

(Proverbs) ch.22:12 - 23:35

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of speaking the truth, trusting in the Lord, and respecting boundaries, and warns against the dangers of laziness, oppression, and anger.

Duration: 1:00:59

Scripture: Proverbs 22:12-13, Proverbs 22:15-16, Proverbs 23:4-5, Proverbs 23:19, Proverbs 23:22, Proverbs 23:24-26, Proverbs 23:29-35

Topics: "Truth and Integrity", "Discipline and Parenting"

Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of truth, integrity, and discipline in his sermon on Proverbs 22:12 - 23:35. He highlights that God stands with those who uphold truth and warns against the dangers of laziness, adultery, and the consequences of poor choices. Poonen stresses the need for parents to discipline their children wisely and the importance of being merciful and avoiding anger in our relationships. He encourages listeners to trust in the Lord, seek wisdom, and maintain integrity in all dealings, especially with the poor and vulnerable. The sermon concludes with a call to live a life of righteousness, avoiding the pitfalls of temptation and the allure of wealth.

Transcript

In chapter 22, we concluded our last study with verse 11, he who loves purity of heart and whose speech is gracious, the king is his friend. And we considered that there are two things there, one is a pure heart and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks and so there is graciousness in our speech and that makes the king, the Lord, our friend. Verse 12, I want to read it in the Good News Bible, it says, the Lord sees to it that truth is kept safe by disproving the words of liars.

God is on the side of truth. So when I speak the truth, even if it lands me on trouble, lands me into trouble here on this earth, I can have the comfort of knowing that God at least is on my side. When I tell a lie, it may save me from some trouble here on this earth, but I have the discomfort of knowing that God is not on my side because he sees to it that truth is kept safe by disproving the words of liars.

We can think of the scriptures, the truth of God, that God has kept safe through all these centuries for us when so many liars and treacherous people have tried to destroy it and take it away from God's people. In the Living Bible it reads like this, the Lord preserves the upright but he ruins the plans of the wicked, and that's another possible translation of it, and that is also something that comforts us, that if we walk in uprightness, the Lord will preserve us, but if there's wickedness somewhere within, whatever plans we

make, the Lord will see that it comes to ruin. Verse 13, the sluggard says, there is a lion outside, I shall be slain in the street.

This is just one of the many excuses that lazy people make for not going to work, it's an exaggeration, of course nobody actually says it like that, but it's to highlight the fact that people often make so many silly excuses for their own lack of diligence in any area, even if it is a matter of diligence in the study of the scriptures or any other thing, and the word of God has, particularly in the book of Proverbs, we see here again and again, shows the sluggard, the lazy man, is put in the same category as a fool. Verse 14, here is the reason why people fall into adultery, and it's a very serious verse. When a person falls into adultery, this is the reason, the mouth of an adulteress is a deep pit, and it is he who is cursed by the Lord who falls into it.

Think of that. That means that a person has so rejected God's word, like it says in the Good News Bible, adultery is a trap, but it only catches those with whom the Lord is angry. When you hear of preachers falling into adultery, can you take it lightly? No.

You have to say, the Lord must have been angry with that man, the Lord must have hated that man, that's why he allowed that fellow to go into that trap. If the person were humble, God would have protected him, but because he was not humble, God allowed him to fall into that, and once a person falls into this, it's almost impossible to recover one's testimony completely. You can recover it to some extent, but never completely.

Not even David could do it, much less anyone in the New Covenant. This is something we have to fear tremendously, and when we hear it happen to someone who calls himself a Christian, remember this verse, he who is cursed by the Lord falls into that open mouth of the adulterous woman, otherwise God would have protected him, if the man were humble and God-fearing. Verse 15, foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will remove it far from him.

It's amazing. This is the wisdom of God, that it's only by inflicting pain, physical pain, on a child that you can remove the foolishness which is inside his heart. It says foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, and there is no child in the world that is excluded here.

