

# OpenTheo

## Proverbs: God Conscious Living (Part 2)



### **Proverbs** - Steve Gregg

In this continuation of his teachings on Proverbs, Steve Gregg emphasizes the importance of living a conscious and aware life in the presence of God. He notes that God does not meticulously control every detail of our lives, but we should still be wary of his displeasure and strive to adopt a healthy fear of God. He also delves into the concept of humility, and how it is essential in our relationship with God and others. Ultimately, Gregg reminds listeners that God hates pride and will hold each individual accountable for their actions and words.

### **Transcript**

In our last session in Proverbs, we were beginning the topical coverage of the material in the main body of the book, which is chapters 10 through 29, pretty much, and sort of going through it to pick out themes. The first and perhaps the most important theme to examine in Proverbs is that of the God-conscious life. That is a life that has lived aware of God's oversight, aware of God's assessment of what we're doing, aware of whether we're pleasing or displeasing him, aware of the degree to which he is involved in our lives.

These are things that most people live without any awareness of. They are aware of the things their senses see and little else. But Paul said that we are being changed.

Actually, what Paul says is that our light affliction, which is up for a moment, works for us in exceeding an eternal weight of glory as we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen. For, he said, the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal. And what is not seen, of course, is God's hidden hand, his sovereign activity behind the scenes.

Many people do not look at what is not seen. They don't have any way of seeing it. It cannot be perceived except through spiritual perception.

Solomon was, like the better men of the Old Testament in his better days, a spiritually minded man aware of God's presence and of God's values and of God's sovereignty. That's one of the themes that comes up a lot. And this awareness of God, of course,

breaks down into specific things about God that we must be aware of and what that God awareness looks like in our life.

We looked at the scriptures and Proverbs about the fear of God. We could have looked far beyond the range of the book of Proverbs on that subject because the fear of God is found in the Pentateuch, the historical books, throughout the wisdom literature and the prophets, as well as the New Testament. But we're trying to confine, for the most part, our studies to what Solomon has given us on these subjects.

And so the fear of God was the beginning. It is the fundamental state of awareness of God that we all need to be wise. We have to be aware that God is somebody to be reckoned with, somebody whose displeasure is to be avoided.

That's what the fear of God is. And we were talking as we ran out of time last time about the sovereignty of God and how God reserves the right to do all that he wishes to do in his world. Now that he wishes to do, of course, as I said, it doesn't mean that he wishes necessarily to micromanage everything.

He might, and he could if he wished. But that's not a given. To say that God is sovereign does not mean that we know exactly how he sovereignly chooses to govern.

It just means that he has the right to govern any way he wants to. It is my understanding that God has allowed human beings a measure of freedom, of will, of freedom, of even self-determination, whether we will do right or wrong, whether we will choose God or reject God. In this, of course, I have a different opinion than many Christians who hold to a more reformed view of God's sovereignty, where they believe that God's sovereignty means meticulous providence.

They believe that that means that he's not meticulously and providentially controlling every detail, that he's not sovereign. And in making a statement like that, as they often do, they are pulling a bait and switch, because they're basically selling you the word sovereignty and then switching it for something else. What Christian would not agree that God is sovereign? Every Christian believes that God is sovereign.

But once you have conceded that point, many people say, oh, well, then you must admit that. And then they go on to something that is not at all in the definition of sovereignty. And it is not in the definition of sovereignty that the one who is sovereign controls everything proactively, although it means that he has the right to do so.

And depending on his style of governing, depending on his preferences, because the one who's sovereign does get to do what he prefers, he can prefer to grant freedom if he wishes and to not micromanage every detail under his domain. And yet, once we have acknowledged, if we do, that God has granted human free will, we have to also grant something a little closer with our Calvinist friends would argue, because it is true that

God, though he grants free will, he doesn't grant absolute free will. People may plan to do something, but God will determine what the outcome is if their plans are not something he wishes to see materialize.

And so the Proverbs frequently talk about how the preparations of the heart are of man, but the outcome essentially is from the Lord. Man gets to make his own decisions about what he wants to do, whether he's really permitted to carry out his plans or not is strictly up to God. So that there are many times in the life of Jesus where it says they took up stones to stone him or they sought to kill him.

That was their plan. God didn't prevent them from making the plan, but when it was not yet his hour, God prevented them from carrying it out. That's the sovereignty of God, not that he feeds to the human mind every thought and every decision.

He leaves the decision making to the individual, but the question of whether their plans are carried out is strictly up to God. And that's what Solomon says. And he says that also God has the power and the right and sometimes actually does this, that he can turn the hearts of kings any direction he wants to.

In Proverbs 21, 1, and many people assume from that scripture, which says the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water. He turns it with us wherever he will, that that means that every decision the king makes is, you know, made by God. And God is turning the king's heart at every moment.

That is not necessarily stated or implied. What it means is that God holds the heart of the king in his hand. And when God wishes to tweak it or jerk it or direct it some direction, he's got the full power to do that, just as he has the power to change the course of rivers.

But as with the rivers, the course of rivers usually takes a course determined by the laws of nature. God can change them on the occasions that it suits his purpose to do so. And so also, I think a king's heart, like anyone else's, is for the most part free to do whatever he wants to, unless what he decides to do is going to go awry of something that God has intended to occur.

