

I. The Value of Character Studies

I would like you to open to Proverbs 12. For the last couple of weeks, we have been looking at the book of Proverbs, really for the last couple of months, and we have been keying in on keywords in the book of Proverbs. I showed you how that is one of the great ways to unlock the Bible. I also remember telling you that when you start out as a young Christian and you do word studies, you start out with basic words, but then you grow into the deeper words that really give you an incredible study.

We looked at the word "balance," and we started Proverbs 11. We looked at the word "branch." We took the word "instructions," and we really looked at that one. Last week, we talked about being established and rooted in the things of God. We learned how to use them to unlock the Scriptures. When I teach you the Bible, I am not just giving it to you so I will give you something on Sunday morning, but I am giving you insight into how to, throughout the rest of the week, really use your Bible.

Today, we are going to look at another aspect of studying the Word of God, one that you are probably pretty familiar with, but I think you will see it maybe a little clearer or better today, and that is character studies. Character studies are one of the richest ways to learn your Bible. I know that there are many ways of studying the Bible. When I used to, early on, when I was really trying to put my Bible together, I would always work for a while on one or two ways, and then I would switch to another couple of ways, and I would try to balance it out.

Over the years, I have learned that one of the greatest ways to study your Bible is by association, the things that God puts in there that are like other things in the Bible. And yet, again, one of the great ways to study it is by contrast, the things that God puts in the Bible that are not like the other things in the Bible. Word studies, we have talked about that the last couple of weeks. Sometimes you want to go through your Bible and purely get a historical application. You want to find out what is going on in history. It is invaluable to the total package of learning your Bible.

Sometimes you want to get the prophetic side to it, and that is how it deals with the Second Coming of Christ or future events, the Millennium or eternity. Sometimes you want to take a doctrinal study and you want to see the specific teaching that the Bible has given you. There are doctrines in the Old Testament for the nation of Israel, and there are doctrines in the New Testament for the Church. You have to be able to separate which is which to know your Bible and understand your Bible.

Then there is an inspirational way you study the Bible. That is taking things out of the Word of God that purely come to you. They are in your world for you to learn and to get through life and all the things that you deal with. And then we have character studies. In Proverbs, you will find that a character or a person is laid out. Then you can take that profile—I use that word, that is a good word—and work it through people in the Bible and really learn from it. It is something that

you take and you start, and you really can develop it. You associate their lives with the character that is laid out in Proverbs or throughout the whole Bible, really.

II. Profiling the Wise and Foolish Man

Let me take a minute and show you how it works. I always take the book of Proverbs because that is where we are in our study. The book of Proverbs fundamentally—and you know this because I have talked about it many, many times—the book of Proverbs is fundamentally about a wise man and a foolish man. Also, that really goes through the whole Bible as a sub-theme. You are going to find where there is a man who builds his house on a rock and a man who builds his house on sand. One is wise and one is foolish. In Matthew 25, you have ten virgins; five are wise, five are foolish. So it kind of follows all the way through the Bible, but it is certainly defined in the book of Proverbs.

The book of Proverbs is about either a wise man or a foolish man. That is a biblical profile. You start with that, and in the FBI, they have what they call profilers. I guess probably every police department does. They have patterns that they look for. A really good profiler can look at a crime or a series of crimes, or what a guy or a person does in that crime, and they get a profile of that person. They can tell within an age bracket of how old he is. They can tell his race by certain things that he does. They really get good at it, and that is how they catch many, many criminals, and they get them, and they keep them from getting to the point where they profile them.

The book of Proverbs does that for us. When we talk about a wise man, you are going to find in the book of Proverbs that it says nine things that set a profile for a wise man.

- You want to be wise in your life? Find out what these nine things are.
- You want to associate with wise people? Find out what these nine things are.

At the same time, the book of Proverbs profiles what a foolish man is. There are eight things in Proverbs—I have given them to you before—that profile what a foolish man is. What you do is simply see those traits, see those patterns, and then you follow them through. They will lead you to exactly what the person is by his actions, and you come away with an incredible way to study the Bible.

For instance, you take a wise man and a foolish man and you profile them. You follow the path of a wise man. You follow the pattern of a foolish man, and in real life, you can then see people around you—people that you work with, people that you are associated with—and immediately you can tell, "This is a wise man, this is a foolish man." This is somebody I want to associate with; this is somebody I do not want to associate with.

In the Bible, there are some great wise men. I would say that Solomon probably tops our list. He has been given credit as being the wisest man that ever lived, and certainly he was. He writes three out of the five wisdom books that you have in your Bible. I would say that Job is one of the wise men in the Bible. He writes one of the wisdom books. When you come over to the book of

Psalms, you will find that is your fifth wisdom book. You will find that Psalms is written by a collection of people.

- David wrote it. He is a very wise man.
- You are going to find that Asaph wrote Psalms 73-83. If you are into music, if you are a singer, if you are somebody who likes music, a study of Asaph is an incredible study. He is probably one of the greatest, if not the greatest, picture of what a musician should be found in the Word of God.
- Moses is another author of Psalms, so he is a wise man.
- You will find in 1 Chronicles 9:19, the sons of Korah. They also wrote some of the Psalms.
- A guy by the name of Ethan, over there in 1 Kings 4:31, he wrote some of the songs.
- You will find a guy by the name of Heman, and a guy by the name of Chalcol and Darda, and the sons of Mahol in 1 Kings 4:31. They are all listed as wise people.

