

Thoughts in Proverbs Ch 15

by George Verwer

George Verwer emphasizes the practical wisdom found in Proverbs 15, focusing on communication and the importance of a soft answer in daily interactions.

Duration: 51:16

Scripture: Proverbs 15:4-17, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Christian Life"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of love in the Christian faith. He shares personal stories of reaching out to people on the ship and how love should be the motivation behind our actions. The preacher encourages the audience to study and learn about love, suggesting reading books on the subject. He also discusses the need for humility and the wisdom found in the book of Proverbs. The sermon concludes by affirming the relevance of Proverbs in our lives and its alignment with New Testament principles.

Transcript

I want you to turn with me to the book of Proverbs. I want you to go right to the middle. It's right after Psalms.

We have a great emphasis on the Psalms in these days. But, uh, we seem to stop there. Proverbs 15.

There's 31 chapters, one for every day of the month. Some of you, I'm sure, heard the old story. I was selling books door-to-door before I ever went to Mexico in my home area.

I discovered how easy it was to sell Christian books door-to-door. I actually could have made a living doing that, especially children's books and sex books, Christian sex books, or Christian books about sex. We didn't have many in those days.

We had Life and Love by Clyde Naramore. It was hot. These people didn't even know this book existed.

And I met a lady who bought a lot of books, really warmed my heart, and then she said, son, you've got to study the Proverbs every day. She gave me this little motto, a proverb a day keeps the devil away. She's quite strong and overbearing.

I think she's in the glory. And then she pointed out that there were 31, one for every day of the month. I have never stopped reading the Proverbs every day ever since.

That's 29, no, 32 years, 33, 34 years ago. And the Proverbs has been an absolutely major impact in my whole life. I understand, I don't know if I knew this before that, that Billy Graham is very strong on the Proverbs.

I may have touched on this before for some of you, so let me take my survey. How many of you are regular Proverb pilgrims? You're reading the Proverbs regularly, maybe not every day, but at least every week you're into the Proverbs. Raise your hand.

So the Lord has led me this morning to try to capture the rest of you. It's interesting, there are hardly any choruses based on the Proverbs. There are hardly any hymns based on the Proverbs.

Not many even touch the same principles. And it's hard to believe that it could be such a neglected book. It's especially dedicated, the Proverbs, to the big mouths, to the lustful, and to the lazy.

Should I repeat that? It's dedicated to the big mouths, the lustful, and the lazy. Having all three of those problems as a young person, I found this book rather hard-hitting, to say the least. I often start in the beginning, in chapter 1, and I never get very far.

So I've decided to start in the middle, in chapter 15, just giving you a few mountain peaks, just trying to whet your appetite through this practical book of wisdom that God has given us in His Word. This is man's wisdom, but it's wisdom that man received under God's help, and received the stamp of being fully inspired and part of God's Word. We won't go into a lot of discussion concerning interpretations of Proverbs, higher criticism, and all that kind of thing, but we do believe it is God's Word, and we believe it's relevant for our generation.

It's always good to back up Proverbs with other important principles out of the New Testament. Almost every, I think I could say that every major principle in Proverbs you could find back up, and similar verses in the New Testament. Let's start right there at verse 1. I'm not going to read any one chapter, I'm just going to jump.

I may go backward, I may go forward, and look at some of these mountain peaks. We could easily spend a day in chapter 15. Chapter 15 is one of the highlights of the whole book.

A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger. Another interpretation is harsh words. You can imagine why the Spirit of God has led me to dwell on this book.

To this day I'm still learning how to give that soft answer. And if you have that ability already to give a soft answer, praise the Lord. I wonder if you've thanked the Lord for that.

Now if you're just dead scared so you don't give any answers, that's something else that's dealt with in other passages. Soft answer. How much better I can testify from much failure and praise God also from much victory that a soft answer turneth away wrath.

I'm thinking not just among ourselves as God's people. That's not our first concern. Our first concern isn't just our little community here on the ship.

Our first concern is our whole life. You get off the ship today. You go to do an errand, and in the process of doing that, somebody hinders you.

Maybe like once in my life, maybe more than once, trying to get a little petrol, a little gasoline, and the man is pumping it on the pavement. I never like to see my money pumped on the pavement. Anything where I'm losing money tends to get me a little excited.

Like phoning people, as I've been doing yesterday, and the receptionist or secretary says, just a second. Two minutes later, at no small cost, you're still listening. No voice, nothing.