So that God allows a lot of freedom, but not absolute freedom of will. The king can certainly choose to do something that God doesn't want him to do in most cases, but God can prevent it. In some cases, God can even stop the king from choosing a certain thing.

As with Pharaoh, who would no doubt left to himself have had the good sense to repent and let the people go. Well, earlier than he did, given all the disasters that befell him through the plagues. And yet God hardened his heart and made the king not repent for a period of time.

So that is God's prerogative. Though to say that God has that prerogative and even say that God has done these kinds of things is not the same thing as preparing an overall cosmology that Jesus is controlling the thoughts of every person at every moment. Or that God has predetermined what every king will do every waking moment of the day.

That's not necessarily something that Proverbs is telling us, although it is something that given a certain concept of sovereignty that is very, very popular today, one might read into it. Now, moving from this idea of God's sovereignty, let's talk about another important subject, and that's God's omniscience. What God knows, God's sovereignty and his omniscience are not the same thing, although some people think so, because especially when it comes to God knowing the future.

Some feel like, well, the reason he knows the future is because he's going to control the future a certain way. He's kind of mapped it out. He's got it prearranged.

He's going to work it out. He does whatever he wants to, and therefore he knows what he's going to do before he does it. I do believe God knows the future, but I don't believe that he knows it strictly because he's got every detail planned out and he's going to do everything he planned.

I do believe God has a plan, of course, and that that plan will never be thwarted. But God can work that plan, even allowing human beings a measure of freedom. Sometimes people have compared it to a chess master who's playing 100 games at the same time against lesser opponents, and he's walking around the room, teach chess, and he makes his individual moves.

He may or may not know or care what the next move is of his opponent. Doesn't matter. He's going to win anyway.

The opponent can do whatever he wants to. The chess master is going to win, not because he's foreordained every move that his opponent's going to make, but because it doesn't matter what move his opponents make. He is smarter.

He can work it out. He can work with what his opponent does and still win the game. And God is able to do that.

He doesn't have to micromanage everything in order to know that his outcome is going to succeed. But he does know all things, and there's a few places in Proverbs that bring this up, and to live a God conscious life, we need to have that as part of our mental furniture. God knows, you know, there are things that are frightening to us about the future or even about the present, and it's good to know that God knows.

In Proverbs 5 and verse 21, when he's advocating moral purity to his son and the avoidance of adultery, he says, for the ways of a man are before the Lord, the eyes of the Lord, and he ponders all his paths. God is paying attention, pondering, assessing,

watching everything that a man does. The eyes of the Lord are observing these things.

And therefore, I mean, that can be comforting or not comforting. I remember when I was raising my kids, someone said, you know, there's all kinds of child raising books, including a lot of them written by Christians, and they don't all have the same philosophy. I remember some Christian said, you should never tell your children that God is always watching, because it'll put sort of this dread of God in their minds.

You know, it'd make them, you know, feel paranoid, because they're always being watched. I thought, well, I guess it could have that effect on some people. It has the opposite effect on me.

I'm glad that God is watching. I guess it has two, there's a two edged sword there, or a two sided coin, maybe I should say, that God's knowing everything. On the one hand, means if you're doing the wrong thing, he knows it.

But it also means that if you're not doing the wrong thing, and maybe someone else is doing the wrong thing to you, God knows that too. I mean, God is paying attention. And if he's on your side, that's a good thing.

Now, if you're doing something that is that God will not wish to approve and that he might even judge, then God seeing it is perhaps intimidating. In this case, Solomon is appealing to the latter instinct in his son. If you're doing the thing you don't want him to find out about, don't do it, because God knows it.

Someone knows that you're doing it. Somebody's watching all the time. You've got this unseen eavesdropper, someone who's spying on you.

But that's a good thing because he's watching over you for your good. Actually, the fact that he's seen you do the wrong thing and likely to chasten you for it is even for your good. It's good to know you're living your life under the eye of a caring God, but one who is also discerning and has opinions about your moral behavior.

In chapter 15 and verse three, it says, The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good. And there's the two sides of that coin. God is watching the evil man.

Now, that doesn't make the evil man very happy because what God is seeing isn't making God very happy. But he's also watching over the good. That means that God is paying attention when you do the right thing.

Maybe no one else is. Maybe no one else will ever even know. Remember, Jesus said, When you do your righteousness, don't do it to be seen by men.

He said, The hypocrites do that and they have their reward. What is their reward? Their

reward is that they're seen by men. That's what they want.

They want the approval of men. They got it. That's all they're going to get.

They're not going to have a reward from God because they've sought a lesser reward. They've been satisfied with a lower reward than they would have had if they'd simply done things for the eyes of God and no one had found out. So Jesus says, When you give alms, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

When you pray, don't do it to be seen by men, but do it to be seen by God. When you fast, he said, don't do it in such a way that people will notice you're fasting and approve of you and think you're wonderful, but do it more or less secretly. And he said, In all these cases, and God who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly.

So the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous as well as the unrighteous. Are you committing adultery secretly with your neighbor's wife? Well, the eyes of the Lord are there watching you. They're beholding the evil.

