife hates? For me, it's a faded green and purple flannel shirt that I've had since the early 90's. I wore that shirt in my eighth grade school picture. I wore it throughout high school and college. I even wore it on the first date with my wife. Of course, it has shrunk over the years and I can't button it up when I put it on anymore. The sleeves are too short, the shoulders are becoming threadbare, and the collar has seen better days, but I still love that shirt. One day it will disappear. I will either lose it or my wife will "accidentally" misplace it. That's what happens to our possessions: they never last.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE POSSESSION THAT YOU'VE OWNED FOR A LONG TIME? WHAT FAVORITE POSSESSIONS HAVE YOU HAD IN THE PAST THAT ARE NOW LONG LOST?

Everything on this earth will eventually fade away, but we have access to something that never shrinks, never fades, and will never change: God's wisdom. This week, we see that wisdom helps us distinguish good from evil, that the rewards of wisdom are of greater value than gold and silver, and that God's wisdom has stood the test of time.

Proverbs 8:12-17 I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion. The fear of the Lord is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and reverted speech I hate. I have counsel and sound wisdom; I have insight; I have strength. By me, kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me princes rule, and nobles, all who govern justly. I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.

Hatred is a dirty word in our society today because man is fallen and sinful and our exercise of hatred is sinful and fallen. Man's hatred is pointed towards people for reasons that are ungodly. God, perfect and just, exercises holy hatred not towards man but towards sin and evil. We don't like to think of God as hating anything. We prefer to focus on His love, but His love is his motivation for hating evil. In these verses, we learn that the Lord has a **hatred of evil**, extending to **pride and arrogance and the way of evil and reverted speech**. God hates evil because it is His enemy and leads to the destruction of His children. We have to be careful in our own view of evil. With the world growing more sinful by the day, it's becoming increasingly easy to overlook evil around us. TV and media have normalized it. It's easy for us to overlook evil and not think about the damage it causes to individuals, families, churches, and

communities. The less we hate evil the more we accept the consequences: separation from God. Wisdom guides us in recognizing what is evil and helping us to avoid following in its trappings. It guides us in seeing evil through God's eyes and hating evil as he does.

WHAT EVIL ACTS DO YOU FIND YOURSELF INCREASINGLY BECOMING ACCEPTING OF?

Wisdom not only helps us recognize evil, it helps us understand good. In pursuing wisdom we find **counsel, sound wisdom, insight, and strength**. Counsel and sound wisdom are meant to guide us in understanding what is godly and ungodly. Have you ever sought counsel from someone you respect? Counsel can come in different ways. Sometimes its sage words from those who have been through situations similar to the one you face now. Sometimes a good counselor listens and helps you navigate through your own discovery of the Holy Spirit's guidance. In any case, counsel requires another to help you in the journey. God's Word is that guide and the Holy Spirit is that Counselor.

WHO DO YOU SEEK OUT FOR GODLY COUNSEL? WHO DO YOU SEEK TO PROVIDE GODLY COUNSEL TO?

Our greatest source of **insight** and **strength** dwells within us. We can look to the Holy Spirit for guidance. In fact, God says that **I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me**. How do we diligently seek wisdom from God? In John 14:25-26 Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." God sent the Holy Spirit to teach us the ways of God. He does this by guiding us as we study Scripture and bringing the principles taught in study to mind at just the right time. We simply have to seek his help.

Proverbs 8:18-21 Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice, granting an inheritance to those who love me, filling their treasuries.

The fruit of Godly wisdom **is better than gold, even fine gold, and its yield than choice silver**. What is the fruit of wisdom? Godly living. When we allow God's wisdom to guide our lives, the fruit of that guidance is worth more than any worldly wealth. It helps us to **walk in**

the way of righteousness, in the paths of justice. Righteousness is the fruit of wisdom. Justice is the fruit of wisdom. When we practice righteousness and justice, we find ourselves at peace with those around us. And peace, I would argue, is of greater worth than silver and gold.

Psalms 19:7-11 says

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb."

God gives his laws and commandments not to restrict our lives but to give us abundant life. Kids tend to think of rules as oppressing their fun. As adults, we understand that rules and commands are in place to ensure safety and peace between us. God's law not only brings us peace and safety, but so much more. Walking in the way of the Lord is reviving, rejoicing, and enduring.

