

Proverbs 1

Sunday 7/28/2013

We started our book of Proverbs last week. I gave you a lot of background material on it, things that you really need to know about the book so that when we actually get into it, as we do today, it will make more sense to you. We will even talk about some more things today as we enter into chapter 1.

Last week, we began our introduction to the book of Proverbs, and as I said, there are some things that you want to keep in mind about the book as we go through it. You now know, and I laid this out for you last week, that the book of Proverbs represents the mind of God. I showed you the five wisdom books in the Bible and how each one of them relates to the mind of Christ, the mind of the Holy Spirit, and Proverbs, the mind of God. Then we talked about the other two and laid those out as they all put together the heart of God and how that all relates to the sufferings of God through Job and Psalms.

I told you that the book of Proverbs represents what God thinks. The book of Proverbs is simply God's opinion on everything in life. It is the book, as I told you last week, of our right choices, showing us the right solution to every issue in life and every problem we have to deal with. We saw the book of Proverbs as God's mind, and it represents for us the fourth dimension.

Remember, I told you, I took you over to Ephesians and showed you that in a physical world there are three dimensions. In Ephesians, it talks about a fourth dimension, and that fourth dimension is the spiritual side. It is what I talk about when I tell you about walking out of the natural into the supernatural and living a life with God that is unexplainable. That is the fourth dimension. The fourth dimension is the depth of God; it is the mind of God, which the book of Proverbs represents.

Then I told you the theme of the book of Proverbs, which I think is very important. The theme of the book of Proverbs develops and becomes one of the great themes of the Bible, and it is the theme about a wise man and a foolish man. You are going to find that everything in the book of Proverbs, as the Bible is built, is around that concept. Today, we will begin to look at chapter 1 and we will start to define some areas for you as we begin to put the book together.

Let us start in Proverbs chapter 1 and let us pick it up in verse 1 and read down through verse 7.

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, and judgment, and equity;

To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for the Lord Jesus, and we love you today. We thank you for those that have come, and we thank you for the ten years that we have been here and the blessings of God and how many people we have seen come and come into our church. Lord, how you have just blessed us with the ministries that we have and the great people who run them, and Father, all of the great things. So let us enjoy today, not only let us enjoy the time we have and the Word of God, but throughout the rest of the day, the baptisms, the food, the fellowship, and all of the things that we do together. We will thank you now and praise you in Jesus' name. Amen.

I. The Natural Breakdown of Bible Books

Every book in the Bible has a natural breakdown. I do not know if you are aware of it or not, but I went through it early when we started our church. I went through every book in the Bible; it is online. I went through every book in the Bible, and it shows you the natural breakdown of that book. What I mean by that is this: God has put some natural divisions in the books of the Bible that help you break them down properly as you want to study them, an outline for us to follow, so to speak.

2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." You have to get the Bible rightly divided. If you do not rightly divide the Bible, you are going to wrongly divide the Bible. When it comes to the books of the Bible, God has put a natural outline around every book in the Bible. When dividing it out, He does that so it will make sense when you begin to study it.

I have told you many, many times, I deal with a lot of people, and I help a lot of people figure out the Bible. I see two problems that people always have with the Word of God, and I am sure that everybody here has experienced this at one time or the other. The two problems that people have when they get into the Bible are:

1. They do not know what to look for.
2. When they do find something, they do not know what to do with it.

I really believe that most Christians want to study the Bible. I think honestly that most people start out wanting to get something out of the Bible. I do not think there are too many people who get saved on Sunday and then Monday or Tuesday say, "I do not want to get into it." I think probably almost everybody makes an attempt at getting into the Bible. But I have dealt with people for many, many years, and I see this problem over and over again. It is a problem that I have tried to undertake to fix, at least in my own church. I cannot fix it for everybody.

How many times have I told you that the first problem people have when they begin to read the Bible is they do not know what to look for? I believe it is the reason why many people start to read the Bible and then get discouraged. You get back in the Old Testament in some of those books and some of those passages, and you have to step back and say, "Man, I wonder why even God put this in here." But there is a reason for everything in the Bible.

The second problem they have is when they do find something, then they do not know what to do with it. They do not know how it fits with the rest of the Bible. One of the reasons why God divided the books of the Bible the way that He did, and He really did the whole Bible that way, but we are talking about the book of Proverbs today and its natural outline, is so that it will make sense when you and I begin to read it.

I am telling you, Proverbs follows a very simple outline. But I am also telling you, you miss the outline, and the book will never open itself up to you. It is like a key that unlocks all the truth that God has. It is not my outline; I did not set out and create these. They are natural outlines that once you just look at a book and you see how it begins to break down and how it begins to lay out, you see how easy it is. It is this outline or breakdown of the book of Proverbs that we are going to follow in our study of it. So you want to get it down. It is how we are going to go through the book because it is the best way to go through the book.

II. The Three Sections of Proverbs

There are three sections to Proverbs. The outline is basically three sections to the book of Proverbs. They are important to look at as individual sections. This is what you have to do with every book in the Bible. When you get into a book of the Bible, it may have four or five sections to it. You want to take each section individually. You want to understand it. You want to identify it. You want to see what it does. Then you want to go to the next section. You want to see what it does. Then you want to go to the next section and see what it does. Then you want to stand back and put all the sections back together. That is how the book makes sense.

Trying to just get into the Bible, I used to know a couple of Christians that every time they had a problem, their answer when they did not know what it was, was to close their eyes, flip their pages, and put their finger down. That was the verse they thought God would give them to their answer until they got an ephod as a third part of an omer. It did not help them in their problematic situation. That is not how you do it.

Many people approach the Bible the same way. They just start reading the Bible. God never intended for you or me or anybody else to just, after you got saved, to sit down and start reading the Bible on your own and figuring it out. That is why God gave us pastors and teachers. That is why God, that is the job of the church. The job of the church, first and foremost, is to make sure that you have the best opportunity that you can have in life to understand the book, to understand how the Bible lays out.

You do not get that just by coming on Sunday morning. You do not get that just by coming to a Thursday night Bible study. You get that by somebody taking the time to sit down with you and walk you through the books of the Bible. You get that by somebody understanding that God never intended for you just to sit down and open it. You will get overwhelmed, and you certainly will get discouraged. God intended for the church to take and help you break it down and show you through these natural breakdowns how it works.

➤ Section 1: Chapters 1-7 (Admonition to Wisdom)

Proverbs has three sections. Section number one is going to be chapter 1 through chapter 7. In this section, you are going to find where almost every chapter heading starts with "my son." I think one of them starts, "my little children." But it is all directed to "my son." Every chapter starts out that way, chapter 1 through chapter 7.

This first section will be addressed directly. Remember last week I told you how all the books of the Bible, all the Bible, has three applications:

3. It has a historical application.
4. It has a prophetic or a doctrinal application to something in the future.
5. Then it has a personal or a practical application to you.

