

Proverbs 20-22 • Walking In God's Wisdom

Teacher: Pastor Paul LeBoutillier
Calvary Chapel Ontario

Verse 1 of Proverbs chapter 20, *“Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, (if you have an NIV, I think your Bible says “beer” instead of “strong drink”) and whoever is led astray by it is not wise.” (ESV)*

In other words, all the wisdom we've been talking about here in Proverbs goes out the window when alcohol is involved. How do you like that? I figure I'm just going let it all hang out here.

This last week, I wrote a blog post about whether or not you can lose your salvation, and I've been getting nasty notes ever since. I figure I got nothing to lose so I'm just going to just go for it here.

I actually had a note from a guy, also this last week who said, that somebody in his church had told him that he didn't believe that when Jesus turned the water into wine, that it was actually an alcoholic wine. Because he said, Jesus wouldn't have done that because wine is evil.

And I had to remind this guy that even though this proverb shows wine and strong drink personified, and speaks of them in an evil context. This personification is not to be taken literally, this is a figurative expression basically telling you and I that there's a danger that lies along these lines.

Alcohol is not evil, men are evil. The heart of man is evil. Okay? Sin does not reside in wine. Sin resides in man, and that is why we get into trouble when you take man, and you put strong drink, and you put them together. It usually always is some kind of trouble.

But then you've got situations where in the New Testament, well, yeah, Jesus did turn water into wine. And you also have Paul writing to Timothy, telling him to drink a little wine for his stomach ailments, his frequent stomach ailments.

People wonder what's that all about? Well, the water back in those days was often, undrinkable, or it was just full of all kinds of bacteria. And apparently

Timothy was suffering because of those sorts of things. I mean, good grief, that can happen to you today. You go down to Mexico and you might be, suffering for a long time to come if you drink in the water. You can imagine, a couple of thousand years ago. And so Paul told Timothy to take some wine to, cut down on some of that, I suppose, that bacteria that was coursing through his digestive tract. What a drag, right?

Paul wasn't telling Timothy to do anything sinful there because he trusted that Timothy wasn't going to overdo it. You got to understand in Jewish culture, wine was a very common beverage and it was used and drank frequently. Yeah. People also got drunk, that's where the sin comes in. That's where the error comes in and that's where the problems begin to exist.

Because of that, there's a lot of people who have been drinking in the past who have simply said, I'm not going to do that anymore. And you know what? I think that's about the wisest thing a person can do, I really do. I think that's one of the smartest things you can do because the scripture says right here that there are some great dangers that lie along that path.

And I think wisdom would tell you, if there's an edge here, let's not play close to it, you know what I mean? If there's a cliff here, let's not fall off the cliff as it relates to this sort of a thing.

I got to be honest with you and tell you that I believe that Christians treat drinking far too lightly today, far too lightly. And some Christians would argue with me and say, yeah, but pastor, are you trying to tell me that I don't have liberty to do that? And I'm saying, no, that's not what I'm saying. I'm not saying you don't have liberty.

The fact of the matter is, you do actually have that liberty. But what Christians don't hang on to is that God has not given you liberty so that you can exploit that or sin. In other words, what Paul said is, don't use your liberty or your freedom as an excuse to sin.

Secondly, what Christians don't hang on to is that you don't live alone. You live with the rest of the body of Christ. And you know what really bothers me is seeing people on social media, Christians, who have all kinds of scripture plastered on their Facebook page, and we got pictures of them drinking alcohol.

Is it wrong to drink alcohol? No. Is it improper when you don't understand who might be looking at those pictures knowing that you're a Christian? Yes, it is improper. It is flat out improper. You don't know who's looking.

And one of the things the Bible tells us is not to cause your brother to stumble in the area of those things which maybe somebody else can't handle. Let me show you a passage on the screen from Romans chapter 14. Now this is a very important passage. Paul writes and says,

Romans 14:20-21 (ESV)

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, (and he's talking about things, foods that might have often been forbidden before. He says) but (listen to this) it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. (and you could say what he drinks too, and that's what Paul means because he goes on to say,) It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.