You don't know whether they've gone, you've been cut off, or what. And you just see, if you're like me, you see the money. Some of these phones actually show you how much money you're spending.

They're terrible. That thing at the OM conference, those little units, trying to make a call. Tick, tick, tick.

Forget it! The soft answer turneth away wrath. To somehow, at that moment of being upset, to grab ourselves, to instantly worship Jesus, to instantly repent, and try to come out with something that is gentle. That's another sentiment.

Grievous or harsh words stir up anger. Now, the only way that I'm still in this great race, living a godly life, is because when harsh words come from my mouth, and I started practicing this as a young Christian, as fast as I could get my ego crucified, I go back to that person and I say, please forgive me. I didn't mean it to come across that way, or I shouldn't have said that, and I really would ask you to forgive me.

Now, as Christians, we should forgive people who have used harsh words against us, whether they come back or not. If you sit in your cabin after being hurt by somebody, say, wow, if they come and apologize, I'll just accept them. I'm just itching to forgive them and forget and accept them.

We'll maybe become good friends. Don't worry about any baby noise in my meeting. Glory to God and reality.

But there may be a word there that child has for all of us. It says out of the mouths of babes come great things. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright, but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.

I don't know if any of you have the problem of not being able to stop talking. Now, I am known as a talkative person, but my wife can testify that I am well able to stop. In fact, after talking for 52 years, I don't love silence.

I love silence. I love to be alone. I'm happy to sit for hours reading my letters and praying through my photos.

I don't need to talk. If people, however, get me going, it's hard to stop. Again, I learned how to stop because I'm so conscious of time.

But again, I know that talking too much, the inability to stop and to listen, maybe the other person would like to say something. Most people are not gifted listeners. And it's good, as it says in one of the living Bibles, paraphrases of Proverbs, learn to turn off the flow.

Sometimes you meet people with diarrhea of the mouth. Very blunt statement, but it goes home. And that's something that's emphasized a great deal in the book of Proverbs.

In fact, it's one of the main emphasis of the whole book. Look at the 29th verse in chapter 14. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding.

But he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly. Now listen, when you're on OM, you can be sometimes hasty and get away with it. People generally are loving.

Generally they're forgiving and forgetting. And also, in a larger movement, we can make up for your mistakes. Somehow, not always.

The world we're all living in can be very, very cruel. One mistake can cost you your life, your marriage, your children. And the more you can develop self-control, the more we are preparing you for whatever God calls you into Christian ministry, long-term service on the ship, being a pastor.

Surely there's not more than 25% of the pastors I've met in 35 years that are successful. There's no way more than 25% are successful. Being a pastor is incredibly difficult.

Incredibly difficult. You've got people in that congregation, they are ready to pounce. And if a pastor doesn't have mouth control, doesn't have self-control, he can get in more trouble on a Sunday morning than you can ever imagine.

When he does, when he makes a mistake and he says something stupid, people will talk. When he hears about people talking, he will get offended because he's human. His wife will get more offended.

And pretty soon the church will be in a state of siege. That's why these gifted pastors who really have self-control as well as ability to preach the Word of God, love people, pastor people, and have some management skills which seem to be very basic today in most cases, these men are in such demand that they actually have almost organizations just to find them. The business people of the world have executive headhunting organizations.

Have you heard that term? Just to find the top executives. And they're ready in a place like the United States. Many electricians here.

The Lord bless you. You can listen to the cassette tape. My dad was an electrician.

I have a great nostalgia for electricians. They're all wonderful people. I lost my train of thought there.

Somebody help me. What was I talking about? Pastors and the tremendous pressure they're under. And the importance of learning self-control and especially mouth control.

And the fact that often what you can get away with in OM, you can't always get away with when you're in some other situation, some other ministry. So this is a great challenge. You mark that verse.

I have all these verses marked. He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding. But he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

How many have been blessed through the writings of Charles Swindoll? Raise your hand. Charles Swindoll. Can't believe it.

Please read one of his books. If you don't get some blessing from Charles Swindoll, write me about it. I'll send you a couple of free books and an apology.

This man is one of the most gifted writers in the English language that I have ever read. His book about service, *Improving Your Serve*. It's not a book on tennis.

You saw it in the library. You thought it was a book on tennis. Even my daughter who doesn't read many Christian books was just thrilled with that book and purposely went to hear Charles Swindoll when she was traveling around the world.