When you start to read through Proverbs chapter 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7, when it says "my son" in the first seven chapters, historically, it is Solomon's son, Rehoboam. That is who it is historically. But I showed you last week that prophetically or doctrinally, the book of Proverbs is written to the nation of Israel. In Exodus chapter 4, we are told and we find that in a corporate sense or a national sense that Israel is God's son. So prophetically, the Proverbs in the first seven chapters, when he talks about "my son," is to Israel.

But then there is a practical side to the book of Proverbs, as there is to the whole Bible. For you and for me, historical is great, and doctrinal is wonderful. But what is going to get you and me through life tomorrow will not be the historical, nor will it be the doctrinal. What is going to get me and you through life's trials and tribulations and troubles is going to be the practical application.

When in the first seven chapters he talks about "my son" and gives him instructions, he is talking to you and me as God's child. He is talking to you and me as someone who has been born again and born into the family of God by a new birth. He is talking about someone who is now God's child. This first section deals with what the book of Proverbs, the wisdom of God, will accomplish in your life if you let it. The first seven chapters deal with an admonition to get God's wisdom and what it will do for you when you do.

I look at chapter 1 through 7 kind of like a prelude to the book of Proverbs itself, a defining set of chapters that shows you the real underlying dangers of this life and how to avoid the pitfalls. The first seven chapters are written to you and me. In it, it shows you exactly how to get God's wisdom. When we start coming through chapter 2 and chapter 3 and chapter 4, you are going to begin to get insight into things about your Christian life that God wanted you to see that you have never seen before. It actually shows you if you want the wisdom of God, if you want to learn the Word of God, it actually shows you the step-by-step process because that is what God wants for you.

Solomon wanted that for his son, Rehoboam, but it did not work out very well. God wants it for you and me as His sons. Many times it does not work out very well, does it? I always look at it like this: I know the world is darkness. I know the Bible says that the devil is darkness. I know that this world around me is all darkness, and I know that the devil goes through life setting up traps and entrapments and snares and entanglements because it is darkness. He goes through

great lengths to put all of that stuff in our lives. That is basically what life is. Life is you trying to find your way through life in total darkness that the devil has put landmines and tripwires and booby traps and punji stakes and everything out there to stop you and to mess you up. That is why so many of God's people start out with the best intentions, but they wind up falling back into the world. They wind up getting into all kinds of circumstances and situations.

But the Bible says that the entrance of Thy Word gives light, does it not? The Bible says that Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, is it not? The Bible talks about the fact that He is your light in a dark place. Remember last week I gave you Daniel chapter 2 verses 20 and 22, but 22 said, talking about God, that He "revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him."

You see, even though the world is darkness and even though the devil has strewn through your path and my path all of the things that mess us up, God knows what is in the darkness. The Bible says that He is a light that shines in a dark place. The Bible says that the Word of God is your flashlight. It is the light that guides you through, that shows you where the pitfalls are when you get it.

Back in the Gulf War, the one in the 90s, when we first started that war, the men over there that were fighting against Saddam Hussein and all of his troops, they had that night vision gear. Third, fourth generation stuff, it was incredible. The Iraqi army was so poorly equipped, and they did not have any of those things, and they actually were terrified to go out at night. Because of the fact that they knew that going out to even go to the bathroom, going out to the chow hall, going out to go to one tent to another, even when somebody ordered you to go report to the commander, they knew that there was a great chance that they were going to be killed from point A to point B in total darkness. Because the American troops had starlight scopes, they had night vision scopes, they had everything that they could actually see in the darkness. In fact, the American troops got so proud of it and the Iraqis got so afraid of it that a name that they chose for themselves was taken from a movie that was made a number of years ago. It was simply called, they called themselves, "We own the night." And they did because nothing went on in the darkness that they could not see.

I have often thought about that and thought to myself, that is exactly what the Word of God does for you. There is no reason for you or me to fail. There is no reason for you and I to get caught in the trappings of the devil. We own the night. God knows what is in the darkness, and He has given us the light of His Word, and through that, we see everything that the devil wants to try to do and everything the devil tries to accomplish in our life. Chapter 1 through 7 lays out what the light of God will do for you when you get it and begin to use it the right way.

➤ Section 2: Chapters 8-30 (The Proverbs Themselves)

Now the second section picks up in chapter 8 and runs all the way up to chapter 30. Within this section, we have the Proverbs themselves. If I remember right, years ago when I counted them up, I think there were 630 of them. These Proverbs from chapter 8 to chapter 30 will contain the truth of God in any particular given situation. In this section, you are going to find the issues of life defined for you. In this section, you are going to find how to conduct yourself, what you do,

how to make right choices, how to make right decisions because you are going to be faced with them. I have told you many, many times, life is choices. Life is being faced with choices you have to make. As I showed you last week by a couple of different examples, it only takes one bad choice to alter your life forever.

So the second section deals with the issues of life, the world's wisdom versus God's wisdom. In this section, you will see the comparison of a fool. The book of Proverbs, I told you last week, that the word "Proverbs" itself means "to compare," "to sit side by side." In this book, when we get into this section, you are going to actually see that. You are going to see the comparison of a wise man and a foolish man. He goes to great lengths to show you in this section everything that you need to know so that you do not make bad choices.

This is Kid Sunday today, and I am glad all the kids are in here, especially for this message because I want to emphasize today that you all are coming into your world, like I talked about the last night at camp, when you are going to have to start making your own choices. You are going to have to be faced with circumstances and situations where you are going to have to choose which way to go. You are going to be under peer pressure with your friends at school. You are going to get drawn in by other people, maybe teachers or somebody that is not saved that will teach you or talk to you or tell you different from what your mom and dad are trying to tell you. You are going to have to realize that there is coming a time in your life where you are going to have to make choices, just like your mom and dad have to make choices.

We have all made bad choices. Nobody goes through life with 100% batting accuracy. That is why I always tell people, when it comes to the Bible and God, I do not ever care where a person has been. I do not care what they have done. I do not care what they have gotten into. It does not matter to me. All that matters is where you are at today and where you want to go from here. Everybody has got a past. Everybody has got a history. You have to realize that God takes people where they are at, not where they were, when that person wants to do what they need to do.

This is a great section here. When you get into this section, you really begin to see the mind of God at work. I have got to tell you, it is really quite overwhelming in all the things that you do. You are going to see the comparison of a fool and a wise man dealing with the principles and the issues of life and the consequences that go along with it.

➤ Section 3: Chapter 31 (The Virtuous Woman)

Now the third section will be just simply one chapter, chapter 31. Personally, I think for me as a Christian, and I cannot speak for you, but I think by the time we are done, you would probably agree with me. I think for me personally as a Christian, the greatest single chapter that shows me exactly what I need to be in every aspect of my relationship with my family, my relationship to God, my relationship to ministry, my relationship to everything, is Proverbs 31.

