

Bible Study # 81
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The Writings Series—Proverbs 1—9

Well, we have finally finished up the Psalms and **are getting into the book of Proverbs this evening**. The English title “Proverbs” is a pretty good translation of the Hebrew word that is the title of this book. The word in Hebrew is derived from the Hebrew word “*mashal*,” which literally means “rule.” The sense of the title in Hebrew is “words to rule or govern your life with.” It’s pretty much the sense of the English word “proverbs.” It is a short statement, or summing up, that is a good rule for life. That is the meaning of the word in Hebrew.

The book of Proverbs was written over quite a lengthy period of time. King Solomon compiled the majority of the Proverbs. But there is a record in the book of Proverbs that certain other portions were compiled by the men of King Hezekiah and by various other unnamed wise men.

The book of Proverbs can be divided into **seven sections**. If we look briefly, I think we will see that these seven sections are fairly clear.

The **first section** of Proverbs is a very short section. It is simply the first six verses, which is the introduction. It gives the title and the purpose of the book.

Proverbs 1:1-6, “The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion—a wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel, to understand a proverb and an enigma, the words of the wise and their riddles [KJV, “dark sayings”].” This is sort of a summary of the purpose of the book. The first section gives the introduction, the title and the purpose of the book.

The **second section** begins with Proverbs 1:7 and continues through Proverbs 9:18 (the last verse of chapter 9). Beginning in Proverbs 1:7, we begin to get into the Proverbs themselves.

Proverbs 1:7, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.” This section, the second section of Proverbs, is basically a discourse on understanding and wisdom. If you

read through, you will notice the first nine chapters are more of a lengthy discourse and there is some story flow to it.

The **third section** begins in Proverbs 10:1.

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon:”

When you get into chapter 10, you have, in many cases, these short, one-verse statements. It starts out clearly setting out that this is a special section because the first part of Proverbs 10:1 says, “The proverbs of Solomon” and then goes through the third section, which is really the **first body** of Proverbs by King Solomon. We start out in Proverbs 10:1 and go all the way down through chapter 22:16. This is the first body of Proverbs written by Solomon.

The **fourth section** is the **second body** of Proverbs. This is from Proverbs 22:17 down through the end of Proverbs 24:34. This body of Proverbs is labeled as “the words of the wise.”

Proverbs 22:17, “Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge.”

Proverbs 10:1, we are told, “The proverbs of Solomon:” When we get down to this second body of Proverbs, these come from a miscellaneous number of sources that were copied out. They were not proverbs that originated with Solomon, though they may very well have been proverbs that he wrote and were included in, but he attributes them as the sayings of the wise.

The **fifth section** is the **third body** of Proverbs. We find this section begins in Proverbs 25:1 and comes down through the end of chapter 29—chapters 25, 26, 27, 28 and 29.

Proverbs 25:1, “These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied...” Here is a section of Proverbs that Solomon had written, yet, had not been included in the original book of Proverbs as Solomon had left it. They were other proverbs of Solomon that now, at a later period of history, the men of Hezekiah copied out and added in. It is a third body of Proverbs—again, proverbs in the sense of short, succinct statements.

You’ll remember that once we got through the introduction of the first six verses, then nearly the whole first nine chapters were a lengthy discourse, not the little short quick statements that are made throughout the rest of the book. We’ve come through these three bodies of Proverbs.

Now the **sixth section**, Proverbs 30, is what is called “the words of Agur.”

Proverbs 30:1, “The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, his utterance. This man declared to Ithiel—to Ithiel and Ucal...” It doesn’t say who Agur was. There have been some who have speculated that it was maybe some sort of a title that could have even applied to Solomon, but it doesn’t say that. It is attributed to Agur in this way.

The **seventh section** is Proverbs 31.

Proverbs 31:1, it’s labeled, “The words of King Lemuel, the utterance which his mother taught him...” Here in Proverbs 31 is the account of the virtuous woman. This is basically what a mother taught her son to look for in a wife and what is of real value.

We find that we have these seven sections. As we go through, we find that each has its own area.

Proverbs is written as a combination—on the one hand, a discourse, and on the other, what was called an “aphorism.” “Aphorism” means “a concise statement of a principle,” a short, pointed sentence making a moral point. One of the things about proverbs is that so much of it can be summed up in one or two verses. It is a very short, concise statement and then moves on to a totally different subject. Most of Proverbs are written this way. This short, concise statement that is summed up in just a sentence or so is called an aphorism. Most of these employ a parallelism.

Let me give you an example. **There are different kinds of parallels.** There’s what is called “**synonymous parallels.**”

Proverbs 14:19, for instance, “The evil will bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous.” **Now, that’s sort of two different ways of saying exactly the same thing.** That’s what’s called a synonymous parallel.