IN WHAT WAYS HAVE YOU SEEN GOD'S WORD PROVE FINER THAN GOLD IN YOUR LIFE? DO YOU TREASURE HIS COMMANDS MORE THAN YOU TREASURE YOUR POSSESSIONS?

Proverbs 8:22-24 The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

We learn that God's wisdom existed before creation. We see **the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of old. Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.** Before the very first moment of creation, God's wisdom existed. Everything was created in light of God's wisdom. It prevailed long before man and will continue long after we are gone. There is a timelessness about God's wisdom. The importance of remembering this comes when our personal thoughts come in conflict with God's teaching. I believe we've all had those moments when we read a passage of Scripture that runs contrary to a personal belief we've long held. In those moments we have the choice to either rely on our own understanding or recognize that God's wisdom is eternal. His wisdom is never changing.

Proverbs 25-31 Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth, before he had made the earth with its fields, or the first of the dust of the world. When he established the heavens, I was there; when he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth, the I was beside him, like a master workman, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always, rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the children of men.

God's wisdom existed **before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills**. Wisdom was there **when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit**. Creation itself stands as a reminder of God's wisdom. It's summer time and families are planning trips. Some go to the beach, some go to the mountains, some go to national parks. In every trip I take there is always a moment when I stand amazed at God's creation. Whether it's looking at the ocean, standing on the edge of the Grand Canyon, or looking out at the Smokies, I'm reminded of God's power and goodness. These moments should also serve as reminders of His wisdom and faithfulness. Even the sights we see will fade away. God's truth existed before any mountain rose from the ground and God's truth will exist long after every mountain fades from the horizon. If what God says can outlast even His creation, how much more should I value it in my life today?

PERSONAL STUDY

As you read Proverbs 8:1-11 and 8:32-36, take a few moments to consider the follow questions.

- **What do you learn about God's wisdom in these verses?**
- **What happens when we listen to wisdom?**
- **How does wisdom call out to you in your life?**

WEEK EIGHT

PROVERBS 10

James 3:7-10 says For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

Taming our tongue is a lifelong effort: it only takes a moment to speak a word you can never take back. This week, we look at Solomon's wisdom on our daily speech.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD TROUBLE TAMING YOUR TONGUE? WHAT IS AN EXAMPLE OF WHEN YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE A BETTER JOB OF WATCHING WHAT YOU SAY?

Proverbs 10:11 The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

Does your speech build up or tear down? In verse 11, we see that **the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life**. Now, does that mean righteous words can add days to someone's life? Of course not. But righteous words certainly can add life to someone's day! Our words can add good life to our neighbor, especially when we speak of the Lord. If our words are seasoned with Jesus Christ, if our everyday interactions point to Him, then we can speak words of life into our neighbor's life.

WHAT ARE EVERYDAY WAYS YOU CAN SPEAK LIFE INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S DAY? WHO CAN YOU BE A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE TO TODAY?

On the other side, we see **the mouth of the wicked conceals violence**. Words can often hurt more than actions. The Hebrew word for violence here implies cruelty, damage, and injustice. When the heart is focused on violence, damage, and injustice, then the words of that heart can be cruel or incite violence. We are learning almost daily how simple words can either draw peace or incite violence. Words are powerful weapons and we must be careful how we use them. As Christians, our words should never be taken as supporting or encouraging violence.

Proverbs 10:18 The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool.

This proverb and the following proverb continue the discussion of how dangerous our words can be. First we see **the one who conceals hatred has lying lips**. When you foster hatred towards others in your heart, it taints your view on everything. As such, even loving words spoken from a hateful heart are lies. How can I say that confidently? Jesus said it in

Matthew 12:33-27

“Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit. You brood of vipers! How can you speak good, when you are evil? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person out of his good treasure brings forth good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure brings forth evil. I tell you, on the day of judgement people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”

Jesus took this speech thing very seriously! Our words are windows into our hearts. If our hearts are full of hatred, then ultimately our words will reflect that. As Christians, our hearts should be full of the love and wisdom of Christ. Our words should reflect that. There is no room for hatred.