You go back into some of the ones you are more familiar with, Daniel. Daniel is the greatest type of the Holy Spirit of God anywhere in the Bible because of his wisdom. You have Joseph. He is a wise man. When you have to deal with his brethren who have sold him into slavery, you see his wisdom personified in how he deals with those scenarios. Abraham. Abraham did not start out too good, but he wound up being a friend of God. Do you know why? Because he became a wise man.

Then you want to take and look at the fools in the Bible. I would think that the number one fool in the Bible is probably Saul.

Proverbs 12:4-5

1 Samuel 26:21

‘Then Saul said, I have sinned: return, my son David: for I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was precious in thy sight this day: behold, I have played the fool, and have erred exceedingly.’

And he did. He did.

Rehoboam, over there in 1 Kings 12, one of Solomon's sons. He is a fool. He splits the kingdom. And when he split the kingdom, he set the death knell for the nation of Israel. When they got divided—divide and conquer—it was only a matter of time before they were going to go down. Jeroboam. He is a fool in the Bible. He is one of Saul's mighty men of valor. And he takes and

splits the northern tribe of Solomon's mighty men of valor. He takes the northern tribe and splits it up. You have Ahab in 1 Kings 18. The Bible is filled with them.

A wise man in the Bible will follow God in His Word and take His instructions. A fool in the Bible will follow the world and forsake God's instructions. You have guys like Pilate. You have guys like King Agrippa. You have guys like Herod and Festus and Caiaphas. All people who in the Bible are great studies and character studies and great profiles of what a fool is.

Now you have a character study, or a lack of character study in a fool's case. Now you look at every situation you get into. Once you learn the profiles in the Bible, once you learn what a wise man is and what a fool is by the examples found in the Word of God, then you put them into your own life as you go through life. You have to deal with scenarios, look at people, deal with situations. Now you have a basis on which you make the value system for your life. So the theme of Proverbs is a profile of two kinds of men: a wise man and a foolish man.

III. The Virtuous and Wicked Woman

Now also, you are going to find in the book of Proverbs, but throughout the Bible too, you will find what we call sub-themes. They will be people who are not the major theme of something, but they are also a sub-theme of good or bad. And there are other character profiles that you can study through. It is the same way with all the Word of God. You will have a main one and then you will have secondary ones. In our passage today, which we are going to read here in a moment, you are going to see that.

In Proverbs 31, you have a virtuous woman; she is a sub-theme. And then you have a strange woman or a wicked woman. You will always have a righteous man and an evil man popping up in Proverbs. In our text today, it will be found and based on a sub-theme found in Proverbs 12:4-5. This will be the virtuous woman versus the wicked woman.

Proverbs 12:4

‘A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.’

Proverbs 12:5

‘The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.’

Now Father, we thank You and praise You for the Lord Jesus, and we do love You today. We thank You for those that have come out. We thank You, Father, for another day that we can open up the Scriptures of this book, and we know we can trust it. We know it is Your absolute Word, and we just now rest in it today and yet enjoy it as we get fed from the manna from Heaven. We will thank You and praise You in Jesus' name, for Jesus' sake we ask it. Amen.

Now in this profile of a virtuous woman and a strange woman or a wicked woman, you will again have a number of character studies of women in the Bible to illustrate both cases. You talk about a woman of virtue. There are some great studies in the Bible. I would think first and foremost in my mind would be Ruth. She has a whole book dedicated to her life, and you can see

how she is really someone who has a lot of virtue. Another would be in 1 Samuel 25:30, Abigail, and that scenario with David and her husband.

In the New Testament, you find Mary and Martha, in particular Mary, in John 11, the sister of Lazarus. She is the one that took the oil and put it on His feet and used her own hair—an incredible woman. In Proverbs 31, we already mentioned we have a case study of a virtuous woman there, and it is an incredible study to take that.

You are going to find that in the Bible there are two women. There are two women who remain anonymous to this day, but the Bible says that they are great women, and they are one of the greatest studies that you are ever going to take in the Bible.

1. The one is in 2 Kings 4:8-44. That is the woman of Shunem. And it goes through that story there how she loses her son and then she gets her son back, and she is an incredible woman with what she does and how she handles things.
2. The second would be in Matthew 15:20-28, and that is the woman who has a daughter vexed with the devil. She is the one that comes to Christ several times and gets rejected flat out.

When you study both of those out, you find that they are two great character studies, not only in a personal way that any man or any woman could read those and want to have the character qualities that they had in dealing with life. But on a broader scale, the reason why they are anonymous, and the reason why there is no name given for them, and the reason why there are only two in the Bible that says they are great, is because you are going to find that the woman of Shunem is a great picture of the nation of Israel as the wife of God. And you are going to find that the woman in Matthew 15 is a great picture of the Church in a relationship with Christ. And they are incredible studies.

But then you have the wicked women in the Bible. And they are great studies too.