Proverbs 31 will deal with the context of the virtuous woman. I know, I know, it is a great verse to put on Mother's Day cards, and it is a great thing to talk about your mom being a virtuous woman, and I am sure she is, was, will be, and all of those things. I understand that. But you will also realize that this is talking about you.

One of the things you are going to see in the book of Proverbs, and you will notice as we go through it, is that in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is always given a female gender. I know that makes your ladies feel special, and you certainly are special today, and I have no problem believing that women are smarter than men. I think that in many ways they are. But before you get too carried away with the fact that when he went to make wisdom, he personified it in the form of a female, that is because in the book it is written to you and me and Israel as God's son. Israel is God's son. I am God's son. But when it comes to the final process when God is done with us, remember now Israel is likened to God's wife. That is female. You and I are likened to Christ's bride. That is a female.

So what you have in chapter 31 is the finished product of your life and my life. Wisdom is personified into a female form because for you and me it is a picture of the body of Christ, the church, the bride of Christ, with all of God's wisdom adorned around her. So that is why you find that in there. Israel in the Old Testament is God's wife. The church in the New Testament is Christ's bride. So in both cases, wisdom is personified as a woman or a female because it shows the final phase of our life when we grow to the place that we become the kind of bride of Christ that we should be, or Israel becomes the nation that they should be when all of chapter 1 through 30 is applied in your life and my life. It is incredible. The wisdom of God in its final form.

I think chapter 31 is one of the most profound chapters in the Bible. It certainly pulls all the information together and shows you and me what we should be in this life when we have gotten the wisdom of God. That is why she is called a virtuous woman. You could go down through that chapter and you could match up everything that needs to be in your life and my life when it comes to our relationship with God. Absolutely incredible detail and material. It covers every aspect of our lives as God's people.

III. Defining a Wise Man

Now Proverbs 1:5 said a wise man, it says a wise man shows up and it says a wise man will do some things. So the first thing once we get the outline down and you have that under your belt now, the first thing I want to do is coming through here is I want to define for you what a wise man is. I think this is very important. I think it is important because Proverbs is about choices, the choices we make. In life, we choose to let people in our lives or circumstances in our lives, and they one way or the other will have a profound effect on our life. I think most of you could look back and say that is true just by many people in your life, many circumstances in your life. Some of them very positive, some of them very negative.

In life, you basically have two people groups you have to deal with. When you go to work tomorrow, you basically have two people groups you have to work with. Even in churches, our church, you have basically two people groups. Every aspect of your life falls around it. I know the actual thing is, "Well, you have got to change and you are lost." I know that is true, but I am going to talk about a little narrower than that. I want to redefine a little more than that.

In life, the two people groups, and in work the two people groups, and even in our church the two people groups that you are up against are simply wise men and foolish men. It is people who

apply the Word of God and get the wisdom of God and the people that do not. A foolish man can be a saved person. A foolish man can be an unsaved person. You simply will be who you hang out with.

A couple of weeks ago, we talked about, took a little interlude, and I talked about real leadership, tried to get you an understanding before we got into the book of Proverbs, what real leadership is. I showed you Aaron versus Moses. Remember this sermon? How Moses was a great leader. Moses was a tremendous leader. Aaron was weak. Aaron was a leader who always caved to the people. He made the golden calf. I gave you all the list of the things that a non-leader does and showed you the things that a leader tries to accomplish.

I remember I just made a brief mention of it, how that, right in that chapter, you have Joshua showing up. While all the people are, and Joshua becomes Moses' successor. Joshua becomes the guy who takes over Israel after Moses dies. While Aaron and all the people are down here playing and having a great time making a golden calf, you will find that Joshua is with Moses on the mount with God. I remember making the statement that leaders to be hang out with leaders that are. You find Joshua becoming a great leader because of who he hung out with. He hung out with Moses. His leadership skills were fine-tuned by a great leader in the Bible, Moses.

You always want to remember, and sometimes we do not like to think this way, but it is true. We are in complete control of our destiny in the sense of who we allow or what we allow in our lives, good or bad, to make choices or influences over us. We have a little thing we talk about in our prayer groups, "iron sharpeneth iron." That is simply a phrase in the Bible found in Proverbs that shows you that we ought to sharpen each other. We ought to make each other better. But just as iron sharpens iron, on the other side, lead will make you dead. Hang out with lead Christians who do not ever go anywhere, do not ever do anything, will always mess you up.

Circumstances never determine who you are. We like to think that is true. "Well, you do not know my circumstances." I do not care about your circumstances. Circumstances never define who we are. Never do. Never define who we are. Rather, your dealing with the circumstances and how you deal with it define who you are. People like to blame their bad life on circumstances. How many times I have heard somebody say, "Well, I did what I did because of my circumstances." People like to blame their problems on other people. I have heard parents tell me that the reason their kids do not come to church is because of what somebody else did. What has that got to do with your own personal responsibility?

We have to be responsible for the choices we make, and we are in complete control of our destiny in that one sense. You may not be responsible for what is going to happen to you tomorrow, but you certainly are responsible for how you deal with it. That is the book of Proverbs. That is the book of Proverbs.

In life, it is not all, and I am not suggesting or supporting gambling by any way, shape, or form, but you look at things in life, life is like a game. Dr. Ruckman years ago preached a sermon where he drew out and he preached a sermon on the game of life. What he painted or drew out there was a ball stadium. He put the whole stadium up there, with people in the stands, and then

the Christian pitching, a Christian batting at the bat, and the Word of God is the umpire behind it, but the devil was pitching. His message, his great message, was the game of life.

You know what, he made some great analogies to what, when we play sports, that is the same way as life. You do not always like the calls the umpire gives you when you play softball or baseball or the line judgment when you play volleyball, but you do not always like what the Word of God says to you either about life. In other words, as in games, as in life, there has to be a final authority. Somebody has to say you are safe or you are out. They are not going to let you decide that. How would that work for you? You would win every game. Nobody would ever get out. We laugh at that, but you know what? If God allowed us to make the same kind of choices in our life without an absolute to guide us, we would do the exact same thing. We would never be wrong. Why? I know how God's people are today when they have the absolute authority they think they are never wrong. So there is an absolute to it.

I looked at that thing, and you know, life is not much different than when somebody is playing poker. There are some really good, I have never understood the game of poker. I have never followed it. I really do not know about it, but I have talked to guys that were great at it. You have some of these guys who are just phenomenal poker players. I asked a guy one time, and I said, "Tell me what the secret of a great poker player is." He said, "You know what? The secret of being a great poker player is not always having a great hand because in playing poker, many times you get a bad hand." He says, "The secret of being a great poker player is not always having a good hand, but really a good poker player finds out how to play a really bad hand."