Every child in the world has got foolishness in its heart, and it's good for every father and mother to realize that, particularly fathers and mothers who think, my child can never do anything wrong. Well, then your child must be an exception to what is mentioned in Proverbs 22.15, but all other human beings, this is true, that foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, and it's very dangerous to defend our children, because that's the way we can ruin them. We have to face up to the fact that our children, however good, lovely darlings we think they are, have got foolishness bound up in their heart, because God's word says so.

Never mind what I think, put aside my own reason, God's word says that. And God's called me, as a parent, to drive it out of his heart. God says, I appoint you, father and mother, to drive out that folly from the heart of your children.

And it says the only way is by using the rod of discipline, not the rod of anger. A rod of anger won't drive it out. Fathers and mothers can use a rod of anger.

Here it is the rod of discipline. The father and mother must also be disciplined themselves. Use the rod in a disciplined way, for the purpose of discipline.

The rod of discipline will remove it far from him. Let me read that in the Good News Bible, it says, children just naturally do silly, careless things, but a good spanking will teach them how to behave. Now, when a father and mother do not give that spanking to the children when they are small, the result is, the children grow up, and even when they are adults, they still do silly, careless things.

What a sad thing, that such parents have allowed their children to grow up to do silly, careless things when they are grown up. It says in the Living Bible, a youngster's heart is filled with rebellion. And that's also true.

There's a spirit of rebellion because he's unconverted in his heart, but punishment will drive it out of him. We ought to see even those small manifestations of disobedience as basically a part of the spirit of rebellion. The spirit of rebellion.

And that's why we ought to take it seriously, and not allow even a small disobedience to be taken lightly, because we want to help our children to be free from that spirit of Lucifer, which is manifested in rebellion. Verse 16, He who oppresses the poor to make much for himself, or who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty. In James chapter 5, verse 4, it speaks about those who don't pay their servants properly.

And that's a serious thing. When servants work, we don't pay them properly. And that is to oppress the poor, so that I can have a little more of a bank balance.

And there it speaks about the judgment, James 5, that will come upon people who do that, to increase their bank balance at the cost of not paying properly those who have worked for them. And there'll be quite a huge number of people who will be judged just on that one verse. And they will come to poverty, to spiritual poverty, and ultimately, even financially, God will make sure that they suffer.

Or, those who give to the rich. And that giving to the rich can sometimes be with an end in view. You know, Jesus spoke about inviting a person for a meal, and you know that you'll be invited back again.

And we can give a gift to a person, because we know that when our turn comes, he'll come back with a gift to us. And that is giving a gift to the rich. Giving a gift to the rich.

And it's a form of bribing. We can be so afraid of bribing. But here, in the Living Bible, it says, God watches these things, and it's always in the realm of the motive that God sees.

What is the motive? It's not a question of the action of giving, to find out whether it's giving to a rich or a poor person, but what is the motive behind it? And here is opportunity for us to cleanse our motives, even in our giving gifts, and even in our paying those who work for us, that we are righteous. Now, from verse 17 onwards, there is a small section here that concludes in chapter 24, verse 22, and it begins with similar words to the words we read in Proverbs chapter 2. I want to read it to you in the Living Bible. Verses 17 to 19, it says, That's the advice he gives.

He says, listen to this wise advice, you follow it closely, it'll do you good, and you can pass it on to others. Trust in the Lord. At all times, in all circumstances, under all situations, whatever may happen, trust in the Lord.

Just think of having those four words as a motto for one's life. That's basically what he's trying to say. Just take a little motto like this with you all through life.

Whatever may happen in the world around you, trust in the Lord. He'll bring you through. He'll lift you up.

He'll make you stand. Trust in the Lord. When things are difficult, when things look impossible, trust in the Lord.

It's a fantastic thing to live by. And he's sort of summing up, basically, what he's trying to say. And he says further in verse 20 and 21, In the past, haven't I been right? Then believe what I'm telling you now, and share it with others.