That can't go well for you when God's watching you do the wrong things. But he also sees when you do the good things, even if no one else does, even if no one else appreciates you. In fact, it should be your desire that as few people as possible do see and appreciate you.

Because if you are rewarded with human rewards, then you've been paid. Remember when Jesus said that when you give a feast, you shouldn't invite your rich friends and your neighbors who can invite you back and then you'd be repaid for your generosity. That's not a good thing to be repaid.

He said, rather, when you make a feast, invite the lame and the crippled and the blind and the poor because they can't repay you, he said, and then you'll have a reward in the resurrection of the just. Jesus said so to have God's approval and maybe even God, the only one who will reward you because he's the only one who knows is a desirable thing. Something to be hoped for.

In fact, in many cases, not that it's ever not that it's desirable that no one should ever know you're a good person or to know who you are or to ever appreciate you. But the less of that you court in your behavior, the purer your motives will be and you'll be acting simply with the consciousness that the eyes of the Lord are on you. And that's enough.

That's all the approval you need. Verse 11 of chapter 15 says, Hell and destruction are before the Lord. How much more the hearts of the sons of men.

So God not only sees what you're doing, good or evil, he sees what's in your heart. He's examining them. And so this speaks of God's omniscience.

In this case, he's not talking about God's foreknowledge that doesn't really come up in Proverbs as a part of the subject of God's omniscience. But the fact that God knows what's going on right now and what you're doing is definitely an important factor in having a consciousness of God that is desirable for your life. Rather than those people who live without any consciousness of God, God is not in any of their thoughts and they are doing things that God is watching, but they're not doing things that they would like to have God watching that they're not aware of, that they're not thinking about it.

To have God's eye upon you and you're aware of his eye upon you is a very positive part of living with the kind of awareness of God you need to have. And then there's throughout Proverbs, a long list we can make of things that I've called the sympathies of God. That is, what are God's sentiments? What does he favor and what does he not favor? These things are certainly the things that a wise person will want to know if he's living consciously in the presence of God.

If he knows his life is lived before the eyes of God, then he'll certainly be well served to learn what God's preferences, what his sympathies are, what God's judgments are about things. And so there's quite a few Proverbs that tell us what God delights in and what God hates. Those are the kinds of things that a person needs to have as a, if you're a wise person in the sense that Solomon advocates, fearing the Lord, these things are the things you'll really want to know because you don't want to end up doing and choosing the things that God hates.

Much better to be choosing that which God delights in because, of course, then he'll be happy with you. And that's always better when God is happy with you. Life will be better.

For example, one of the things about God's sympathies that comes up frequently in Proverbs is the fact that God delights in righteousness and detests wickedness. Now, we might say that's so basic we don't even need to take time to think about it. And it is basic.

And those of us who are Christians, I mean, it's like a fundamental, of course, God hates evil and loves good, but apparently not everyone knows that. And perhaps even Christians don't understand to what degree this is true. Because if we understood it fully, we would then, of course, adopt that fear of God that is to hate evil.

Also, that's talked about in Proverbs chapter eight. And so he says in chapter 11 and verse 20, those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord. Now, the word abomination comes up a lot in Proverbs and elsewhere in Scripture.

The word abomination means something that is foul and detestable, loathsome, something that stinks. That's what an abomination is. In most cases in the Bible, for example, in the historical books and in the prophets, when you find the word abomination, it usually is referring to an idol.

For example, Moloch is the abomination of the Ammonites or something. You know, Chemosh is the abomination of the Moabites. This is the way that the Old Testament often speaks.

The word abomination means the idol, the false god is an abomination. But Proverbs uses it somewhat differently. Proverbs is not talking about idols specifically.

It's just talking about things that God detests, finds loathsome and are, you know, an unpleasant stench to him. And that's what it means. Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord.

We just saw a moment ago that the hearts of men are before the eyes of the Lord. And when he sees in those hearts perversity, it stinks to him. It's very displeasing to him.

But such as are blameless in their ways are his delight. And so in chapter 15, also chapter 15, verses eight and nine, it says the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. But the prayer of the upright is his delight.

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. But he loves him who follows righteousness. Now, there's a couple of things here that are abomination to the Lord.

One is actually the sacrifice offered by a wicked man. Now, a sacrifice is an act of worship. In Israel, they would take animals to sacrifice.

That was the primary form of worshiping Yahweh is through offering sacrifices. Yet when the man who's offering the ritual worship is himself wicked in his heart, then that which would ordinarily be pleasant to God becomes foul in his sight. It shows that God is not a God who particularly has a thing for ritualism.

It's not as if you can be a wicked person and it just makes it all right when you offer your animal sacrifice, when you go to church, when you put your tithes on the plate, when you when you do the religious thing, when you do the outward forms of religion that doesn't make up for it. It's not as if those things make up for being essentially a wicked person in all your heart and your motives. In fact, it not only makes up for it, it's even more offensive to God.

Apparently, as offended as God is by wickedness, generally, he's even more offended when a wicked person hypocritically acts like he's a worshiper of God and offers sacrifices, though he's wicked. That's an abomination to God. And that statement is actually repeated a number of times in Proverbs about God's detesting the sacrifices, or we might say that external formal forms of worship of one who is internally a wicked person.