What is parallelism and what is the purpose? It’s a poetic device used to emphasize the point that’s being made. The Proverbs are written in a poetic way. They are written in a way that sums up a moral point in just a few words. One of the main ways this is made is through parallelism. There’s a parallel that’s drawn that serve to emphasize. Sometimes it’s a synonymous parallel.

Proverbs 18:7, another example of a synonymous parallel is, “A fool’s mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.” This is synonymous. It sort of restates the same thing. It is synonymous in its parallel. It states the same thing in slightly different words.

Now, there is a second example or type of parallelism called “**antithetic parallelism.**”

That means that the second clause presents a contrast to the first clause.

Proverbs 13:25, an example of that is, “The righteous eats to the satisfying of his soul, but the stomach of the wicked shall be in want.” Here’s a contrast that’s made. It’s not saying the same thing. The first part of the verse talks about the righteous; the second part talks about the wicked. The first part talks about the righteous having plenty and the second is about the wicked being without. There is a contrast. The parallelism is of opposites or of contrasts.

Proverbs 17:22, “A merry heart does good, like medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” There is a contrast here. It serves as a matter of emphasis but through contrast.

A third kind of parallel is what is called “**synthetic parallel.**” **This means that the second clause continues the thought of the first.**

Proverbs 19:11, “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” Here, you see that the second clause is not an exact; it’s not saying the same thing as the first. It’s not synonymous and doesn’t make a contrast. It does something else—it continues the development of that thought. “The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression.” It further develops the thought.

Proverbs 20:13, another example of that would be, “Do not love sleep, lest you come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will be satisfied with bread.” It further develops the thought of the first.

A fourth kind of parallel is a “**parallel of comparison.**”

Proverbs 10:26, for instance, “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to those who send him.” That’s a comparison. It’s not saying exactly the same thing. It’s not a contrast. It’s not further developing it. It is a comparison. **It is taking two things and compares them.** Now, what does vinegar do? “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” Well, drink a good mouthful of vinegar and see what it does. It puts your teeth on edge. If you get in an area that’s real smoky, what does it do? The smoke irritates your eyes. “Vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes.” What do they have in common? Well, they put you on edge; they are irritants. “So is the sluggard to those that send him.” You send somebody lazy to do a job and he just “pokes” along. What happens? Notice how your patience just wears down. I know that’s never happened to some, but it’s happened

to the rest of us. This type of Proverb makes a comparison. It uses a description and then it compares it to something. It's a poetic device, but it sort of brings it out. That's what a comparison does.

Proverbs 25:11, another example, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver." Here's a comparison. A word fitly spoken is not apples of gold, but it says it is *like* apples of gold. So, on the one hand, you have something really beautiful, precious and valuable. That's the way a word fitly spoken is—the right word at the right time. It's a beautiful thing. It's valuable. There is a comparison that is brought out.

There are different kinds of parallels that are drawn, but one of the things that is common to virtually all the Proverbs is that they use the device of parallelism. They make a parallel. It may be a synonymous parallel where you just restate the same thing in different words. It may be a contrast in parallel where you state one thing and then state sort of the opposite; you make a contrast between two opposite things. It may be a synthetic, a blending parallel where the second clause just continues and develops the thought of the first. Or it may be a comparison parallel where you compare one thing to something else and you parallel it that way.

This is most, or all, of what are called the three bodies of Proverbs. The first body by King Solomon (chapters 10-22) is sort of the heart and core of the book. The second body of Proverbs is Proverbs 22:17 through 24:34. They are called "the words of the wise." They were miscellaneous proverbs copied out. And then the third body of Proverbs (Proverbs 25 through 29) is proverbs of Solomon copied out by the men of Hezekiah. All of those use that type of development.

A key word in the book of Proverbs is the word wisdom. This is, really, one of the main terms used. It comes from a word in the Hebrew language that relates to sound judgment. It's a combination of knowledge, understanding and action that are all intertwined, all sort of put together.

Knowledge is a matter of knowing facts. Take, for example, somebody who's gone to college. He's just fresh out with a degree and has a lot of facts, a lot of information. He has a brand new job he's just started. He's never had to put those facts to practical application. But boy, he's taken all kinds of tests and he knew the right answers. He has knowledge.

After he's worked on the job for a while, he may begin to develop a little understanding as to how you apply that knowledge to practical everyday situations. When he comes fresh out of school, he may have a lot of knowledge but doesn't have a whole lot of understanding. In fact, you can have some people out there who never had that level of education and knowledge, but they have understanding because they have dealt in the practical area of it—of how to make some of these things work. Understanding goes beyond knowledge.

