

WISDOM FOR YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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Good evening! And thank you for the opportunity to speak to you on the subject of Wisdom for young people from the book of Proverbs. Here's a question to think about: What makes the book of Proverbs so special and so essential to Christian believers and to the Christian church today? The answer is that this book of Proverbs is about: wisdom. The answer is that this book of Proverbs promotes: wisdom. The answer, the reason that the book of Proverbs is so special and so essential to Christian believers and to the Christian church today, the reason is that it sets forth TRUE WISDOM.

And isn't wisdom what we need today? Maybe this has always been true, but surely the confusion of our times cries out for the voice of wisdom. Think of the moral confusion not to mention ignorance that marks our society today. Think of the spiritual confusion that prevails everywhere today. Isn't this the experience also of so many young people? The rising generation is confused, is ignorant, not knowing what to do, where to go, whom to embrace, what to believe, which way to live, and so much more! Maybe that's how you feel sometimes. Maybe that's your experience. It could be that at least sometimes you're confused, you're uncertain, unclear, you feel like you're walking in the dark, you don't know what's expected of you, you can't determine what's right or wrong, you find yourself unable to make decisions that are wise and right and good. That's the struggle of many people today, many young people – maybe it's your struggle too sometimes: How, just how do you sanely and safely make your way through this life?

If you've ever asked that question, if you've ever for one moment wrestled with it, then this speech is for you. It's titled Wisdom for Young People from the Book of Proverbs. That's the title. And that's the title because the book of Proverbs is for young people, and the book of Proverbs is about: Wisdom! Wisdom is the right application of knowledge to all of life. Wisdom is the right application of knowledge to all of life. And Proverbs is about wisdom.

The word 'wisdom' is found 50x in this book, at least once in almost every chapter. The word 'wise' is found close 70x in this book. The book of Proverbs sets forth this wisdom, The book of Proverbs praises wisdom, The book of Proverbs urges wisdom. And of course, all of Scripture is the wise word of God, but particularly Proverbs sets for this thing called wisdom and says, for example, chapter 4:7, "Wisdom is the principal thing: Therefore, get wisdom, and in all your getting, get understanding."

The first nine chapters of the book of Proverbs are like a prologue telling us over and over again, We need wisdom, We need wisdom. The choices are Wisdom or Folly, Don't let it be Folly, We need Wisdom! The first nine chapters make that very plain. They press wisdom upon us as so worthwhile, especially in view of some particular temptations to which young people can be prone. I just quoted from chapter 4. Listen to chapter 8:32ff: "Now therefore hearken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors. For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the LORD."

So that's the first nine chapters: Get wisdom! Then just about the rest of the book, chapters 10:1-31:9 – these are collections of sayings of wise people, mostly Solomon, but also some anonymous wise people in chapters 22-24, and then the words of Agur in chapter 30 and Lemuel in chapter 31. These chapters are full of collections of short sayings – they are observations and reflections on life, observations and reflections sometimes issuing in or else just implying exhortations and directions. For example, ch. 19:1, "Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity, than he that is perverse in his lips, and is a fool." That's an observation, but the implication is: Integrity matters, Keep it! Or else ch. 20:13, "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread." The observation is that if you sleep the day away, you'll be a poor man. The implied exhortation is: Wake up, Get out of bed, Go make a living. And the book of Proverbs is full of sayings like that. The bulk of the book, as I said, is this kind of thing: Collections of sayings.

Finally, there is an epilogue – chapter 31:10-31 – the anonymous poem about the virtuous woman. That superb poem concludes the book of Proverbs.

So that's Proverbs. It's all about wisdom. And it's all about wisdom for young people.

What I want to do tonight is to ask two questions: One, what is this wisdom? And two: How to access it?

I. WHAT IS THIS WISDOM— and to answer this question, I want to make three points. *One, the wisdom of Proverbs is the wisdom of God.* And now I don't simply mean that God through His Spirit inspired Solomon and the others to write the words of the book of Proverbs. That's true. But more than that, the wisdom of the book of Proverbs is the wisdom of God Himself, it is His wisdom. It's the wisdom that He possesses, the wisdom that He manifests. Wisdom is an attribute, what makes God God. In 1 Timothy 1:17, Paul tells us that the Lord, the King, is "the only wise God." The Lord God is only ever always wise in Himself as well as in all His works and ways.