And that's, of course, what Jesus brought out to the Pharisees so much. There was nobody more exact and more scrupulous in their outward forms of worship than the



Pharisees. And Jesus pointed that out.

He says, you know, you pay your tithes down to the smallest detail of your mint and anise and cumin. Ordinarily paying tithes, you harvest your grain fields, take your tons of grain and take a tenth of it and bring it to the temple. And yet they did this even with the little little herbs they grew in their window boxes.

I mean, they didn't they didn't scrimp on their tithes at all. They were very scrupulous. But he said, you neglect the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

This is Matthew 23, 23. Jesus says this basically saying you are you're very careful about outward forms, but you're not careful about personal righteousness and goodness. And and he says you like whitewashed tombs outwardly, very clean and very tidy and very sterile.

But inwardly, very putrid, like full of dead men's bones, like a tomb would be. And so this is the same thing Jesus taught this Solomon was aware of at this point in his life. And then in chapter 15, verse 29, the Lord is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

Again, the contrast between wickedness. As a defining trait and righteousness as a defining trait. Here he's not he doesn't specify specific wicked deeds or specific righteous deeds.

He specifies persons who are themselves wicked. And persons who are themselves righteous. That's interesting that in a time before the coming of Christ, that even anyone might have been regarded as righteous.

When people say there's really no one except those who are regenerated could really have any thing that God recognizes righteous in them. They don't pay much attention, apparently, to the Old Testament or what they actually do is they suggest that if you find someone in the Old Testament does righteousness, that person has been regenerated. Although the Bible does not give us grounds for believing that regeneration was an Old Testament phenomenon, I don't think.

I don't I don't think it does. But the point is that there are people who are they not just doing wicked things. They are wicked.

There are people who are not just doing righteous acts, but they are righteous people. Now, of course, righteous people are going to be doing righteous acts and wicked people are going to be doing wicked acts. But the issue here is not simply the evaluation of the moral quality of their deeds, but it's looking at their heart and what their orientation is.

Are they orientated toward righteous, pious, godly orientations and motivations or are

they the opposite? Those who are the opposite. The Lord is far from them. And this is contrasted with his hearing the prayer of a righteous, which makes it sound like he doesn't hear the prayer of the others.

He's too far away to hear them or they're too far away from him. He's around, but they're far from him in their hearts and therefore they call out to him. But, you know, he just can't hear it because they're just too far away.

But he hears the prayer because he's not far away from the righteous. We are told chapter 21 and verse three says to do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. This sounds like something that Saul, Solomon's predecessor, Saul, to Kings previous, had heard from the mouth of Samuel.

Remember, in Samuel chapter 15, 1 Samuel 15, when Saul was supposed to have killed all the Amalekites, he didn't. And when he excused his behavior to Samuel by saying, well, I was going to take some of these cattle that I was supposed to slaughter, I decided to sacrifice them to the Lord instead. And Samuel said, has the Lord as great delight in sacrifice as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams.

And so Samuel, a couple of generations before Solomon, had told King Saul that God prefers obedience over sacrifice. And of course, obedience has to do with character. It has to do with your lifestyle day by day, whereas sacrifice has to do with those special occasions of formal worship.

And God is more interested in what you're doing with your life than what you're doing in church and what you're doing in your, you know, in your religious outward ceremonies. To do righteousness and justice is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice. And this idea is brought up lots of times in the prophets, Hosea 6, 6. God said, I will have mercy rather than sacrifice.

Hosea 6, 6 in Micah, chapter six, there is an extended section in the early part of Micah, chapter six, where the rhetorical question is, what can I with what shall I appear before the Lord? What does God want from me? Shall I bring, you know, a thousand rams, a thousand oceans of oil, all these things that were offered. He's using these elaborate hyperboles about, you know, how shall I offer my firstborn son? Obviously, he's making outrageous suggestions. It sounds like what he's saying is, how many sacrifices will it take for God to be happy with me? Do I have to offer thousands of rams? I mean, how unreasonable is God? Does he want me to sacrifice my own child? The answer is, of course, no.

This is not stated as a serious suggestion. It's almost a sarcasm. It's almost as if this is the kind of thing the prophet is saying the people are thinking.

They're thinking that God has unreasonable demands and that, you know, they couldn't possibly measure up to what it takes to please God. But then Micah says in chapter six and verse eight, he says, well, he has showed you, oh, man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you? It's not about how many sacrifices you offer. It's that you do justly and love mercy and walk humbly with your God.

That's not all that hard, is it? Doing justly means you just don't violate your neighbor's rights. Showing mercy means that you're a compassionate person. That doesn't that might cost you a little bit, but that's not like thousands of rams being offered and walking humbly.

Well, that you know, that's this is a rather inexpensive set of requirements. God is not requiring that you do a lot of hard things, just the right things, just just and merciful and humble things, loving justice and mercy to do righteousness and justice. That's more acceptable to God than sacrifice.

He's not concerned so much about the ritual worship. I believe that God obviously must have appreciated ritual worship in some measure because he ordained it. But I believe the ritual worship was not something he loved for its own sake, because the Bible says he never had any pleasure in the blood of bulls and goats and the sacrifices.

It says that a couple of times. And that was just never what he was into. So why did he have them do these rituals? Well, because they were pointing forward to Christ.

