

# OpenTheo

## Wisdom Literature (Part 3)



### Wisdom Literature - Steve Gregg

In this session, Steve Gregg delves further into the teachings of Proverbs and how they provide wisdom for everyday life. Drawing from nature and common sense, he examines topics such as diligence, generosity, and deferred gratification. While acknowledging the complexities of life and the inevitable struggles that come with it, Gregg emphasizes the value of living according to wisdom and seeking counsel from others. Ultimately, he underscores the importance of spiritual blessings and trusting in God's sovereignty.

### Transcript

Today we're going to continue talking about, well, the last few sessions have been about wisdom literature in the Bible. We saw there's quite a few books in the Bible that are specifically wisdom literature, particularly Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. But the book of Job also is regarded to be wisdom literature.

And there's some of the Psalms are considered wisdom literature in the Bible. So, it's a category of literature that the Hebrew people especially were fond of. Of course, we think mostly of the inspired scriptures when we think of what the Jews had given to them to guide them.

God gave them the law, God gave them the prophets. But he also gave them wisdom literature. Now, this is recognized as a separate category.

In Jeremiah, it talks about the law, the prophets, and the counsel of the wise as three different categories of means of knowing what God wants. So, God, of course, makes laws. We're not under the laws of the Old Testament, but Jesus, of course, gave us commands as well.

There's the prophets also were there to correct people when they drifted from keeping the laws properly. And then there's the wisdom, which covers categories that might be overlapped in the law sometimes. But wisdom literature is not itself law.

It's not prophecy. The Proverbs actually say, if you do this, this will happen in many cases. But they're not prophesying it because some of the things don't happen.

There are things you could do that the Proverbs advise you not to do, and you won't get the terrible result that it predicts. Or you can do the right things that the Proverbs recommend, and you won't get the great results that it predicts. Because it's not really predictive prophecy.

It's common sense observation. That's what wisdom is. Wisdom is basically common sense.

It's recognizing that some things are worthy to be pursued, and that some avenues are intelligent ways to pursue those things. Now, your pursuit is not guaranteed success. There are promises of God in the Scripture, but that's not what wisdom literature is.

God does make promises. But wisdom literature is advice. It's counsel.

A father to his son. He's advising his son how to stay out of trouble, how to take the course of life that wise men take. Now, wise men take courses that would be advisable to take.

These courses tend toward the results you want. They tend toward them. In other words, if you want to have money, you should work.

Now, that's often said in the Proverbs. If you want money, you should get a job. But, if you get a job, you're not guaranteed to be rich.

After all, there could be a financial collapse, and you could lose all the equity in your house. Your stock record could crash. You could be a hard worker.

I mean, you could live in a third-world country where people work real hard, and barely have enough to feed their families daily. And that was the case with many of the peasants in biblical times, too. So, to say, work hard and you'll be rich, is not a promise.

It's more like saying, if you want to be rich, working hard is the only sensible way to go that, toward it. Because if you want to be rich, you'd be a fool to sit around on your hands and do nothing. In other words, wisdom identifies generalities, tendencies, and the kinds of things that a person will take into consideration if they're smart.

Now, it's amazing, I'm sure to you, as to me, how few people have even basic smarts in this respect in our own society. I really think that that wasn't always the case. I think common sense was more common.

For example, everybody knew what a woman was until, what, five years ago. Everyone knew what marriage was until a couple decades ago. People are lacking in all common sense now.

But that's because they have forsaken the word of the Lord and what wisdom is in them, the Bible says. What do they have to guide them if they don't have the truth of

Scripture? You would think that mere intelligence and rationality would guide most people into sensible ways of life. But we don't realize how true that is or is not until we see a society that has abandoned the word of God.

The truth is, ancient pagan Greek and Roman societies had wise men, they had philosophers, they had some good ethics in some cases. They weren't the same as the biblical ethics, but they could have been worse, given the corruption of man. But that's because they had people who were deep thinkers about things.

And they had not heard the word of God and rejected it. They were still feeling their way, as Paul said, that they might feel after God and find, perhaps, His ways. But a society that has had the knowledge of God and has thrown it away is simply choosing absolute foolishness.

And we see that in our society. Now, Proverbs is a book we're looking through because it is a distillation of wisdom on many important points. And I know that all of you probably have read the Proverbs, probably some of you have favorite Proverbs.

Who doesn't? I mean, there's some really great Proverbs. But you may not have noticed, and I have to say I didn't notice until some years ago when I sought to put together a topical arrangement of Proverbs on various aspects of life. I didn't realize how many aspects of life there are that the Proverbs give us guidance on.

Or I should say, how few things in life there are that the Proverbs do not address. That if a person simply meditates on the Proverbs, their life will become wiser. In fact, that's the very reason the book of Proverbs was written, it says.

In the opening verses of Proverbs, Solomon says it's to make simple people wise. He says, the Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, this is the opening words from Proverbs. King of Israel, to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding.

To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity. To give prudence to the simple. To the young man knowledge and discretion.

A wise man will hear and increase learning. And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. To understand a proverb, an enigma, the words of the wise in their riddles.

Now, these Proverbs are to give understanding and prudence, which is wisdom, to people who don't have it. So that even if people were not believers in God, but followed wisdom, they'd get into less trouble. Now, God's whole point in revealing his word to us is not that we stay out of trouble, but it's a good byproduct of being righteous, is that you stay out of trouble.

Sometimes being righteous takes you into trouble, and that's very clear, and Proverbs doesn't really talk about those situations. It talks about how you will avoid trouble. If

you're wise, you can take wise courses of action.

Now, in the next several sessions, we're going to continue looking at Proverbs. And starting next time, I'm going to start getting into some of the specific topics and unpacking what Proverbs says about those and what wise behavior is. Now remember, wisdom is something that is obligatory.

We can't say, well, I'd just be a stupid Christian. That's okay. No, God doesn't want you to be stupid.

In Ephesians, he says, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. You can't neglect wisdom and still understand what the will of the Lord is, because God made us to be rational. That's why he gave us this computer in our head that no other creature has.

Other creatures have brains, but not like ours. We have rational minds, and there's a reason for that. God didn't do that just because he was trying to see how creative he could be.