Boy, I thought to myself, that is life. You see, you are not defined by all the good things in life. They are easy to play. What defines you is when life gives you a bad hand, how well you play it. That is the key. That is the key. That is the book of Proverbs. That is the book of Proverbs. It does not happen about circumstances. It does not come about by people in your life. We choose who we allow in our life. We choose how to deal with circumstances. I want to talk to you about a wise man. I think it is invaluable that you learn what a wise man is, especially if you want to be one. Now, if you do not want to be one, now is the time for you to leave.

IV. Nine Principles of a Wise Man

Proverbs defines a wise man with nine principles. They will not only define a wise man in the book of Proverbs, but these same nine principles define who you and I are. Might I suggest, since we are going to be in this a while and we are going to be talking of the comparison of a wise man and foolish man, may I suggest that you make a list, a personal list. You are not going to show it to anybody. You do not have to show it to your wife or show it to your husband or you do not have to show it to the person sitting next to you. But my advice to you if you really want to grasp this is begin to make a personal list. You want to make a personal list of people in your world that you, based on the Bible, think are wise. Somebody who uses the principles to make the choices in life because life is about choices, and you do not have to show it to anybody, but you want to have your own personal list as we go through here that you can begin to look at that list. Then at some point in our study, not today but down the line, you are going to have to make your own choices because we are going to make the same list about fools here the next time we are

together. Now you are going to have a complete list based on the Bible to show you what a fool is and what a wise man is. It is going to necessitate some choices in your life, but I think choices are good.

I do not know if you know it or not, probably most of you have been around here a length of time. Number nine in the Bible is the number of fruit bearing. There are certain numbers in the Bible that are always associated with certain subjects. Number nine in the Bible is the number of fruit bearing. The first time you find it showing up is in Genesis chapter 9 where Noah was told to be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth. The next time it shows up is in Genesis where Abraham is 99 when he bears the fruit that he so wanted. You go over to the book of Galatians, you are going to find nine fruit of the Holy Spirit of God. Galatians just happens to be the ninth book in the New Testament. If you spell Galatians, it has nine letters. If you see the verses those nine fruit are found in, 22 and 23, add it up. It is nine. Nine in your Bible is fruit bearing. Nine in your Bible is fruit bearing.

I know to a lot of people that does not make any sense, they do not believe that or buy that, and they just think that is a coincidence. One of the things I learned years and years ago is that that book is a supernatural book, and there are no coincidences in it. Nine is the number of fruit bearing in the Bible. People ask me all the time, "Why do you use the King James Bible?" I use the King James Bible because that is the only Bible down through history that has really borne fruit. The greatest Philadelphian church age, at a time when three quarters of the world was won to a saving knowledge of Christ, was with that book. There have been more souls won to Christ with that book than there are other new translations put together. It is called the Holy Bible, nine letters. It was put out under the auspices of a guy by the name of King James, nine letters. In 1611, you add them up, six and three is what? That is the book you want that bears the fruit that you need. So we are going to look at nine principles in the book of Proverbs very quickly here that show you what a wise man is.

6. A wise man will win souls.

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise.

I want you to note that it says "the fruit of the righteous." The fruit of the righteous is not the people that you win to Christ, though everybody teaches it that way, but rather the fruit of the righteous is the fruit of the Holy Spirit of God that is in your life that produces the people in your life that you win to Christ. You do not ever want to just go out and win people to Christ because you can win people to Christ. You want to win people to Christ because you have got the character qualities of the Holy Spirit of God in your life, the nine fruit of the Holy Spirit of God that will produce what you need to win people to Christ.

A guy said one time, D.L. Moody, D.L. Moody was a great preacher, and D.L. Moody was talking to a guy the night before he had preached to the church, and he was talking outside of church. The guy that supposedly got saved the night before was staggering drunk up the street. The guy did not really like Moody, he kind of hugged him and he says, "Isn't that one of your converts there? The guy got saved last night and there he is drunk tonight." Moody looked at him and he said, "Yeah, it must be one of mine, could never be one of the Lord's." We can win all

kinds of people in professions of faith. That does not mean they are really saved. When you win people to Christ, it comes because of the Holy Spirit of God working in you.

The Bible says the fruit of the righteous is as a tree of life. The tree of life bore fruit. That fruit brought eternal life. You as a tree of life, when you have the fruit of God in you, you are going to bear fruit. You are going to bear fruit. I love this when it happens in our church, and it happens from time to time. Good young Christians, guys and gals, they will come into my office, and we will sit down, and they will begin to talk, and one of the things that they will be burdened about is the fact that they have been saved now for five or six years, and they are burdened about the fact that they have not won anybody to Christ yet. I really appreciate that because I deal with a lot of God's people who never care about that, and it is refreshing to see somebody who does care about it. But I always, in every case, there is somebody who in my mind and my thinking is a great soul winner. They just do not look at it through the eyes of wisdom of the book of Proverbs.

You realize that 1 Corinthians 3:6 tells us that there are three aspects to soul winning? All you ever hear is, "Who did you win this week? Did you get anybody saved this week?" I have a guy where I go work out. Every time I see him, he knows I am a preacher. Every time I see him, he always asks me, "Did you get anybody saved this week?" I got so, I just, I do not know if he is just, I do not think he is paying attention because last week I told him we had 2,000 saved, and he just said, "That is great." I do not think he is listening.

I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Paul said, "I have planted," that means he sowed the seed. "Apollos watered," that is somebody else completely who prayed for the guy. Then he says, "and God gave the increase." Somebody else won him to Christ. You have to understand that concept. All three of those are important. When the guy finally got saved, the guy who sowed gets the credit for it, the guy who watered gets the credit for it, and it is all across the board. Because soul winning is just not, "Hey, look at me, I won this guy to Christ." Soul winning is always a team effort.

I am going to tell you, the greatest example I know of that is this church. I watch you people. I watch you people when unsaved people come on your ball team. I watch you people when you get an unsaved friend that you bring to church. You understand that all you are doing is you want them to get saved, you want them to trust Christ, so you bring them to a place where they can hear the gospel. Somebody else, you say, "My so and so is coming to church," so they start praying for them. Pretty soon, tell them to start being their friends, they start seeing the difference, and pretty soon, you know what, they get saved. Danny may win him to Christ, Zach may win him to Christ, Phil may win him to Christ, John may win him to Christ, and so we think because that person went out and won him to Christ, "Man, I wish I could have won that person." He says down in 3:9, "For we are labourers together." We are all in this together. There is not a one-man show about soul winning. Soul winning is a church understanding the concept of that, and some of you are sowing, some of you are watering, and some of you are reaping. You will not always reap, but you will always water. You may not be the one that is sowing, you get to reap. But everybody who is involved, it is an attitude. It is not an attitude that I want to win the

souls, it is an attitude of the fruit of the Spirit of God, that that is what God saves you for. You are a tree that bears fruit, and that fruit gets borne in three ways. Most people do not understand that.