I've listened to the tape series he gave at Wheaton College some years ago. He talks about the four spiritual flaws, F-L-A-W-S, among God's people. Absolutely brilliant material.

He's a man that I believe is a representative of what we see in the book of Proverbs. Look at 15 verse 13. I've been thinking about joining a new organization I just discovered.

It's the Fellowship of Merry Christians. It's a group in the United States that specializes in Christian humor. Most people didn't know such a thing existed.

They are absolutely convinced that Jesus had a sense of humor. They have over 20 books in their catalog about Christian humor. Now some of it is off the wall like the book in my cabin, *121 Things to Do During a Boring Sermon*.

Did I tell you about that one? One of my favorites is if you're in a liberal church where they don't really believe in salvation or the new birth or anything like that, the man's giving a very boring sermon. Toward the end of the sermon just walk forward in the meeting and raise your hand and say you want to accept Christ as your Savior. Definitely can stir the place up.

Look at verse 13. A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken. Verse 15.

All the days of the afflicted are evil, but he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast. I think you can link that with a wholesome tongue mentioned in verse 4. A wholesome tongue is a tree of life. What do some other translations say instead of a merry heart? What do we have? These six, yay, seven Bible scholars here in this second row.

Thank you for sitting here in the front. This is such an encouragement. Happy heart.

Another translation. Cheerful heart. Any other word there? Joyful heart.

So you've got some scope for interpretation. But there is, there is certainly a place for humor. Some of the most serious speakers use humor.

Leonard Ravenhill. I remember him coming to the OM conference. And he's so strong.

Oh my, Leonard Ravenhill. *Why Revival Tarrys?* Everybody in OM used to have to read that. It hit me so hard I can tell you almost the time and the place.

Let's see, my computer says 1964, January, Benares, India. I first read that book. *Why Revival Tarrys?* Ever since then I've been a major distributor of that book.

Even got it in magazine form, 50,000 copies. Leonard Ravenhill, when you hear him speak, his humor is in the book. It's not so clear when you hear him speak.

Tozer, humor. Vance Havner, the strongest Southern Baptist preacher you could ever get. Deadly humor.

Talks about the average church in America. So lukewarm you've got to backslide to get into fellowship. Talks about so many churches that want to finish dead at 12 and most all the people are dead at 12.

Every other line or every fifth line at least of people like Vance Havner seem to be pithy missiles of humor ready to blow sin out of your backslidden heart. Here's another original statement. We're just throwing these nuggets out here this morning.

We're not even charging you. Tony Campalo, strong message, heavy message. Totally different kind of speaker.

And surely one of the reasons that Tony gets so many invitations is of course his commitment to the Lordship of Christ, his powerful message, but also his humor. And we can't copy these people. We can learn from them.

And people have different anointing for different messages. But I think there's a greater problem that we get intimidating by the fear that somebody's going to accuse us of copying somebody. Now you turn away from that intimidation.

I preached at Moody one of the first times back after I studied there and somebody wrote me a note, I think you're trying to copy Billy Graham. I certainly was never trying to copy Billy Graham consciously. He was my spiritual father.

I had listened to dozens and dozens of his tapes. Maybe something had crept into one of my messages like the Bible says. A real copy really takes a lot.

The Bible says, or God bless you. What does he say at the end of his radio broadcast? God bless you real good or something like that. I don't remember saying that.

I'm not a southerner. In the United States, those from the north and those from the south are very different people. We don't imitate one another.

But I could have been intimidated by that. Does that mean anybody who gives an invitation is trying to copy Billy Graham? Anybody who says the Bible says is copying Billy Graham? Anybody who gets loud is copying Billy George Ferrer? Anybody who bangs is copying Billy Sunday? Anybody who spits is copying Tony Campalo? No. By the way, preachers don't purposely spit.

They speak too fast and the juices get in the mouth and it just comes out. I mean it's awesome when they can get a picture of it. Big chunk of saliva heading right for the red-headed girl in the front row.

And it's so embarrassing when Tony Campalo comes back to England, the group in the front row put up their umbrellas in the meeting. I mean it's really unkind. People are cruel, aren't they? We preachers ought to form a club for basic survival.

So God can use humor. Now humor is difficult. And you're going to have to, as many of you are wanting to learn to speak publicly, you're going to have to learn how to use humor.