- You have Jezebel, who is the wife of Ahab.
- How about Delilah back there in Judges 18.
- Then you have over there in Mark 6, Herodias. She was the one that left her brother and married Herod, and John the Baptist told her that what they were doing, living in sin, was wrong.
- And then you have her daughter. She is not named, but she is a piece of work. She is the one who belly danced before Herod. He loved it so much and thought it was such a great deal that he said, "You know what, you are the greatest dancer I ever saw, and I will tell you, I am going to give you whatever you want out of my kingdom, except you cannot be king." She went back to her mom and said, "What a deal! Do you want to get a new car? Do you want to get a new house? Do you want to get into this?" Her wicked mother said, "No. Let us get John the Baptist beheaded because she did not like his preaching."
- There are some wicked women in the Bible. You have the witch at Endor back there in 1 Samuel 28.

And the more you learn the Bible, the more you read the Bible, you are going to find that all the witches did not die out in the Old Testament. They have made it into the New Testament.

IV. Historical Application: Solomon's Quest

Now along with that, you will have three basic applications that you will want to work through in each one of these studies. This passage here, for instance, I am going to use as an example today. This passage here will have a historical application. In other words, it really happened in history, and there is a point to it that God wants you to understand. It has an inspirational application. That inspirational application means that you read something that actually happened historically, and yet the material in it will go right into your life and what you are dealing with every day in life through the principles. And then there will be a doctrinal application to it. That simply means that whatever you are studying about this, even though it happened historically and even though it inspirationally will teach you something, there is a prophetic application. It is going to fit somewhere, somehow, into something in the future. And this is what you do when you learn how to use your Bible.

Now let us look at the historical application of this passage for a moment first. That is, if you do not have this in your Bible or you have your notebook, you are probably going to want to get some of this down. This is great stuff to go home and put it in your Bible right by this passage so you can understand what you are dealing with.

Solomon was looking for a virtuous woman. He had a thousand wives, but he could not find a virtuous woman among them. And the reason is, in most cases, they were wicked women without virtue. They had come from all the pagan nations that Israel was told to stay separate from. And like New Testament Christianity today, that was hard for him to do. You find that it says there that some of the women came from Egypt. We know that Egypt is a great type of the world. One of the greatest studies you will take in the Bible. He had some from Moab and some from Ammon. Those are the two children that came through incest with his own daughters back there in Genesis. He had some women from the Edomites, from Edom. God wrote a whole book, the book of Obadiah, against the Edomites. You had the Zidonians and the Hittites. All these nations were nations that God said you are not to have anything to do with.

Solomon forsook that good piece of advice, just like most of God's people today. Not a lot has changed in a couple thousand years of history. In fact, in 1 Kings 11, it is these very same women who are his downfall and ultimately the destruction of the nation of Israel.

1 Kings 11:1

‘But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites;’

The Bible says on down in verse 3 that those same women that God told him to stay away from, they turned his heart away from God.

1 Kings 11:3

‘And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart.’

They brought in all their gods, they brought in all of the junk from their nations, and ultimately it is his end.

But at some point, he finds this woman of virtue that he is looking for. He makes reference to her in Proverbs 31 where he says:

Proverbs 31:10

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies.

And some say that it is the Queen of Sheba. There is no absolute proof for that, but she is mentioned over there in Matthew 12 as the queen of the south, and according to that, she has some judgment, and she certainly was impressed by everything that she saw. But you never know for sure. Finding a virtuous woman is almost as hard today as it was back in 987 BC.

But at some point, he finds her, and then he writes about her, a book to her, and that book is a song, a love song. This is why women love songs, and it is the book of Song of Solomon. It is dedicated to her. She is called a pearl in Matthew 13. In Song of Solomon 1, she is called a black pearl, which leads people to believe that it was probably the Queen of Sheba from Africa, being black. I do not know what you know about black pearls, but black pearls are pretty rare.

When you start to come through, I remember one time years ago I read that, and I was starting to know how the Church is the pearl of great price. I know that the Song of Solomon is about the Church, and I saw Song of Solomon 1 where it talked about that she was black, so that would make her a black pearl. I knew he had a thousand wives and he only found one, so I asked a jeweler one time who did not know anything about the Bible how rare a black pearl was. And he says, "Oh, probably one in a thousand." I said, "Amen." He said, "What did you say?" I said, "Never mind."

Here is the lesson from history. It is a great lesson, very clear. Do not join yourself to what God has told you to separate yourself from. That is simple. Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Let God have put asunder. Do not let any man join them back together. I mean, it is just that simple. This was Solomon's basic problem. This was Israel's basic problem. This is the Church's basic problem, and this is the Christian's basic problem.

V. Doctrinal Application: Crown and Rottenness

Now let us look at it doctrinally for a minute here. This virtuous woman, who was a crown to her husband, will be the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, but she will be the Church in the New Testament. This is one of these places where you have a dual application. You have to learn those in time in the Bible. We know that in the Old Testament, Israel is God's wife, and in the New Testament, the Church is Christ's bride. And Israel was to be a crown to God in the Old Testament, as the Church is to be a crown to Christ.

You say, "How do you mean that?" A crown deals with a king, and a crown deals with a kingdom. So in the Old Testament, Israel was to be a crown to her husband because the kingdom

is the Kingdom of Heaven, and in the New Testament, we will be a crown to Christ because the kingdom is the Kingdom of God.