The reference to meat there is not just because people are vegetarians, it's a reference to meat sacrificed to pagan idols. And you guys understand what that was about. There were many Christians that believed it was morally wrong to ingest meat that had been dedicated to a pagan god. And they believed that for Christians to eat that meat, they would then become defiled and Paul believed the opposite. He believed that those gods were nothing at all and that all things are clean and it's no big deal.

And he basically said to the believers back then, listen, if nobody raises any questions of conscience, just go ahead and eat what's in front of you and don't ask, don't ask. Not for your sake, but for the other people's sake in the room who might have a weak conscience and they can't eat that meat because they believe it would be morally wrong.

He said, if there's somebody basically in the room, and I'm paraphrasing what Paul basically said on the subject. If there's somebody in the room who has a problem with eating meat, sacrifice to idols, then don't do it for their sake. Don't do it. Just abstain. It's not that big of a deal. Are you free to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Absolutely. Don't use your freedom as a cover up though for sin and don't use it as an opportunity to cause your brother to stumble.

If your brother or sister would be offended or stumbled by you doing that, then don't do it. And the same thing applies to alcohol. We have Christians around us all the time who have had a past with alcohol and they can't go there anymore.

Not even a drop. But what happens if there's a young Christian who sees you on Facebook, raising your wine glass and they're thinking, well, it's okay for them, but it's not okay for you, it's not okay for that person. And so, if you cause a brother or a sister to go back into that lifestyle, then it's on you.

Yeah you had liberty to do what you did. Yes, you did and nobody's going to deny that, but you do not have liberty to make someone stumble. And that's something that we Christians, we've got to remember. You don't live in a vacuum. You live in the body of Christ and we need to think about each other. And we don't do it, frankly, enough.

Myself as a pastor, I made a decision many, many years ago that I was just never going to touch the stuff. Not because I'm virtuous, I think it's dangerous. I think it's dangerous and I'm not, a real strong person. So I got to stay away from dangerous things, because they're dangerous. I mean, duh. I just think, it's one of those things that we need to think about.

Skip down to verse 5, you'll remember we're not covering every single verse here through the Proverbs. We're hitting the highlights. Verse 5 says, *“The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.”*

I want you to think about what that verse is saying for just a moment, because, it's very common for people to express their opinions, their ideas, or their thoughts on a particular subject. And you can hear what's coming out of their mouth, and that's what's there on the surface. But, to conceal their true purpose, there's something below. In the very same way that deep water can conceal objects from view. You and I could be on a boat cruising across the lake or whatever, unbeknownst to us, there's all kinds of junk down there on the bottom of the lake because the water conceals it in the very same way.

What's really going on in a person's heart may not be what is immediately apparent on the outside. And this proverb is basically saying that a person with understanding is going to take time to draw out the hidden purposes and bring them more to the surface. Do you know what I've learned? And when I say learned, I mean, this isn't all that old. Okay.

I'm learning that when somebody says something, the best thing for me to do is to ask questions, especially if I don't necessarily agree with what they're saying. In the past, I think I've been way too quick to assume that what they've said to me that's on the surface is what's really there and what's really going on.

But this proverb reminds me, that's usually not the case. But if I'm going to be a man of understanding, I'm going to draw out of them those more hidden sorts of things, and I find that doing it with questions is a great way to find out what's really going on in somebody's heart.

Now, hidden motives. These are tough, you guys. These are tough things for us to know. You and I might try to figure out somebody's motive behind what they're doing or their attitude, but it's really tough for us because we can't see the heart.

This is one of the areas actually where the Word of God comes into play. You guys know that's one of the functions of the Word of God, right? It exposes the heart. It exposes what's down below and that's why I think some people don't like coming to church and hearing the Word of God talked about, because they know they're going to get exposed.