We have confidence in a person when we find that what he has told us in the past has proved to be right, that there is wisdom there. And that's what the writer says. In the past, haven't I been right? Then believe what I'm telling you now, and share it with others.

Trust in the Lord, because God wants the younger generation also to be wise, so that they can share this truth with others. In the NASB, it reads like this, verse 21. To make you know the certainty of the words of truth.

And that word, certainty of the words of truth, means to be convinced of the truth of God's word. Because we have experienced its reality and its power in our life. That we are convinced and are certain of the truth of God's word.

And I want to read it also in the Good News Bible. Here he says, verse 20 and 21, reading from verse 19. I want you to put your trust in the Lord.

That's why I'm going to tell them to you now. And he says, I have written down 30 sayings for you. They contain knowledge and good advice.

And will teach you what the truth really is. And then when you are sent to find it out, you can bring back the right answer. So, it's like a mini book of Proverbs, in the middle of the book of Proverbs.

That he's written down in the remaining verses, up to chapter 24, verse 22. 30 different statements on 30 subjects. And he says, take heed to this.

He sums it up with a heading, says, what I'm basically telling you is trust in the Lord. But in practical terms, this is what you should do. And I have 30 bits of advice for you.

So we can look at those 30 bits of advice. First of all, verse 22 and 23. And I just want you to see here, that when he gives these 30 bits of advice in the remaining two chapters.

Notice where he begins. The very first thing he wants to say. What he's saying in verse 22 and 23 is, don't take advantage of a poor person just because you can.

Don't take advantage of those who stand helpless in court. The Lord will argue their case for them. And threaten the life of anyone who threatens theirs.

What is the first of all these 30 sayings? We can sum it up in two words. Be merciful. Be merciful towards another person who at this particular time happens to be under your power.

Or under your authority. Don't try to lord it over him. Don't take advantage of that fact that that person is under you in any way.

Be merciful. That is the very first thing. In the flesh, there is a tremendous lust to take advantage of those who are under us in any way.

And we have to fear it. That's why it says, work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Be merciful because you will find that the Lord is fighting their case for them.

And it's dangerous to have the Lord fighting someone's case against me. It's good to be merciful. That's interesting.

That the very first thing he says is that. And then the second statement, the second instruction, the second teaching he gives is in verse 24 and 25. And we can sum up these words again in two words.

Avoid anger. It's very practical. He says trust in the Lord basically.

But he says this trusting in the Lord works down to very practical applications in daily life. First of all, be merciful to the poor. And secondly, avoid anger.

Don't make friends, the Good News Bible says, with people who have hot, violent tempers. It's dangerous to be friendly with a man who doesn't have control of his temper. Because you might learn their habits.

And then you may not be able to change. It's interesting that the word of God says that. In other words, anger can be contagious.

Are you afraid of going too close to someone who's got leprosy? Well, be careful of being too friendly with people who have hot, violent tempers. It's not at all a good thing. You might learn their habits.

And you may not be able to change. To be merciful to others is what God requires from us. And God really desires that we fight and overcome this hot, violent temper that dwells in our flesh.

And bring it under the control of the Holy Spirit. Instruction number three is in verses 26 and 27. Here he says, again the Good News Bible, Don't promise to be responsible for someone else's debts.

If you should be unable to pay, they will take away even your bed. In other words, don't stand as guarantee for someone else. That is a dangerous thing.

I believe that, as we said in an earlier study when we considered this, that it would be proper if we have come into such a relationship where the person has really become one with us in the body. Not that they sit in the same congregation listening to the same message or believing the same doctrine. But there has come a covenant relationship in one body.

Then it would be right. But otherwise, even if a person calls himself a believer or a brother, even if they are in the same meeting place, take the word of God and don't stand guarantee. It also, I think, implies that we should be wise in our giving money to others.