Now let me show you. When Israel goes into captivity and loses the Kingdom of Heaven in Psalms 78, in Lamentations 5:16 concerning this time period, here is what it says:

Lamentations 5:16

‘The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!’

You see, Israel in the Old Testament was a crown to God because she had the Kingdom of Heaven. In the New Testament, the Church is a crown to Christ because we have the Kingdom of God. And that is exactly what happened in the Old Testament, and that is exactly what has happened in the New Testament. Israel in the Old Testament would be a crown to God; she failed. The Church in the New Testament would be a crown to Christ, and the Church failed.

Now that is not all, look at Proverbs 12:4, "a wicked woman is as rottenness in his bones." That is an awful thing to say. You will not find an anniversary card with that in it. You have to get one of them blank ones and put it in yourself. But that is a great study. The skeleton system that a human being has is really the structure by which all the rest of the body is stabilized. Our skeleton system is the structure, the framework of our bodies. The skeleton structure is the framework, and when a disease hits those bones, the structure collapses; it falls apart, it gets weak, it gets rotten.

What happened to Israel and the Church today is simply that the wickedness of Israel put a rottenness in the bones of God—the Church, the Old Testament structure that God had. And in the New Testament, this Church has a disease today that has weakened the structure, the bone, the very system that holds the Church up. The world has a terrible disease out there, a lot of terrible diseases, but the one that came along here 30, 40 years ago that they will probably never get a handle on is AIDS, called HIV. And the world has a disease, and that disease is for a man or a woman to become HIV positive. It is a terrible disease and usually results in death at some time in your life, even though they have drugs that can forestall that for a while.

But I have always thought it was interesting that in Christianity, the Church has a terrible disease. Have you ever noticed that? And the Church disease does exactly what this verse says: it attacks the structure of the Church and degrades it, and it falls apart. Where the world is HIV positive, the Christian world is NIV positive. And it has destroyed the very structural system of God's Church.

VI. Inspirational Application: Marrying Wisely

Now let us look at the third one, inspirationally. Looking at this passage inspirationally, it is simply this: be careful who you marry. Now let me say, this is talking about a woman here, either a good one or a bad one. I can see we are going to get into trouble on this one. But it can go both ways. Boy, I have never seen the men take out pens and take notes so fast on any sermon as I have right now. Well ladies, hang on because I am going to flip-flop it here both ways.

In particular, it can go both ways, but in particular, it is talking about the importance of finding a good wife. Proverbs 18:22, every young man at Shingle had to have this verse down, and it simply says:

Proverbs 18:22

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

Now a good wife will bring the husband the favor of the Lord because she is a good helpmeet. She has virtue; she is godly. A good wife will stabilize the family. She will balance out the family. She will balance out the husband, sometimes with a rolling pin, but she balances him out.

Now the tragedy here, and this is so true, is that most husbands never get this; they never do. In a church like ours, you can actually see the process at work. Our Church is filled with good, godly women who really love God and the Bible and really apply what they learn, not only to their own personal life but to their family. All you have to do is look around and see; in a heartbeat, you can tell by the way they train up their children. And when their children get a little older, how good their children behave. And when their children get older, how good they stay with their families and are not out in the world, and how they marry good people, and they stay, and the process goes on. I mean, you can see it. Now I know we as husbands like to take credit for that because we are the spiritual head of the home. I get it, I understand it, but the wife plays a big role in that.

When a man has a good wife, it reflects back on him as the leader. It is a crown to his head, the Bible says. It is honor to him because he has a good wife. The Bible says over there in Proverbs 31:23, when it is talking about the virtuous woman and all that she has going for her and how good she is, it actually says there that:

Proverbs 31:23

Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land.

He is known because of the wife that he has. Now you know that is true. I do not know if you ever thought about it or not, but when people look at you when they get to know you, or you introduce yourself, or in church, they look at you. They do not just look at you; they will look at your wife, they will look at your family, they will look at you through those things that are supposed to be the way they need to be. People just do that. It just does. Those husbands never find or never see the true value of a good wife.

One time, a guy was deer hunting with his friend, and it was a cold November morning. They were up there in a tree stand, looking out across the field at this beautiful buck. I mean, it must have been a Missouri national Daniel Boone champion. It was incredible. It was walking right out in there broadside. The guy got his rifle up and got sighted down on him, and just about the time he did, he looked out of the corner of his eye and a funeral procession was coming down the road. His buddy looked at him and said, "Take the shot! Take the shot!" He laid the rifle down, stood up, put his hand over his heart as that funeral went by. His buddy looked at him and said, "You know what, I have always thought you were an idiot and a scoundrel with a lot of things,

but I want to tell you, that was more than impressive." A record buck got away all because you wanted to show respect to that funeral going by. He said, "Yeah, well, you know, we were married for 35 years."

Most husbands never find or never see the true value of a good wife. They never really value her opinion. They never learn that she sees things differently than a man. She forms a very important balance. That is invaluable. When a wife tries to tell her husband something, many times the husband just gets mad about it. He gets mad because deep down inside—a little psychology here—he knows he is wrong. He never gets the value of listening to her or taking her advice when she knows something more about things than the man does. And women do. Not much, but they do. I am just kidding you.