And some people who do come to church, they get angry when they come and they think somebody came up to me and told me their story. I've had that happen several times. I've been doing this a long time. I've had people come up to me and say, yeah, I brought my neighbor, or my aunt, my brother to church, he stormed out of church. He believes with all his heart that I called you ahead of time or I wrote you and told you everything about his life.

Can I just tell you that people don't do that first of all to me. And second of all, I don't address people in a general sort of a way from the pulpit. I'm just teaching through the Word of God.

What they don't understand is that's the Holy Spirit through the Word of God doing what the Word does so well. Let me show you this passage on the screen from Hebrews chapter 4. It says,

Hebrews 4:12 (ESV)

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, (and look at this) and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Isn't that interesting? Again, you and I can't discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart just from the surface of what somebody is saying. It's very, very

difficult for us to do that unless the Lord, through a gift of the Holy Spirit, gives us understanding. But the Word of God does it and a man of understanding draws that out.

Skip down to verse 6, *“Many a man proclaims his own steadfast love, but a faithful man who can find?”* Wow. Although this verse isn't speaking only to women, I think it's one verse that every single woman ought to read and understand.

A man may loudly proclaim in your hearing his undying love for you ladies, but a truly faithful man is a rarity. And that doesn't mean God can't make faithful men. I believe He desires to fashion faithful men. But most of us have to go through a fairly lengthy period of stupidity before we get there. Before the Lord begins to do that work in our hearts. But just, this is one of those proverbs that reminds us there's a difference between what a man wants you to know about him, and who he really is. Okay?

There's a difference between what he conveys to you, verbally and who he really is. And really, the only way to find out what's really going on there is, for most of us is, just the passage of time. Time will ultimately tell that story.

But, you guys know how young Sue and I were when we got married. I was 20, she was 17, she was the mature one by the way, at 17. I was the immature one at 20 and I'm just thankful that she bore with my years of ridiculous unfaithfulness because I gave her plenty of reasons. I communicated many ways and through many of my actions that I was not a faithful man, so, it is a rarity. Be careful what a man says.

Skip down to verse 9. *“Who can say, “I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin”?”* And yet people do. Don't they? Yeah. People do. People do say that. You guys are familiar with the Holiness Movement, right? There have been several throughout the course of Christian history.

The Holiness Movements are usually marked by a belief that Christians can attain a level of sinless perfection, in this life, I'm talking on this side of heaven. And there are still churches that still will preach that kind of a holiness message that you can come to a place of sinless perfection, this side of heaven.

And it's just not biblical for one thing. But this is one of many Bible passages in both the Old and the New Testament that speak of what we call, the universality of sin. In fact I've heard it said that if a man thinks that he is pure, he is a victim

of pure delusion. Let me show you how the apostle John put it. On the screen, 1 John 1:8.

1 John 1:8 (ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

And you know what? John is saying the same thing that Solomon is saying here in Proverbs, and that is, there's a reality of the sinful nature. And yet there is this ongoing forgiveness that is happening in our lives. Isn't that beautiful?

There's a lot of Christians that struggle with that. They get saved. They come to the cross. They recognize Jesus as the Savior, but then after a period of time they're made very painfully aware that they are still sinners because they usually do something really dumb, and really big, and really sinful. And then they begin to wonder, A., am I really saved? B., can God really still love me? And what in the world is going on in my life? And it really is troublesome to a lot of people.

Some Christians come to the conclusion that if I don't confess every sin that I commit, even after I accepted Jesus as my Savior, then I'm not truly saved. In other words, I have to get saved again. Every time I sin, I get unsaved. That still is a belief that people are hanging on to. It's so sad.

Because, the Bible makes it clear that the forgiveness that Jesus extends to us when we put our faith in the finished work of the cross is perpetual. It's a perpetual forgiveness. It's an ongoing forgiveness.

