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Proverbs 1 - 2



Proverbs - Steve Gregg

In this discourse, Steve Gregg discusses the organization of the biblical book of Proverbs, noting that it may be challenging to determine whether to approach the book verse by verse or chapter by chapter. He highlights a recurring theme emphasized by the wise King Solomon - a love for correction and a teachable spirit. Gregg also stresses the importance of internalizing godly principles and wisdom to avoid being influenced negatively by peer pressure or societal norms, a concept he refers to as "shale." Finally, he explores the contrasting depictions of the wise and foolish woman found in the early chapters of Proverbs.

Transcript

It's going to be difficult to tell when we pass from the introductory to the actual study of the book of Proverbs because we're not ever going to start just going through verse by verse and go through the chapter by chapter. That is not, in my opinion, the most efficient way or profitable way to study Proverbs. Proverbs is obviously a miscellany of proverbial sayings on recurring themes, and those themes are important.

And on each of the themes, there are many proverbs, or in most cases, there are many proverbs on a given topic, but they're not all bunched together. It's not a topical arrangement. But if we want to really learn the lessons concerning those topics, it's profitable to look at all of the teaching on that in the Proverbs.

So what we will do is, at a point not so far ahead of us now, be looking at a topical study of the things that Proverbs talks about. And if you've had a chance to look ahead in your notes, you know, there's quite a lot of specific topics that we're going to be looking at. Now, one thing we have not done, however, is to just survey the book and to just get a broad overview of it.

Proverbs is not the kind of book that you can give such a detailed outline of, as you can with a book that's perhaps either historical narrative or a didactic teaching book. Because a teaching book, a teacher usually moves from one point to the next in a logical fashion. And you can see a flow of thought, a train of thought.

In fact, that's one thing that's very helpful about reading the Bible in most of its books, is you can find a difficult verse somewhere. You can look at the verses before and see where the author was kind of going and then kind of follow his trajectory so that you can sort of say, well, this verse that's so difficult. And it probably looks like this is where he's going from what he said before.

You can kind of get some hints about a difficult thing in Proverbs, though. But you don't have that kind of phenomenon. There is no trajectory in general.

Now, there are sections of which it could be said there is. There are sections that are blocks of teaching, especially on the subject of wisdom or in a few cases on the subject of warning his son about the dangers of the wrong kind of woman. There are sections where you have a bit of narrative or a bit of extended teaching on one point.

But once you get past a certain point, especially once you get past Chapter nine, what you really have is just collections of things that are not necessarily arranged in anything like a logical sequence. Because that's just we assume that these were collected by various people after Solomon was gone from his three thousand Proverbs. Someone took their favorites and put them together somewhat randomly, it would appear.

But we can look at the broad outline of the book. There are some places where there are changes from what has gone before. And we can call those divisions in the book.

For the first part of the book, chapters one through nine is quite different than the other parts, because it's not just a collection of random things. It is. There are some random things in the section, but you find for the most part, it's an extended attempt to impart to his son one thing.

And that is a love for a valuing of wisdom, a seeking after wisdom. One thing you can tell Solomon is very terrified of is that his son will not be wise. We see this in Ecclesiastes also, when he says that he meditated on the vanity of the fact that a man can be wise and build a great estate through his wisdom and leave it to a son who's a fool.

And not only does the son not deserve all that estate because he didn't have the wisdom to create it, but he's such a fool, he'll he'll destroy it. And it's as it tormented the mind of Solomon to think that through the wisdom God had given him, he might accomplish great things. But at his death, they're left to a son who doesn't have the same amount of wisdom he had and just kind of undoes it all.

And so he spends the first nine chapters really trying to get across to his son the value and importance of placing wisdom as a first priority. And that's in chapters one through nine. Within that chapter, we could even subdivide it.

There's an introduction in chapter one, the first seven verses, which I'll go ahead and read. And it's like the introductory to the book. It says the Proverbs of Solomon, the son

of David, king of Israel, to know wisdom.

That is apparently the reason for writing the book of Proverbs is to make known to know and to make known what wisdom is 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, and he says, a wise man will hear an increased learning and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So this is how he starts. And in this opening section, he actually introduces a variety of kinds of wisdom sayings he talks about in verse five. He talks about counsel, receiving counsel in verse six.