Making any decision, I do not care what it is. Any decision you have to make, you are always a wise man when you know all your options. And sometimes a wife can present options that we do not see. Now I realize that in Christianity, that is not true in a majority of cases. Finding a good, godly wife is pretty hard to do. I have them here, but I mean in Christianity. That is why when you do find one, it is a very good thing, Proverbs 18:22 says. She is like that black pearl, one out of a thousand.

Now I want you to note Proverbs 12:4 there. It says, "she shall be a crown unto her husband." In a Bible sense or a Biblical sense, this is in her life as we talked about. She will bring honor, bring favor to the man. So without question, the reference to this also is a reference to the Judgment Seat of Christ, 1 Corinthians 3, 2 Corinthians 5. Listen, a good wife will build toward that day. A good wife will realize that the most important day in your life as a Christian after you are saved is the day that you stand before God, the Judgment Seat of Christ. And all she does, she sees it as you do. And you get the favor of God and the blessings of God because she follows your leadership and she makes a good part of the team for the Lord. The Bible says that at the Judgment Seat of Christ—a great verse that I gave you a couple of weeks ago, 1 Samuel 30:24—at that time, they are going to part alike.

You know this, to the lady, just as a bad husband can destroy your life and keep you from fulfilling the plan of God. And I talk about it all the time on who you marry. Ma'am, you can marry the wrong guy, and all that God has for you goes out the window. I mean, you can marry the wrong guy, and I will tell you what, you did not prove all things, you did not follow the process, you did not get it. So you marry some guy who may be a nice guy, but he is never going to fulfill in his life, and you are going to shackle yourself to that, and you are going to lose all that God has for you.

But I want to say to the man, so can a bad woman. A bad woman will put the whole family out of sync. I have seen it where a guy married a gal, and there are all kinds of scenarios where the guy has had a fellowship with God, and he marries some gal, or he does not, he is backslidden, and he finds some gal and marries her, and then he gets right with God. I mean, there are a thousand different scenarios. We get to the point now where you want to do something, you want to get on fire, you want to move for God, and she will not go to church. And when she does go, she causes issues with everybody there. She cannot get along with anybody. She will always find a problem,

and she will always bring it back to you, and you will want to get up and go to church and get the Word of God and get something, and she will be a lead weight around your ankles every Sunday morning, every Thursday night, and everything that you want to do.

If she is unsaved, she wants nothing to do with God or the Church. Absolutely nothing to do with it. If she is saved, she usually wants nothing to do with ministry; she is totally adverse to anything that is spiritual. Instead of you taking your life and, as a team, ministering together and doing all the things that God wants you to do together, you lose all of that because you spend all of your energies trying to deal with somebody that you have linked yourself to, but it did not go anywhere. Now, I am not saying there are not ways to work around that and there are not things to do, but as old Paul said, "Such shall have trouble in the flesh."

Now let me say this. I understand that the man is the spiritual leader. I get that. But it is almost impossible to lead a bad woman. I mean, it really is. It is really hard to do that because it can make life such a miserable place at home. Just as a good woman will make the family, a bad woman will destroy the family. The last part of Proverbs 12:4 says, "but she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones." We talked about the bones being the structure of the body. A bad woman will destroy the structure of what her husband will try to build for the Lord. She will put three pieces in; she will take two pieces out.

You see this all the time—maybe you do not—but I have seen it all my life in pastors' wives. You have a guy who is a good guy, and he tries to do some things for the Lord, but his wife destroys everything he tries to do with her mouth. Everything he tries to build, her attitude tears it down. With everything he is trying to do for the pulpit, she has four or five power plays going on behind the scenes. She has a co-pastor mentality. Her husband may be the pastor in the Church, but she is thinking she is right up there with him, and she manipulates everything. And if she does not have the co-pastor mentality, then she has the pastor's mentality, which is even worse.

Listen, I have seen them lie, I have seen them be the biggest gossip in the Church, I have seen them be the farthest thing in the universe from a quiet and meek spirit, 1 Peter 3:4, which the Bible says in the sight of God is a great thing.

1 Peter 3:4

But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

I have seen it all my life. I have seen churches where the pastor tried to do something, he wanted to do something, he wanted to get something done, and his wife, because whatever her problem was, was so insecure or so wicked or so rotten that she had to try to destroy everything that was going on. And most times, the guy is oblivious to it.

I have seen it in churches where they used to have a "mother of the year" deal, and every year this wife would get "mother of the year." You would think she was the only woman on the planet. And she would sit down there, and the husband would get up, and he would talk about what a great helpmeet she is and all this and that. Everybody in that Church saw it as the farce that it

was. If they had to vote and do it the way it was supposed to be done, she would not even get that church dog catcher.