Then people say, well, then why did Jesus tell us to pray? Forgive us our sins or forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors or whatever the case might be. And of course, the reason for that is, the clarity of relationship. You don't confess your sins to get saved again. You confess your sins to get barriers out of the way with your relationship with God. Because sin still separates. It always has, it always will, and it can separate.

Now, if you're in Christ, and that means you've put your faith in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, sin can no longer separate you eternally, but it can still separate you relationally from God, and you can feel that great distance from God, and we've all felt it. We've all felt distant from God and there may in fact, at those times be a need for you to just confess sin and get things out of the way. It's like, I want to just..., I want to move everything out of the way, every barrier, every hurdle to having a close, intimate relationship with God. I know

He loves me. I know that I'm forgiven. I know that I'm going to heaven, but there's a distance. I can feel this distance between me and God so Jesus tells us to make that a regular part of our prayer.

Verse 11, *“Even a child makes himself known by his acts, by whether his conduct is pure and upright.”* And, I want to just remind you that the Book of Proverbs is a book of observations, and this is basically an observation by Solomon telling us that the basic nature of a person reveals itself pretty early.

It doesn't take long to see that your child, I mean, you love this baby when it's born and you're like, oh, this baby, she's perfect. And oh, look, she's gorgeous and she gurgles and smiles and stuff. And then this little sinful nature starts coming out, this little sin, selfish, sinful nature. And it's like, oh, it's terrible.

It's funny when my oldest son Aaron and his wife had their little boy, he told me very early on, he said, I don't think I'm going to be able to discipline him. He just thought he was too cute. He was like, this kid is just cute, too cute, and I love him too much. But I know that because he loves him, he is going to discipline him. And because he's also, it's like, I want to just say to parents, just wait, just wait.

I mean, you're never going to stop loving your kid, but believe me, you're going to see things come to the surface and you're going to say, that's got to stop. And so as parents, we seek to shape our children through discipline and training and so forth.

Verse 12, *“The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord has made them both.”* Whenever the Bible talks about the ear and the eye, it's usually referring to the means by which you and I are able to learn.

And basically what this proverb is saying, is that the ability to hear, the ability to see, and to learn through those avenues is a divine gift from God. We have a responsibility to be careful about what our eyes see and our ears hear, right?

And the reason is, is because of an earlier proverb that we saw, which said, guard your heart because from it flows the issues of life, or as the NIV says, the wellspring of life comes from the heart. (Proverbs 4:23) We got to be careful what we put in our heart through the eyes and through the ears.

Skip all the way down to verse 19. *“Whoever goes about slandering reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a simple babbling.”* And this is a simple warning about hanging around with someone with loose lips.

You know what they say, loose lips, sink ships. Isn't that what it says? Something like that. Anyway, there are some people that just don't know when to stop talking and you need to be careful associating with such an individual. It says here, don't associate with them.

Skip down to verse 22. *“Do not say, “I will repay evil”; wait for the Lord, and he will deliver you.”* Great reminder. Don't try to work it out. Don't take vengeance. And I like the word that's used here; don't deliver yourself. That's an important word because we try to do that. We try to deliver ourselves don't we?

And, it was Mueller who would make reference to that in his autobiography about those things in our life where we set out to deliver ourselves from our problem. I got a money problem so I set out to deliver myself from it. I got a car problem so I set out to deliver myself. I don't even think to pray about it. I've got a this problem. I've got a marriage problem. I've got a relational problem. I've got a work problem. I set out to deliver myself from that and so we got to be careful.

Verse 24, *“A man's steps are from the Lord; how then can man understand his way?”* Oh, wow. This is great. Great proverb.

Very simple reminder here to tell you and I that God's ways are not our ways. And we can't understand everything that happens in our lives. And you know where that leaves us? It leaves us with trusting God.

It's interesting when people are going through a rough season or they've had a something happen, that's very difficult or whatever, I'll many times hear them say, I just want to know why this is happening. I just want to know why.