Wisdom combines knowledge and understanding. It adds in a little extra ingredient. On the one hand, you can have somebody who comes out of school with a lot of knowledge; he knows a lot of facts. After he's worked for a while, he has some practical experience. He begins to understand how to apply those facts in practical situations. Then over a period of time, he develops wisdom as to how to do it, when to do it and how to put the whole thing together. It's not only knowing what to do and understanding how to apply it, but also when to apply and how to go about putting it into practice. He has the wisdom that comes with putting the whole thing together.

Wisdom is a very important concept in the book of Proverbs. It combines knowledge and understanding and goes beyond the two.

Another key word in the book of Proverbs is the word instruction. The word "instruction" comes from the Hebrew word "*nuwcar*." It could mean "discipline" because instructions have to do with discipline. Instructions are the means by which our life is disciplined and guided. Proverbs emphasizes the importance of instruction and discipline in our lives. It emphasizes the importance of gaining wisdom. This is really strongly emphasized.

As we come back to the beginning of Proverbs, we notice the purpose of Proverbs to begin with.

Proverbs 1:2, "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding..." The starting point is: Why is the book of Proverbs in the Bible? It is so that we can come to have wisdom, plus instruction and discipline in our lives.

Verses 2-4, "to know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion..."

There are some things that come out with age and experience. One of the purposes of Proverbs

is that it was specifically written to give help to young people. It's an important book for all of us. I don't think there are any of us who are so wise that we can't gain something from Proverbs. But it has particular value for young people because they haven't yet had the amount of lessons of life's experience. Just living life will teach you some of the lessons in Proverbs.

The problem is that if you haven't come to understand some of those things until the end of your life, then you have missed out on a lot of years when you could have done them and been better off. You don't want to end up your life full of regrets saying, 'If I'd known this or that.' Some things we are going to learn by experience, but there's a lot that we can have the "edge" on.

It's written, here, that one of its purposes is to give prudence (KJV, "subtlety") to the simple. The Jewish version translates it "shrewdness," a safeguard against being misled. There's a certain naïve quality to someone who is young and lacks experience in life. There's a certain amount of gullibility that comes in. Proverbs has as its purpose to help young people to not be quite so gullible and to guide toward knowledge and discretion.

Verse 5 shows that, "a wise man will hear and increase learning, ..." A wise man is not a know-it-all. Somebody who thinks he knows everything is somebody who doesn't really know a whole lot because somebody who doesn't think that he has anything left to learn just shows how much he has left to learn. It's like he doesn't even know what he doesn't know. A wise person is somebody who goes through life desiring to continue learning. We can all continue to learn as long as we are alive and think, 'All this we can learn.'

It continues and we are told the starting point for true wisdom.

Verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The beginning of wisdom—the starting point—starts with the fear of the Lord. This doesn't mean being scared of God. It's talking about a deep reverence for God. It's the only starting point. If you separate God from knowledge, knowledge becomes an instrument of destruction instead of construction. Look at so much of what we've built up. You know our problems in the world today are not because of a lack of knowledge. We have the ability to blast ourselves off the planet several times over.

"The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." We see that we need to start out really reverencing

God. Mr. Herbert Armstrong wanted to have it inscribed on the cornerstone of Ambassador Hall (the main classroom building), "The Word of God is the Foundation of Knowledge." Knowledge that isn't based on God's Word isn't knowledge. That doesn't say that the Bible contains all knowledge, but it is the foundation on which all other knowledge must be able to stand. The Bible is not written to tell us everything we need to know about the subject of geology, archeology, biology or whatever it may be, but it gives us basic principles. If you lay those aside, you can't understand the rest of it. The Bible deals in principles with every issue and everything.

Verse 8, "My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother..." *The key advice (sort of a starting point) in Proverbs focuses on the need of young people to heed their parents' teaching and instruction.* That's an important part. 'Listen to the instruction and discipline of your father; don't forsake the law of your mother.'

That's sort of like a sign I saw the other day, this "takeoff" to young people: "You better hurry up and do all this stuff while you still know all the answers because as you get a little older, you are going to realize how much you don't know." Sometimes it's rather hard to tell somebody who is maybe about 16 years of age that they don't know quite as much as they think they do. Most of us who have been parents and had children about that age realize that there is a point in a young person's life where they are amazed at how much they know and how little you know. As they get a little older, their perspective sort of changes.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong and others have made statements something to that effect. Mr. Armstrong said he left home and was amazed at how much his father learned from the time he was age 16 and the time he was age 25. It was amazing how his father went from being one of the dumbest men around, to being the smartest man he ever knew. It was a matter of perspective that came in.

A starting point—a focus in something that is important—is, 'Young people hear the instruction of your father, forsake not the law of your mother.' Realize that there is a level of experience and a level of just life that has been lived. That's really important and something that young people can really profit from in taking advantage of the things that their parents have learned and gone through.

Verse 9, “for they [wisdom, instruction, law] will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck.”