They were instructive. They had a didactic value of teaching certain lessons about things, but they were not things that in themselves, you know, rang God's chimes. Wow, it's makes me feel so great to see them bring that grain and burn it on the altar there for me.

I mean, God and another place, God said, if I was hungry, would I ask you to bring me food? And Psalm 50 says, I mean, God's not really needy. It doesn't care that much about the sacrifices themselves. He doesn't care that much about the tithe itself.

What he cares about is where the heart is. And insofar as religious rituals flow from a heart that loves God and are a true expression of that devotion, then he loves that. The prayer of the righteous is his delight.

Because the person is righteous, the prayer of the wicked, not so happy about that. He doesn't like the wicked. In chapter 21 and verse 27, it says the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination.

We saw that earlier also. How much more when he brings it with wicked intent? Now, the distinction here is this, that some people are essentially wicked because they live their lives without the fear of God. But when they bring their sacrifice, when they go to church, they're doing it with a sort of a desire to do the right thing at that moment.

They don't live their lives wanting to do the right thing. But at the moment that they feel like it's time to worship God, they try to really do so. That person is a wicked person defined by his behavior through the week and his sacrifice is not acceptable to God.

But how much worse is it if he brings the sacrifice with wicked intentions, like to make a name for himself to be in a religious person? Or in some commentators say this with wicked intent should be translated as the price of a foul deed. I'm not sure if that's how the Hebrew reads or what, but it would suggest if he's bringing a sacrifice that was obtained, he's bringing something he's given to God, which was obtained by doing some crime on his part. He did something wrong.

It'd be like if a prostitute, you know, goes out and sells herself and brings the price and offers at the temple. Actually, the law did not permit that. The law said the price of a harlot could not be brought into the temple of the Lord.

But in any case, we have, again, God not showing great love for sacrifices, per se, only if those sacrifices are offered by persons that in other respects are pleasing to God. The person is not pleasing to God in general, by his behavior is not going to change his status with God by bringing a sacrifice. Of that kind.

Chapter 28 in verse nine, the one who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be an abomination. So it's the same idea as the fact that it's only the same with prayer. A sacrifice is an act of worship.

Prayer is an act of worship. The person who brings his sacrifice or who prays to God, but is a person who has turned his ear away from hearing the law. Now, this is a different thing than someone who simply has stumbled into misbehavior, because people do that even when they intend to be good.

There are people who really want to obey God, but because of various things they have sometimes failure. We all we all stumble at times, but there are people who just don't want to hear the law. They have no interest.

They don't want the law of God to define their duties. They want to ignore the law. When they hear it, they turn their ears away from it.

They're not choosing to be obedient. They don't want to be. And that person then, of course, when he is in danger, he always cries out to God.

Even atheists do this. And by the way, someone who's an atheist and a very small percentage of humanity really are honest atheists, if indeed there even is such thing as an honest atheist. But if there is even that honest atheist, when he's in serious trouble, is often tempted to and actually succumbs to this temptation to cry out to God to help him.

And we saw in the book of Judges, there came a time when the people called out to God

and said, save us. And he said, well, you know, it seems to me I've already done that a number of times and you've never really obeyed me. You don't really show that much interest in me.

You're just interested in you and you don't like it when things are going badly for you. So you call on me. But this time I'm not going to deliver you anymore, he said.

Now, he was persuaded to deliver them after all, because he's just that kind of God. This is chapter 11 of Judges, I believe we're talking about, that initially he said he wasn't going to deliver them anymore. But then because he had mercy on them, because of their misery, he did deliver them.

But the point is, he made a good case. Why should I listen to you? You don't listen to me. That's what wisdom says in chapter one of Proverbs.

Because you did not heed my voice, you're going to cry to me when you're in disaster. I'm not going to listen to you either. The prayer of the wicked person is an abomination.

The person who turns away from hearing the law of God. Now, another aspect of God's sympathies that we find here is that God delights in truthful people and detests liars. This is a corollary of being wicked or righteous, of course, a righteous person.

Is one who will be honest and tell the truth. A wicked person will often not be committed to the truth. But this is a specific behavior, a specific commitment to a certain set of values that is singled out.

Namely, that a righteous person is committed to being honest. He's truthful inside and therefore he will not lie. Whereas a wicked person has no such commitment, and although not all people who are ungodly are prominent in their lying, there's no reason for them not to if it's convenient for them because they don't have the fear of God in them.

They will do what is convenient and often convenience means lying. In chapter six, verses 16 through 17, it says, These fixed things the Lord hates. Yes, seven are an abomination, a proud look, a lying tongue.

So also in verse 19, a false witness who speaks lies. So there's of the seven things God hates, two of them are the same thing, a lying tongue and a false witness that speaks lies. This one must be doubly offensive to God that he would bring it up in two positions in a short list.

In chapter 12, verse 22 says, Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal truthfully are his delight. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but he who deals truthfully, those people are his delight. So this is another one of God's sentiments that the person living consciously in the presence of God will wish to keep in mind.

Since we have choices in these behaviors, we want to choose those things that delight God, delight his heart. And perhaps a slight variation on this same thing is not just lies versus truth, but just wicked words versus righteous words. Now, chapter six, verse 18, where it's listing, listing the things God hates, it says, A heart that devises wicked plans, wicked thoughts, wicked plans.