Can I tell you brothers and sisters in Christ that if you knew why it wouldn't bring you any comfort? Can I just tell you that? We think knowledge is always going to bring us comfort, and it doesn't. We live in a culture today where we are very knowledgeable. The Bible even said that in the last days, knowledge would increase and we've increased our knowledge.

Have you ever googled like a pain or a symptom you were having? Have you ever done that? Have you ever got on your computer and you're like, you got something going on, and so you get in, you put it in there and you get onto like WebMD or whatever it's called. And you look it over. Did that help? Usually it makes it worse. Doesn't it? When we diagnose ourselves, we're like, we're out of our gourd with like fear, and then we got to go to the doctor to find out that

we're not going to die in the next 15 minutes. And what we're dealing with is actually normal. We've got knowledge and it doesn't bring us peace.

We're filled with knowledge and this proverb reminds you and I, that by asking the question, how can a man understand his way that you're not going to understand everything the Lord is doing in your life. And you can beg and plead with Him to tell you why, and He's not going to tell you why, because He knows that it's not going to bring you any peace.

What He wants you to do is to trust Him, even in the midst of your lack of understanding. And that's hard, but that's where faith comes in. That's why faith comes in, right? If I don't understand the situation, but I'm still faced with trusting God, that takes faith.

Skip down to verse 27. This is an interesting proverb. *“The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all his (inner or) innermost parts.”* A very interesting...

Generally it's generally believed that this verse is talking about the human conscience and its ability to guide us in matters of morality and right and wrong. But essentially it says, *“The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord”* and it allows Him to search and know us. Isn't that interesting?

When God is looking into your life, He's looking through your spirit. He's not looking at the body or He's not dealing with all of your emotions, your intellect. He's dealing with the spiritual part of you.

That's the part that we Christians know exists, but we're like confused about what it really even is. And it's probably the most real part of us because it's the part that endures after we die. Well, so does your soul. Your body dies and your spirit and your soul go on. And isn't it interesting that, we're pretty acquainted with our soul because that's emotions, intellect, and will.

But this whole thing about spirit, just ask another Christian, define your spirit for me and then just see what they say. Most of them are going to go, well, it's part of who we are. We're body, soul, and spirit. Yeah, I know that. What is your spirit? I don't know.

It's just..., we don't really get it, and yet it's the lamp. It's the insight where God searches your life, that spiritual part. Here's one interesting thing about the spirit in the New Testament. We're told that when we come to Christ, our spirit

literally merges with God's Spirit. Isn't that weird? Our spirit literally merges with His. It's pretty crazy.

Verse 29, *“The glory of young men is their strength, but the splendor of old men is their gray hair.”* I think the message here is pretty obvious. Are you guys asleep? What's the problem here? I was being funny, but it didn't go over.

Anyway, so the glory of young men is in their physical prowess, the splendor of old men is their gray hair. The tricky part is transitioning from glory to splendor, isn't it? That's the hard part. The guys are like, yeah, I'm still doing the glory thing. It's like, no, you need to be in your splendor years.

Let's go to the next chapter. Chapter 21, verse 2. *“Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart.”* This is really interesting. You know what it basically says?

It's saying to you and me that we're lousy judges of ourselves, we are. And most people will vigorously defend their own decisions and their actions. But, we're not good judges. Only God sees the situation completely. And so, if you're judging your own situation, your own heart, your own attitude, your own actions, you're probably not going to see things properly.

Skip with me all the way down to verse 9, talking about meddling. *“It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.”* Probably best not to comment here, but, seriously, it's not something I can relate to.

Verse 24. This is an important verse. *““Scoffer” is the name of the arrogant, haughty man who acts with arrogant pride.”* And the reason I wanted to highlight this verse tonight, is because you and I both know that scoffing has reached an international level through the internet. And it happens all the time and it's also happening in politics, news reporting.