Verse 10, it warns, “My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”

There are two things that it focuses on beginning in Proverbs 1:9 coming down through chapter 2. *It focuses on discretion and understanding.* Discretion and understanding, we are told, will protect a young person from the corrupting influence of the wrong kind of people. It will protect them from men who are corrupt and have upside down values—in other words, those who are lawless or criminally inclined—and immoral, loose women.

There are two areas that young men are warned about. One is getting tangled up with the wrong kind of men—people who are dishonest. This could be involving yourself in everything from the wrong kind of business dealings to just a wild bunch of people who are headed for trouble. *There are two things that young men need to be warned about. First, stay away from the wrong kind of men*—the kind of men who are dishonest, corrupt or wild, men who are not honest and law abiding. Keep away from that bunch because they are going to get you into trouble. *Second, young men need to be warned to stay away from immoral, loose women* because they will get you into trouble, too. That is very much brought out as we come down in Proverbs 1 and 2.

Proverbs 2:1-7, “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; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; ...”

Verse 11, “discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep [KJV, “preserve”] you...” This expression of being discreet—of knowing when to do what—has to do with a certain careful, cautious approach. Understanding or discernment is being able to distinguish between what is appropriate and what is not. These things will preserve you.

Verse 12, “to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things...” —In other words, things that are upside down, things that are contrary to what’s true.

Verses 14-15, “who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths...” You have men who are dishonest, people whose ways are upside down. You may get entangled with the wrong crowd, but knowledge, discretion and understanding will deliver you. It will keep you away from men who are dishonest, men who are not honorable in their intent and in their behavior.

Verses 16-17, “To deliver you 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.” This is someone who is not faithful to her marriage vows and who has turned aside from the teachings of morality that she received.

Verses 18-21, “For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead; none who go to her return, 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...” There’s an emphasis, here, on discretion, understanding, and protecting young people from corrupting influences.

Can we afford to trust in our own feelings?

Proverbs 3:5-6, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” In what can you trust? For some people, their trust and confidence is in the way they feel. The guide for their life is just their feelings, their emotions—I don’t feel like “this” or “that.” I tell you what, there are times I may not feel like getting up in the morning, and many times you don’t feel like getting up in the morning. There are some people who just go through life and, if they don’t feel like it, they don’t do it. But for those people, life doesn’t seem to go too well for them. Life doesn’t always feel good; doing what we should do doesn’t always feel good, but it is what we need to do.

It says, here, in what we are to put our trust—“Trust in the Lord with all your heart.” What is going to guide you? ‘Don’t lean to your own understanding’—the way it seems to me. If what God tells me is different from what I have come up with on my own, who am I going to trust? God says, ‘No, don’t do this. It’s going to hurt you.’ And my buddy over here says, ‘Yeah, go ahead and try it. It won’t hurt.’ Now, in whom do I have the most confidence?

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways

acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” If you really want God to lead and guide you, He will.

Verse 7, “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.” That’s a starting point.

The first key to prosperity that the book of Proverbs gives is right here.

Verses 9-10, “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine.” A starting point for getting ahead is putting God first. There are many principles in the book of Proverbs about getting ahead and prospering. There are many principles and we will notice some of them as we go through. *But the starting point is putting God first; honor Him with the firstfruits.*

Verses 11-12, we are told, “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor detest His correction; for whom the Lord loves He corrects, just as a father the son in whom he delights.” God corrects His children. Many times circumstances and various things are there to instruct and to chasten us.

Verses 13-16, “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her. Length of days is in her right hand, in her left hand riches and honor.”

It is talking about wisdom and the importance of wisdom. Wisdom, we are told, is more precious than rubies. Wisdom has greater value than all sorts of money and material things because there are a lot of people who have money, but they lack the wisdom to properly live and enjoy life.

Verses 17-18, “Her [speaking of wisdom] ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her.” Wisdom is something that leads to a happy and successful life. It is far more than just an accumulation of money. There are a lot of people who have accumulated a lot of money who have been awfully big failures. They have lived miserable, unhappy lives and have seen a lot of tragedy. Some of the people the world would see as being the most successful have been miserable and have committed suicide.

Look at someone like Elvis Presley or Marilyn Monroe. You would think they had the things that everybody thinks would make them happy.

They had fame and fortune. Elvis Presley didn’t have to worry about enough money to buy what he wanted. He lived in a fabulous mansion. He was famous, popular and all kinds of things. How many people thought Marilyn Monroe was pretty and glamorous? She had all sorts of people after her attention.

You can think of different people, different entertainers—people that on the surface had what most people think, ‘If I had that, I’d be happy. If I was famous, popular, beautiful, rich and people liked me, oh, that would be wonderful.’ There were people that had some of those things, and, yet, you read about their lives in their latter years and they were miserable. They were miserable and unhappy. There’s a lot more to happiness. What they lacked—and what so many people lack—is not money and some of these things; it’s the wisdom of how to properly relate to God and to our fellowman and to be able to live a productive, serving life that involves and is based on wisdom.