He talks about a proverb and an enigma and the words of the wise and riddles. These are all different forms in which wisdom sayings can be kept. And he indicates that these things have to be grasped, have to be understood with the mind because they are encapsulated wisdom in various literary.

Capsules, a riddle, a proverb, an enigma. These are different ways in which wisdom can be encapsulated to, as it were, tweak the mind. I mean, you can just speak a normal bit of instruction to somebody and it can be wise instruction.

But a proverb or an enigma or a riddle is something that catches in the mind. It's something that you puzzle over. It's something that encourages, by its very nature, meditation and contemplation because you don't, you know, the meaning doesn't lie immediately on the surface.

And that's a helpful thing. It stimulates the mind to think along the lines of what do the wise men mean by this? Now, he also introduces in this section things that we could say are essentially or close to being synonyms, but perhaps have different nuances of meaning. In verse two, he talks about instruction and understanding.

In verse three, the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity. So we can see that as a king, he's concerned especially that his son would have wisdom to rule, wisdom to be an adjust, a just and righteous administrator of the government. And he mentions prudence and knowledge and discretion, learning and understanding in verses four and five.

So these are some of the words that are going to be used almost interchangeably. In fact, sometimes they are used interchangeably, it would appear, though each one has its own nuance. Perhaps there's not a great deal of difference in the mind of Solomon between these things.

This is all intellectual, responsible thinking is really what he's got in mind here. And he's trying to impart a great appreciation for that as something to be sought and to be followed to his son, as we shall see. And then he had sort of a summary statement in verse seven.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. He said that a wise man in verse five will increase learning and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. The idea here is that Solomon wants to speak against the idea that a person can be wise enough that he doesn't need to hear any more counsel.

He doesn't need anyone to tell him anything that will correct him because he's now attained it all. He says, no, a wise man will attain and seek counsel. It is a mark of wisdom that a man knows there are still things he doesn't know.

He doesn't see himself as the final authority then and later on in Proverbs, as you say, with much counsel, make war or in the multitude of counselors, there's safety. And one of the things about a wise man that Solomon repeats often in the Proverbs is that that wise man loves to be corrected. He's not desiring to have a reputation as a know it all.

He would like to be a know it all as he would like to know everything. And that's why he accepts correction, because where he is wrong, he wants to be set right. He wants to know what's right.

A lover of truth does not object to being corrected. In fact, they appreciate it because correction can only happen if you were wrong and somebody else shows you what's right. That's what correction is.

If you want to be right, if you love the truth, then you'll appreciate correction. Now, of course, being corrected is a humbling thing, because and especially if we speak very confidently and then we get corrected. You know, if we say if we're very dogmatic and very sure of ourselves and what we say and then someone says, oh, yeah, but you're wrong about that point.

And they turn out to be right. Well, then you kind of have to eat humble pie. You don't have to eat humble pie if you never got too arrogant in the first place.

A wise man is going to be humble enough to invite correction and embrace it and not have his ego all involved in his opinions. And that's a pretty unusual thing to find among people who actually are educated, who actually are intellectuals. I say it's rare.

It's not impossible. There are wise people with good education. But often men who are educated would like to think that because they're educated, they possess a certain immunity to correction.

They've heard it. They've learned it. They've put in their time and they know.

And especially it's hard for them to learn something or be corrected by someone of lesser educational status or even maybe a child. But a wise man loves truth and therefore will gladly receive it from any source. In other words, he has a teachable spirit.

Solomon, we read in an earlier lecture, was passing by a neighbor's property and he saw that the wall was broken down and the field was overgrown. And he says, my heart received instruction from that. A man who's got a teachable spirit is just looking for truth, looking for reality everywhere and picks it up from all kinds of places.

He doesn't mind if it comes from the mouth of a child, the mouth of an inferior person to himself. He's not too proud. He loves truth and he is thankful to the person who offers it to him.

And so, verse five, there's a wise man will hear and increase learning. A man of understanding will attain counsel. And at the end of verse seven, fools despise wisdom and instruction.

They don't like to be corrected. Now, those first seven verses, we could call the introduction to this first part of Proverbs and then in verses eight through 19 of the same chapter, chapter one, he turns it around to being more like cast in the form of a warning that if you neglect wisdom, you'll be very sorry for that. In verse eight, he says, my son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother.