Never in life want to miss what is going on in the world and miss the application to Christianity. What do you think of Bruce Jenner? Bruce Jenner. See, that is what I thought your reaction would be. Going from a man to a woman, transgender, sex change operation. What a sick world we live in! Vanity Fair puts a picture of her. I do not know if it was—I do not think she looked that way that quick. I think they probably used a lot of computer Photoshop on her or whatever. But there she is. She really is a dilemma for us. Do you know what I am saying? I mean, if everybody knows who you are, but everybody is satisfied who you are not anymore, but they know who you are, what restroom do you use? I lay awake and I am thinking about that. How do you address her, him? Well, "hi, her, him," used to be "him, her." You talk about him, huh? That would be a problem. Front page cover. National attention. Facebook. And President Obama sent her a letter of congratulation for her courage. I am sure glad Bill Clinton was in office, and he would be vital over to the Oval Office. Amen. And Baptist churches across this country, in the pulpit today, last week, everything this fiasco started, are slamming him/her, and painting it as a messed up, fouled up, degenerate process, and it is. Romans chapter one personified.

But I want to tell you something. In life, I have watched for 40 years, women in churches who never changed their name from Josephine to Joe, never had a sex change operation, yet they wear the pants of the man in the family. They run the show just like a man, and they usurp the authority of the man, and you never hear a word about it. Bruce Jenner, as screwed up as she is, it is. At least it is honest. "I will change my sexual orientation on the outside to match my heart attitude on the inside." But what we have got in churches is spiritual transgenders. See, if the world does it, it is wrong. I mean, you see two lesbians walking down the street. One looks like a woman, the other looks like Butch the mailman. It does not take a lot of imagination to know who is playing who. But see, it is okay when the world does it, it is wrong. But in churches, it is okay.

We used to have this lady that lived across the street. I think she is dead now, I do not know. But she had a husband. Every time I would go out to take my dogs out, or I would be out there with her bringing this dog out, I just had to go in the garage. It was such a hilarious thing. I do not think she ever went anywhere that her husband did not tag along. And she had this—I mean, she was a bruiser. Let me just tell you that. She had this little chihuahua. Now I love dogs, I do. And I would never hurt a dog for anything on the planet, cats neither. I have a hard time hurting anything today, I just do. But I want to tell you, a chihuahua is just—and if you have a chihuahua, I am thankful for you, and I know you will probably love the little guy. But you have to admit, other than an ad for Taco Bell, what good are they? I mean, their eyes look like somebody just stepped on their tail, bugged out. They have a bark that is so high-pitched, it hurts my ears.

She had this little chihuahua, and her husband—her husband was about 100 pounds with the skinniest little legs you ever saw in your life. I mean, they are no bigger than matchsticks. And he had a high voice. And I used to watch him go out there, and she would have that little dog on a leash, and he would be out there standing just like this, watching. And she would say, "Go

potty, go potty, go potty." And I could not ever tell if she was talking to the guy or the dog. She was so manly and persuasive, I had to go potty. And this little guy was so wimpy. And it was obvious that she ruled the roost. She is the one who said what happened, when it happened, where to go, where not to go.

I had a dog one time, years ago, and this dog lived his life with his tail between his legs and his ears always down. You just look at him, and that dog would cower in the corner. And I would watch this woman; he would say something, "Oh, honey, why," and she would look at him, and he would just... But you see, that is okay. The woman becomes a strong, dominant leader, and the husband is a weenie, and he submits himself to her, and we just look at that, and we never say a word and never address it. And it goes on in churches with pastors' wives and women in churches all the time. And I do not care how big the guy is. I have seen guys that were six foot four, 300 pounds, that were just as wimpy as you could find. And she will ruin the family. She will ruin the husband. She will ruin the ministry. She will ruin everything she touches. Sometimes God's people can be the most hypocritical, double-minded, double-standard people you ever met. And we just look at that in churches when she plays the dominant role, and she is the man, even though she stayed a woman. And as I say, she is a man, we never address it, and we want to clobber old Bruce Jenner and his depravity.

VII. Inspirational Application: Right Thoughts vs. Deceitful Counsel

Look at Proverbs 12:5:

Proverbs 12:5

‘The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit.’

Now that is one of the great verses in life, on life. And when things go the way they go in life, many times this verse really shows you why. If you ever grasp verses like this in the Bible, you will be great in dealing with people. It gives great insight into why things are the way they are and why they go the way they do.

Now the verse says this: "The thoughts of the righteous are right: but the counsels of the wicked are deceit." Did you ever notice how when you get a child at two, three, four, five, six, or seven years old, you never met one who was an agnostic or an atheist? You never really met one that believed in evolution? You never met one that was a drunk or into drugs? Because we as children are right in our thoughts, we are pure in our thoughts. God did it that way so as a child our thoughts would be pure and right so we could find God. This is why Jesus always was around children, and He never forsook the little children coming to be with Him. He realized that a child when he is young has his thoughts right. Now stay with me on this. This is incredible.

The only way we learn to reject God and the Bible and to get away from all the things that He has for us is to learn behavior. It is to be taught by somebody older that we associate with. Many times it is the parents. Kids five to ten years old want to go to church. "Mommy, can we go to church today? Daddy, I want to go to church." He is up and ready to go while mom and dad are

still in bed. And he says, "I want to go, I want to go, I want to be there, I want to get what is right, I want to hear the Bible, I want to go to Sunday school class." They do not want to go, and from five to ten or eleven, he wants to go, but then from twelve on down the line, he does not want to go anymore. Do you know why? Because he thought right, but by your teaching him through his learned behavior, somebody older is always the one who teaches the younger ones what is wrong versus what is right.