We see the value of wisdom that’s laid out. It’s more precious than any price tag you could put on it. It continues to stress the importance of wisdom through chapter 3.

Verses 21-23, “My son, let them not depart from your eyes—keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck. Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.” It describes the way we walk through life directed by wisdom.

Proverbs 4:1-7, “Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, and give attention to know understanding; for I give you good doctrine: do not forsake my law. When I was my father’s son, tender and the only one in the sight of my mother, he also taught me, and said to me: ‘Let your heart retain my words; keep my commands, and live. Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.’”

Again, this emphasizes wisdom and acquiring wisdom. We are told wisdom is the principal thing. In that sense, focus on getting wisdom—pursue it. Wisdom ultimately comes from God. Who is the wisest Being in the entire universe? God is! The source of wisdom is God. We can go to God for wisdom of what to do, how to do it and when to do it. Wisdom involves all of those things—the *knowledge of what*, the *understanding of how*, and the *wisdom that puts*

the two of those together with when. What's appropriate, how it fits in and when it fits in.

Verses 14-16, "Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evil. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn away from it and pass on. For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; and their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall." Unless they get into something, they just can't get a good night's rest. It says don't get tangled up in that.

Verse 19, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble."

Verse 24, "Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put perverse lips far from you." We are told to put away the deceitful mouth and the perverse lips—in other words, lies, falsification of the truth and evil slanderous words. Get rid of the things that we say that are hurtful, harmful and false, things that are going to stir up and create trouble.

Proverbs 5:1-6, "My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and that your lips may keep knowledge. For the lips of an immoral woman drip honey, and her mouth is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps lay hold of hell. Lest you ponder her path of life—her ways are unstable; you do not know them."

Verses 8-11, "Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house, lest you give your honor to others, and your years to the cruel one; lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner; and you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed..."

As you go through, it gives very practical things and describes, in a poetic way, instructions to a young man to stay away from loose, immoral women. It talks about how they may seem so sweet and pretty and "this" and "that," but in the end, she is bitter as wormwood and sharp as a two-edged sword. The end of it is bitter, and it's going to hurt.

"Remove your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house." Get away. Don't even get close. Stay away from this kind of person.

What are the consequences if you don't? "Lest you give your honor to others [One of the things that will happen is that you'll harm your reputation; it will hurt your reputation.], and your years to the cruel one." A lot of people have become entangled in unhappy, miserable

marriages. They've become entangled in things, and some of the years that should have been their young and happy years, they have been tangled up with some real hurt and real pain.

"Lest aliens be filled with your wealth, and your labors go to the house of a foreigner." One of the consequences, when people get tangled up in immorality, is that they may have children out of wedlock, which winds up being costly or they wind up marrying and divorcing. Strangers ultimately are filled with their wealth. They are working, and it's all going out—everything from child support payments to whatever.

There are several problems. One is about reputation. It also talks about the years of young adulthood (the 20s and 30s). Instead of years of pleasantness and happiness, it is years that you are in a cruel, unhappy situation. It talks about economic problems.

"And you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed." Venereal disease is not a new thing. It was around in Solomon's day. It's talking about diseases you can get. AIDS, of course, is quite well known at this point in time, but there have been all sorts of different ones around. When some of these things happen, then you will regret it.

Verse 15, the point is, "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well." That's not talking about the fact that you shouldn't ask somebody for a drink of water if you're at a neighbor's house. It is a poetic description of the fact that a husband and wife should enjoy one another and be faithful to one another. That's what it's talking about.

Verses 15-17, "Drink water from your own cistern, and running water from your own well. Should your fountains be disperse abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be only your own, and not for strangers with you." This is talking about your children.

Verse 18, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth." This is a very poetic description of the importance of being faithful—one man and one woman loving one another, saving themselves for one another, and being faithful to one another. It's a very important point.

We see that verses 3-4 make the contrast—how an immoral woman might appear beautiful and desirable, but the end result is very bitter and very painful.

Verse 15 says a man should find contentment with his lawful wife and not get tangled up pursuing others. This is a very important section.

Have you noticed? When he starts talking about wisdom, what does he start talking about?

If you go through this section of Proverbs, you will find that most of Proverbs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8, when he is focusing on wisdom, he spends an awful lot of time talking about money and sex. Those have been the things that have been the downfall for an awful lot of people. They've become tangled up in dishonest schemes and things that were not honest and honorable.

We have some big "high rollers" who are spending their time in jail right now. I think Charles Keating just got released from jail today. He was the one that was behind some of the big savings and loan crisis. He got several congressmen and senators who had been catching a little heat, too.