ARE THERE AREAS OF YOUR HEART THAT HARBOR HATRED TOWARDS ANOTHER PERSON OR GROUP OF PEOPLE? TAKE A MOMENT TO REPENT OF THAT SIN AND ASK GOD TO FILL YOUR HEART WITH COMPASSION AND LOVE FOR THAT PERSON OR GROUP.

We also see that **whoever utters slander is a fool**. The purpose of slander here is to defame someone, to aim at ruining the reputation of another. Why is this bad? Again this is a window into the heart of a fool. I am fully convinced that we slander others in order to make ourselves feel better. We look at another person, say something crude or false about them, in order to elevate ourselves above them. In essence, when you say something discouraging about your neighbor, it truly shows that you think little of yourself. We should instead seek to see the good in one another and speak of that. We each bear the image of God. Recognize God’s image in each other and uplift one another in love.

HAVE YOU EVER SLANDERED ANOTHER PERSON? HAVE YOU SOUGHT FORGIVENESS FROM THAT PERSON? IN NOT, WHY NOT?

Proverbs 10:19 When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.

I've got to be honest, this is one of my favorite proverbs. As a man of few (spoken) words, I love to see how wise I am! But seriously, this is one of those proverbs that make you think. It lets us know that **when words are many, transgression is not lacking**. In a practical way, this makes complete sense. Our best guard against saying something wrong is our willingness to think about what we say before we speak. We all know those people who have no filter between their brain and their mouth. They often have to apologize for something they have said. When words are abundant, when you are speaking at length, it gives little time for the Holy Spirit to restrain your tongue. Thoughtful speech can be empowering and God honoring, thoughtless speech can bring dishonor to the Lord.

HAVE YOU EVER SAID SOMETHING THAT YOU IMMEDIATELY REGRETTED? WHAT ARE WAYS TO PREVENT THAT?

On the other side, we see that **whoever restrains his lips is prudent**. Restraint doesn't mean silence. Simply remaining silent isn't the call of this passage. Deliberate, thoughtful speech shows the speaker to be prudent. Our words are meant to honor and glorify God. In our interactions with others, we do that by encouraging our brothers and sisters in Christ and lovingly speaking Gospel truth to the lost. Both of those require thoughtful speech.

Proverbs 10:31-32 The mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom, but the perverse tongue will be cut off. The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.

We see that **the mouth of the righteous brings forth wisdom**. The righteous speak the language of wisdom. Their words point to God and His glory. This comes from a change within. The one who walks in righteousness and immerses himself in the pursuit of God's wisdom will naturally speak words of wisdom into the lives of others. Again this is speech that comes from the abundance of the heart. A cup will only spill what is inside of it. If that cup is filled with wisdom, then it is wisdom that will overflow the rim.

The righteous has a great deal of discretion. **The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable, but the mouth of the wicked, what is perverse.** The people of Israel were considered perverse when they deviated and distorted the Lord's ways and turned from Him. Perversion is that which is against God's ways and turns us away from him. Perverse language and perverse subjects don't edify the body of Christ. There is no building up of one another through perverse words. The righteous man understands this. He knows that perverse words reveal the foolishness of the speaker, so he speaks in acceptable words and on acceptable subjects. He speaks in words that point to the way of the Lord.

THINK OF THE LAST CONVERSATION YOU HAD WITH ANOTHER PERSON. DID YOUR WORDS POINT TO GOD AND HIS WAYS? IF NOT, WHAT COULD YOU HAVE SAID TO BRING JESUS INTO THE CONVERSATION?

Recognizing what is acceptable and what is perverse is increasingly becoming more difficult in today's society. Our society is leaning into the perverse and normalizing it. Things that would have offended us ten years ago seem to be unoffensive today. This has happened because we have become immune to the perversion we see around us. This also happens when we turn our focus away from God. The more we lean into His presence, the more we see the world through His eyes, the more we can distinguish what is Godly from what is perverse.

PERSONAL STUDY

Read through the other Proverbs in Chapter 10 and consider the following questions.

- **What other verse address your speech?**
- **What can you learn from those verses?**
- **How is God calling you to change the way you speak today?**