John R. Rice was a great soul winner. He is dead now, been dead for 20 some years. John R. Rice is one of the old Philadelphian guys that was the last of the Philadelphian guys. He was a great preacher. He had a burden for souls. I got to see him preach before he died probably three or four times in person. I could never see him get up there and at the end talk about heaven and hell and souls without tears coming to his eyes. He wrote more books, more tracts on soul winning than any man I think I ever heard about in my life. He had a message that he preached on not winning people to Christ as a seven-fold sin. I remember hearing him preaching at one time. In fact, I got the outline in my Bible. But he understood that soul winning was very important. But he also understood that it was not just a one-man show. It was a team effort that everybody sowed, everybody prayed. And some people reaped. But we all get it. There is no reason why at the end of the year you cannot have 40 or 50 people you won to Christ because that is probably how many people we get saved here in a year's time.

If you understand the concept, John R. Rice preached that not winning people, remember now the Bible says a wise man wins souls. He that wins souls is wise. John R. Rice preached that seven-fold sin of not winning people to Christ. He said:

7. It was a disobedience to the main commandment of Christ.
8. It was a lack of love for God.
9. There was no abiding in Christ, that you did not care about souls.
10. It is a picture, it represents you not following Christ.
11. Not winning Christ is the folly of a short-sighted fool.
12. He went so far on the sixth one to preach on the fact that it was spiritual manslaughter.
13. That was being disobedient to a sacred trust.

Do you know you are ordained this morning? The Bible says in John chapter 15 that God has ordained you that you bring forth fruit. When we develop the attitude of not caring about souls being saved, when we develop the attitude, "I do not care one way or the other." It does not bother me that you do not win people to Christ because I understand the concept. What bothers me is God's people have no burden to see people saved. The Bible says you have been ordained, and you have been ordained to bring forth fruit, and that fruit should have remained. So that sacred trust that he talks about is your ordination as a Christian today. You got saved. You may not be ordained sitting in that seat this morning to be a pastor. You may not be ordained to be a deacon, but you are ordained to be a soul winner. The Bible says the wise man wins souls.

14. A wise man will inherit glory.

The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools.

Only a fool in my mind, of course I understand where I am coming from, only a fool in my mind would put the world, this whole world, above the one that is coming. I have a hard time seeing that. I have seen many of God's people come out of the filth of this world God delivered them from, and they stick around for a while, and then they go right back in. I do not understand that.

This one has to do with your millennial inheritance when Christ sets up His throne and you reign. We call it the millennium.

If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us:

If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself.

A lot of people like to use that verse and make a reference to losing your salvation. It is not, your salvation is not even in the passage. What he denies you if you are not faithful is the reign. In other words, you can lose your millennial inheritance. That is what he is saying. That inheritance should be the number one thing on our long-term goal as a Christian. I know in my own life it helps me keep things around me in perspective, and this is why I do not let a lot of things bother me. It really does not matter to me because I know that there is coming a day when God is going to make all things right. There is coming a day where every crooked thing is going to be made straight, and I am okay with that.

I try to teach you, try to preach the best I can to you, help you any way I can to see the debt, the obligation that we have to Christ for working in the ministry based on His saving us and dying on the cross. I know we are never going to get everybody to do right by God, but that is really not my job. My job is to tell you the truth. My job is every time I step on that pulpit or we open up that book that what you get is the truth, even when we do not like it. I can tell you this, when I leave here on Sunday morning or Thursday night or after a one-on-one time we have together, I am the most at peace, rested man you ever saw in your life. You know why? Because I know that I gave you the best job that I could do to give you the truth to point to you that you have got an inheritance coming, but some of you are going to lose it, and a wise man inherits glory.

15. A wise man will receive commandments.

The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

There are some things that God has commanded us to do as Christians. I know we think the 10 commandments are Old Testament and the commandments were done away with. I understand what you are saying, but you need to realize that you and I as Christians have been commanded to do some things. A wise man will receive those commandments. One of them we already looked at was in John chapter 15, the ordination to bring people to Christ.

You are going to find in Matthew 22:36-40 that Christ took all of those 10 commandments when they were done away with and He re-rolled them over into two. In the Bible, it is called the royal law in James chapter 1. It is called the law of Christ in Galatians 6 and Galatians 5. But He took all of those 10 commandments and He rolled them into one, and He gave them to us as New Testament Christians. You know what they are? The first one is to love God first, the second one is love your neighbor as yourself. You cannot separate those two. You cannot this morning say you love God and hate the person sitting next to you. You just cannot.

I had a lady one time, she said, "I hate my husband." I said, "Well, that ain't going to work." I said, "You have to love him." She said, "I cannot love him." I said, "Well, if you cannot love him as your husband, you have to love him as your friend or your neighbor." She says, "I do not want

him as my neighbor, and I do not want him as my friend, and I cannot love him that way either." I said, "Well, if you cannot love him as your husband and you cannot love him as your neighbor or your friend, then you have to love him as your enemy, but you have to love him." There is nowhere to go with it. You cannot say, "I love God and I hate you." You cannot say, "Well, I love God but I do not like you."

I realize there are some nasty people in this world. I understand that. Sometimes you have to love them through Christ, but you have to love them. You have to love them. When William Booth died, he started the Salvation Army, a great organization back then. It has become pretty much an apostate mess today. If William Booth came back alive and walked through the first Salvation Army church, he would have a heart attack before he got past the first ashtray. But it was a great organization. When he died, he died on Christmas Eve. All of his followers got around because every Christmas Eve he gave an address to them, and they all were waiting, but the old man was ready to die. But he mustered up the strength to say one more thing to them before he died. Everybody who was part of the Salvation Army got around the radio shaft to listen to him. He gave one word which was his message. You know what it was? "Others." Others. Others.

So we are commanded to do some things. We are. In 1 Corinthians 12, 13, and 14, you remember there are multiple issues that the church at Corinth had. They were messed up on all kinds of stuff. They were messed up on spiritual gifts, they were messed up on baptism, they were messed up on the Lord's Supper, they were messed up on all those things. You know what Paul has said to them in 1 Corinthians 14:37? He says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." A wise man will receive those commandments. A fool will view them as options. They are not options.

16. A wise man will hearken to counsel.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.

A wise man will always follow biblical principles to the best of his ability. A wise man also knows that there are some people who know more about life than he does. God puts them in your life. You want to put yourself around wise people. We see this a lot of time with some of you kids. You are going to come into that age in your life where suddenly you are going to think you know more about life than your mom and dad. I guarantee you, you do not. I deal with people all the time that are much like some of you kids. They think they know more about life than I do, and they do not. I am telling you the thing that you have got to realize and understand when you put it all together is a wise man hearkens to counsel. He does. He goes after it.