Let me tell you something. As a kid growing up, every dirty joke I ever heard, every dirty habit I ever formed, every vile thought or every rotten joke I ever heard was taught to me by an older boy. I never thought of smoking or drinking until I got in with the older guys and they said, "Oh, this is what is cool, this is what you do." It was a learned behavior, but as a young child, my thoughts were right. It took somebody older in this world to take that away from me and fill it with the filth of this world. It is to be taught by somebody older that we associate with in families with multiple children. I have watched parents have three or four kids, and I have watched them lose the first one—I have watched the oldest one—then I have watched them lose the next one, then the youngest one, and then right on down the line, and they never figure it out. They never figure out that the reason they lost the first one, the oldest, is because they were not doing what is right, and somebody else trained him that way. Then he trained the rest of the kids coming up.

I have seen women who have left their kids to work for a living and left their kids with somebody else, maybe a grandparent or an aunt or somebody out here or a babysitter, and there are other kids in there that are nowhere near where they need to be with God, and Karen says, "I cannot take my child there anymore." She is coming home with the worst stuff you ever saw in your life. Do you know why? Because somebody older taught her that. Somebody younger has their thoughts right. The importance of grounding our children before they hit life, they hit school, they hit a job, they hit the world. A kid hits 15 or 16, he is rebellious into the world, he is uncontrollable. We lose all influence in their life. They get into booze, they get into drugs, they get into all the worldly things, and we scratch our head and think it just happened.

A beautiful rose bush just does not happen. Getting flowers in your garden just does not happen, and one day you come out and, "Wow, there is the rose bush!" That is beautiful, it is gorgeous, red and yellow roses. That flower just did not happen to bloom. The seed was sown long before it popped up. It just took some time for it to blossom, and right now your children in this world who have the right thoughts, the seed is being sown either by you or the people they associate with, and someday they will blossom. This is why the importance of camp, having a week where your kids get everything out of their life. The first time we had camp, a lot of kids said, "Well, I cannot take my cell phone, I cannot take this, I cannot take that." "What fun is this going to be?" That is because their whole world is about associating with people outside of one-on-one contact. One time in their life, one week of their life, where everything from the world is completely out, and all they get to do is be indoctrinated with the things of God. What parent would pass that up? And a lot of parents will say, "I want my kids to go," but your kid does not want to go. Did last year, did not he? Do you know what I am talking about?

As a drunk, as a drug addict, as a fornicator, or a godly child, it did not start that way. Somebody educated them out of the value of knowing all about God. I had a lady one time come to me, and

she had a daughter, and her daughter—this happened so many times it is unbelievable. Her daughter was hooked up with a guy who was an absolute slug. He was an absolute worthless—he was the most worthless kid. I mean, he was into drinking, and she shamed her mom and dad. And she met this guy someplace, I do not know, and they got a relationship going, and she hung out with this guy. This guy was the most worthless guy you ever met in your life. He caused nothing but problems. And it is none of my business; it is not my child. But when the mother comes to me and she starts ragging on everything and she starts talking, she is blaming this guy. She said, "Oh, you do not know, this guy is this, this guy is that, this guy has been a headache, this guy has caused this problem, this guy is the biggest jerk, this guy is this, this guy is that, he has brought so much strife into our life." And I let her go on, and then I stopped and I asked her a question, "Okay, so this guy is a jerk." "I get that, you made your point. Let me ask you a question: What kind of value system did you instill in your daughter that she picked up that jerk?" It is not the guy's fault; a jerk is a jerk is a jerk. You just failed to give her a core value system that has a sign, "No jerks need apply." But we like to blame everybody else.

Not only is it true as a little child growing up—you little gals and guys that have good thoughts, right thoughts—and we need to protect that. Moms and dads need to protect that. You need to make sure that the influences, the associations that they get into, do not ruin that; protect that. I mean, they are going to have to deal with it sooner or later, but right now you keep that right thought process going.

But not only is it true of children, but it is true the day you got saved. And I do not care if you are 50, 40, 30, or 20. The day you got saved, that Bible says you are a new creature in Christ Jesus:

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

The moment you get up off your knees after trusting Christ as your personal Savior, you are as clean in your thought process as a three-year-old. Over there in Mark 5:15, you have the story of the maniac of Gadara. And he was demon possessed. And he left his family, left his wife, and lived in the grave, in the tombs, in the cemetery. He was strong; he could break chains, and no man could hold him. And he was walking around naked, and he was yelling, howling at the moon at night. Then one day he met Jesus. And Jesus changed everything about him. And if you ever have that day where you meet Jesus, it will change everything about you. And the Bible says after he had his encounter with Jesus, that he was sitting there, and the Bible says:

Mark 5:15

And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.

What happened when you get saved? You get a right mind. What happened before you were saved? You had the wrong mind. You could not have a right mind before you got saved, and your life depended on it. But the moment you get saved, you now have a right mind. You have the right thoughts. And now you have the ability to make the right decisions. You are as pure as a

three-year-old. The righteous are right. But the counsels of the wicked are deceit. You are just as clean as you were at three and four.