God hates those things. In chapter 15 and verse 26, we read, The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord, but the words of the pure are pleasant. Interesting the contrast between the thoughts of the wicked and the words of the pure.

Usually you'd have more of an exact dichotomy presented. You know, the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination, but the thoughts of righteous people, he likes those. But he shifts from thoughts to words for the simple reason that the Bible teaches everywhere that a person's words are the manifestation of their thoughts.

Jesus said, Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. And so you don't have to guess what a person thinks if they're talking a lot. I received an email today from somebody saying he'd listened to 80 percent of my lectures online.

He says, I feel like I have you at a disadvantage. I feel like I know you very well, although you don't know me at all. And I hear that from time to time.

I'll meet someone for the first time and say, Oh, I feel like I've known you for years. Because they really have. They've heard my teachings recorded.

And, you know, when someone listens to my words, they know what I'm thinking. You can definitely get to know anybody if you listen to them and they talk enough. And I do more talking than most.

I'm doing a lot of talking. And so a person's words will reveal what's in their head and who they are. Unless, of course, they're very good at concealing who they are and they're presenting a false front and saying things that aren't sincere.

If someone is saying things that they don't really believe, then all bets are off as to what's inside their head. Because they might have a motivation to give the impression that they're a certain kind of person. They just might be crafty enough to guard their words most of the time and say things that are really more virtuous than what's really going on inside.

Because they have some motivation to persuade people that they are better people than they are. That's why Jesus said that every idle word a man shall speak. He'll give account of it in the day of judgment.

Idle means unguarded, careless. A wicked man with a wicked heart will by nature pour wicked things out of his mouth. But if he is strongly motivated and crafty and well

disciplined, he might prevent his mouth from speaking the things that are really in his heart.

And give the impression that he's other than he is by the things he says. But his careless words, the things that slip out when he's not guarding his speech, those are going to tell you what's going on inside. Because everybody has their careless moments when they actually say what they really mean.

That is no doubt, although I'm certainly not Freudian, why they have what's called the Freudian slip. Freud suggested that there's times when you say things and you act like it was a mistake because it really wasn't what you intended to say. But he said that really was what you intended to say.

That was a slip up. That was a careless word. Now, I've never studied Freud and I don't really know all the things about Freudian slips.

But we have used that term in common speech a lot. And it's sort of the idea that your careless words will show what you really are thinking. We read, of course, that one of the things God hates is pride.

And this is often referred to as a proud heart or a proud look. Apparently, again, the way one looks, their countenance can reveal whether they're proud or not. You definitely have seen people who just look at their face and think, well, he sure seems to think highly of himself even before he says a word.

Just the way he carries himself. And I know the nose is a little higher in the air or something, you know, a person just has this look of being arrogant. Now, you have to be careful because a person might have a look of arrogance and not know it and it might not really be arrogant.

But it's talking about someone who is so arrogant that you can tell by looking at them that they are. And that's one of the things that are listed as the seven things that are abomination to God. In fact, the very first thing on the list is a proud look in Proverbs 6, 17, a proud look.

God hates it. He hates human pride because it is so inappropriate. Man has so little to be proud of.

Remember, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4, 7, I think it was. He said, what makes you different from anyone else and what do you have that you haven't received? And if you received it, why would you boast as if you had not received it? That is, whatever it is that makes a man feel proud, it's almost always a comparison he's making with him and someone else. He thinks he's better than others.

Very few people would have sinful pride if there's no one to compare themselves

positively against, favorably against. I knew a man, a minister. He's dead now, but when I met him, I was very impressed by what appeared to be humility in him.

And I, after knowing him for a while, I actually pointed it out to him. I said, you know, I realize a lot of people, and you certainly realize a lot of people admire you because of your ministry and because of your, seemingly your spirituality and so forth, but you don't seem to let it go to your head. You seem so humble all the time.

And he said, well, he said, it just depends on who you're comparing yourself with. He said, if you compare yourself with other Christians or other people, there are times when you would have occasion to feel good about yourself. But if you're comparing yourself with Jesus, you never will have any occasion to be proud.

And that, of course, is appropriate. Why compare yourself with other people? That's not the standard you're going to be judged by before God. God isn't going to have you up there on the stand on Judgment Day and say, now, how'd you do compared to the national average? You know, it's a question, did you measure up to the standard of Jesus, who is our model? And someone who's proud is out of touch with reality.

They're thinking of themselves more highly than is sensible. It just is so offensive. Even when the people, when the Bible says in Psalm 2, that the heathen rage and the people imagine everything and the kings of the earth and the rulers take counsel against God to overthrow him and break his chains off, says God shouldn't have any laughs at them.

It's amusing to him. It's like seeing a little kid thinking he's tougher than his dad, you know, or something. It's just now it's amusing when it's a little kid, when people are grown ups and they still think that way about themselves and they think they're as good as God.

Or they or at least they just think they're great. It's offensive to God because people are not great. Even good people are not great.

And whatever you have, Paul says, you've received that as a gift. You don't boast in something that was given to you and you didn't even earn it. Whatever you have, and there are many things that people have that can elevate them in the eyes of man above other people.

It can be their education. It can be their good looks. It can be their athletic prowess.