In fact, it's this wisdom of God that's reflected throughout the creation. Listen to Proverbs 3:19: "The LORD by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding hath he established the heavens." And in Psalm 104 – yes Psalm now – 104:24, "O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." So wisdom is in God and in His wisdom and with His wisdom He has fashioned the earth and preserves the earth and all that is in the earth. Proverbs 8 offers an extended explanation, verse 22, "The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was..." And further verses tell of Wisdom's presence and role at the Creation of the world. This is God's wisdom here.

So that's why wisdom starts for us with "the fear of God." And you all know the text: Proverbs 1:7 – "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge." And Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." Wisdom begins with recognizing the LORD as God and reverencing Him as God. Wisdom begins with acknowledging Him and submitting to Him. And that makes sense, doesn't it? If He made the world, and everything in the world by wisdom, then we need His wisdom to live in this world, we need to look to Him and to live in dependence upon Him.

So the wisdom of the book of Proverbs is first and foremost the wisdom of God. He is all-wise. And how does He reveal that to us? Well, in creation, but more than in creation, what about with the incarnation? What about with the sending of His only Son to become man, to become flesh? It's remarkable to read about Jesus in Luke 2 that He was filled with wisdom and He increased in wisdom. But even more so, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:30 that Jesus Christ is our wisdom and further, Colossians 2:3, "In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." So we can say this: You want to know the wisdom of God? Look to Jesus! Study Jesus! It's all in Him.

This, by the way, is how we're to see Christ in Proverbs. It's an Old Testament book, to be sure, but it's part of that canon of Scripture about which Christ one time said: "These are they which testify of Me" (Jn. 5:39). The wisdom of the book of Proverbs is not simply the wisdom of God, it's the wisdom of the Son of God, it's the wisdom of the pre-incarnate Christ. Everything taught here He upheld and taught too. These words aren't just Solomon's words or Agur's word or Lemuel's words, they're ultimately Christ's words. This is Christ's wisdom. Proverbs is full of Christian wisdom.

And what's really interesting in this connection is that on occasion in the book of Proverbs, wisdom seems to take on a life of its own. It's not just a concept but it becomes a Person, or like a Person. You can find this especially in chapters 1, 8, & 9, when Wisdom appears as a distinguished Lady entreating whoever will hear to follow and to embrace Wisdom. Chapter 1:20, for example: "Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets...How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity...Turn you at my reproof; behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." And then chapter 8:1, "Doth not wisdom cry? And understanding put forth her voice?... Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men..." Verse 17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me." And you find more of the same in chapter 9.

And people say, Well, is this Christ here? Is Wisdom here the pre-incarnate Christ? I think it is best to say that here we have a type of Christ. This is what Christ would be like and what He was like when He came – and even more so – calling, inviting, teaching, instructing, leading, nurturing. He could surely say what Wisdom attributes to herself in chapter 8:14, "Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding, I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth....I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgement..." He could say that. And about Him it's true what we read in verse 17, "He loves those who love Him, and those who seek Him early shall find Him." So the wisdom of Proverbs is the wisdom of God as revealed in creation, as revealed in Christ. This is the wisdom that's here in this book.

When we see that, then we have to say, don't we, What wisdom this is! It is ultimate wisdom. It is essential wisdom. It is perfect wisdom. It is wonderful wisdom. It is divine wisdom. It is glorious wisdom. What wisdom this is! And already we've said enough,

haven't we? Enough for us all to agree, This is wisdom worth having. This is wisdom we need and would desire. The God who has made us and in Christ redeems us – His wisdom we need!

But now let's try to focus our understanding of this wisdom even more and say that not only is it the wisdom of God, but it is wisdom for life. What I mean is that the wisdom that's here in the book of Proverbs is practical wisdom. And that's clear in at least two ways. One, this book covers many subjects, it addresses so much of life. For example, chapter 1, Don't go with the wrong crowd, but listen to the voice of Wisdom. Chapter 2, similar points: Bad company will corrupt you, Sinful women will destroy you. Chapter 3, What are your priorities, In whom is your trust, What are you living for? Chapter 4, Wisdom is essential to life. Chapter 5, Stay pure. Chapter 6, Watch what you promise, Make sure to work hard, Stay away from the wicked man and from wickedness, Be sure to stay pure. Chapter 7, Stay pure. Chapter 8, Embrace wisdom. Chapter 9, Be wise, not foolish.