And by this, he means the law taught to you by your mother. In all likelihood, since this was in Israel, the law that was taught to him was God's law. So he talks about the instruction of your father and the law of your mother.

No doubt he has in mind the scriptural revelation that was given by God to that particular race of people. And they were transmitting it. You know, in Deuteronomy six, Moses said to the Israelites that they should transmit the law to their children.

When they're rising up, when they're walking in the way, when they're lying down at night, they should be speaking the laws of God to their children. So we are assuming that that's what these parents were doing. Solomon and his and his son's mother were passing along the law.

So it is the law of your mother. It means the law that you've received at the mouth of your mother. No doubt a reference to the law of God, for they will be.

That is, these laws and the instruction will be graceful ornaments on your head and chains about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood.

Let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause. Let us swallow them alive like shale and whole like those who go down to the pit. We should find all kinds of precious possessions.

We shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in your lot among us and let us have one purse. My son, do not walk in the way with them.

Keep your foot far from their path. For their feet run to do evil and they make haste to shed blood. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

For they lie in wait for their own blood. They lurk secretly for their own lives. So are the ways of everyone who's greedy for gain, who takes away the life of others.

So foolish men fall into many hurtful snares. People who don't have the wisdom to hold to their own principles and are influenced by the group, by pure pressure, end up running into things that they would never have approved of had they been wiser. Don't forsake what you've been taught by your father and the law you've been taught by your mother, or else you'll end up doing ultimate crimes that you would never have thought yourself evil enough to do because of the influence of others.

You need to be governed inwardly by the principles you've been taught, the principles of wisdom, rather than having no principles to just be pulled into evil behavior by your friends, by your peers, by pure pressure. I might just add, since some may not know, there's a word Sheol in verse 12. Let us swallow them like Sheol.

Sheol is really a Hebrew word that just means where people go when they die. In the King James Version, this word in certain instances is translated as the grave, in certain times translated as hell. Probably the grave is a better translation, but it's not even necessarily speaking about the physical grave so much as just the realm of the dead.

There was sort of an undifferentiated and unspecific concept that the Hebrews had because God never really spoke to them much about the afterlife. You don't find any direct teaching in the Old Testament about heaven or hell, as we think of those terms. But rather, Sheol, which sometimes is wrongly translated as hell, is really just not where the bad people go.

It's where everybody went when they died. Everyone who died went to Sheol. It's just the place of death.

It's the place of being dead. The Hebrews didn't have a real clear idea of what was over there on that side, and they didn't speculate a great deal about it. All they knew is that people do die.

They pass from this life, and where do they go? Well, they're wherever people go when they die. We'll just call it Sheol. And so we're going to encounter Sheol a lot, and I'm glad

to see the New King James leaves it untranslated.

The King James made the mistake of trying to translate it many times and mistranslated it. A lot of modern translations leave it, as the New King James does here, untranslated. And it has a parallel in the New Testament.

The word Hades in Greek is the exact same concept, or almost exact. It's at least close enough that the Greek Old Testament translated three centuries before Christ almost. The Alexandrian Jews who translated the Hebrew text of the Old Testament into Greek, they chose the word Hades as the Greek word to translate Sheol.

And so it's the equivalent, essentially, in their thinking. So you read of Hades in the New Testament, you read of Sheol in the Old Testament. It's not a very important observation with reference to the flow of thought here, but it is nonetheless something that if you've never heard of Sheol, you might think, what's that? What's he saying there? You're going to find that word often enough that it's worth getting it under your belt at this point.

Now, he says, as he talks about his son being drawn into this misbehavior, you know, coveting someone's money, even to the point where you ambush them and take their life even to take their money. And he's talking about, you know, a young guy is becoming a band of thugs, bandits who you know, steal and divide up things equally. Let's have one person among us.

Let's just have, we'll start a business here where we rip people off and we'll share all the proceeds. He's actually talking about a rather violent kind of business here, although in principle, it'd be the same whether you were doing it through legal means or almost legal means. Many people learn how to twist the laws and or go under the radar of the law and do business deals.

Many people get ripped off through hoaxes and so forth. Some of you may have encountered one. My father was ripped off by recently some kid posing as my son.

Called my dad and said, Hey, I've been in an accident with somebody who lives in the Dominican Republic. And whenever there's this foreign element, you know, and please send \$3,000 to get me out of jail here. And here's a policeman who will tell you this whole story.