It can be the amount of money they make or how intelligent or articulate they seem. There's all kinds of traits. That if people possess them, those traits can become their ticket to being admired by other people who don't have those same traits in the same measure.

And those things, any of them, you name them, make the whole list of everything that



you've got that sets you above anyone else in any way in the eyes of man and say, now, which of those things did you actually acquire on your own? You know, most of them are gifts of yours at birth. Lots of them are hereditary and anything that you've earned by hard work, you have to argue, well, who gave you the opportunity to do that hard work? Aren't there people just as good as you, just as diligent, but they can't work hard or they work hard in a country where there's nothing that can be gained by hard work? Except eking out a small living. I mean, everything you have has to be traced back to something God has given and how could you possibly be proud of it? And so a proud look is so inappropriate that God hates it.

In Proverbs 16, 5, Solomon says, everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord. Though they join forces, none shall go unpunished. If they think that they can conspire together to overthrow God and to avoid his punishment, they're really out of touch with reality.

They will not go unpunished, no matter how many of them group together and conspire against God. That kind of pride is essentially disgusting to God. It's an abomination.

Chapter 21 and verse 4, it says, a haughty look, a proud heart and the plowing of the wicked are sin. Now, the plowing of the wicked, some would give an alternate translation, the lamp of the wicked, but neither one of them is a very clear, conveys very clear information. It did to the original readers, I'm sure, at the time, but what that imagery means, I'm not sure.

But the part that's obvious is that what is sin inside of God is a haughty look and a proud heart. There are a few things that just struck me about God's sympathies very powerfully when I was a young Christian and in the ministry. And, you know, a few of them.

I knew that God loves those who will trust him in a childlike way. That's a good thing. I knew that God loves those who love others.

And I knew that God loves humility and hates pride. And just growing up, at least from my teenage years on, I'm very sensitized to that, very much aware that I'm a proud person. And yet how offensive that is to God and always desiring to be more humble and wondering how can you get there from here? You know, how do you get more humble? Obviously, there's a bit of a catch 22 with this matter of being humble, because you never really know if you are.

And if you are and you know it, then there's a chance you're going to be proud of yourself for that, because it's a value that you aim at. There really aren't that many people who seem very humble. And if you get there from where you are, if you actually do seem humble and you become aware of it, then you're likely to compare yourself favorably against other people.

Say, well, they're not humble. It's funny. We've had some pretty funny students in our schools over the years.

And I remember once at lunchtime, my children overheard two of the students talking about something. I don't know much of the conversation, except they heard this line. One said, no way.

I'm way more humble than you. I'm sure it was spoken in Jeff, but the expression itself just really does. I mean, that does express some people's attitude, whether it would be silly enough to say it or not.

You know, I'm way more humble than that person. Well, then you're not. Or at least maybe you are, maybe they're less humble than you are, but you're not very humble.

Remember, Paul said, if anyone thinks he knows anything, he knows nothing as he ought to know. Which I think means this, that of course you do know some things. But if you think of yourself as knowing something, then you're not aware of how much you don't know.

And therefore, you're not knowing what you do know with the proper sense of humility. You give yourself credit for knowing a lot. Well, then you don't have the humility to realize that you don't know much of anything compared to what's out there to be known.

What percentage of all knowledge do you have after all? Not one millionth of one percent. So pride is just so inappropriate for people. It's just so uncalled for.

And how does one get humbled? Well, of course, a lot of times people who value humility will pray for humility. They say, God, make me humble. But that could be a mistake.

Only because God doesn't really ever promise to humble you. He commands you to humble yourself. Everywhere throughout the scripture is the exhortation, humble yourself, lower yourself, take the lower seat.

Humbling yourself, the word humble means to be made low. So make yourself low. Esteem others better than yourself, Paul said in Philippians chapter 2. In honor preferring one another, honoring others more than you honor yourself, he says in Romans 12, 10.

There's lots of places that talk about what it means to humble yourself. It means to simply become the servant. You do it.

Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus. He was in the form of God, but he emptied himself. God didn't humble him.

Jesus humbled himself and took on the form of a servant. Humbling is something you do to yourself. God commands it.

The Bible doesn't say, pray to me and I will humble you. If God has to humble you, it's never a very good thing. It's because you refuse to humble yourself.

God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore, humble yourself in the sight of the Lord that he may lift you up. You don't say, God humble me, because if he does, it's going to hurt.

Because when God humbles you, it's only because that's a discipline. You should have humbled yourself. God shouldn't have had to humble you.

When God humbles someone, it's usually humiliating. It's not a humbling. It's a humiliation.

Humbling yourself is simply that you think reasonably about yourself. Like Paul said in Romans 12, 3, let no one think more highly of himself than he ought, but rather let him think soberly. Be sober, be in touch with reality.

Don't think higher of yourself than you ought to think. And I think this is one of the things that Christians have to have as a fundamental conviction that they're thinking about all the time, that God hates pride in people. And therefore, our lives need to continually be just a habit of bringing ourselves lower because our tendency in our human nature is to try to elevate ourself.

Be noticed, be recognized, be complimented, be appreciated, be exalted. The way our nature is always gravitating that direction. And so it's like we have to keep putting ourselves back down in our proper place.