My advice to all of you, whether you are a little child or whether you are a teenager or whether you are an adult, my advice to you in addition to the Bible would be to tell you to seek out good role models for your life. Seek out people who are doing what God wants you to do or wants them to do, who are wise people, and I would make them your role models. I would find people with common sense and follow those kind of people. Common sense is not too common anymore, and you find it many, many times where you know it is not. Common sense is like

deodorant. The people who need it most, they never use it. You have got to come to the place where you look for role models, role models.

I saw a t-shirt the other day that somebody was wearing that says, "Duct tape has a thousand and one uses, but toilet paper is not one of them." That is common sense, you see. That is common sense. Find role models. Find people who use the principles of God. Never take, never take advice from anybody whose spiritual life is a disaster unless they tell you to stay away from them. That would be good advice. You want to build into your life people who by their counsel will make you better.

I have got to tell you this. They sound the same, but there are two words in the Bible that are called "counsel," but they are spelled differently, and they mean something different, and you need to know them. They are spelled different. One is spelled C-O-U-N-S-E-L. The other one is spelled C-O-U-N-C-I-L, and it shows you the two different ways that you get counsel.

- The counsel, S-E-L, is advice from an individual. When we talk about a counseling ministry, that is the kind of counsel we are talking about.
- The second kind of counsel is C-I-L, and that is like a group, a meeting, like the World Council of Churches. In church history, we talked about it when we came through it, there are 14 church councils down through history. In the Bible, councils, C-I-L, were never good in favor of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were always against it. In church history, every one of those 14 councils are worthless when it comes to anything with God or the Word of God or the church. They were all put up by a religious organization that cared nothing about God in the Bible.

So there are two kinds of counsel that you are going to get into. Would you take advice on your 401K and in your investments by a guy who lost everything he had in his? Would you take advice on raising your kids from people who lost theirs to the world? Or your Christian life, about your life, when theirs is a disaster? You see, a wise man takes counsel, and he hangs out with the wise people. Make a list, man. Make a list. Make a list.

17. A wise man guards his tongue.

A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.

Listening to people talk reveals who they really are. There are people who just cannot shut up. I am not kidding you. We were at the wedding last night, and we bumped into some lady that I had known years ago from the, when I used to go to the Bally Fitness Center, and Barb worked out with her at the school. This lady would not. I mean, I am thirsty. I want to go out and get some of them little crackers that they had last night. This lady would not get off of it. She is just going on and on and on and on, and she is telling me about Will, and she, you know who she is. You are telling me about you, and she is telling me about Will. She says, "Will had to be a preacher." And I said, "Will is a preacher." You could not talk to this lady. She said, "Will had to be a preacher." And I said, "Will is a preacher." She says, "No, I do not mean that." She says, "I mean a real preacher." And I said, "Okay." She said, "Yeah, he gets out and makes some real money." And I said, "Okay, whatever." After we were done, we were driving home, we were talking about it. I

said to my wife, I said, "You know what? I just love the sound when she finally shut up." She just would not stop talking. Nice lady, but I will tell you what, my ears were oozing when she was done.

Here we are, people who have an opinion of everything. I have met people that knew everything about everything. No matter what subject you brought up, they were the expert on it. You know that is not true. Whatever you brought up, they knew everything there was to know about it. They go on and on, and they want to give you all this information, way more than you need.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him.

When it comes to dealing with situations that you hear about, the best thing you can do is keep your mouth shut. Get all the facts before you shoot your mouth off. You see, a wise man, that is what the verse says, "a fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it till afterward." A wise man waits the situation out before he speaks. He gets all of his facts before he talks. He realizes there are two sides to every story. He does not just hear what one person says about somebody and then makes up his opinion on that. That is a fool. You get all of your facts, and you get them straight. But when you do speak, you are not speaking based on your emotions, but the fact that you have got based on the principles. Remember, you can always learn more from observing a situation than you can by talking about a situation. That is a wise man.

A wise man guards what he says around younger Christians. A wise man guards what he says about any situation. He knows that words are very powerful, and he knows that when something is said, it is hard to take it back. A guy said one time, "You know, saying something is not true about somebody, it is like when they make an accusation in the newspaper about somebody, and then they found out it is wrong. They found out it is wrong. It does not matter how many retractions they print. The damage is already done." A guy said one time, "Discourse and saying things that are wrong or talking about people, whether it is right or wrong, it is like going up to an Empire State Building and taking 5,000 feathers and throwing them out off the top of the building and then deciding to go back and get all the feathers." You are not going to.

18. A wise man seeks knowledge.

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

When it comes to the Bible and it comes to seeking knowledge, there are no experts. I love the term that people like to throw around, "He is a Bible scholar." There are no Bible scholars. When it comes to the Bible, there are no Bible scholars. When it comes to the Bible, there are no experts. When it comes to the Bible, all you have are students who are on different levels of learning. That is all you have. People like to portray themselves, "I am a Bible scholar." People like to portray themselves as, "I am this or I am that when it comes to the Bible." "I am an expert in the Bible." There are no experts in the Bible. The Word of God is on different levels.

In a Christian life, the greatest pursuit, I am going to tell you right now, that you can have in your life is the pursuit of truth. It is the greatest pursuit you will ever take or undertake. It really is. It is a lifelong venture. The process of spiritual growth is a constant learning process. What we learn will shape the outcome of everything in our lives. When you get married down the line and

have kids, it will shape your family also. A Christian shall learn from everything in his life because "the heart of the prudent getteth knowledge; and the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge." It is just that simple. The value of getting God's opinion on everything in life and then comparing it with the world and the things that you see and then growing through it, that is the difference between a wise man and a foolish man.

When it comes to the Word of God, God's school is never out. There is never a day, no matter how old, I am 63 years old, I have been in the Bible for almost 50 years, and there is never a day in my life, if I live to be 100, there will never be a day in my life when I can say, "I got it all down." In fact, the truth of it is the more you learn, this is that fourth dimension, the more you learn about the Bible, the more you get the Bible, if you are doing it right, it is not how much you know. If you really got it down right, the more you learn the Bible, the more you know how much you do not know. That is the key. That is the key. That is the key.

I am telling you, when it comes to the Word of God, God's school is never out. At the first, when you were unsaved, the Bible says over there in Luke, it talks about the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. You see, when you were lost, before you were unsaved, God came looking for you. Luke chapter 19 says, "the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." But once you get saved, now it is your turn to seek Him. He will come to get you to get saved, but He is not coming after you to give you the book. You have got to go after Him. A wise man seeks wisdom. A wise man seeks knowledge. That is the way it works.

19. A wise man dispenses knowledge.

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge: but the heart of the fool doeth not so.