I used to love watching the news. I don't watch it anymore. I have to usually find out what's going on from my wife. And one of the reasons I hate watching the news is because I'm just fed up with scoffers. I really am.

And this verse tells me where scoffing comes from. It comes from prideful arrogance, that's the origin of scoffing. By the way, scoffing is defined as speaking to someone or about someone in a scornfully derisive or mocking way. Do you ever hear that on the news? Do you hear mocking? Speaking scornfully, derisive and divisive. It happens all the time, doesn't it? And this proverb tells

us what the root of it is, arrogant pride. Best to steer clear, it says. Steer clear of the scoffer. You know somebody who's a scoffer, steer clear of them.

Verse 30, *“No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel can avail against the LORD.”* This is a great verse, but I got to tell you, it's one of those verses that could stand some meditation on our part.

We could just, quickly thinking about what's being said here doesn't really do this verse justice, but, *“No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel”* (none of those things) *can avail against the LORD.*”

I heard a cool saying that goes like this, never fight against God and never fight without Him. Isn't that good? I think that is a paraphrase, if you will.

Next verse 31. *“The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD.”* This is a reminder to you and I, that even though we think through our victories. And we think, well, I know what made me victorious. Size of my army, my military strategy, brilliant though it was. The Lord allows us to be victorious, the glory goes to Him.

Chapter 22, skip down to verse 6, well known proverb. *“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”* You guys all know this proverb, it's quoted a lot. But, as I've been saying to you ever since we started our study through the Book of Proverbs, this book is a book of observations, not promises. Okay.

I see Christians desperately wanting to take verses like this as a promise, but Solomon is basically saying that when you are diligent to train up a child, they're typically going to stick with it when they're older. They're going to typically stick with that which they've been trained with. But again, this is an observation. It's an observation.

Verse 10, back to the topic of straw scoffing. *“Drive out a scoffer, and strife will go out, and quarreling and abuse will cease.”* Again, another reminder about the need sometimes to physically separate yourself from somebody who is scoffing and mocking.

Verse 13, *“The sluggard says, “There is a lion outside! I shall be killed in the streets!”* The sluggard, what a great word. We don't use that anymore, I'm sure it would be highly offensive to do so. But the sluggard, of course, is the biblical term for the lazy person who will invent excuses to keep from working because they don't want to work. They just simply don't want to work.

And there've been people like that throughout the course of human history and in the early church, they dealt with sluggards. And the reason they dealt with people like that is because the church, as you know, in the first century was a communal organization. What I mean by that is the early church was the very first commune.

We think that the hippies came up with communes in the late sixties and early seventies, but the early church lived communally. And what that means is, and we read this in the Book of Acts, that they literally gave one another money. They sold land, devoted the money to the leadership, and it was distributed among people so that there was no need among the people.

Well, whenever you have a communal environment, you're going to attract people who think, hey, free lunch. It's a free lunch program. These guys are just, they're just sharing the wealth so, it started to be a problem. They started recognizing there were people who were just a burden and they weren't willing to contribute.

That's the problem with communal living. By the way, that's where we get our word communist and communism is essentially the idea of communal living and it doesn't work. And the early church was never told to do it. They just did it and frankly, it had a lot of problems. There were issues. You read in the Book of Acts, there were complaints that some people were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. And so they had to work out a solution to that. And there were obviously issues with freeloaders to the point where Paul had to come up with a rule.

Check out this passage on the screen from 2 Thessalonians chapter 3, verse 10, it says.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NIV)

“...even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.””

“...even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.””

Yeah, it sounds pretty rough, at least from our perspective here in the United States of America, where we think everybody ought to get not only a free lunch, but free everything. At least some people do, but this is not harsh. It's actually the best thing you can do for somebody because when a man loses his need to provide and to work hard, he becomes less of a man. When you give handouts

to a man over and over, he becomes less of a man. And we've seen it play out in our country. I mean, there are tons of people of course, who refuse to admit it, but I think that biblical principle is a sound one.