And in lending money to others. It also comes under this instruction. And imagine that the writer of Proverbs, when he is thinking of 30 important things to say, he speaks about mercy, he speaks about anger, and all of a sudden he speaks about lending money and standing guarantee.

It is one of those things which can lead people into a lot of trouble. And he is telling people, be wise here. Be wise in lending and giving money.

It requires a lot of wisdom. Then, number four is in verse 28. Never move an old boundary mark.

Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set. And you know how it is in empty plots of ground? We see that even today, little marking stones that mark the boundary of a plot. And in the middle of the night, you can move that, take that stone out and move it six feet the other side.

And what you have done is, you have gone into somebody else's territory. And the way we can, this has a practical application of course, that we don't cheat one another in any way. But also, it has an application in relation to the spiritual boundaries that we have considered often in the church.

That we respect the boundary that God has drawn around another person. To respect not only another person's physical plot of land and property, but also the boundary that God has drawn around another person. That we treat that person with respect, because God has drawn a certain boundary around them.

And the world is full of people who are going into other people's territories. Being a busybody, in other people's matters, things which don't concern them at all, they are always putting their nose into. And that is to move the boundary mark.

God has given that person a particular boundary. For example, you see the way somebody's children are being brought up. And is that within your boundary? It is not.

It is a million miles away from you. God has put a boundary around that father and mother and given the children to them. And that is foolish for me, to sit in my house and talk about how he is bringing up his children and she is bringing up her children.

That is none of my business. If they come to me for advice, I can give it. But otherwise, it's none of my business to go and move their boundaries and put it on my side and act as a busybody in their matters to tell them how they should bring up their children or how they should do anything in their home.

If they come to you for advice and they have confidence in you, give it to them. Otherwise, my dear brothers and sisters, we can save ourselves a lot of trouble and a lot of foolishness and a lot of unnecessary problems if we just respect our boundaries and respect the boundaries of other people. Don't move it.

God has put it. Respect it. That's simple wisdom.

Then, instruction number five, verse twenty-nine. This reads like this in the Living Bible. Do you know a hard-working man? He shall be successful and stand before kings.

Of course, we are not interested in standing before earthly kings. That was a big thing in the Old Testament because God's promises to Israel were earthly. The earthly king was the representative of God in Israel.

But today, for us in the New Covenant, we have only one king, the King of kings, Jesus Christ our Lord. And here it tells us how we can stand before him if we are wholehearted. Like the hard-working farmer we considered in 2 Timothy 2 who gets the first share of the crops.

The one who really works hard, we can say, within his own boundary. The one who really works hard within his own boundary, he will stand before the king. We have considered in another study once about the sons of Zadok in Ezekiel 44 who were permitted to stand before the Lord and minister to him.

And a whole lot of other priests to whom God said, yeah, I'll give you a ministry, but you can't have that highest ministry of standing before me. You can have a ministry of serving the people. There are different categories of ministries even in the New Testament and the highest of all is to be able to stand before God's face.

And every one of us can have that if we work hard on our flesh within our own boundary. Now we go to chapter 23 verse 1 which is teaching number 6 in this section. Verses 1 to 3. And let me read that in the Living Bible.

When dining with a rich man or a ruler, be on your guard because there can be so many temptations when you're invited to dinner in a rich man's house. And don't stuff yourself although it all tastes so good. For he is trying to bribe you and no good is going to come of his invitation.

Yeah, there are many things we can consider there. It says about food. Don't be a slave to good food.

It's very interesting to think of Daniel how he was at the king's table and he would not eat that lest he compromise his position. And how temptation came to Daniel initially through food. Temptation came to Eve in the Garden of Eden through food.

Temptation came to Jesus first in the wilderness through food. That's interesting that so many of the important temptations mentioned in the scriptures have come through food. And that here it says not to be a slave of food.

At the same time it speaks about being careful when we are invited by the rich. So we can say there are two exhortations here. One, don't be slaves of food.