He had a purpose in the design, and that's that we would be thinking people. So that even when we don't have a direct word from the Lord, we can say, you know, I'm not going to walk out in front of that speeding truck. You know, that's smart.

That's wisdom. And those are the kinds of things that Proverbs applies to many different aspects of life and potential disasters. Now, I want to just talk at this point about some of the kinds of Proverbs that we'll find, because they are different kinds.

And we'll look at examples of them, which means we'll get to get some wisdom from looking at some of the Proverbs. But we'll do so in the context of looking at different categories of Proverbs. And some of the Proverbs that Solomon wrote were observations from the natural world.

In 1 Kings chapter 4, when it talks about how Solomon wrote 3,000 Proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. We don't have all 3,000 Proverbs, but he wrote a lot of them, obviously. And it says, as it's summarizing his proverbial musings, it says, he also spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall.

He spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish. And Solomon looked at nature, and he saw lessons that God had built into it, into nature. And, you know, when you see, for example, Solomon didn't mention this particular point, but when you see birds migrating seasonally, and they have no navigational equipment such as we would understand, and they travel, and many of them have never made the trip before.

Sometimes their parents made the trip, came back, laid eggs, left again, and the babies, you know, after the parents are gone, the babies fly off, make the same trip their

parents did, you know, across the whole world. How's this going? Both Jeremiah and Isaiah make mention of this, that, you know, it's amazing, the stork knows her times, the swallow knows her proper place, but my people don't. The idea being, yeah, these dumb animals know how to migrate the right course that God has for them, and God has made that remarkable when you study the migration patterns of animals.

Because my people, they're not as smart as these animals, apparently, because they don't know the right way to go. Isaiah begins by saying the ox knows its owner, and the ass knows its master's crib, but my people, Israel, they don't understand. They don't know who owns them.

So, I mean, looking at nature, we'll see all kinds of things if we have our eyes open properly, and Solomon did. Lessons to be learned. For example, in Proverbs chapter 6, very famously, verses 6 through 11, he must have been observing ants, as all people who aren't too busy do at times.

Ants are fascinating. When you see this little kind of creature, sometimes so small you can barely see it, and it's carrying something three or four times its own size, and not complaining. And there's a whole line of them doing that.

And it's hard to get them out of your house once they find out there's something in your house worth having, but I've never wanted to kill ants. I do sometimes when we have to, there's no other way to get rid of them, but I admire them. Solomon admired them.

They're role models to us, as far as he's concerned. He said, Go to the ant, you sluggard. Consider her ways, and be wise, which having no captain, overseer, or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest.

How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler, and your need like an armed man. You're going to be overcome by poverty and need if you just take as much leisure as you can at a time when it's really time to be working. Now, he mentions the ant, which actually knows nothing.

Its brain has no information content. It's all instinct, obviously. God programmed it like a machine.

But the ant is seen as being wise enough to know that winter's coming, food supply's going to be sparse, summer's here, there's abundance, let's gather it all up for the winter, and so they do it. Now, that's what Joseph, of course, advised Pharaoh to do when he knew there was a famine coming up in seven years, and there was going to be seven years plenty. Let's go gather that up first, so we'll be here for the famine.

That's wisdom. That's wisdom. Now, Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, so that's a moral statement.

But does it disagree with what Solomon is saying? I don't believe it intends to. Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, or moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal. What's the difference? Well, the ant doesn't lay up treasure for itself, it's for its whole colony.

It's working for the good of its brothers and sisters, its fellow drones or whatever they are, you know, little critters. And likewise, when Joseph stored up for the seven years, that wasn't just for him, it was for the whole world. He stored up to save the world.

So, there is something sensible if you have, and people in America often do, if you have surplus after you've paid your bills, to say, What's the wisest thing I can do with this? Well, one of the wisest things to do is to help the poor, because the Bible says God will always help you when you're poor, if you help the poor. But a lot of times, you think, OK, I've got this money here, the most obvious thing to do with it for the poor is not obvious to me, I think I'll put it aside, instead of just spend it. Instead of, Well, we've got so much money, let's just go waste it.

No. You know, Wesley, when he was writing to disciples about stewardship, Wesley said, The principles are, Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can. Now, make all you can means work hard, and you'll have more to help others with.

Save all you can doesn't mean store up a lot in a bank account, but don't be frivolous, don't waste. Save rather than waste. Keep the money available for good uses, and then give all you can.

So, that was Wesley who said, It's quite biblical, Solomon indicated that saving up for hard times is not a bad idea. The ant is a prepper. Now, one of the things about preppers is a lot of times, they're just trying to make sure their family will be OK when everything goes south.

Well, you might say, Well, that's a very selfish thing to do. It could be. On the other hand, if everything does go south and there's food shortages, the prepper at least won't be draining the system.

They will not be part of the problem. They won't be making the bread lines longer, give you a place near the front. But, of course, a Christian who has prepared for the future does so realizing that I will be in a position to help others when there is no other help available.

That's what the ant is doing. That's what Joseph did. That's what Solomon said is wise to do.

We should look ahead. At a later time, twice in Proverbs, Solomon said, The wise man foresees the evil and hides himself, but the foolish pass on and suffer for it. In other words, the wise man sees that the ant sees the winter is coming.

That's going to have to be something I need to do something about. I'll do it now. All I can, instead of waiting until I can't.

So that's a lesson from nature, an observation from nature, seeing how ants are, how God designed the ant. Another such observation from nature is in chapter 24, verses 30 through 34. Proverbs 24, 30 through 34.

He says, I went by the field of a lazy man. He's on the same subject, different animal. And by the vineyard of a man devoid of understanding.

Okay, so he's lacking in this quality of wisdom that Solomon's advocating. And there it was, all overgrown with thorns, its surface was covered with knit nettles, its stone wall was broken down. When I saw it, I considered it well.

I looked on it and received instruction. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest. So shall your poverty come, like a prowler, and your need like an unarmed man.

Now he's got the same lesson in both these places, but different examples. The ant is not a sluggard and therefore it has plenty to eat, so does its community when winter comes. Another illustration of the need for industry is that if you just look at what the second law of thermodynamics does to anything you own, if you're lazy about it.

Like look at my car. I never do anything to maintain it. And it gets older and noisier.

But, I mean I do some things, I'll change the oil once in a while, but there are people who really take care of their cars nicely. And they're worth as much, you know, years later as they were when they bought them, maybe more. You know, when you take care of something, it's work, it takes work.