Verse 15, back to child raising. *“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him.”* And, I bring this up, even though we've talked about discipline in some earlier studies here in Proverbs.

But this verse, I bring it up because it explains why there is a need for discipline. And by the way, discipline isn't synonymous with punishment. Discipline means training. It's actually a subset of where we get our word, disciple; a follower, one who is trained, and so forth. It may involve punishment, but not necessarily.

But anyway, we're told in this passage why it is necessary with a child and the reason is because foolishness is bound up. Those are the words used there, *“bound up in the heart of a child.”* And that is the simple reality that we all deal with as parents when we have children.

Ever since the fall of man, every child that has ever been born has been born with a willful self-centered disposition. It's in all of us, myself included, more so than you. And it doesn't go away automatically. And a child who is left to themselves continues to grow in foolishness because they are never trained away from it.

And one of the most important things that happened in our child raising years in our home was when Sue and I realized what we needed to do in terms of training our children and it had to do with addressing foolishness. Because I found myself, as a dad, many times just addressing my irritation. Because your kids are going to irritate you with either noise, or statements, or their mess, or whatever. And I found myself responding to my own irritation and I didn't like it, in fact, I hated it.

But when Sue and I really got a hold of this idea that our job as parents was to train our children not to be foolish, it changed, it literally transformed our parenting. Because now, we were on the lookout for foolish behavior to bring correction to it and every parent has to be diligent to discourage and correct both foolish actions and foolish attitudes that come out of their child.

You remember Proverbs is all about wisdom, right? We're talking about applying wisdom, understanding wisdom. And there's nothing wrong with

saying to your child, that's not God's wisdom, that's foolishness. That's worldly, and that's foolish, and that's not what we're doing.

The thinking of people today is so incredibly foolish because it's worldly and they've never been trained to think otherwise. And so, it just becomes very, very, very challenging for people.

Verse 17, we're almost done with this chapter. Interesting, it changes the way it addresses itself to us here. In verse 17, it says, *“Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge, ¹⁸ for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, if all of them are ready on your lips.*

¹⁹ That your trust may be in the Lord, I have made them known to you today, even to you. ²⁰ Have I not written for you thirty sayings of counsel and knowledge, ²¹ to make you know what is right and true, that you may give a true answer to those who sent you?”

What a great few verses. But notice it 17 with the responsibility that you and I have. *“Incline your ear, ... hear the words ... apply your heart.”* Okay. That's something probably worth underlining.

“Incline your ear.” That means listen. Hear, really hear the words and that means take it in. Take it in and *“apply your heart.”* Apply it to your life. How does this fit for me? How does this fit in my life? In my marriage, in my parenting, in my relationships, in my job, in my money handling, there's a lot of wisdom coursing through the Book of Proverbs. How does this apply?

Verse 24. This is the last verse, actually verse 24 and 25 are the last ones we're going to cover tonight. *“Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, ²⁵ lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.”*

And once again, we've broached this subject in the past here in Proverbs about a man given to anger or a man with a flashpoint of anger. But the reason I want to bring this up this second time that it's referenced is because this verse describes another pitfall, and that is learning his ways.

And so it says here, make no friendship with that individual, lest you learn his ways. So the council of wisdom says, don't connect yourself with someone who has that flashpoint of anger because you're going to, it's very easy to pick up on that. We can do that.

We can pick up on, on what people are, their sensitivities when we're around them a lot and they're talking to us and they're speaking into our lives. And if they're angry people, we can be made angry. If they're jealous people, we can take on jealousy that we wouldn't normally feel just because we're hearing all this going on all the time.

If they're covetous, desiring the things of others and constantly talking about it, it can produce that same thing. If they have a love of money, that too can be drawn into our hearts by just spending time. This statement of make no friendship is an important one for us to think about and apply to our lives.

Is there anybody in my life who's causing that kind of an influence, that is really drawing me away from the Lord.