If you don't have a good memory, you should write humorous stories down, humorous things that happened in your life. Write them down now. Because you may not be doing a lot of preaching now, but

later on that little humorous story of something that took place on the ship will be very, very helpful.

Write it down. Keep a notebook of humorous experiences, funny things that are happening to you. Because it's amazing how the memory fades.

And though they're there, you can't recall them. And it's not right as a preacher, or a teacher, or even in personal sharing, to recall something and then not tell the truth. It's one of the greatest pitfalls we can fall into in our witnessing, in our preaching, in our teaching.

In our desire to communicate, we say something that isn't quite true. We add to our testimony. Now every time you get a chance to go off this ship and go to a meeting, you go.

That is such a great opportunity. And meet the people. And if you get a chance to share your testimony, even if you're scared stiff, share it.

You can write it out. There's nothing wrong with writing it out. People in these churches, some of their pastors write out their whole sermon.

You prepare that. You plan it. You ask how much time you have.

And share from your heart, and God will use it. And it's one of the best training tools we have, is to get you off the ship, into the churches, into other meetings. Even if you're just going to stand behind the book table, you will meet people.

Take the initiative. Ask people their name. Most people in England are fairly shy.

They don't understand the ship. They think, oh embers are coming. They think you're all a bunch of dynamic spirit-filled evangelists.

Little do they know how many slokey pokey, hokey dokey, sleepy drowsy bousy myopiates we've got on our ships. Of course they're all in bed. They're not here now.

Take the opportunity to get off the ship and to mingle with the people. To go to these meetings. Give your testimony.

Keep it short. Mix it with one or two stories. Surely we've all had something happen to us on the ship we've learned from.

Now I've been learning for a long time. This morning I learned another lesson. Yesterday I meet the man in my thinking, in charge of helping us keep the ship tidy.

Beautiful. I talked about it last night, remember? This morning they had one of my favorite breakfasts. Rice krispies.

I was a little hungry. So I fill the bowl. Then I pour the milk in.

And pretty soon I was in a major crisis. And all I could think of was this guy is watching me as the krispies, as I tried to move, float over. Did you see all the krispies on the floor there? It's me! George Brewer! And I saw the vacuum cleaner and I wanted to, I was looking for a plug.

I couldn't see anywhere to plug that thing in. And finally I sort of wheezed over and sat down at David Greenlee's, his little private stall there. And got the krispies landed before any more went over.

Then I'm trying to have the krispies in walks David Greenlee. Ah! I'm at Greenlee's table! Help Lord! I dare to say on this ship you could probably get a story almost every day. This is a potential nuthouse.

This is a place of either much weeping or much laughing. Choose you this day whom you will serve. And the book of Proverbs will help you stay happy and sane.

Learn to laugh at some of these things. You go to your cabin. You're tired.

You want to be alone. And there's some new recruit. He's in your cabin, necking with his girlfriend.

Don't get excited. Get your camera. Get a picture.

I'll give you ten quid for it. Okay, let's see what else we can find in the book of Proverbs. Verse 16 and 17.

Better is a little with a fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs. Gross! Where love is than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

There's an increase of vegetarians. No doubt someone will propose, everything eventually comes to the ship ministry, that we become vegetarians. God's people, just think of the seaweed possibilities.

We wouldn't have to take any food at all. We could save a lot of money. We just get some real deep hooks and as we're going across the ocean, scoop up seaweed from the floor and we could serve it in all different styles.

Seaweed fried, well that wouldn't be good for the health. Seaweed boiled, probably safer. I admire vegetarians.

Just don't get on to me. I'm a meat eater. But look, there's what it says.

And this is strong. Better a dinner of seaweed. Herbs, it's the same.

It's all the same, that green stuff. Don't let them kid you, it's all the same. Probably getting in trouble now.

Better a dinner of herbs where love is than a stalled ox. Tremendous filet mignon, prime rib of beef. All these things, just start hallucinating.

Better to have seaweed and hatred therewith. What a powerful verse. Can you honestly say, because of 1 Corinthians 13, because of verses like this, that love is your number one passion.

You want to love people. You want to show love. You want to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit.

When you wake up in the morning, you get into the Word, your desire for that day is love. It's to go the extra mile. It's to show these people that come on the ship some love.

That has been the passion of my life since my earliest Christian days. I studied every verse on love when I was in university. I was only 18.