There is something you want to mark in your Bible, and you will see this a lot, not only in Proverbs, but you will see it throughout the whole Bible. It is what I love about the Bible. Notice the word "lips" and "hearts" in association. How the Proverbs puts together lips and the hearts, because we know the Bible principle is out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The other thing works. He puts them right in there as a comparison for you. Those are the things I want to show you how to look for.

When you take it in and take it in and take it in like you do Sunday after Sunday and Thursday night after Thursday night, you have to develop something in your life that you put it out. It is the old sponge concept. You take a sponge, and it will absorb water, it will absorb water, it will absorb water, and then pretty soon all you are doing is pushing water. You know why? Because it is full, and it cannot absorb anymore. Until you take it over to the sink and wring it out, it will not take up, soak up anymore water. Your life and my life is the same way. You can come here Sunday morning, you can come here Thursday night, you can get the side book, come over to my house one on one, you can do whatever you want. You can take it in, take it in and take it in, but you will become that lumpy, wet sponge unless you get wrung out with giving out what you take in. A wise man dispenses knowledge.

We have to be wrung out. It is the next step after learning the knowledge of God is to put it out. Nothing builds you like building other people. You make your list. Look around our own church.

Look at the people who came into church maybe the same time or before or after you did right in a short period. Look where they are at. Some of them are just going to town. Some of them are much farther than some others are. Some of them have gone leaps and bounds, and you can take it all back to one thing: the fact that once you take the knowledge and you start dispensing it and giving it to other people, God takes that and develops you. He makes you with it. He takes you and He develops you in every aspect of your life. He comes to the point where He builds you while you are building other people. He takes what you know, and when you start letting other people, you teach and develop, He will teach you and develop you by those other people.

I get people all the time, and I understand it. I think a lot of the same thing. They work with somebody, and they are really an idiot. They work with somebody, and there are more problems than they work. They always have an excuse. They never do what you tell them to do. I know you get discouraged with it, and many of you have come to me and said, "You know what, so and so is just not doing it. I do not know what to do. I do not know this. I tell you what, I just wish they would get in or get out. I wish they would get it together and all that." I understand all that, but you do not understand. The wisdom of that is it does not matter. I want them to make it. God wants them to make it, and you want them to make it. But at the end of the day, it is their choice whether they make it or not.

I will put you with, I am telling you right now, I will put you with somebody who I do not think has a snail's chance of making it. But I will put you with them simply because maybe they will. I want to give them the best shot I can. But at the end of the day, if they do not, your working with them will make you if it does not make them. You have to grow somehow. You do not grow spiritually just by coming Sunday morning and Thursday night. You grow by taking what you have got and dispensing it and dispersing it to others.

I will give my own example of my own life today. I will tell you what, I do not ever say anything about this, but this is, to me, it is the greatest thing in the world. I will get 30 hours a weekend in 40 different books of the Bible. You say, "Wow, you get all that study time?" I have not even studied for myself yet. That is what you do for me. You force me on Sunday morning to get into the book of Proverbs. I will come on Thursday night, and you will ask me about nine or 10 questions by nine or 10 other books in the Bible. You will come over one on one to the tune of 20, 30 hours a week, and you will all have, some of you have got 50 questions about the Bible in 30 different books. You say, "I love coming over and you teaching me the Bible." Yeah, I love coming, you coming over and keeping me fresh in the Bible. I mean, I may be giving you your answers, but you are making me work through 30 books of that week before I even get into my own personal stuff. It is a two-way street. When you start to take what God has put in your heart and you start to deal with somebody else, disciple them, work with them, teach them, give them what God has given you, it makes you, it develops you. You now not only have to put the material for yourself, but they are going to ask you questions that force you to think, that make you look. Many times, I love what some of you say. Somebody will ask you a question, and you will say, "Well, I do not know the answer, but I will have it by the next time we meet." That is what I am talking about. They make you think.

Otherwise, everybody go home and do this tonight. Get you a bucket of water, put it up about that big, a big bucket, get you a sponge, put it in top and check it hourly. At the first, you will see it is floating real high, and you will see a little ridge at the bottom where it is soaking up water. You will come back in 20 minutes. The ridge is a little higher, still soaking high. You come back in two hours. That thing is just going to be looking like the deadest, wettest, ugliest thing you ever saw, a big old thing just floating in there. It just cannot take any more water. It is almost submerged now, but it will not sink, but it is so heavy, it is worthless. You are getting my point. You have to wring it out. You have to take what God gives you and then you have to do something with it, and it makes you. It makes you. It makes you. It is a waste of time for you to take it all in if you are never going to give it all out, just the way that it is.

20. A wise man will hear.

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

There are hundreds of thousands of God's people today in churches, and I am telling you they are saved. I am telling you they are on their way to heaven, but I am also telling you they stopped hearing from God years ago. Yet they go to church every Sunday. They will be there tonight. They will be there Wednesday. They will be on visitation. They will drive church buses. They will be ushers. They will sing in a choir. They will be Deacons. They will be Sunday school teachers, but they just go through the motions, and they never hear a thing God says in any message or anything from God.

You know, that was Israel's problem. Matthew 13:14-15, he says, "in hearing they shall not hear, and their ears were dull of hearing." Matthew 8:18 says, "in having ears, you hear not." How many times has God said through the Gospels, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." When you stop listening to God and what God says, then you will start listening to somebody else. That is how the process starts. Because there are God's people out there, I am telling you, they are saved, and they are on their way to heaven. They are going to heaven, but I am telling you right now, they have not heard a thing from God for years.

21. A wise man will fear and depart from evil.

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth, and is confident.

As a Christian, we all know this, there are some places that we need not to go. They are not going to be helpful to us. There are some places that we need to stay away from. As a Christian, there are some people we need to stay away from. Negative people. Here again, make your list. I have known people that are not happy about anything unless they are unhappy about something. Negative people. I have seen people who were so negative, I mean, they were absolutely, there was not anything good about anything. They could not, every time, if they went out on their front porch and it was a sunshine and day and the birds were chirping, it would be, "It is too hot and the birds are too loud." They are just negative. Those are the kind of people you need to stay away from. Those are the kind of people you need to stay away from.

Then I am going to tell you something else. There are some wicked people out there you need to stay away from. I am not talking about in the world. I am talking about in churches. I am talking about, hey, there are women in this world when their feet hit the bed in the morning, the devil himself says, "Oh, Lord, she is up again." I do not know if he says, "Oh, Lord," but he says something along those lines. Those are the kind of people you need to stay away from. Those are the kind of circumstances you need to stay away from. Never putting anything or anybody in your life that will not edify you to the cause of Christ.