And if you'd rather not do that, well, you'll see that some of the things you should have taken care of are falling apart unnecessarily. That's a lesson from watching how weeds grow on a field when there's no one tending it. In chapter 30, some more lessons from the animal world.

Proverbs 30, verse 24 through 28. Paul said, there are four things which are little on the earth, but they're exceedingly wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they prepare their food in the summer.

So he's still on that one. Then he says, the rock badgers are a feeble folk, yet they make their homes in the crags. There's a lesson to be learned there.

If you're weak, surround yourself with stronger people or stronger fortifications. I know my pastor always taught from this that since we're weak people, we need to hide in the rock. Which is, of course, Christ, which is true.

And I'm sure Solomon would agree with that. The point here is, though, that the rock badger knows its vulnerability and doesn't go out strutting itself in front of lions and things like that as if it doesn't know its weakness. It knows its weakness, it seeks the proper kind of protection in its environment that it doesn't have through its sheer muscles and claws and teeth.

The locusts have no king, he says, yet they all advance in ranks. Actually, the locusts in Revelation 9 have a king named Abaddon, but the real locusts don't. They have no king, and yet they move like an army, and they destroy everything that is before them.

Which, I'm not sure what the lesson there is, except that they are wise enough to work in harmony with each other on the objective without somebody at their head telling them what to do. Also, he says, the spider, now some translations say the lizard. Apparently this word in Hebrew, it's not known whether it refers to a spider or a lizard.

But New King James says, the spider skillfully grasps with its hands, and it is in king's palaces. Apparently indicating that it's tenacious. Even if it's small, even if it's a weak creature, yet its tenacity finds a place for it in enviable places.

Okay, so these are things he sees in nature that he draws ideas from, proverbs from. He also makes observations of human nature, not just the natural world, but the nature of man, how people work in style. In this sense, I think Proverbs has, in many cases, every bit as much, if not more, awareness of human nature as modern psychology does.

Probably more, because they don't know God, and the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God. I mean, some psychologists know God, but the schools of psychology developed by Freud and Jung and Maslow and Adler, and the ones who are considered the great thinkers in psychology, they don't know God, so they often make conclusions that can't be trusted. Solomon was not the most consistent follower of God, but his theology was good, and he understood.

But you can see from these proverbs that he observes people. Here's a man who's ruling a country, but he also kind of watches and sees how people react to things, and what people typically do. And he's learning how to relate and how to even anticipate what people are going to do.

In Proverbs 12, 25, he said, anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, but Pfizer has a drug for that. Oh, no, he didn't say that. He says, but a good word makes it glad.

Oh, that's a lot better than a drug, I'd say. What causes depression? Brain chemistry problem? Well, if so, the Bible doesn't tell us so, and apparently it's not something we need to know. Our brains have all kinds of chemical things going on that we don't understand, and we have to live with it, and people always did without knowing about it.

But he does notice that anxiety in the heart makes people depressed. If you're anxious



all the time, you're not going to be a happy camper. But he said, a good word makes it glad.

Now, I don't think he's being so silly as to think that just saying one happy comment to someone is going to cure their depression. But he's saying that communication from somebody who isn't in that depressed state, somebody who's got their head screwed on straight, who can see things clearly, who can speak encouragement to them, not just a word of encouragement in passing, but probably somebody who sits down with them and speaks truth to them, and speaks good things, encouragement. That is a cure.

It's talk therapy. Now, before there were the pharmaceuticals that the psychiatrists give out now, there were psychologists. I don't have an awful lot of respect for their field that much, but they at least knew that talk therapy was something that could help, as opposed to drug therapy.

Now, you talk to someone who's got diabetes, talk therapy's not going to help them, because that's a disease. Something you can talk somebody through is not a disease. If it's a disease, you need something physical, and that's why the medical profession, the psychiatric profession, especially because they are medical doctors, has such a vested interest in convincing us that all of our abnormalities are diseases, because then we've got to buy something from them.

You see, psychiatrists are the only healthcare professionals who are medical doctors and can prescribe drugs. So, they have a vested interest in encouraging us to trust drugs for just about everything. And there's a new one out every time.

There's a new mood or a new problem that people are complaining about. People don't have to get strong in character anymore. People don't have to cope.

They don't have to deal with things. They don't have to trust God. They don't have to make right decisions and move through the depression.

They just have to take a pill now, which means that life becomes easy in these areas, but where life is easy, there's no growth and we don't grow in strength. We don't become strong in adversity if we simply manage adversity with a pill or something. A good word can make it glad.

It's amazing that you can tell it's not a chemical problem if a good word can cure it. And they didn't know about chemicals. Well, they knew about alcohol back then.

And by the way, that was one chemical that was advocated in Proverbs, chapter 31. Give it to somebody who's miserable, somebody who's dying. Let them forget their misery.

Apparently, alleviating a person's misery in the hospice with alcohol was something they would have done. But it's not, generally speaking, advisable to use alcohol as a

management tool for stress or for depression, things like that. In chapter 13, verse 12, another human nature kind of thing says, Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but when the desire comes, it's a tree of life.

Hope deferred makes the heart sick. What does hope defer mean? Unfulfilled expectations. You had hoped that this would happen, but it didn't.

Remember the men on the road to Emancipation said, we had hoped that this was going to be the man who was going to deliver us Israel. Well, he was, but their hope had been deferred and their hearts were grieved and sickened by it. I think a lot of people who have bitterness toward God, for example, their hearts are sick because of hope deferred.

I mean, we heard today about somebody who his wife and child were killed in an accident, so he lost faith in God. I always want to ask somebody like that, so there's plenty of reason to believe in God before your wife and child died. But back when you thought there were plenty of reasons to believe in God, you knew there were like millions of wives and children dying all over the world, like for hundreds of years.

But that was okay. God could exist with that, but not with you suffering. I can't quite figure that way of thinking out myself, but that's how people are sometimes.

But they had hope that their marriage would last forever. They had hoped that their child would grow up and give them grandchildren. Didn't happen.

Their hope was deferred. And they get sick. They get angry.

I guess the lesson from that, obviously, is not to give people false hopes. Do not make promises you can't keep. Don't raise expectations that are not likely to be fulfilled.