It changed my life. It laid the foundation for this whole movement, which some people have called a revolution of love. And a lot of the people in the world are linked with us, and they give money to us

because they know we love them.

People that I have phoned on this ship, perhaps 30 people or more, they know that I have phoned them, most of them, because I love them. I'm not after their money first. Some of the people that I phone don't give anything.

I am actually needing to give to them. Love is the answer. That was a required reading book in the early days by Theodore M. Love is the answer.

And if you're like me, in which when I was young, loving people didn't come easy, start reading every book you can get on the subject of love. I did almost everything I could get about love. And it was used to change my life, though I still have a long way to go.

Even when visitors come to this ship, they're standing in here after a meeting, or anywhere, the coffee bar, and you go to them. Introduce yourself. Don't wait for people to introduce themselves.

I'm George Furman. I'm with the ship's crew. We're so thrilled that you've taken time to visit the ship.

Don't give them the idea. You are doing them a favor, letting them on your ship. That's to throw the book of Proverbs out the porthole.

We show appreciation. We show love. That is the biggest challenge on this ship, because you're going to run out of your own steam sooner or later on it.

Sooner or later, you're not going to want to see people coming up the gangway. And sooner or later, you're going to enter into a hide-in-the-cabin mentality. I was on Douglas with a couple of people.

I couldn't believe it. At five or six o'clock, they went into their cabin, they closed the door, and that was it. They didn't even have ship people into their cabin, except occasionally.

I just cannot understand that. Do you think businessmen out in the world can function that way? Do you think Margaret Thatcher can function that way? Everybody needs to be able to get some private time. And if you're not getting any private time, you need to talk to somebody with a little sanctified imagination.

I have lived on this ship. I had to lead this ship and the whole of O.M. at the same time, with a wife and three kids, and I found private time. A little sanctified imagination.

This ship isn't sailing that much. And when we're sailing, I've been around these decks so many times, there are many places where nobody is. You could curl up there.

It gets harder if the weather gets freezing, but actually the weather is going to get hotter and hotter and hotter, and then we're going to see the Latins really come into their own. If you think the Latins are really moving now, as we get further south, their eyes will begin to sparkle. Their hair will not need to be put up in the morning.

It will immediately fall into the right place, and great things will happen. Better is a dinner of seaweed where there's love than prime rib of beef and hatred therewith. Love is the answer.

How difficult to have breakfast together. Breakfast with people. If I had my way, I wouldn't see anybody for the first two hours of any day.

Even my wife, early in the morning, nobody told me these things happened before the wedding. They look so beautiful. And my wife, when I first saw her, I stepped out of the elevator there at Moody Bible Institute.

She was sitting at the desk. A tremendous brain tornado took place, broke into my romance department. I was almost finished on the spot.

Now, the adventures of the Verwers, 30 years later, 7.30 in the morning, getting ready for OM devotions at 8 o'clock. I look over at my wife. I have to immediately say, woe is me, I'm a man of unclean lips.

I don't know if you know that verse. Proverbs 16. Look at verse 24.

Pleasant words are like honeycomb. Let me get some more honey. Sweet to the soul and health to the bones.

But drop down to verse 28. A perverse man soweth strife and a whisperer separateth chief friends. Proverbs talks a lot about gossip.

I think one of the things that starkles some new people when they come on OM, the most, I bet some tell me this, is the gossip factor. Just on our little team, ICT and Brahman, a rather large complicated team. Family, singles, different departments, different ministries.

Just the gossip that gets going on our little team. It's absolutely amazing. Now, some gossip is harmless.

Don't think Christians are ever going to get to a place where they're not speaking about things. And listen, there is a fine line between information and gossip. So I don't believe in this great desire not to gossip, to control our tongues, to not speak evil.

I don't believe we ever arrive in this world. Some of the most godly people I've met, I've been stunned when I've heard them speak things negatively about other Christians, even other Christian leaders. I remember meeting one of the most famous leaders in California.

I dare not give his name. I had to see him, this is 30 years ago, or 28. And then I had to see this other leader.

The man actually said to me, don't bother seeing him. It's a waste of time. He's not going anywhere.

I couldn't believe it. The man he was speaking about became one of the greatest Christian leaders and one of the greatest Christian organizations in the history of the church. The other Christian leader said, don't waste your time.

He's not going anywhere. He said some other negative things as well. So don't worry too much if somebody's gossiping about you.