And they put another guy on the phone and some guys say, I'm officer so and so. Yeah, your grandson, blah, blah, blah. And the kid sounded enough like my son.

And my dad thought it was really him and sent him \$3,000. And of course, he immediately found out that a scam that's all over the internet. And there's a whole bunch of people being ripped off that way.

I mean, internet scams, this is the same kind of thing. It's just not as violent. They're not

killing people, although some of these people might, their lives might be greatly endangered.

You know, if they make a great sacrifice for their grandson, and then they end up not having enough money to live on themselves. The point is, it's very tempting to think, well, in cooperation with these people, we can get a lot of money kind of easy. And we'll just split it up.

And the lure of profit lures people away. But it's foolish. It's not wisdom.

And it certainly isn't right or good. But I like this statement in verse 17, a proverb itself. Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

What's that mean? It means if you're trying to catch birds and you're laying out a snare, a net to catch them in, if the birds are watching you lay out the net, even they will be smart enough not to go there. They'll be suspicious. If the bird is watching you lay the trap, it's not very smart, but it'll be smart enough not to follow that trap.

In vain you're laying that net if the bird is watching. You might catch a bird that wasn't watching at the time, but the one that was watching is not going to go in there. And he's saying, you're stupider than a bird if you walk into a trap like that.

You should be able to see that's a trap for your soul. And I hope you're smarter than a bird. That's why I'm writing this book to give you more wisdom than birds have.

But even birds have enough wisdom not to walk into what they recognize as a trap laid for them. And so this is his warning about the dangers of neglect of the wisdom that's been passed on to him by his parents. And then the next part, verses 20 through 33 to the end of the chapter one, it's like a sermon preached by wisdom.

And here for the first time in the book, Solomon personifies wisdom as a woman. And he does so in other places later on, and most notably in chapter eight. The entirety of chapter eight is a speech given ostensibly by wisdom, who is personified as a wise and, you know, respectable and wonderful woman.

No doubt he depicts wisdom as a woman because he's writing to his son. And obviously his son would be attracted to women. If he was writing to a daughter, maybe he would depict wisdom as a man.

We don't know. Sometimes people say, well, why would Solomon depict wisdom as a woman when we think of 1 Corinthians 1 30, it says Christ has become to us wisdom. In fact, there are even people who go so far as to say Christ is the feminine aspect of the Godhead because he is wisdom and wisdom is depicted in a feminine form.

Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they're going all kinds of places with this. That this is not

intended to take them.

First of all, it is not likely that when Solomon put words in the mouth of wisdom that he was thinking specifically of Christ. Paul says Christ has become unto us wisdom. But, you know, the wisdom of God or wisdom in general was not necessarily a female and is not necessarily identified just with Christ.

Although we could see wisdom as almost the same concept as John uses when he talks about the logos, the word or the reason was with God and was God and was in the world and was personified in Christ. We could say that wisdom, reason, the logos, this is not this, of course, is not using the word logos. So I don't want you to misunderstand me here.

But the concept of reason is not very far removed from the concept of wisdom either. John personifies logos, Solomon personifies wisdom. The fact that Solomon personifies it as feminine does not mean that he or even necessarily that the Holy Spirit has in mind that wisdom is Jesus.

Now, it may be true that we can see that Jesus is the embodiment of wisdom. And so, in some respects, might anyone be. If they're very wise, you can say they're the embodiment of wisdom, whether they're male or female.

But this is making wisdom out to be a woman because throughout the early part of this book, Solomon is going to be contrasting two women, the woman that is wisdom and the woman that is the strange woman, the foreign woman, the seductress. We're going to come back and forth to these two in this first section in chapters one through nine. There's several different sections in this passage in this in these nine chapters.

First of all, he returns the idea of the seductress, the bad woman, the woman that will that the foolish man will embrace. And that's in contrast with the man who embraces the beautiful reality of wisdom, which is like a much more wonderful woman to have. So I think wisdom is depicted as a woman because he's talking to his son who would be obviously Solomon knows his son is going to be interested in women.

He takes after his old man. And also because he has to give so many warnings about the wrong kind of woman, it's clear that he's thinking my son is attracted to women. I want him to be attracted to wisdom as one would be attracted to a woman in the right way, you know, to the right qualities in a woman.