But also, you know, don't adopt expectations that are unrealistic. Now, is it unrealistic to think that your kids may grow up and give you grandkids? No, that they might do so is not unrealistic. That they might not do so is also not unrealistic.

In other words, the only thing you can count on are very few things, and God being the one most to count on. But other things, we might say, well, you know, I'm aiming in a good direction. I think we'll probably have this happen.

And if it doesn't happen, boom, our hopes are deferred. Our expectations are shattered. In James, it says, Go to now you that men, you who say, Today or tomorrow we'll go into such a city and buy and sell and get gain.

He says, for that you don't know what will be on the morrow. For what is your life if it is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away? For that you should say, If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that. You won't have your hopes deferred if that happens.

When my wife, my previous wife, was killed in an accident back in 1980, I didn't expect that. I didn't expect it that day. Well, when people said, Are you angry at God that that happened to your wife? I thought, Well, why should I be angry at God? I knew she was going to die.

I didn't know she was going to die that day. But I knew when I met her that I was meeting somebody who was going to die. Everyone I look at is somebody who's going to die.

I knew when I married her, either I'm going to lose her or she's going to lose me someday, or we're going to die together. But we're going to die. We don't know what day that's going to be.

We'll leave that to God and accept it when he decides, when he shows us what it is. But the truth is, my heart never got sick over that. I was sad.

Of course, you're going to grieve. But we don't grieve as others who have no hope, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4. It never occurred to me that God had made a mistake or that God was stepping out of his legitimate range of options by taking my wife. It was not what I thought.

But it never occurred to me that she would live forever. And therefore, when she didn't, it didn't defer any of my hopes. Really.

I mean, of course I hoped for a longer marriage and longer lives together. But it wasn't a hope I had my anchor on. You know, you need to know, you can kind of hope it'll not rain tomorrow, but you can't be sure.

You can kind of hope that your kids will grow up in good health, but you can't be sure. Those can't be your hopes. Your hope has got to be in God.

And you'll never be disappointed if your hope is always in God. But if your hope is in some result or some development or some providence of God, you're basically setting yourself up for disappointment. You might not be disappointed, but you certainly could be.

And you'll make your heart sick if your hope is in something that can be deferred. In chapter 18 of Proverbs, 18.1, a man who isolates himself seeks his own desire. He rages against all wise judgment.

Now this is something about human nature that Solomon observed. There are people who don't want to, you know, consult others, don't want to be with others. They've got something to hide, or they just can't tolerate people's different of opinion.

And so they isolate themselves. You may bring the best, most sensible, you know,

criticism to him, but he'll just rage against it. He's not interested in correction being, you know, being shown the right way.

He rages against all such wise stuff. He's just seeking his own desire. And that we would have, say, undelayed gratification of his desire.

Because any good counsel will tell somebody how to live in a way that will bring about very desirable results. But he wants what he wants now. And he doesn't want anyone telling him otherwise, so he'll separate.

He'll make himself an isolated monad, not accountable, not observed, not corrected by anybody. It's not a wise way to be. In chapter 23, Proverbs 23, verses 6 and 7, Solomon said, Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies.

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink, he says to you, but his heart is not with you. Now, everyone here has heard the verse, As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

And I'm not sure what those who quote it are usually trying to prove. Usually when I've heard it, it's not in its context, and I'm not sure what they're trying to say. What Solomon is saying is this.

The man is, by definition, a miser, in the first line. Do not eat the bread of a miser. Okay, so you're talking about a miser.

What's a miser? A stingy person, not a generous person. Well, why is his bread available to you? He must have invited you over to eat. Wait a minute.

He's a miser. Why would he show hospitality and generosity to me? He says, eat and drink. He acts very welcoming, very generous, but his heart is somewhere else.

And what's in his heart is who he really is. He's not really generous. He's really a miser.

I mean, that's the definition. Now, obviously, some people who invite you over are not misers, and this wouldn't apply. When you know somebody is a scrooge, somebody who's never done a generous thing in his life, now he's suddenly showing uncharacteristic generosity and friendliness to you.

Realize, okay, what he's saying isn't really what he is. Because this isn't like what he is. What's in his heart is, you know, what's his motivation? What's he got going on? I need to figure he's trying to play me.

And that's what's all I'm saying. Don't trust him. Chapter 20, verse 14.

This is a funny one. There are some funny ones. "It is good for nothing," cries the buyer.

But when he has gone his way, he then boasts." So you go to the garage sale, and you

find something you like, and they want five bucks for it. You say, that piece of junk, that's not worth a buck. It's worthless.

And they say, okay, you can have it for a dollar. Then you go and say, look at this great thing I got for a buck, man. It's worth at least ten, you know.

Capitalism. Yeah. The idea is that when you're the one who's in the position to be paying for it, you devalue it.

But when you've obtained it, you see it for the thing of value that it is. When you're bargaining with someone, you're going to try to bargain them down on the pretense that it's not worth much. But then you'll boast about the deal you got.

My dad used to boast about paying only a dollar for things at the dollar store, which is not a great accomplishment, but it was something he was always happy about. He was a man who cared about not letting that money slip away. So he always said, oh, look what I got for a dollar.

Look what I got for a dollar. I mean, that's cool. Although, like I say, it doesn't take, what shall we say, an economic genius to find things for a dollar at the dollar store.

But if he had to bargain them down, you know, from boxes, the same thing for five dollars, he'd probably say, I can get that for a dollar at the dollar store. It's not worth what you got. I don't know if he'd say that or if he'd just go to the other store, but some people would.

Okay. So, chapter 29, verse 5. A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet. This is human nature.

If someone's flattering you, it's a trap. They're laying a trap for you. They're spreading a net for you.

Now, flattery is not the same thing as a compliment. Like, whenever anyone compliments my wife, we all know that it's true. No matter what I say.

She thinks I flatter her sometimes. Can you believe that? She thinks I flatter her. I don't.

And I tell her she's the most beautiful woman in the world, I'm the luckiest man in the world. She says, oh, stop it. She hates to hear it, as women do.

Or is she playing me? But no, she thinks I'm flattering. And she must think I'm trying to get something out of her, which isn't safe that much of the time. But when somebody's just overboard, and they're flattering you about things that aren't really realistic at all.