On the one hand, people get tangled up in things that they shouldn't, in terms of money. Another thing has to do with morality and the distinction there. These are areas that really tie into wisdom. In chapters 4 and 5, we saw the emphasis on sex. Now in chapter 6 we get back to money again.

Proverbs 6:1-2, "My son, if you become surety for your friend, if you have shaken hands in pledge for a stranger, you are snared by the words of your own mouth; you are taken by the words of your mouth."

Verse 3, you better go humble yourself and see if you can get out of it. This is talking about people who are quick to obligate themselves for someone else's debt—being surety and co-signing. Boy, you can get yourself into a heap of trouble there.

Verses 6-9, "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, which, having no captain, overseer or ruler, provides her supplies in the summer, and gathers her food in the harvest. How long will you slumber, O sluggard? When will you rise from your sleep?"

We are talking about money and management. Go to the ant. Learn something from the ant. What ways of the ant can you consider to be wise? Well, the ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it. There's not another little ant out there cracking a whip saying, 'Hurry up.' They don't have a guide, an overseer or ruler. There's not one little ant that's making the other little ants do it. Ants, by nature, do what they are supposed to do. They provide their food in the summer and gather their food in the harvest. They take advantage of the opportunity. When are you going to gather your food? —After it is all rotted? It's pointing out the ant as an example of diligence.

There were warnings earlier about avoiding the person who is dishonest and corrupt and about entangling ourselves in things. Now, it says there are some wise things to do. One is to be diligent. Look at the ant. The ant does what it is supposed to do, when it is supposed to do it, and it takes advantage of and uses opportunity. That's an important lesson of managing our affairs. That's what the ant is doing. It is taking advantage of opportunity. When the opportunity presents itself, use it because opportunity is here and then it's gone. Opportunity doesn't just stay.

Verse 9 is talking about the person who is lazy and just kind of lies around. They never get up and do what they are supposed to do.

Verses 10-11, "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall your poverty come on you like a robber, and your need like an armed man." It says that if you're lazy and just lie around and you don't get up and work and do what you should do, you are going to find yourself caught by surprise with a lot of problems.

Verses 16-19, "These six things the Lord hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren."

Here are things that God absolutely hates. It focuses in on an attitude of pride. We can convey outwardly the way we think and feel inwardly. It starts out by talking about a proud look. A proud look is reflective of a proud heart. God hates that. He hates a lying tongue—somebody that's dishonest, corrupt and harms and hurts innocent people. God hates "a heart that devises wicked imagination [plans]"—up to things they shouldn't be. He "who sows discord among brethren" is something God hates. God does not value and appreciate discord. He values harmony. We should desire to live in peace. We are not to go out and try to stir up trouble and get people mad at one another. We are not to spread rumors and gossip that serve to agitate and stir up people to where we turn people against one another. That's not God's way.

Psalms 133:1, he says, "...how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" One of the things God hates is sowing discord among brethren—stirring people up and spreading things that hurt and separate and cause problems.

Proverbs 6:20-23, "My son, keep your father's command, and do not forsake the law of your

mother. Bind them continually upon your heart; tie them around your neck. When you roam, they will lead you; when you sleep, they will keep you; and when you awake, they will speak with you. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life..." It illuminates the way we should travel through life.

Verses 24-29, "to keep you from the evil woman, from the flattering tongue of a seductress. Do not lust after her beauty in your heart, nor let her allure you with her eyelids. For by means of a harlot a man is reduced to a crust of bread; and an adulteress will prey upon his precious life. Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; whoever touches her shall not be innocent."

Verse 32, "Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul." It's talking about the problems and consequences that result. These are some very important principles that are brought out. It says he who "commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding." He's not considering the end result of his conduct, which is the destruction of everything that's really important. That's a lack of understanding because if you really think it through, you realize that it just doesn't make sense. It's just not something that is going to be good.

Proverbs 7:1-7, "My son, keep my words, and treasure my commands within you. Keep my commands and live, and my law as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, 'You are my sister,' and call understanding your nearest kin, that they may keep you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words. For at the window of my house I looked through my lattice, and saw among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding..."

Here's a young man who is not too bright, walking down the street. It describes this in a poetic fashion.

Verses 8-18, "passing along the street near her corner; and he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night. And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart. She was loud and rebellious, her feet would not stay at home. At times she was outside, at times in the open square, lurking at every corner. So she caught him and kissed him; with an impudent face she

said to him: 'I have peace offerings with me; today I have paid my vows. So I came out to meet you, diligently to seek your face, and I have found you. I have spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love.'"

Verses 21-22, "With her enticing speech she caused him to yield, with her flattering lips she seduced him. Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks..." It's talking about the problems that come. A harlot is pictured, this immoral woman.