So here he has wisdom depicted as a woman speaking. And it's interesting because it is difficult for a Christian not to see this speech as being given by Jesus, although he is, of course, not coming to the world at the time when Solomon wrote this. Yet Christ is wisdom to us.

And the words of wisdom certainly have almost a double entendre in some cases where

you could see it as the words of Christ says wisdom calls aloud outside. She raises her voice in the open square. She cries out in the chief concourses at the opening of the gates in the city.

She speaks her words. How long, you simple ones? Again, simple means simple minded. This simple is a negative in Proverbs.

Simplicity in the New Testament is often a good quality. But in the Proverbs, the simple one is the same thing. The simpleton, the person is a fool, the person who is not really deep or thoughtful or doesn't have any wisdom.

How long, you simple ones? Will you love simplicity for scorners delight in their scorning and fools hate knowledge? Turn in my reproof, wisdom says. Surely now this certainly sounds like Christ, really. Surely I will pour out my spirit on you.

I will make my words known to you because I have called and you refused. I've stretched out my hand and no one regarded because you disdained all my counsel and would have none of my reproof. I also will laugh at your calamity.

I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer. Then they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord.

They would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof. Therefore, they shall eat of the fruit of their own way and be filled to the full with their own fancies for the turning away of the simple will slay them and the complacency of fools will destroy them. But whoever listens to me will dwell safely and will be secure without fear of evil.

Now, obviously, all these words we could see, we could expect to find them maybe in a prophet speaking the words of God to sinful Israel or to sinful man. Hear my words. I'll speak my words to you if you receive them.

I'll pour my spirit out on you. But if you reject me, I will not be found by you. You may belatedly desire me, but it'll be too late then.

When you are really in trouble, then you'll wish you had me on your side, but then I won't be accessible to you. You'll call, but you won't find me. This is in this context, wisdom speaking, the person who neglects to embrace wisdom and chooses a path of foolishness will certainly have his time or her time when they find that their foolishness has caught up with them.

And then they will wish they could be wise, that they will have passed up the opportunity and wisdom will not really be able to be found by them. That's what they say. Now, when wisdom says, I will laugh at your calamity in verse 26, I will mock when your terror

comes, doesn't sound very nice to laugh at someone's calamity, but it's a graphic impressionistic statement that's supposed to say, you know, if you scorn wisdom, there'll be a time when wisdom will scorn you, essentially.

And he says, wisdom says, because, verse 29, they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord. Now, this is a really important statement. They didn't choose the fear of the Lord.

This is not something that was a matter of predestination with them. They didn't fall into trouble because God chose for them to go the wrong way and then to beat him up over it. They were at a crossroads where they had a choice to make.

They could fear God or not. He has already said in verse 7, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So, if you value knowledge, you will choose to fear God.

The person who neglects or declines to fear God has made a choice between two options. You can or you cannot. They didn't choose to can.

They didn't choose to fear. They chose the wrong course, because if they had chosen the fear of the Lord, from there would have arisen a wiser course. But, of course, since the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and of knowledge, the failure to choose the fear of God in their lives proves to be resulting in foolishness and its natural calamities that follow it.

Now, the next several chapters, chapter 2 through 7, it's kind of extended continuation of instruction to do what your parents have taught you to do. That is, don't innovate morality. The assumption here is that his parents, the son's parents, have embraced the law of God and they have taught the law of God.

And this is an old law that was given to Moses, you know, 500 years earlier than this. It might seem outdated to the young man. This is old morality.

And so many times young people feel like they should really consider that their parents are outdated in their thinking. These are modern times. And so the idea is don't innovate new moral standards.

Stick with the ones you've been taught by your parents, assuming they are in line with the word of God. Some people didn't have Christian parents and were taught values that are not really good ones to retain. But on the assumption that what you've heard earlier was the word of God, stick with that.

And in chapter 2, my son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands within you so that you incline your ear to wisdom and apply your heart to understanding. Yes, if you cry out for discernment and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures. There's a lot of ifs there.

If you do that, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Now, certainly understanding the fear of the Lord and finding the knowledge of God are you can hardly find anything. The Bible places a higher value on those two things.

And if you find fearing God to be a perplexing concept, what does it mean to fear God? Well, it sounds like you don't understand the fear of the Lord. You can understand the fear of the Lord as a possibility. Finding the knowledge of God, knowing God is a privilege held out as an option.