And the other is, don't be slaves of the rich. Because that can be a dangerous thing. That we can, having been invited by the rich, we have put ourselves in a compromising position.

That we have to please them after that. And there's something that we have to be careful about. That we don't place ourselves under obligation to some rich person because he's given us a dinner or something else.

If we really want to serve the Lord, we have to be free from all men. So that no human being can say that we are under any obligation to them. Not at all.

We are free before the Lord to speak the truth to them and offend them. What an exhortation this is. If Christian workers and pastors and all had taken this seriously there would have been a purer church in the world today.

No, we are never to become under obligation to people. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9 I am free from all men. And we must always keep ourselves like that.

That we don't put ourselves under obligation to anyone. Particularly to the rich who would like to control us in some way. Exhortation number 7 verses 4 and 5 is concerning making money.

It says don't weary yourself to gain riches. It's not against earning a living. But it is this pursuit of wealth.

Of trying to get more and more money beyond what I need. It's not speaking about earning what I need to live. And he says here Seize from your consideration of it means stop thinking about making more money than you need.

Because when people have begun to think like that of making more money than they need they have finally landed into all types of troubles and difficulties. It says that in 1 Timothy 6 that those who will be rich pierce themselves through with many sorrows. And it says here not only that when you set your eyes on it it is gone.

Don't think that just because you make more you'll have more. Usually the people who make more end up spending more and they still don't have more really. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.

That's what God's word says about riches. It flies off like an eagle. Think of that.

It's not slowly going away it just suddenly goes. And if my heart is set on that I can be tremendously disappointed. So, here's practical wisdom.

Don't weary yourself. Stop thinking about that. Be content with having enough to take care of your needs yourself and your family.

Verse 6 to 8 is exhortation number 8 Do not eat the bread of a selfish man or desire his delicacies for as he thinks within himself so he is. He says to you eat and drink but his heart is not with you. You will vomit of a stingy man.

In other words don't go where people are not eager to have you. In simple words it means that we should really go only where people are happy and eager to have us. It is folly to go to a person ya he may have said ya brother please come but you have to sense whether he was really sincere or whether he's eager to have you or whether he's just being courteous.

And there can be and there has been and there is a lot of folly among believers in this area not just in matter of going for a meal. We have to see when for example we can go to different places in now we can think of some different fellowships in different parts of this country and of course I can think that I am a of course they will definitely be eager to have me because I am such a very brother who brings a blessing wherever I go. We can have such high thoughts about ourselves but the other person may not be having such thoughts about you.

And there it is so easy for us to have such high thoughts that everybody is just eager to have me just because they sent me an invitation. Of course this man also sent an invitation but his heart was not really in it. And we must not be so stupid or so foolish to think that everybody who invites us is necessarily so eager for our company or our fellowship.

We have to sense that. If I have high thoughts about myself then I will think yes they are really eager. But if I have small thoughts about myself I will say yes that may be just courtesy out of courtesy invited me.

And I have to think we are not to make fools of ourselves and grow up with a testimony for folly in this area. But really seek God for wisdom and humility. If a person is really eager to have you brother he will

keep on asking you.

It won't be just once. He will really want you. And that's the best time to go.

We will have far more to give when people are really eager to have us somewhere than just because we got a casual invitation and we are rich so we have got money to travel and we jump into a train or a bus and off we are. That is folly. Yeah? We have to be careful that we don't do such stupid things.

Be careful in accepting invitations to see that people are really eager. Let's not trust ourselves on people who are not so eager to have us. That's simple wisdom.

He says eat and drink of course he has to be courteous. But his heart is not with you. It means he is not really sincere in what he says.

Yeah of course it's wrong on his part but never mind about him. We are not to be foolish. Verse 9, instruction number 9 says do not speak in the hearing of a fool for he will despise the wisdom of your words.