Not always speaking in a self-deprecating manner, not a false humility that pretends to be something that you're not, something lower than what you really are. There's no reason in the world that you should have to deny the good things that God has given you. What you need to deny is that that in any way gives you reason to be proud.

After all, they're what God has given you, not what you have acquired. It's what God has done. And so if somebody says, wow, you really are good at this or you're good at that or, you know, you don't have to deny that you're good at it if it is true.

I mean, it's never safe to depart from the truth and lie in order to sound humble. It's much better to just say, well, you know, that is a gift that God's given. Thank God.

You know, I appreciate the gifts and other people, too. God is the gracious God. He gives people lots of gifts and he's given me some gifts that I really appreciate.

And I don't know why he has entrusted them to me because I'm not really that good a manager of them. Seems like he might have more wisely given such gifts to someone better than me. And, you know, the people who think well of me, well, I know better than

they who I am.

I know that the things they are impressed with are things that may be genuinely present, but they are not present because of my goodness. They're present because of the gifts of God. If they actually knew me better, they would save their accolades for someone more worthy of them.

That's what a truly humble person is continually reminding himself of. That's not that's not a phony kind of false humility trying to make yourself seem lower than you really are. It's just recognizing how low you really are.

It's not allowing yourself to delude yourself to think you're better than someone else or to compare yourself with an unreasonable person to compare yourself. You can if you want to feel better about yourself, you can always find someone who's worse than you and say, I'm better than they are. But the problem is you can always find someone who's better than you and say I'm worse than they.

You're never the best or the worst. There's always someone better and someone worse. And if you're using other people to compare yourself and say, where do I stand here? You're not going to be judged by the national average.

God's not going to grade on a curve. He basically says, here's the standard I have for you. And that's to be like my son, Jesus.

He's the model man. He said, I've given you an example that you should do as I've done. And as long as you keep your eye on Jesus, then you're not really going to ever think that you're very close to the goal, probably.

And you're going to see yourself as humbly as you probably should. Now, we'll take just one more of these points today and then we'll have to break and save another for next time. And it is in chapter 17 and verse 15, another one of God's sentiments, his sympathies.

Chapter 17 of Proverbs and verse 15. He who justifies the wicked and he who condemns the just, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord. So, in other words, it is principally applicable to judges and magistrates who make legal decisions, legal decisions between the plaintiff and the defendant in some kind of an action brought to court.

That if the person is guilty and he's released as innocent, that's an abomination of the Lord. If he's innocent and he's condemned as if he's guilty, that's an abomination equally to the Lord. I remember hearing when I was in school, I think it was in junior high, some famous American, I don't remember who it was because I didn't pay very much attention in school to history.

I remember hearing a quote and having that stick in my mind, but it was some famous person in American history said something like, I'd rather see a hundred guilty people go free than one innocent party, you know, convicted and punished in court. That is better than having one innocent person go to jail. I'd rather see a hundred people who deserve to go to jail, not.

And that kind of sounded for some reason right and humanitarian to me when I heard it at the time. But then this verse is that which kind of made me rethink that. There's two things equally abominable to the Lord.

One is when the innocent party is punished. The other is when the guilty party is not punished. The court should be exactly just.

And it's an abomination to God when the courts are not just. And of course, this would apply to our personal assessments of people, too. I mean, we treat people according to the way we size them up and we judge people according to whether we think they've done the right thing or the wrong thing.

And sometimes we don't have adequate evidence to know. Remember, Proverbs says he that is first in his own cause seems right until his neighbor comes and examines him. And he that answers the matter before he hears it, it's a shame and a folly to him.

There's times when we've heard a rumor, we've heard something about somebody and we've heard the negative information, but we haven't heard the other. Marriage counselors have to be very careful about this because they'll hear the wife's side of the story and she can tell it very well or the husband's side. They've heard only one side of the story.

And in a marriage counseling situation, people who go to marriage counselors almost always think that they are the innocent party in the conflicts between them and their spouse. If you hear only one of them, you're going to side with them because they probably are telling you the truth as they see it. And they're aware of their own victimhood.

They're aware of their own disappointment. They're aware of all the times that their spouse has wronged them. And you might make a judgment against their spouse without hearing the other side.

When you hear the other side, you realize that, wait a minute, if you hear these two people separately, you wonder if this is the same marriage. Because it's like from her point of view, it's all his fault. From his point of view, it's all her fault.

And that's why it's so important not to make judgments. A lot of people are friends of the husband or friends of the wife and they only hear the one side, you know, at a coffee clatch or sitting at a bar or something. They hear someone complain about their wife or

someone complain about their husband and they never hear the other side.

And they form a view that they either condemn that they might condemn that party and they don't know if they're innocent or not. To condemn somebody who's innocent is not OK with God. And so not only in a court of law, but in the court of private or public opinion, it's an abomination for innocent people to be treated as if they've done something wrong.

And for guilty people to be treated as if they haven't. So those are among the things that we learn about God's values, God's sympathies, living in the awareness of these things. It's a very practical thing to know these things.

If you are a person who fears God and wants to please him, knowing the things that are going to make God unhappy are really going to be a top priority for us. And so Solomon talks about some of those things. There are several more on our list that we'll have to wait until another time.

So we'll stop at this point.