I wonder how many of us talk about somebody that may have body odor or bad breath or one of those little funny little things. I wonder how many of us have the courage to go up to that brother and just simply say something. What do we do when we see a brother whose fly is down? Now, I don't think the sister should be in charge, but I tell you, as soon as possible, if you see somebody walking around, it's just part of our culture.

I am convinced someday flies down will enter into our culture. It will be acceptable among the young people. They'll all walk with a little zipper down.

Because can you imagine right now, it's acceptable to have a hole in your knees of your dungarees. There's now a new style in which the holes are in the back and you can see young people with their underwear sticking out. That's accepted.

It's the style. So who knows where style will take us. But at present, it is love that will take you to a brother very quickly and just say, hey, zipper or some little code word.

We never talk about these things in meetings, do we? As Christians, there's things we don't talk about in public. Does the queen go to the toilet? I'm glad your humanity is coming out this morning. The book of Proverbs is filled with pithy, humorous statements.

And gossip is deadly. And we need to stand against it because it separates chief friends. You on this ship have the ability to turn two close friends against one another.

We have seen that happen on O.M. through gossip, through little innuendos, little stories. If you have a question, if you have an accusation, the first place to go to is that person. Matthew chapter 18.

Let's go back a page to chapter 14. Verse 12. That's linked with 1215.

1215 says the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. Verse 12, chapter 14. There's a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness. The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied from himself. I want to just say something very, very simple.

Don't get away from Jesus. Whatever you do, on the ship when you leave the ship, when the problems come, the disappointments, some of you are already disappointed in the ship ministry, you're disappointed in the leaders. I get this feedback, oh, there's people on Dula who's disappointed with leaders, people along us disappointed with the leaders.

Not much. I go to whatever team in the world, all are disappointed with the leaders. I guess they thought we were going to resurrect apostle poles for every ministry of operation mobilization.

Leaders are human. Leaders are strugglers. Leaders are different.

And I believe too many people in OM judge people by outward appearance. They judge people by outward appearance. And certain kinds of people, they like a certain kind of leader.

They like a more charismatic leader who's more outward and more expressive and maybe more loud. There are a few people who like these types. Other people prefer the more laid back, phlegmatic, godly, committed man or woman.

We're never going to get the perfect leader anywhere. We only have Manfred with us for so many more months. How grateful I was when I heard he was willing to come.

We have a number of other people. It is a major decision to determine who should be director of the ship and who should be captain. And I believe in many ways each decision is important.

And Dale is in consultation with the board members. He's in consultation with field leaders, in consultation with me and Peter and the executive committee of the ship's ministry and with people on the ship. How do you think we're going to choose somebody that everybody is going to be happy? No.

And there are different leaders who will operate in a different style. There are two or three people we're thinking about bringing here as directors. Each one of them will have a different style.

We can roll with that in O.M. That's part and parcel of our ethos. To adjust the ministry a little bit to the style of leadership. Chaco is leading Dulas for two months.

He's a very different man than Bernd Kocher. Bernd Kocher is very different from Alan Adams. And Alan Adams from George Miley and George Miley from me or David Hicks.

So it's a beautiful thing when we develop that kind of flexibility. Now I read this passage of scripture because to me it emphasizes that we can as Christians be deceived. We can think that something is right and we can be all wrong.

The fool is always right in his own eyes. And what I want to just say here among other things is the value of counsel. In fact there's another proverb that says in the midst of counselors there is great safety.

Now that doesn't mean everyone who gives you counsel is correct. Ultimately you, before God, have to decide your will for your life. Don't cop out on them.

That's why some of the heavy handed movements where the leadership comes straight from the top right into every detail of your life. Most of that has been rejected now. People have repented of it.

Bob Mumford wrote open repentances. Repentance of how he got into that. But people went for that.

Why? Because finding God's will is hard, isn't it? Some of you have many different choices. What are you going to do with your life? I have to decide in the next few days, am I going to go to New Zealand next August? Am I going to go to Australia in January? That may be 92, I can't remember. I've got so many things I've got to decide on.

South Africa next July, Brazil and Chile and Argentina, wherever, next May. I don't find it easy. I'll tell you sometimes I'm dead scared.

And I believe God has got to set us free from the fear of failure. We are free to fail. I believe if I go to South Africa by mistake, somehow I got the wrong signals, God is going to bless it.