Even in electricity, who does not know that positive and negative, they will never go together. You take a positive line and a negative line and touch them, you are going to blow a fuse. You as a positive person, matching yourself up with a negative person, you are going to blow your fuse. It is never going to work. They will tear you down. They will drag you down. Life can be terrible. Life can take everything from you. Life can be, you get up in the morning and this breaks down, and this happens, or you get a phone call about this and that. Life itself can be so disparaging. But I am telling you, there are people in this world, Christians, who will get their hooks in you, and they will try to destroy everything in your life. They will tell you everything. They will suck the jelly out of your donut, and it will just be flat.

The Bible says you need to fear them. You fear them from the standpoint that they will hurt your walk with God. You depart from them so you do not become like them. I want to tell you something. I am just telling you. You can wrap this up to some hysterical old man who does not know what he is talking about. He should be living in a mountain in a cave, or you can take it for the truth that it is. But I want to tell you something. As a Christian, listen to me, until you completely break with that world and the people in that world, you are going nowhere. You may think you can live both worlds. The Bible says, "How can two walk together, except they be agreed?" You may think you can run down the middle and do what you want to do in both, one foot in the world and one foot in Christianity. The world will win every time. It is an illusion in your mind that you think that I can stand for God and be with the world. I do not have to leave those old friends. I do not have to leave those old things. I do not have to do that thing anymore. And I can still have association with them. They will win every time in your life. You have to break it off, bury it, totally obey, utterly destroy, the book of Judges says.

V. The Progression of a Fool (from Psalms 1)

A great example is found in the Bible. Now Psalms 1, I want you to turn there. Last Thursday night, Cleon asked a question about blessings. I showed you where the definitive passage was on blessings. It is in Psalms 1. Let me show you something else about it this morning that goes along where we are at. This is the answer why some people used to love God, used to love God's people, used to love the church, used to love everything about God, and now they cannot stand it anymore. Put them on your list. It is your own personal list. Put them on your list. You want to be a wise man? Quit hanging with fools.

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

Now I want you to notice the progression. The moment you start walking with God, the moment you quit walking with God, and you cannot walk with God in the world at the same time, so let us make that clear. Let us put it into an example. You come to church, you start getting involved, you start growing, you start getting the Bible, you start whatever you get, you are going really well, and then you get an old phone call, you meet an old friend, or you start to get to it, and then suddenly you quit walking with God, and you start walking with the world again. I want you to notice the progression. It is a downward progression, and it is just as viable as the first and second laws of thermodynamics.

When the walk with God stops, now you start walking with the ungodly. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly," but I want you to see that. You are not just walking with the ungodly. Did you see what you are walking with? You are walking in their counsel. Not only when you quit walking with God, you quit taking counsel from God, and when you start walking with the ungodly, you start walking not with them, but you cannot walk with them without walking in their counsel. Now they are telling you what is right and wrong. Now they are leading and guiding you. Now they are making the value judgments in your life that you are too strong to stand up for for yourself, and now you are getting bad counsel. And it is the S-E-L, individual.

Now that goes along for a while, and once you start walking, the progression goes down. Once you start walking in the counsel of the ungodly, then it says you are standing in the way of sinners. Now, again, you are not standing with sinners. You are standing in the way the sinners go. Now you are doing what they are doing, where before you just took the counsel. You quit walking with God, started walking with their counsel, listening to what they say. Now you are not walking anymore. Now you are standing in the way that they are going.

Now look at the third one. "Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." Now you are sitting with them. Now you are right in the middle of it. You started out, quit walking with God, started walking with them, started standing with them. You took their counsel. You got in their way, and now you are sitting in the seat of the scornful, and then now, this is the answer, why you who once loved God, why you who once loved the book, why you who once loved church, why you who loved everything about it, now will sit and destroy it and talk bad about it because you went through a natural progression when you leave God and the wisdom of God and you start hanging with fools. One, two, three. You walk with them, you stand with them, and then you sit with them. This is why so many of God's people who once loved God, loved the things of God, and loved the church, are now where they are at.

VI. Conclusion: The Choice is Yours

When I look back in history, man has developed through a number of eras, they call them, ages, eras. Back in the 1800s, the end of the 1700s and into the 1800s, if you go back in history, they

call that the agricultural age. A little bit later on when America really got founded and really got going, they called that an industrial age. Then we got into all of the fast-paced telephones and all this stuff, and we entered into the information age. It was said 25 years ago, I remember hearing a preacher say it, that one New York Times daily newspaper contained more information in it than a man in the 14th century would attain in all of his life. That is the information age. Then in the 60s, we got into the space age. Then we got into the computer age. What we are doing well, as far as I am concerned, now we are in the stupid age. We have got a lot of people with smartphones giving to stupid people. They cannot figure out anything in life for themselves. They cannot make any choice. That is the right choice.

I am telling you, these are the nine character qualities found in the book of Proverbs that are for a wise man. You want to be wise? You want to make the right choices? This is where you start. I am not saying this will solve all your problems, but I am saying you make a list. You put the people you know to fall into this category of being a wise person, and then you hang out with them. Iron sharpens iron.

Would you, if you wanted to be a world class swimmer, would you hang out and train with a person who cannot swim? If you wanted to be a great baseball player, would you train with a guy who could never hit the ball and lost every game? If you wanted to be a great boxer or fighter, would you train with a guy who never won a fight in his life? Well, if you want to deal with your marriage and make it better or your relationship with God, would you take advice from somebody whose own personal spiritual life is a disaster? If you want your children to grow up by your side in ministry and you want to, would you take advice from somebody who has lost all their kids? Of course you would not.

Then if you really want to do your best, be your best, and accomplish the best for God, why would you ever consider and hang out or allow yourself to get under the influence of people who do absolutely nothing for God except complain about everything or absolutely do nothing for God? You see, the book of Proverbs details out for us what a wise man is and a foolish man is. We are going to talk about the foolish man next time. He does this so you and I will make the right choices, the right decisions in all that we do as His son. So the first seven chapters are "my son, my son, my son."

Now I leave you with this great principle and this great proverb. We will end on this note today, and the next time we get back, we will be in Proverbs dealing with a foolish man.

He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed.

You know what, folks, life is just that simple. The real thing about it is you get to choose. Nobody will ever make that choice for you. You can say, "Well, somebody, you know what, they made me do it." Nobody made you do anything. "Well, they coerced you." Until you allowed yourself to be coerced. No, when it comes down to it, we have to make our own choices in life. You may not be responsible, as I said earlier, for many things that befall you in life, but nobody holds their destiny in your hands where you go more than you do by allowing circumstances and people in your life. Now you can choose people or not choose people. Circumstances sometimes will hit you between the eyes, but you do not see them. But even in that, as I said earlier, you

may not always be responsible for the circumstances in life, but you are responsible for how you deal with them. It all comes back to Proverbs. It all comes back to the book of choices. It all comes back to a wise man versus a foolish man.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you and praise you for...