That's the prologue and then follows all so many more chapters full of detailed observations regarding life – observations issuing in or simply implying exhortations and directions. And it all has to do with life. With life here in this world. Life for you when you are young. And all through your life. Take just one chapter, for example, Proverbs 20. What's the opening verse? "Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Now isn't that a relevant observation? Don't Solomon's words here relate to life as we know it and live today? Solomon's point is: Watch out with regard to alcohol, Watch out that you don't drink too much, it'll make a fool of you, you'll get into fights, it'll destroy you.

Take verse 2, "The fear of a king is as the roaring of a lion: whoso provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own soul." What Solomon means is that angering a king is like angering a lion. Think of a lion after you, roaring away. That's what it's like to have an angry king on your case: it's fearful. So be careful not to anger the king. Be careful not to anger those in authority over you. It's not worth it. Don't speed past a policeman. Not worth it! Then look at verse 3, "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling." In other words, wise people will not perpetuate conflict. The honourable thing to do is to seek peace if you can. What helpful counsel! If only we remembered that more often than we do.

One or two more. Verse 4. "The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing." If anyone here has a farm background, then you will understand this one very well. If I understand it right, then Here you have a sluggard, a lazy man. And it's time to plow the ground and to prepare it for seeding. But the lazy man finds any excuse he can not to work. In this case, he says, "It's too cold." And sometimes spring is like that. It's too cold. Of course, nowadays tractors are heated, but the point still stands. If you don't work when you're called to work, you'll suffer, you'll impoverish yourself. Laziness leads to nothing.

Finally, verse 5, "Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out." Counsel in the heart of man – could also be translated, The purposes of a man's heart. Solomon's talking about motivation. What's going on in someone's life? Why do they do what they do? That's not easy to determine. But understanding people know how to get to it. Wise people are able to discern and draw out the thoughts and intents of others.

So do you see how practical this book is? What a lot of issues it touches and addresses – our friendships, our conversations, our business practices, our time management, money management, family relationships – that's a big one: How we relate to father and mother. Listen to Proverbs 19:26, "He that wasteth his father, and chaseth away his mother, is a son that causeth shame, and bringeth reproach." Solomon comes back to this kind of theme again and again. And at the same time, he has words for parents. Chapter 19:18, "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying." So you see the practical nature of this wisdom. It's for life. It's not as if wisdom is some super-spiritual concept unrelated to your life. No, wisdom is for life. Someone has said that here in Proverbs we find "truth in street clothes" (Eric Lane, *Proverbs: Everyday Wisdom for Everyone*, Christian Focus: Ross-shire, Great Britain, 2007, p. 8). The truth of God, the will of God, worked out in daily life.

And the issues are numerous. From choosing a wife to God's sovereignty in your life, from what to do with people who hate you to what happens to you when you love and serve the Lord, from what's going on in your own heart to how to understand another's heart, this book is full of wisdom for life.

And in fact, not just in terms of all of the details, but also in terms of the broader themes and overarching perspective the book of Proverbs sets forth. This is the second point to mention about the wisdom of Proverbs as being wisdom for life. For Proverbs not only

addresses so much of life, but it continually sets before us two options. You can be either wise or foolish, prudent or simple, righteous or wicked, just or unjust. These are the great contrasts found throughout Proverbs, and what Solomon means to say is: Here is your choice in life, With all of life, With every moment, every decision, every conversation, all that you experience, wherever you go, whatever you do, whomever you love and serve, you're either wise or foolish, prudent or simple, righteous or wicked, just or unjust. And you know this. Take chapter 13, for example. Verse 1, "A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke." Verse 5, "A righteous man hateth lying: but a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame." Verse 20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." And verse 25, "The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul: but the belly of the wicked shall want."

It's this great choice that is ever before us, and the goal of the book of Proverbs is to make us by the grace and power of the Lord, to make us wise and prudent, righteous and just, in all of life. In that respect, we have to say that Proverbs is not just "a manners manual." It would be very helpful to memorize the book of Proverbs – and I'll come back to that near the end – it would be good to memorize this book. But simply memorizing the book won't make you wise. Because at the end of the day, Proverbs is not so much about precise rules and regulations in so many particular cases. That's not so much the point of Proverbs. Instead the point of Proverbs is to say, Look you need wisdom, it's from God, it's His wisdom, and this is what Wisdom looks like in life, and when you're truly wise then you will live your life the way Proverbs sets forth, that is, You will live your life continually applying the truth of God to your circumstances in a way that you honour God and His Word. Always saying no to folly and yes to wisdom and embracing wisdom.