Notice several things about her. One, she is described with the attire of a harlot, "And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot, and a crafty heart." She is described as dressing in a seductive way, dressing in a way that does not reflect decency and modesty.

Sometimes you drive down the street in certain areas of town and see somebody standing there. You don't have to give a whole lot of guesses as to what their trade is; it's pretty obvious just by the way they are dressed. Unfortunately, sometimes this sort of appearance gets copied and shouldn't be. We should be conscious of that and teach our young girls to be conscious of that. You don't want to look like a streetwalker. You just don't! That is nothing that is good and nothing that is to be copied.

Yet, there's certain ways of looking, ways of dress and appearance that just sort of stands out that way. It describes that she does not reflect decency and modesty in the way that she dresses and grooms herself.

Then it says she is "loud and rebellious [stubborn]." She is pictured as dressing in a seductive way and is loud, wild, rebellious and stubborn. She's a "gad-about." She's the very opposite of the picture of a godly woman. In Proverbs 7:9-11, you see this picture.

1 Peter 3:2-6, now compare that with, "when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of arranging the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible ornament of a gently and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham," The very opposite is described here.

Titus 2:3-5, “the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

That’s quite a contrast to someone who has on the attire of a harlot, is loud and stubborn, out running the streets and never staying home. It’s sort of like this fiasco—this soap opera—that was played out on television by way of a trial down in Florida several weeks ago. You remember the one involving Senator Kennedy’s nephew and this woman that he picked up at a bar. I don’t have to know all the details, but I can just tell you this—you won’t find the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 hanging out in a bar at two or three o’clock in the morning, picking up some strange man and going home with him. That’s just not where you go to look if you are looking for the virtuous woman. Of course, she wasn’t looking for the virtuous man either. They each sort of found what they were looking for, and then somewhere along the line, a disagreement set in.

There are places that you just don’t go if you are not looking for trouble. You don’t have to be the smartest fellow to ever “come down the pipe” to figure out the caliber of people that hang around in these places at some sort of oddball hour. Nobody is up to any good when they are out hanging around some joint, boozing it up in the wee hours of the morning. There’s just nothing constructive and good going on. Decent people are home in bed. The ones that are hanging around the bars are looking for trouble and chances are they are going to find it. It may not be the trouble they wanted, but that’s just the way it is. There’s a lot of grief and trouble that comes.

If we are where we need to be, doing what we should do, we can save ourselves a lot of grief. I daresay both of them probably look back on that and have cause to regret what they got into that night. I suspect Kennedy’s nephew and the woman each paid a heavy price in some of those ways. That’s an example that’s gotten a lot of publicity because it involves someone who’s a well-known public figure. But believe me, that kind of thing happens on a regular basis involving people that aren’t famous, so it never really makes the news. That kind of thing happens and it happens a lot.

People’s lives are messed up and unhappy and that’s one of the things Proverbs says. Proverbs is advice to young people, ‘Hey, that’s not a smart thing to do. That’s not going to make you happy. That’s not going to lead to real satisfaction in life. It’s going to lead to a lot of grief and a lot of pain.’

Proverbs 7:22, the end result for the young man who goes that path, “Immediately he went after her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks...” They don’t know what they are getting into until they are there. An ox isn’t very smart. He goes right into the slaughter pen and doesn’t know what is going on until it’s too late. A cow is just not an animal that has a lot of foresight. That’s what it is comparing here. It’s comparing a lack of foresight. People get into something and don’t realize what they are into until it’s too late to get out. It says that this kind of young man just sort of gets into something and doesn’t figure out what’s going to happen until it’s too late.

Verse 23, “till an arrow struck his liver. As a bird hastens to the snare, he did not know it would take his life.” It’s talking about something going into a trap. It’s making the comparison that when people get into this kind of mess, they didn’t sit down and think it through.

I don’t think that William Kennedy Smith sat down and thought, ‘What I really would like is to find myself in court (dragged out for weeks and months), have all this negative publicity and go through the trauma of all this stuff.’ It was a matter that he didn’t think. And his uncle, who should have had at least a little bit of experience, should have helped him think. He didn’t think either. I’m sure they all have had a chance to do a little more thinking. Now, whether they have learned anything from it or not, I don’t know. But again, they are not unique. We know about them because they are famous. They have a famous name, so their picture is plastered all over the paper. But all kinds of people, just common everyday people, have done some of the same dumb things and have wound up with a lot of problems, a lot of pain, heartache and hurt as a result of some of these things. So, it’s a warning.

Proverbs 8:1-3, “Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice? She takes her stand on the top of the high hill, beside the way, where the paths meet. She cries out by the gates, at the entry of the city, at the entrance of the doors...”