But it's rather conditional, it looks like. The fear of the Lord and the knowledge and understanding of what the fear of the Lord implies and the knowledge of God isn't just laying on the ground for you to trip over and just bend over and pick up. It's like treasure that's hidden.

It's like something you've got to place as a first priority that you're searching for. Notice all the things he says you have to do. You have to receive his words.

You need to treasure my commands. You have to incline your ear toward wisdom. Now, inclining your ear, of course, is a deliberate act.

What am I going to listen to? There's all kinds of things I can listen to. I can listen to people's advice from many different sectors. Good, bad, foolish and wise.

There's all kinds of choices. Whatever I let go into my ear gate and into my head is really what I choose to. Unless I happen to be in prison and they're piping something into the speaker so I don't have any choice but to listen to it.

If I'm a free person with options, I can turn my ears to listen wherever I want to. If I choose to incline my ear to the right sources and apply your heart to understanding, applying your heart is just some kind of energy, some kind of effort put out to direct your heart. You direct your tastes and your passions and your values of your heart toward a certain direction rather than some other one.

These are deliberate actions on our part, where our ears and our hearts are turned to. What we're receiving from, what sources. These are things that he says you need to do.

If you seek for her, well, verse 3, if you cry out for discernment. Now, discernment is going to be just another synonym for wisdom here. And lift up your voice for understanding.

You're like a hungry person crying out like a beggar for food or for money, for a donation. You're desperate. If you cry out to God to give you wisdom, discernment, understanding.

If you seek for her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures. If you knew, if you had a treasure map, an authentic treasure map, and you knew that if you just purchased

this piece of overgrown property here, you know, 400 years ago, some pirates left a treasure there and you came into the possession of a treasure map. And you knew it was somewhere there on that property.

And you could pick up that property for a song because it doesn't have any particular, you know, real estate value. But you know, it's got mineral values. You would buy that field to obtain the mineral rights.

And then you would dig it up till it was as pockmarked as the face of the moon until you found that treasure. If you believe that somewhere in that property that you had, given sufficient searching and effort, you would certainly find that which would make you fabulously wealthy. You would lose sleep to that.

You'd forget to take meals. You'd be out there digging around until you hit pay dirt. You just wouldn't make it a casual pursuit.

It would be on the front burner until you found it. And he says, if you would seek for wisdom that way, that is the way you would search for a treasure that was hidden, then you're doing what you need to do. If you want to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

God doesn't make himself known to the casual interest, but to the one who takes him as seriously as he deserves to be taken. The person who just kind of wants to give their free time to thinking about God and maybe hoping to find him that way while they're spending other time doing things that's far more important to them or more interesting to them. To take God casually is an insult.

Do you realize who you're talking about here? We're talking about God. If there is no God, then, of course, the search for God is of no value. But if there is a God, there's nothing that matters as much.

People just don't see this as clearly as it seems like thinking people should. Most of the people in America say they believe in God. And maybe at some level they do, but they're not putting two and two together because they believe there's a God that they pursue everything except God and give him the scraps of their time.

If anything, forget him for long periods of time and then turn to him when they're in trouble. I mean, it'd be wiser for them to not even believe there's a God if they're going to live that way because there's only two possibilities. There is a God or there's not.

If there's not, then don't even give him scraps. Don't call out to him in trouble. Don't even mess with it.

You're just wasting your time. There's no God. Forget it.

But if there is a God, then nothing else that one could think could possibly be more fascinating, more valuable, more urgent to find. And that's what Solomon sees. That's what any wise person would say.

People who don't see that aren't putting two and two together. They're not thinking right. They say, oh, yeah, there's a God.

Yeah, but I'm so interested in this television program right now. I'll think about God when I have a little more free time. Well, you wouldn't do that if you knew there was a treasure in your backyard.

And if you simply spent the time digging, you're going to find it. You'd seek that first. You'd make that the top priority, you know.

And Solomon says, if you do that, if you place that kind of value upon wisdom and understanding and discretion, cry out for it and search for it like treasure, well, then you'll find it. And that, I believe, can be taken as a guarantee, although the Proverbs themselves, I said, are not guarantees or promises. This is something that I believe is confirmed as a promise elsewhere in Scripture.