Are you someone who is wise in your life? Or foolish? One way to test yourself is to ask, What's my heart commitment with respect to my sexuality? What's my heart commitment and how do I follow through with that in terms of my sexuality? I think this is one of the burdens of Solomon. He brings it up repeatedly in this book, especially at the beginning but also elsewhere. How intensely and emphatically Solomon makes the point: Intimate relations are for one context and one context alone: Marriage! Are we committed to that? How many young people not to mention older people, how many scoff at what Proverbs sets forth. But it's the way of wisdom. Are you someone who is seeking to be wise? What's your heart commitment with respect to your sexuality? And in what way does your life reflect or not what you say is your heart commitment? I mean, How do you dress? Where do you go on the internet? What kinds of thoughts do you let play on the screen of your mind? What about your activities with other people? Listen to the words of the wise in Proverbs chapter 23:26 and following, "My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways. For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit. She also lieth in wait as for a prey, and increaseth the transgressors among men." Very strong words. But they're found throughout this book of wisdom.

Oh the wisdom of the book of Proverbs is the wisdom of God that's for life.

But now something else about this wisdom. Not only is it the wisdom of God and wisdom for life. But also *it's wisdom to remember*. And what I mean to emphasize here is the form / style in which this wisdom is presented to us. I mean, It's mostly poetry. It's not so much wisdom in prose, it's wisdom in poetry. Sometimes the poems are longer, like in the first 9 chapters, and in chapter 31. But for the most part the poems are one verse or maybe two or three verses long. The book of Proverbs comes to us mostly as poetry. To be sure, it's Hebrew poetry, so it's different than English poetry – but still with our English translations we are many times able to catch the poetic sense.

In this regard, Proverbs is intended to do two things: It's intended to strike and to stick. The Lord wants to make an impression with the book of Proverbs. And through the style and form of this book, He intends to strike our minds and hearts and stick His truth to us. Let me give you an example or two of how this works, of how effective it is. We all know Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." That's a famous proverb – and we know what it means: To live proudly is to live dangerously. We understand the point very well. It's effective, and it's effective, partly at least because of the way it's presented to us. Solomon could have said, When you're proud, that's foolish because God hates the proud and He'll destroy the proud. Solomon could have said that. But with the way he says it Proverbs 16:18, it strikes and it sticks: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." We can see it happening in our minds. Or how about Proverbs 17:12, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps [or cubs] meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." What's another way to say that? Less effective? How about something like this: You don't want to face an active and likely angry fool. In fact, you'd be safer confronting a bear, that is, a mother bear, separated from her cubs, You'd be safer meeting her and dealing with her than you would be if you were to face an active and angry fool. Well, that makes the

point, to be sure, but it doesn't strike and stick quite like the way Solomon puts it: "Let a bear robbed of her cubs meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." The wisdom of Proverbs is wisdom to remember.

That's something to appreciate about this book and to take advantage of with respect to our learning its truth and learning it very well. But having said that, we want to look now at the second question and the second part of our subject tonight. We're looking at Wisdom for Young People from the Book of Proverbs. And so far we've examined what this wisdom is. We've said, It's the wisdom of God, it's wisdom for life, it's wisdom to remember. But how to access this wisdom? How to get it for ourselves? Here's this book of Proverbs – full of wisdom, the wisdom of God for your life, But how to make sense of it, How to read with understanding? That's the second question and what we want to look at yet. So: Wisdom for Young People from the book of Proverbs:

II. HOW TO ACCESS IT - And the answer to that question of how to get it or access it, the answer is this: We get wisdom, this wisdom of Proverbs, we become truly wise through prayerful, earnest, disciplined study of the book of Proverbs. Not only the book of Proverbs, of course, for all Scripture is given by God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness. We need to pay attention to all of Scripture. But also and especially to the book of Proverbs: Prayerful, earnest, disciplined study of it.