Verse 13, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the

perverse mouth I hate.” What is the fear of God? ‘The fear of God is to hate evil.’ If you really stand in awe and reverence of God, if you are really impressed with God, then you hate evil. It’s sort of a contrast. If we are impressed with God, we hate evil because evil is the opposite of what God is. If I am impressed with someone, I want to be like him; the things that are the opposite of him, I hate. ‘The fear of God is to hate evil.’ To really stand in awe of God, we hate evil.

It specifically mentions pride, arrogance, the evil way and a perverse mouth. A perverse mouth means a mouth that is full of a lot of evil, ugly and dishonest things. We don’t like that.

It speaks of wisdom. In some of these cases, wisdom is personified; wisdom is described as though it were a person. It goes through and talks about the importance and the beauty of wisdom.

Verses 33-36, “Hear instruction [wisdom] and be wise, and do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; all those who hate me love death.”

It’s speaking of wisdom. If you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor with the Lord. If you sin against wisdom, you are just hurting and wronging yourself and really loving death. When you find wisdom, it’s like finding life. It leads to good results here and now and on into the future.

Proverbs 9:1, “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars...”

Verses 4-6, “‘whoever is simple, let him turn in here!’ As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mixed. Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.’” It’s inviting the young person and says, ‘Come in, sit down and eat with me.’ This is speaking of wisdom. “Forsake foolishness and live.”

Verses 7-9, “He who reproves a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man gets himself a blemish [KJV, “blot”]. Do not reprove a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you. Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.”

We see quite a contrast here. If you correct or give instruction to the scorner or the wicked person, they just get mad. They don’t like you telling them that they are wrong. So, on the one

hand, we have people who get mad over any sort of correction or instruction. Boy, you have a blot in their book. They have it in for you now. If you don’t agree with them on everything or if you point out and show them where they are wrong, they have it in for you.

Now that’s quite a contrast because if you rebuke a wise man, he will love you. Why? –Because he appreciates the fact that he’s now smarter than he was before. If I am a wise man and you tell me something I didn’t know, I am going to appreciate that. I am glad you told me because now I know more than I did. The guy who is the “know-it-all,” you can’t tell them anything. You try to tell them something and they just get mad. That’s no way to be. If you give instruction to a wise man, he will be yet wiser. He’s going to appreciate it. A wise person appreciates the value of learning. He knows that he doesn’t know it all.

In Proverbs 8:35, God says ‘if you find wisdom, you find life and obtain favor of the Lord.’ That’s something to desire and have. We have to desire to grow in that. There’s quite a contrast between correcting a wise person and correcting a foolish person.

Proverbs 9:13-18, “A foolish woman is clamorous; she is simple, and knows nothing. For she sits at the door of her house, on a seat by the highest places of the city, to call to those who pass by, who go straight on their way: ‘Whoever is simple, let him turn in here’; and as for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.’ But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of hell.”

So, there’s a contrast. There’s an allure; there’s an attractiveness to the forbidden—“Stolen waters are sweet.” Illicit sex and other things—“to enjoy the passing [temporary] pleasure of sin” (Hebrew 11:25). There’s a certain allure, a certain attraction to these things that are forbidden, but the end result of that lifestyle is total destruction. There’s nothing good that is going to come from that sort of thing.

It’s interesting. The things that Solomon really focuses in on are wisdom, knowledge and understanding. He focuses on the importance of a young person gaining knowledge and wisdom. What are the things that he talks about? He talks about how important it is to listen and be receptive to correction and instruction—starting with your parents. Parents have experience of life, plus there’s nobody a young person is going to have in his life that loves him and cares about

his future more than the parents. Here's somebody who has experience in life and who has your best interest at heart.

This section emphasizes listening and being receptive to correction and instruction. It emphasizes having a thirst for knowledge, for learning and growing in what you know. There are many warnings and many descriptions about the contrast between moral and immoral behavior and where it leads. This is one of the most important things for young people to be warned about. Then there's a lot of instruction about handling finances and material things, starting off with honoring God with the firstfruits—putting God first. Then it goes through and talks about getting tangled up with people who are crooked and dishonest and how they are going to come to no good. We are told to be diligent. Go to the ant. Learn how to think, to be wise by being careful, working hard and doing what you should do, when you should do it.

There are several basic things that have to do with life and the way that we handle life. There is an emphasis on wisdom, how we gain it and—what God has put in this important section in the book of Proverbs (these first nine chapters)—how to apply it in our lives.

Hopefully, in this particular section of Proverbs that we have gone through this evening, you have gotten a little bit of insight into some of the things that are really important. Proverbs is a good section to go over, study and talk about with our children. Sometimes it helps to get another translation. Perhaps a simple English translation sort of helps us to really get out of these proverbs what God has packed in because there's an awful lot of life and experience that is packed into this section.

Next time we are going to cover more of Proverbs beginning with chapter 10 through most of chapter 22.