I mean, if somebody's just impressed suddenly by something you did, oh, that's really good, that's obviously not flattery. That's just a compliment. But if somebody's trying to

say, oh, you're the smartest person in the world, or you're just the best at this or that, if they're going on about that, they want you on their side for something.

And they want something from you. So, these are observations from the way human nature works. The animal world, nature, and also human nature.

Now, there are also proverbs that are observations from simply characteristic providences, and this means how God responds to things. Now, once again, God doesn't always respond in a predictable way. This is why people who sign up for the Word of Faith teaching are going to have hope deferred.

Because someone's going to tell them, all you have to do is confess and have faith that you're well and you'll be well. Well, that isn't true, of course. And if you think it's true, that hope is going to be deferred.

And you're setting yourself up for a sick heart, eventually. But, the truth is, there are things that God has, in general, responded to certain ways people behave, which we can kind of count on, but not all, because they're not promises. Let me just show you some words.

Chapter 12, verse 2. A good man obtains favor from the Lord, but a man of wicked intentions he will condemn. Well, that's literally true. Although, obtains favor from the Lord probably, in Solomon's day, meant receives tokens of favor.

Now, it is true. It is true that a good man will receive favor from the Lord, and God will condemn bad behavior. That's his, you know, his subjective judgment.

But, in Solomon's, usually thinking of obtaining favor from the Lord is getting a blessing of some kind. And sometimes you'll be good and not get a lot of them. Job got a lot of them, but they lost him, too, and he was just as good both times.

Just as good when he was rich as when he was poor. Joseph eventually ended up rich, but he was very poor and a prisoner in jail for a long time. He was a good man, equally, when he was rich or poor.

Riches and poverty do not, are not necessarily tokens of God's blessing. And Solomon sometimes, although that verse doesn't specifically say so, Solomon often does indicate that kind of thing as a general thing. Chapter 22, 9. He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives his bread to the poor.

Now, some people who have generous eyes... Now, if we're thinking of spiritual blessings, like Jesus tells us to talk about, well then, yeah, this is true. But Solomon, you can tell from the Prophets, he's thinking more in terms of wealth. He's thinking in terms of fame and good favor.

These are the kinds of things most people are seeking. And he's telling, you know, the ways that most likely are going to bring that to you. But Jesus, of course, would say these are true in a spiritual sense.

You know, if you are generous to the poor, you'll receive blessing from the Lord. That blessing might come to you in poverty, because Jesus said, blessed are you poor. You can be poor and blessed.

Solomon's not thinking of being poor. We can tell that from the general trend of all his Proverbs. He's thinking in terms of prosperity.

But God doesn't always bless with prosperity. Even Jesus said, give and it will be given to you. Full measure, you know, shaken together, pressed down and run over.

Jesus indicated that if you give, you'll be given a lot back. And that is generally true. But sometimes you don't get it back until the next life.

You know, my former father-in-law, now deceased, was a multi-millionaire when I met him. And he gave all, all his money to orphans in Haiti. He died penniless.

Now, there's a man who gave a lot away and did not end up, you know, wealthy. But he didn't want to end up wealthy. He was a Christian.

As a Christian, he wanted to give away as much as he could. He wanted to, you know, it's not he that dies with the most toys wins. It's he who dies with the emptiest pockets wins.

Because, of course, then you're going to go stand before God. And you'll find out what he felt about the use of your money. So, there is spiritual blessing.

And that's literally true all the time. But, to those who are generous. But, I think Solomon is saying, in general, if you're generous, God will bless you with money too.

And that is often very true. It might take decades. I decided to practice personal generosity when I became an adult.

And so, I was 50 something years as an adult. Giving, giving, giving to the poor. But I remained poor for many decades.

I'm not now. The Lord finally came through. I wasn't giving so that I'd have this now.

I was giving so that if I died, I'd be able to stand before God and say, I gave it all. You know, gave it away. That's the reward.

But, wait long enough, sometimes you end up getting rewarded in this life too. And that's what Solomon, I think, is largely thinking of in his words. Proverbs 23, verses 10 and 11.

Do not remove the ancient landmark, nor enter the fields of the fatherless. For their Redeemer is mighty, and he will plead their cause against you. Now, removing the ancient landmark, what's that about? When Israel came into the land, the land was divided to each family and tribe in Joshua's day.

And they had landmarks to delineate what their property lines were. They didn't have modern surveying equipment to know exactly what the lines were. But they set those landmarks up in the ancient times.

Said, this is our family's homestead here. Now, a crooked man might say, well, if I go out at night and move this landmark that's on my property over into my neighbor's property, he'll never know the difference and I'll have this much more property on my side of the land. You can literally steal land, physically, from people by removing those landmarks.

And Solomon said, don't do that, because God is the Redeemer of the poor. If you take advantage of him like that, he'll plead their cause against you. Which almost certainly means you'll get into a lot of trouble, illegally or something.

God's going to see to it. It comes down on your head. Then there's observations in Proverbs.

Just natural causes of that. These are not necessarily divine providence, but they're just things that lead to other things. Chapter 12, verse 24.

The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor. Okay, a general rule. Not always.

Sometimes the lazy people rule. Sometimes people are in politics for 50 years and never worked a job in their lives. And they rule, but they're the exception.

Generally speaking, you want to rise to the top of your profession. You want to be promoted in your job. You want to have people put you up as their leader.

They will do so if they find that you're diligent, hardworking on their behalf and so forth. A diligent person will bear rule. The lazy man, he's going to end up in forced labor.

I often think of this Proverbs in spiritual terms, too. I think the secondary is the spiritual in terms of Solomon's thinking. But if you're lazy about your spiritual growth, you will come into spiritual bondage.

The lazy one will come under tribute, will be a slave of the demonic powers, and of his own lusts, and of the sins that are the master of those who do not fight them off. There's a warfare to be fought, and if you're diligent, you can master them, like God said to Cain. He said, if you don't do well, sin is right at the door.

And it desires you, but you must master it. Well, Cain didn't. Some people do and can.



You can be diligent and overcome the vices. You can be diligent in spiritual disciplines and spiritual warfare, and overcome demonic enemies, too, and rule, rather than be a slave. In chapter 13 and verse 18, it says, poverty and shame will come to him who disdains correction, but he who regards rebuke will be honored.