And let's just take each of those words in turn. Prayerful. We need to be prayerful in our getting wisdom. Or we could say: Wisdom's had through prayer. And that's because at the end of the day, wisdom comes from the Lord. It's a gift from Him. You will know James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that gives to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." We know that passage. But now listen to Proverbs 2:6, "The LORD gives wisdom: out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He lays up sound wisdom for the righteous..." So Scripture's clear, Wisdom comes from the Lord. We need Him to reveal it and to help us make sense of the revelation of it. In my study I have a quote by a preacher from long ago. It goes like this: "For a man solemnly to undertake the interpretation of any portion of Scripture without invocation or calling upon God, to be taught and instructed by His Spirit, is a high provocation of him; nor shall I except the discovery of truth from any one who thus proudly engages in a work so much above his ability." What that means is that if you attempt to become wise on your own, if you don't look to the Lord to help you understand and embrace the way of wisdom that's set here, not only will you fail, but you offend the Lord of heaven and earth. Our getting wisdom can only be done through prayer and the spirit of prayer.

But second, earnest study. Not just prayerful study, but earnest study of the book of Proverbs and earnestly pursuing the wisdom that's set forth here. And let me simply quote from Proverbs 2 where Solomon recommends and urges his son and all his readers to this earnestness. Chapter 2:1, "My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou sleekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God." What's the point? You're not going to become wise through half-hearted effort and intensity. Wisdom's not for anyone with a laid-back approach to Scripture and to studying Scripture, but it's for the earnest. Something of a spirit of desperation needs to characterize our study of this book and our pursuit of wisdom. We need to feel that we need it, we need to realize that without wisdom we're simple, we're foolish, we're not going to make it. We need to feel the vital need we have for wisdom, and that sense needs to drive us. At the same time, Wisdom's calling us through this book. Do we hear? Are we hearing? Let our study of Proverbs be earnest study.

And with that, let it be disciplined study. Proverbs is a book to master. But that requires steadfast, structured study. That requires going at it in a regular sort of way. Now this can be challenging, but here's a suggestion. There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. Why not incorporate one chapter per day in your daily reading from the Bible. And why not do that month after month after month – say, at least, all through this year. And why not for years to come? That can be done, can't it? Maybe read through your Proverbs chapter during lunch or before bed. Or else let it be part of your morning routine. Not just Proverbs, but also Proverbs – one chapter a day. And is it possible to memorize Proverbs? I've been wrestling with that question. I have heard of someone who has memorized the entire book.

But the way to get this wisdom of Proverbs for ourselves, the way to get it is through prayerful, earnest, disciplined STUDY. Now hopefully you're more aware now of the importance and relevance of Proverbs and the wisdom of Proverbs, but how to interpret Proverbs? How to study it in a way that's profitable and a blessing to your soul? That can be a challenge. I know of a youth group that started on Proverbs but soon abandoned Proverbs, because it's not like an epistle or even a prophecy. Proverbs is so different. So how

to study it? Let me offer several basic points for the interpretation of Proverbs – we'll go through them quickly and then apply them to one or two proverbs.

1. Remember the genre of Proverbs – that simply means, Remember that Proverbs is full of poetic reflections/observations in life that issue in or else only imply directions/exhortations. Especially that point about poetry – look for parallel lines, in other words, lines that say that same thing but that build, the one on the other, or else lines that contrast, one from the other. Pay attention to poetic parallelism. Another point related to this: It's important to remember that many times the proverbs are not unconditional promises we may wholeheartedly and believingly receive, but rather, they are general principles by which we are to live. Realize too that context is less of an issue than in other sections of Scripture. Many proverbs are isolated sayings having little or nothing to do with what comes before or after it. Remember also that with the book of Proverbs and with each individual proverb, Solomon doesn't mean to have the last word on whatever subject he's addressing. All of Proverbs has to be interpreted in light of all of Scripture. That's a lot under one point. But the main point: Remember the genre of Prov.

2. Highlight the point of each proverb – Ask yourself, What is Solomon observing here, What's he reflecting on, What's the main point he's making? Does he make this point elsewhere in the book? Or else similar points? How is this particular proverb unique in terms of its content/message? Only once you've summarized it, you can begin to ask the 'relate' question. In other words, it's only when you've understood Solomon that you can ask: How does it relate to me?

3. Relate each proverb to the Saviour. For example, does Solomon point out a vice – a bad thing - like pride, selfishness, an evil tongue? Ask yourself, Where and How does Christ address these matters? Not only that, but, What does it mean that Christ came to die because of sins like these, or that when He lived, He never committed sins like these? And further, What does it mean that the Holy Spirit's come to rid us of our sin and to make us like to Jesus – what's that mean in relation to the particular vice or sin Solomon mentions? Do the same when Solomon sets forth a virtue. Or when he contrasts virtue and vice, the wise and foolish. Always ask yourself the question, What light does the Lord Jesus and His Spirit shed on the text I am studying now?