Because in Jeremiah, we know that God said, you shall search for me and you shall find me when you seek me with your whole heart. So God is saying, I'm available to be found, but not by the half-hearted, not by the casual interest. I'll be found.

When you seek with your whole heart. I have, during the Jesus movement, I and many other people, you know, we got filled with the Spirit and Jesus became so central to our lives, we became obsessed. And some of us have stayed that way and others did not.

But the next generation came up, my children in particular, and they heard about that and they wanted that too. And my children in their youth turned to God. My children in their youth sought to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

They prayed. They had people pray for them. This was their doing.

This is what they wanted. Unfortunately, they didn't find what they wanted. And, you know, anyone listening to this lecture at a later date, circumstances might be different with my children at that time.

But as I speak, my children are a bit bewildered, most of them, because they say, well, we looked for God. We did what you told us to do and we didn't find him. He didn't show up, you know, and they're a little confused about that.

And it's hard for me to know what to say, except this. If you give up the search, then you never valued it as you should. And that will explain why you didn't find.

Because if you were in a desert dying of thirst and someone said, you know, there's

some water just over that next sand dune or there's some water just over that direction somewhere and you hope to be over the next sand dune and you got to the top of the sand dune and there's no water. You wouldn't just say, well, I'll just sit here and die. That's OK.

Plan B. I'll just starve or die of dehydration. No, if you had been told there's water that direction and you went a certain distance and didn't find it, you keep going until you found it, because the only other option is you die. You may be disappointed that you didn't find it as soon as you hoped, but you're not going to say, well, then I'll just give up.

Well, you might. But if you do give up, it means it's not important to you as it should be. You see, I was raised in a in a non spirit filled kind of church environment.

And I knew there was a God and I wanted to seek him. I didn't seek him. I wouldn't say I was seeking with my whole heart as I should.

But I know that when I found out that there was more, I could not be satisfied without finding as much as those people had found of God. And I was fortunate because it was during a time of revival. It was a rather easy time to find God.

In revivals, God comes close and people find him hardly, you know, they hardly have to be looking. But in times where it's not a revival, you have to search more diligently. And before we go, I would have to say I was hungry for God.

And when I found him, I was excited about it. And I've never seen any reason to change that attitude. But if I was like my children, I think, and I don't mean to fault them about this because my children are good kids.

But if my parents said, if you seek in that direction, you'll find God in a big way. And I sought that direction and didn't find him, I wouldn't just say, oh, well, I'll give up on that search because it's hopeless. I think it must be further out that direction because it isn't where I've come to yet.

I must have to go further in this search. I must have to pursue. I'm not going to stop searching until I find.

That's the point. If you say, I'll search, but if I don't find it after so many days or so many years, then I'm done with it. I'm going to do something else with my life.

Well, then that means it was not as important to you as it needed to be. I'll invest this much of my life looking for it because it's worth that to me. But if I don't find it, it's not worth continuing the search.

Well, then it's not worth enough. If you had the treasure in your backyard and you dug a big hole and it wasn't there, but you knew the treasure was somewhere, you dig another

hole. And if you're disappointed in that hole, you dig another and another.

You're not going to just say, well, I've dug up half the yard, haven't found it yet. I think maybe I'll do something else. Maybe I'll go, you know, work at Taco Bell.

No, you would just keep digging because you know there's a treasure there. If you gave up, it's because you didn't believe it was there anyway. And so finding God thoroughly, finding the knowledge of God, the intimate personal knowledge of God, not every religious person can say they have found that.

And many of them can say, I said a prayer. I've been in church. I've been reading my Bible.

I've been doing the disciplined life. I'm doing what I can. But I haven't really ever had that experience with God that some people testify of.

Well, all I can say is keep going the same direction, because if you're going the right direction, it doesn't mean you've apprehended yet. You search, you cry out. And if you speak with your whole heart, you will find.

And if God is not important enough to you to search, if necessary, all your life before you connect with him. If you say, well, I'm wasting my whole life here, not connected. It's a waste to seek God.

If that's the attitude, then you probably aren't going to find him. You see, when I was a teenager thinking about these things, I remember thinking specifically that if some celebrity, if John Lennon or Bob Dylan or some celebrity at the time had welcomed me into his circle where I was his friend or the president of the United States or some very important person had welcomed me and said, I'd like to be your friend. Give me a call any time, night or day.