Now, notice that the carrot on the stick for Solomon is often riches or honor. That's what he figures most people want. And, since most people do, the advice is good.

You want to avoid poverty and shame? Well, don't disdain correction. If you're doing something wrong, and you're too proud to let someone point out that you're wrong, you won't get right, and results will not be what you're hoping for. The one who regards rebuke will be honored.

A lot of times, when someone rebukes you, that means they tell you you're wrong and they're criticizing you, and the natural pride in you says, I need to show that I'm not as wrong as they think I am. That hurts my ego to be told that. And, I need to show them right, so they won't disrespect me.

Because if I admit I'm wrong, I'll lose their respect. But it's the opposite. He says, no, if you accept rebuke, you'll get respect.

You'll be honored. When somebody's caught in something they did wrong, and they keep lying, and say, no, I didn't do it, I didn't do it, no one respects them when they know they've been caught red-handed. If they just say, yeah, I'm wrong, I did the wrong thing, that'll bring honor and respect more than trying to salvage your reputation by denying things.

Chapter 14, verse 4. This is a good rule. We had a farmstead, my family and I, when my kids were young. A little homestead with some goats and chickens and such.

And, my wife at the time used to quote this. This verse. Where no oxen are, the trough is clean.

Why? Why would that be? If you don't have oxen, why is your trough clean? You don't have to shovel stuff. You don't have to muck it out, because there's no ox creating work for you. On the other hand, much increase comes through the strength of an ox.

There's a trade-off here. If you have an ox, you're going to have to work more, because it creates work. But, the work it saves.

The strength of the ox, compared to what you can accomplish pulling a plow, is so much greater that it's worth the trade-off. In other words, you may seek some benefits, but there's only a cost to some. There's a cost-benefit analysis here.

Do we want to get an ox? Well, who's going to take care of it? Who's going to clean up

after it? Okay, that's the cost. But, the benefit analysis is, we can plow ten acres instead of one. I think maybe we should go that way if we're eager to be more productive.

Sometimes, buying farm equipment, buying any equipment, if you own a factory, if you're manufacturing something, you know, tooling up can be a very expensive thing. You need some engineer to design the equipment you need. You need some fabricator to tool it up.

You need to buy the stuff. It costs a lot of money up front. But, in many cases, the reason that innovation does go forward in this country is because people actually make that investment and they find out, and they anticipate it before they find out, that this is going to make them a lot more money than just hand-labored will.

I mean, think of what McDonald's is doing now with these machines that take your order. There's a whole bunch of people they don't have to pay anymore. More people for us to pay with our tax dollars.

Okay. Now, Chapter 29, Verses 15 and 17 says, The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Correct your son, and he will give you rest.

Yes, he will give delight to your soul. Now, there's quite a few proverbs about child-rearing, and they all say kind of the same thing. Rebuke your kid when they're wrong.

Discipline them. You won't kill them. Don't spare for their crime.

They'll be happy, in the end, that you did it. He that rebukes a man afterwards finds more favor than he that flatters with the lips, proverb says elsewhere. You know, you've got to do the unpopular thing, the unpleasant thing, even.

I mean, who in the world, other than a masochist, would want to strike a child? If you're a parent that's not a sociopath, all your instincts are to protect your child, not just from danger, but from pain. I remember when my first son was born, I remember thinking, I can hardly imagine what it would be like when he scrapes his knee the first time. He's still a little, delicate baby.

I think, you know, I just want to protect him from everything, which is not wise, because, of course, if you protect them from everything, they'll go out to a world that no one's interested in protecting them, and they won't be ready for it. But the truth is, because we want to protect them from pain, discipline is often neglected. It's a selfish thing for a parent not to discipline a child, because it makes the parent feel bad.

It also makes the parent risk not being liked by the child. That's another thing. Single parents are especially bad at this.

I know, because I was a single parent for many years, and I, like Solomon, have observed many people, and I've observed a lot of single mothers, for example, who came to our school with their children. A single parent has lost their partner, so they tend to want their kid to be their surrogate partner. That is, they want the approval and the partnership of their child, and the thought of losing that, after you've already lost a spouse, is a very hard thing to want to do.

But, it's a selfish thing. It's a selfish thing not to discipline a child, because the child, without discipline, is going to bring you to shame anyway, it says. And, you know, it says, he'll bring delight to your soul if you discipline him now.

He won't like you at the moment, but he'll thank you later. We had a student, a young man, kind of a new age street kid, who got saved and abandoned Oregon, came to our school, got saved, got pretty goodly saved, and I remember, after we knew him a couple of years, he says, you know, I had two fathers growing up, my natural father and my stepfather. He said, I hated my natural father, because he wouldn't let me smoke weed, he wouldn't let me get drunk, he wouldn't let me go out and party.

Hated him. My stepfather, while he smoked weed with me, we'd get drunk together. He said, I loved him.

He says, now, I'm an adult, I have absolutely no respect for my stepfather, but I really respect my dad. And, you know, I guess that's the tradeoff. When the kids are little, you really like them to be affectionate, and you really are tempted to let them get away with almost anything to prevent that from stopping.

But you know what? It's a lot easier living with a little kid who's mad at you than a teenager who's mad at you. And, you know, correct him now, he'll bring delight to your soul. Now, there's some generalities that I want to just bring out here.

I realize we're going to run out of time here pretty quick, but... Once again, and every time we talk about the Proverbs, I bring this up because I find that people need to be reminded of this. These are not promises of God. These are statements of, if you want this result, the only intelligent thing to do is take this course there, because any other course is stupid if you want to get over here.

If you want to go north, you don't want to walk south. And, essentially, this is not about promises, it's just saying, if you want to have this result, there's a way you can live that's stupid, because it's not likely to produce that result, and there's a way to live that is wise, and it probably will present that although with exceptions. An example of that is chapter 15, verse 1. A soft answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.

If someone's mad at you, can you make them not be mad anymore? Sometimes. He said, a soft answer turns away wrath. Well, with a reasonable person, at least.

There are unreasonable people. We had a neighbor at one time. He moved away now, but just sterling.

Unpleasant, unkind, no reason. Dana's charming, I was friendly. We'd bring them things at Christmas and stuff, and they wouldn't... He, in particular, was just a real nasty character.