So that's the process in brief. Let's just work it through with one or two examples. If you turn to chapter 15:1,2: "A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright: but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness." Right away we can see a connection between these two verses – both have to do with our words. Let's just take verse 1, however. "A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." We note that Solomon's setting forth a contrast between a soft answer and grievous [or harsh] words. A soft answer here refers to when you speak respectfully and kindly to someone who might be angry or already is angry with you. Soft answers, says Solomon, turn away wrath. That is, they calm people down, they lighten up conflict. But the opposite is also true. You can aggravate a situation with your words: Grievous words stir up anger. This is what Solomon has learned in his life. And his point, the main point is to say: Look, the way you respond to an angry man, your words, your tone, well, they powerfully affect what happens next. So watch what you say. And watch *how* you say it. And can't we look to Jesus here? As Peter puts it: "When he was reviled, [He] reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not" (1 Pet. 2:23). Jesus always spoke wisely and well. Not only that, but as Peter continues, "He His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed" (1 Pet. 2:24). Jesus died for all the times that we spout forth harsh words, hurtful words, He died for all the times we fail to speak softly and to turn away wrath. Through His own Word to the Father, "I will go and do the work You have asked Me to do," with that Word and work He turned away the wrath of the Father and opened the way for us to enjoy eternal life.

We could say a lot more, but let's go to another example. Proverbs 3:9,10: "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." I think you can work out the imagery and parallelism for yourself. Let me simply summarize the point. It's this: Serve the Lord with all that you have and are, Let Him have the first and the best, and meanwhile, He will always take care of you, You'll never be in want or need. What's the Christ connection? Well, didn't He teach too: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things – that is your daily needs, whatever's necessary for life on this earth – all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). And not only that, but isn't Jesus the One who, "though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). He became our Servant, so that we might inherit eternal and abundant life! Paul can say elsewhere, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus..." (Phil. 4:19).

Well, that's a start to studying the proverbs and getting the wisdom that Proverbs praises and proclaims. Don't we need this book, and shouldn't we love this book, also and especially when we are young? Listen to Charles Bridges, in his preface to his very useful commentary on Proverbs: "Proverbs takes them [young people] as it were by the hand, sets up way-marks to warn against the coming danger and imminent temptations, and allures them into the bright ways of God by the most engaging motives. And never surely was the object so momentous, as at the present day." Then listen to this: "Our young are growing up at a period, when 'the foundations of the earth are out of course; 'and when subtle and restless efforts are [at work] to poison their hearts, and pervert their ways. Nothing therefore can be more important, than to fortify them with sound principles; that, when withdrawn from the parental wing into a world or a Church (alas! that we should be constrained to use the term!) of temptation, they may be manifestly under a Divine cover, as the children of a special Providence. What this invaluable Book impresses upon their minds is, the importance of deep-seated principles in the heart; the responsibility of conduct in every step of life; the danger of trifling deviations for expediency's sake; the value of self-discipline; the habit of bringing everything to the Word of God; the duty of weighing in just balances a worldly and a heavenly portion, and thus deciding the momentous choice of an everlasting good before the toys of earth. These lessons, thoroughly inwrought, will prove the best security against all attempts to loosen the hold of principle, and to entice upon enchanted ground. This practical godliness – so far from wearing a forbidding look, or being associated with gloom or sadness – casts a smile over a world of sorrow, is a sunbeam of comfort in suffering, and ever a principle of peace and steadfastness. 'Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them' (Ps. 119:165)" (Charles Bridges, *Proverbs*, xiv).

Well, Will you be someone in your life who prayerfully and earnestly disciplines yourself to study this very special book? It's as we become familiar with this book and the wisdom that's here, as we come to know it that the Lord in His grace and by His Spirit would train us to become wise and to walk wisely through life. And that's so worth it. Turn finally to ch. 3:13, "Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her..." And then last of all - verse 35, "The wise shall inherit glory: but shame shall be the promotion of fools." Fools get disgrace. The wise inherit glory. But fools get disgrace. The way of wisdom is the way of life – eternal life. And that's because the way of wisdom ultimately is to live in conscious, close communion with the Father, for Jesus' sake, and through the Spirit. When God is our portion, when He is our all, then we are wise and will be so forever.