I'd be glad to hang out with you. I would have thought, man, that's really great. I would have been so excited.

That would have been almost the dominant thing in my awareness is I'd be name dropping all the time. You know, yeah, me and Neil Young, we were just sitting around jamming the other day. And I want everyone to know I'd be defining of how I saw my own importance in some respects.

I'm not saying it should. I'm just saying that's how it would have been. That's what I would have felt.

I thought, but I've got that very same invitation from the God who created the universe, who everyone answers to, who all the planets answer to, who, you know, the one who is the infinite, eternal God. And can I take that lightly? Can that be anything less than

absolutely defining of how I see my privilege and my role in this world? I've got to seek for him. I mean, there's nothing that could be more important, nothing that could be more gratifying than finding him and having that relationship with him.

Anyway, that's what Solomon says to his son he's got to do is put that kind of priority on the search. And so, verse six, for the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright.

He is a shield to those who walk uprightly. He guards the path of justice and preserves the way of the saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity in every good path.

So first you need to understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. And then having found him, he will be the source of counsel and wisdom to you from the Lord. Come wisdom.

The Lord gives wisdom from his mouth, knowledge and understanding. You if you want to finally understand righteousness and justice, equity in every good path, you've got to make the prior commitment to find God. Once you find God, he will inform you of those things.

Your understanding of what's right and wrong, just and unjust. That will grow out of your communion with God and your acquaintance with him. You seek the knowledge of God first, and then later these other important things will be vouchsafed to you from him arising out of that knowledge of him.

First 10, when wisdom enters your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul. And by the way, it isn't always pleasant to some people's souls. If people don't love the truth, knowledge of the truth can be something they'd like to hide from.

Rather than know. But if you if you are such a lover of truth that it's pleasant to you to gain more knowledge, even if it turns out to be unflattering knowledge or disappointing knowledge, knowledge that something you hoped was true was not true. Yet the fact that it is true, you're glad to know it because it's true and you want to know the truth.

If that's where your heart is, then discretion, which is again wisdom, will preserve you. Understanding will keep you to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in perversity of wickedness, whose ways are crooked and who are devious in their past. Now, he's just warned in chapter one about don't follow people who are trying to lead you the wrong way.

And they say, you know, let's lie and wait for blood and get money and so forth. He says, that's stupid. That's like walking into a trap.

You're dumber than a bird watching the fowler present a net and walking into it afterwards. If you do that, because wisdom will keep you from that wisdom will preserve you from the seduction into the wrong ways by these evil men. But then he goes on and also seduction from the evil woman.

It'll preserve you from to deliver you. Verse 16, from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house, which would be the prostitute's house, probably, or at least the house of the woman who makes a habit of seducing men, leads down to death and her path to the dead, none who go to her return.

At least they don't come out the same, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you may walk in the way of goodness and keep to the paths of righteousness for the upright will dwell in the land and the blameless will remain in it. But the wicked will be cut off from the earth and the unfaithful be uprooted from it.

So have wisdom because it will preserve you from making the mistakes of following the wrong influences, the evil men who try to draw you off, the evil woman who tries to draw you into sexual misbehavior. Falling to these influences is simply an evidence that wisdom was lacking and should have been present. Those last two verses, no doubt, are talking about the promise that God made that Israel would be able to stay in the promised land if they were obedient to God, but would be driven out of the land if they were not.

So he's saying you'll have longer tenure in the land and not be exiled if you follow the ways of wisdom, which is, of course, the wise person will obey the law of God and keep God's covenant. Now, he continues on and we're not going to. We're not going to, of course, comment on every verse, and I was, in fact, going to in this session, I thought I was going to just take the complete survey of the whole book, the big picture.

But obviously, I'm kind of taking passages and reading them. So our survey of the book is going to take several sessions because of the method that I have adopted, which I adopted on the fly. I didn't know I was going to do it this way.

So it doesn't matter because we have almost an unlimited number of sessions to cover problems. So it doesn't matter how long it takes. But we're actually going to break at this point and when we come back, we'll continue to survey this material and move.

I consider this rapid movement, by the way. I don't know what you feel. This is rapid movement through the material.

So this is a rapid survey of the book of Proverbs at this point. Later, we'll get into the details of the topical teachings of Proverbs. OK, so at this point, we'll stop and come back to chapter three tomorrow.

Bye.