Now what happens from here on out will depend on one thing: who you associate with and what they teach you. And just like a little three or four-year-old who has a right thought process will get with the wrong kids at school and take him away from the parents, you get saved at 20, 30, 40, or 50, and you decide to go to church, get baptized, do what is right, get disciplined, get your Bible, and then you run into some old friend that tells you how goofy that is. That is how it works. Right mind. It did not say perfect, but right. He is right. Psalms 1 says:

Psalms 1:1

‘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.’

Psalms 1:2

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

Counsel of the ungodly. You are not sinless. You still have your flesh to deal with. But now you can make right choices because for the first time in your life, you are in your right mind, and you have the ability because your thoughts now are right. You need to guard that once you get saved, just like a parent guards that little child of who they associate with.

Now I am telling you, you do what you want to do. You want some advice from me? I will tell you. Cut out of your kid's life anybody who is a negative influence in any way, shape, or form. I do not care who it is. It may be their cousin. It may be their uncle. It may be whatever. You cut out of their life any association that anybody is going to have any quality time with them, that they are going to influence them, because you are going to see it every time; you are going to see God get the short end of the stick because that old nature is going to gravitate to the world. And my advice to you as a parent: cut them out. Monitor it very carefully. Watch what your kids do on your "inner face" or "no face" or "ugly face" or whatever they have. Keep watching them on the internet. Watch who they are talking to. Watch what they are doing. Watch what they are saying. Watch who they are hanging out with. One of these days you will wind up and wonder where your child went, and it was right under your nose. The thief in that little iPhone took them from you.

Now for you older people that just got saved, let me give you some good advice. You do not have to take it, but it is good advice, and it is free. You get everybody out of your life that is not conducive to your spiritual growth. Do not roll the dice. You say, "That is a hard thing." A lot of things in Christianity are a hard thing. Him dying on the cross was a hard thing. He did it for you. He gave Himself up for you. Now you give everything else up for Him. Just my suggestion, do not look at me like you have a sign of death decree going out the door today, though it would not hurt you. Make sure the people you have in your life are going to support those right thoughts. Do not allow somebody to come in and just tear down something that God is doing. Shut them out of your life. Some of you are so weak-kneed and so wishy-washy when it comes to things like that. You will let somebody tear down this Church or tear down another Christian

or tear down this, and you will just stand there and just put your tail between your legs and just take it all in. The devil will take that, and he will use that. My advice to you is to look at them go for about five minutes, make sure they are on the right track, and then just let them have it. In Jesus' name, of course. Do not tolerate it. For the first time, get some steel in your backbone. Take a stand for something. Do not allow people to manipulate you and push you around in what you are thinking. God saved you and gave you a right mind. Never let somebody take that right mind from you. The greatest possession you have got outside your salvation, and it came because of your salvation.

In both cases, a child and a new baby Christian, you both have the ability to make right choices, to do right things, because now you have the right thoughts and the right mind. But it will depend in both cases on who you associate with. Growing up physically as a little child, growing up spiritually as a person who just got saved, no matter how old you are. And when you take counsel from the older Christian who loves God and His Word, then you will become a wise man. That is a good thing. You hang around people who support what you are doing. You hang around people who encourage you. They edify you. They love God like you do. Maybe they know a little bit more about the Bible, and they will help you get through things in life that you need.

Or you will hang out with the older, godless, worldly man or woman, in some cases saved or lost. Some of the weakest people I ever met in my life, you are going to spend an eternity with in Heaven. And those people will instruct you and give you counsel. And they will take that pure, right mind that God put in you the day you got saved, and they will destroy everything about it. The fool and the wise man. The wise man will stay with the counsel of God because Proverbs 19:21 says that will stand, but the fool will hang out with the crowd that will take away the right things, his right thinking, and give him a deception, a deceit, Proverbs 12:5.

Proverbs 19:21

There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

And with that, he will set up all the idols in his heart like we talked about last week, in Ezekiel 14. I have seen God's people that are so wrong that they could never find their way out of the woods if wrong was woods. And they will go to their grave because they think they are right simply because they have allowed the things in their life which penetrate into their heart that deceive them, and now not only are they deceived, but they are lost in their deception. Lost from finding their way out of it. Now you want to believe what you want to believe. It does not matter what the Bible says.

And again, for the umpteenth time, how easy and uncomplicated the Christian life really is. If Proverbs does one thing and one thing well, it strips the complexity out of what we hear about how hard it is to be a Christian. It is not hard to be a Christian. What is hard is to do what is right as a Christian. What is the problem? And the book of Proverbs lays that out, the simplicity of a life with God simply based on the instructions. Realizing that in this life there is a wise man and a foolish man. There is a virtuous woman and a wicked woman. Staying away from the wicked

side of things and putting yourself around the godly side of things. Taking the right instruction to be everything that God wants you to be and coming to the place that you realize the day you got saved, God put you in your right mind. You now have the right thoughts so you can do the right things. Do not let anybody ever take that from you. Parents, guard your children. You as a Christian who just got saved, or you have been saved for a while and you start to get into the Bible, guard what you have. Do not let any friend, do not let anybody, do not let anybody you hang out with, do not let any associate ever take that from you because that is all you have got that holds you and God together. That will destroy the rottenness to our bones, it will destroy the structure that God has put in our life.