And we made a point of trying to warm him up, and we didn't. A soft answer doesn't... We don't even know what he was angry about, but he was angry from day one. But, an angry man.

A soft answer won't always turn away wrath. Some people still choose to be mad with no provocation. But, let's face it, most people, if they're angry, and you treat them gently, kindly, do good to them, most cases, you're going to warm them up.

You're going to win them over. Just make them less angry. And that's what Solomon's saying.

A soft answer turns away wrath. In other words, if you want to turn away somebody's wrath that's mad at you, you'd be stupid to use grievous words, which are abstract. That's the opposite of a soft answer that turns away wrath.

It's a good relationship skill, a good relationship recommendation, but, again, it's not a promise. You'll find some exceptions. Likewise, Proverbs 10.4 says, He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.

Well, that's typically true, almost always true. Although, a fool who's very lazy might win the lottery. He'll probably get poor anyway, again, because he's a fool, but the truth is that a person can inherit money and be a wealthy stock, like much of the nobility in England have been in past times, or even, frankly, some of the royal family today.

Pretty wealthy, but not wise. A wise and diligent person will usually get rich. A fool and a soft person will usually become poor.

Proverbs 3, verses 2 and 16 both mention that living according to wisdom will give you a long life. You'll live long, and he doesn't mean eternal life. He's talking about life on earth.

He says, for length of days and long life and peace, they will add you. They meaning the commandments he's given them. He says, listen to my rules, the commandments I give you.

They'll give you long life. And he says in verse 16, length of days is in her right hand, meaning wisdom. In her left hand are riches and honor.

So, if you follow wisdom, she'll give you length of days. Well, all other things being equal.

In other words, if you're wise and eat healthy, get plenty of exercise and fresh air, and no one is going to try to kill you, and a drunk driver doesn't hit you, and a North Korean nuke doesn't hit your town, and things like that, then you'll have a long life, usually.

There are people who die young, even though they're very wise. Jesus was fairly young when he died. Stephen was apparently very young when he died.

Wise, very wise, but there's no absolute promise. But the point is that when you live wisely, if you want to live long, live wisely. Because if you live foolishly, you may very well shorten your life unnecessarily.

You know, you go out and get drunk, and sleep around, and do all these things, and sleep with other men's wives, and you know, you're going to get killed. That's what Solomon says in Proverbs 6. He talks about a man who sleeps with his neighbor's wife. Anger is the wrath of the husband.

Jealousy is the wrath of the husband. He will not spare you. You're going to get shot with an arrow, he said.

So, wise and good living tends toward long life. It doesn't guarantee it. Now, some of the generalities in Proverbs are in tension with each other.

Like, one will say one thing, one seems to say the opposite thing. This is not an accident. In fact, it is so obvious that it could never have been accidental.

I mean, I wouldn't make this mistake. Certainly Solomon, who is wiser than I, would not. In Proverbs 26, 4 and 5, we read, Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. Now, what's up with that? If we had one of these verses early in Proverbs, and the other one appeared later, we'd think, hey, this guy contradicted himself. When he put them right together, we know he didn't forget when he wrote the second verse what he just said in the first verse.

What's the point of verses that seem to say exactly opposite things? It's because the truth isn't always that simple. And I think he puts them together in order to show that. There are times when you don't want to answer a fool according to his folly, because it just brings you down to his level.

If he's making stinky remarks about you, stupid insults and stuff like that, if you start insulting him back, you're just going to be like him. On the other hand, sometimes fools say things that you can answer in a witty, proper way, and it shows him how stupid he was. There's time that you answer a fool according to his folly, and it's the right thing to do.

It'll put him in his place. Other times, it'll just put you in his place. And so Solomon is pointing out there's nuance.

There's ambiguity in life sometimes. Sometimes the advice you should use in this situation, not in another. And we see that also, for example, in Proverbs 15, in verse 22, which says, Without counsel plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established.

So if you have enough counselors, your plans will come to fruition. Except when they don't, because in chapter 19 and verse 21 it says, There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel, that will stand. You know, it doesn't matter how many counselors you have, if God doesn't want the plan to come to fruition, it won't.

And one of the Proverbs says, Though hand joined with hand, men will not be able to resist God's purposes. And they all joined together. There were 40 men who took an oath they would not eat or drink before they killed Paul, and that wasn't God's plan.

They starved. Or else broke their fast. I don't know.

But there were 40 people, took counsel together. Well, usually with a multitude of counselors, you're going to establish your plans. But not if it's not God's will.

And that's what these verses say taken together. Chapter 15, verse 22, with chapter 19, verse 21. I'm going to have to quit here pretty quickly.

Let me take another segment here. This is what I call pregnant specifics. These are specific instances of something which are pregnant with applicability to other situations.

It's like much more implied than just the thing it's talking about right there. For example, Proverbs 25, 16. Have you found honey? Eat only as much as you need, lest you be filled with it and vomit.

Now that's probably good counsel about honey. I mean, if you eat too much honey at once, it could make you nauseated. But it's also just advice against trying to get too much of a good thing.

Honey's good. It tastes good. Eat the right amount of it.

But if you eat too much of it, it's going to make you vomit. And that's true of almost any pleasure, almost any thing, almost any good thing can be overdone. You can get too much of a good thing.

The blessings of God that comes to you can become idols to you if you fixate on them too much. This is, you know, this is a general principle. Something that is good, wine is good, but you can get a little too much of it.

And the Bible makes it very clear. You know, some people said, well, Jesus wouldn't have made alcoholic wine because then he'd be responsible for people getting drunk. Really? Who do you think made wine? Who do you think wine came from? The devil? God made wine.

God made fermentation. God made grapes. And it's a good thing.

The Bible frequently says that wine is a good thing. It's medically useful, the Bible says. The good Samaritan poured wine into the wounds of the beaten man.

It says in two places in the Bible that wine cheers the heart of men. And one of those places says it cheers the heart of men and God. Not sure how to figure that one out, but that's what it says.

So, wine is a good thing. It's a blessing of God. If Jesus made six pots full of wine, that's a good thing.

If people got drunk on it, that's a bad thing. That's on them. You might as well say that if Jesus multiplied bread and anyone ate more than they should have and were gluttonous, well, that's on him.

No, it's not. God made food for people. God made wine.