Don't be, don't be a will of God neurotic. We can be deceived. We can make mistakes.

We will make mistakes. The heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? So many verses here that jump out of the page.

But look at the 10th verse in chapter 13. Only by pride, we're going to finish in a moment, only by pride cometh contention, but where the well advised is wisdom. So many of our problems, brothers and sisters, are linked to our pride.

Now there's a great difference between pride and dignity. Where are those who work in the laundry? Stand up. Anybody ever works in that laundry? Please.

Only one? Amazing. Here's one back there. Here's another one.

I hope you can work in the laundry with dignity. The Christian message affected the culture of Europe. The culture of Europe eventually gave dignity to working people.

Never enough. My father was an immigrant. He was a zero.

He had to drop out of school. He mentioned it to me on this last trip. I'm sorry, I had to leave school at 12 to do the most menial, menial tasks.

But he learned how to be an electrician. And as an electrician in America, and it comes from the direct influence of Christianity, you can be an electrician with dignity. And you can make big money.

And that big money put me in college. And if it wasn't for my father, maybe, humanly speaking, his commitment to me, I would not be here today. And we can do any task on this ship with dignity.

Sweep the floor, in some cultures, is out. In the Jesus culture, you can do it with dignity. The first shall be last and the last shall be first.

He that is greatest among you, let him serve. We are called not to be ministered unto, but to minister. So everything we do on this ship, and I've done most of these jobs myself, except the skilled ones, including the joy of working on the sewage system of Lagos, which was sort of a hand-to-hand operation when it broke down.

A bucket brigade, a very wonderful job that I'll never forget. I know I could do it because of my father, because of the Christian influence, I could do it with dignity. I can take an offering with dignity.

I can be, if necessary, a beggar for the kingdom of God. I often feel, sitting in some five-star hotel, talking to some millionaire about the work of God, I feel a real fool. They put food in front of me, I can't even identify it, much less want to eat it, and when I look at the price on the menu, I choke.

But I say, Lord, I'm your fool, and I will do this with dignity. And a lot of this wisdom goes back to the book of Proverbs in the Old Testament. It's beautiful.

So beware of pride that keeps you from being humble, keeps you from doing a menial task, causes you to react when no one's rewarding you, no one's noticing you, no one's even talking to you. By sheer coincidence, you could be on this ship for a day or two without any major conversation. That's not because God's against you, it's because you're living in a real world.

And in this particular world, there's a lot of work, there's a lot of goals, from study programs to prayer meetings to clean up, and sometimes people get missed in the fellowship. Don't get bitter about that. Beware of pride.

Pride is often the cause of that contention, whether it's in the engine room or the bridge or the mental tension. Beware of subtle pride. When I came to Europe, people warned me about Spanish pride.

Wow! Heavy stuff. Then I went to live in France, people warned me about French pride. When I went to live in England, people warned me about British pride.

I already knew as an American plenty about American pride. Then I went to Germany, and I heard, wow, that's the strongest pride in all of Europe except for the Swiss. And when you get to Switzerland, they talk to you about the Italian pride, who talk about Greek pride, who talk about Austrian pride, who talk about the Turkish pride.

Let me tell you something, I'll get the record straight once and for all. It's all the devil's pride. It has nothing to do with nationality.

Let's declare war on Satan. Through prayer, through love, through going the extra mile, let's declare war on Satan. Let's lower our expectations of one another just a little bit.

Could you do that? Let's just lower our expectations a little bit, and just love them as they are. And you'll be surprised that if you love people as they are, and you die to that pride factor, where somebody may have hurt you, you'll discover that eventually they'll go beyond your expectations. It's a beautiful experience.

Let us pray. Father, we thank you for the book of Proverbs. We thank you for this practical wisdom.

We thank you for the subtle humor that hits us sometimes below the belt. And we thank you, Lord, that you are teaching us from your Word how to live the Christian life. Yes, we know the anointing of the Spirit is necessary, and most of us have experienced some of that.

We know, of course, without conversion and you living in us, none of this would be possible. But now that you are in us, and your Holy Spirit dwells in us and is working through us, we want to learn these basic, practical, biblical life principles. And by your grace, we're going to do it.

We know it's going to mean a lot of brokenness. It's going to mean some hard times, some tears. It's going to mean death to self.

But by your grace, we are going forward in this biblical, practical, dynamic lifestyle. In Jesus' name, amen.

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