God made these things. They're for people's good. If people abuse them, if they insist on having too much of them, they step over into the realm of sin.

Too much of a good thing is not a good thing. Here's another one. Proverbs 26, 27.

Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him. Now, what this suggests, of course, is that if you dig a pit maliciously, hoping your enemy will fall in it, you might fall in it. You've created a dangerous situation that you might fall victim to.

Anyone can think of a really good example of that in the Old Testament? Haman, exactly. Haman built the gallows to hang Mordecai, and he ended up hung on them. You know, if he hadn't set that gallows up, he would have never hung on it.

And it wasn't a hanging gallows. Our English versions are very clean. We think he got hung by the neck until then.

No, these were Persians. A gallows was a torture stake, and a person was skewered on it. That's what the gallows was.

It was a torture stake that he intended to skewer Mordecai on, but he himself got skewered on it. Now, if he had never set that up for Mordecai, it wouldn't have been there for him to get skewered. When the king got angry at Haman, he said, what shall I do with this

man? He's attacking my wife.

And one of his hens said, well, there's a stake out there. Why don't you just stick him on it? You know? Barbecue him. Or shish kebab him, I guess.

But, this is the idea. You maliciously set up a trap. You may succumb to it.

It may hurt you more than it hurts your enemy. One other one, and we'll stop at this one. Chapter 27, verse 14.

Proverbs 27, verse 14. He who blesses his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it will be counted a curse to him. In other words, you may be well-intentioned, and you may be doing something that you think is going to bless somebody, but if it's at an unwelcome time, if it's insensitively executed, they're not going to see it as a blessing to you.

In this case, it's talking about blessing someone with a loud voice early in the morning. Well, who wouldn't be blessed? Who wouldn't be blessed if you came into the room and when they're in their bed, hey, praise the Lord, it's another day. I will rejoice and be glad in it.

Let's rejoice together. God bless you, brother, sister. Well, if they're trying to sleep, that's not going to be counted as a blessing.

It's going to be counted as a cursing to them. And so, again, this is an idea that's pregnant with more possibilities. And it would be not just if you wake somebody up saying, God bless you, in the morning they'll think it's a curse.

There's a lot of things that you could force your good intentions on people about when they're not interested. Like these video advertisements. You're interested and the first thing they advertise to you, it's like, okay, I'll buy it.

Well, before you go, here's another offer. And then you say no, pass. And they say, well, before you go, here's another offer.

They want to force all this good stuff that they know you'll love on you. Just get me out of here. How do I get out of here? Dana was doing this the other day with some product that was worth getting.

But then there's one thing after everything. She said she just closed the computer down after they're on the sixth one, the sixth level of no wait, you know. When you're trying to make somebody have something you think is good, and it's not something they want, it's an annoyance only.

And so that's what I think is suggested there. Now, I'm going to stop there right now, but when you read these proverbs, you need to think about them on at least two levels, if



not three. One is, what's the basic meaning of the statement? What's he saying is true? And it has to do with, well, you work hard, you get rich.

You speak softly, you reduce somebody else's anger towards you, whatever. Okay, that's the basic idea. Okay, then what other kinds of things in real life might be governed by that same principle? And so you can find that there are, in so many cases, not only the truth of the proverb itself, but the principle extends to so many different ways people can offend, so many different ways people can be stupid, and so many ways you can be wise.

And then maybe the third thing would be, you know, how does this apply now with the new sets of values that Christ has taught? Now, it doesn't mean the proverbs aren't true. If Jesus said, don't lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, or moth and rust corrupt and thieves break good steel, it doesn't change the fact that if you work hard, you'll probably make a lot of money, which is what Proverbs says. Those things are true.

But we need to read Old Testament things through Christ's values, too. And, you know, we need to just say, okay, well Solomon is assuming that everyone wants to be famous, everyone wants to be honored, everyone wants to be rich. According to Jesus, that's not really what I want most.

However, those things can be good in their own place. I need to have the understanding that Christ gives to not put these things at the level that Solomon assumed most men would place them. But there is still a lot to be said for making some money, especially if you're going to give a lot of money.

I wrote a book called The Joy of Giving back when I was in my 20s, and I went to visit Moish Rosen, the head of the Jews for Jesus, who was a friend of mine up in San Francisco, and I'd just written the book. I said, hey, Moish, I just wrote a new book. And I had my holes and patches on my Levi's, I got my long hair, I'm wearing some smelly t-shirt probably.

And hitchhiked up there because I didn't have a car. And he said, see, we Jews have learned something that you might benefit from knowing, and that is it's good to give, but before you give, you've got to get. You've got to make money before you can give money.

Well, I guess Jews know a lot about that, and he did too, and he's a good man, a good Jew, a Christian Jew. But he meant it as a joke. He was commenting on my lifestyle.

But he thought it was ironic that I, who obviously didn't have anything, would have written a great book about giving. That book went out of print a couple years later, but some of the information is in my newer books. Anyway, we do have to look at the Proverbs, recognizing what the assumption is that Solomon's making about what his

reader, his son, is likely to value, what's going to motivate him, and realizing that he's using those motivations to recommend wise course of behavior, that those carrots on those sticks will cause him to run the race.

We might not be motivated by all the same things if we're Christians, that worldly people are, but the things that he's talking about are not bad things. As I said, it's not bad. Money's not bad.

Even being famous isn't bad. Anything you have can be exploited for the kingdom of God. Everything, every advantage you have can be a stewardship that is wisely used.

So, when we read the Proverbs, we need to see the basic idea of the proverb, and sometimes you have to think a little while before you say, what the what? And then you go, oh yeah, that makes sense. And then you think, okay, now what's the principle there that he might think I should extend to life in general, to other things? And then, of course, weigh everything through the value system that we have as Christians, because Christ obviously came to make us concerned about spiritual blessings in the heavenly places more than earthly blessings. But still, earthly blessings are not bad.

So, we'll stop there, and we'll continue our study through Proverbs. We're not studying through Proverbs, we'll be studying from Proverbs, of various things. And we're going to, down the line, we're going to be talking about business practices he talks about, relationship practices, marriage, family, child raising, those things.

He's got a lot to say about those things. But we're still now in the general category of just seeing what kinds of Proverbs there are, what categories they fall into, and so forth. But then there's topics that they fall into, and we'll deal with those in the future.