That is just like Jesus said in Matthew 7, 6 don't throw your pearls before swine don't give that which is holy to the dogs that we are to think when we speak. These people who are listening to me what sort of people are they? I can't just start off on the new and living way and about Christ manifest in the flesh and all types of things without a single thought about who are these people. I mean are these the people to whom I should be saying this? And there we require wisdom.

Otherwise we are fools ourselves. Just because we have some knowledge and we think we are there to dish it out to anybody who comes across our way. No.

We are not to share with those who despise the wisdom of our words. For example this need not be just about doctrine. It can be to someone in the church that you give some advice to them some wisdom and they despise it.

They don't care for that. Because in their opinion they are wiser. Yeah.

If you are wise next time you will not give them advice. Let them go and do what they like. Do not speak to a fool.

And a fool is one who despises, it says here in verse 9, who despises the wisdom of your words. And you have to sense do I feel that this person doesn't think there is any wisdom in my words? Maybe he thinks I am a fool. Ok fine.

I am not offended by that. But I have to make sure that I don't go and unnecessarily trouble him with more advice in the future. Just leave him.

Because he despises the wisdom of your words. We have to be sensitive here and sensible. And not just go around saying anything to everyone.

These are really practical wisdom. If we take it seriously we can grow up to be wise instead of fools. Verse 10 and 11 is saying number 10.

There is a repetition again about moving the boundary. It's almost as though he hasn't had enough by saying it once. Probably he knows what busybodies the children of Adam are and so he's got to repeat it.

And there are certain things repeated in these 30 sayings. Do not move the ancient boundary. Or go into the fields of the fatherless.

That is a combination of ill-treating the poor and the helpless. Beware of injuring the helpless. That's basically what he's saying.

Those who are weak. Those who cannot fight back. Those who cannot take their case to court against you.

Those who have nobody to fight their cause for them. That's basically what it says about the fatherless. Nobody to fight their cause.

Weak. They are under you in some way. Beware that you don't go into their boundary.

Respect the boundary that almighty God has placed around that human being. For their redeemer is strong. And he will plead their case against you.

And we can look at it another way. And that is if you are one of those helpless people whom somebody else is taking advantage of. Think of this verse.

That you have a powerful guardian. That's how it says in one translation. A powerful guardian who will fight your case for you.

Because you have no one else to fight your case. You are helpless. It's a tremendous word of encouragement to those who find themselves in some helpless situation in life.

You can feel like a fatherless person in some situation. Instead of feeling sorry for yourself and ending up defiled with the spirit of self-pity. You can say to yourself, well it says here that if I am helpless then I am in a very blessed position actually because I have a mighty guardian who will fight my case for me.

And what better position to be in than that? That is not any cause for self-pity. Self-pity is always because of unbelief. Always because of unbelief.

Only atheists can have self-pity. You say, no I have seen believers who have self-pity. Yes, that's because those believers become atheists at that moment.

That means they don't believe in a heavenly father. They don't believe that God is almighty. They don't believe God is going to do anything for them.

At that moment they have lost all faith. And that's why they end up in self-pity. Only an atheist who does not have a heavenly father can have self-pity.

But one who has a heavenly father, how can he ever be a self-pity when he is in the most powerful position? Because he says my almighty guardian is going to take care of it all. I am helpless, humanly speaking. Think of a wife who is always being bashed up and troubled by her husband in 101 ways.

She can wallow in self-pity or she can rejoice that there is a powerful guardian who will fight her cause. Or any other person like that who is in a difficult situation. A word of encouragement.

Verse 12, Exhortation number 11. And here it says in the Living Bible, Don't refuse to accept criticism. Get all the help that you can.

Don't refuse to accept criticism. Get all the help that you can. And it says here, Apply your heart to it in the NASV.

In other words, when you get some criticism, what should you do? Apply your heart to it. Like I heard a brother say once that one day the phone rang and he picked it up and some person who was mad with him began to tell him all types of things. You're like this and you're like that and you're like that.

And he said, I've got to press the phone really close to my ears now and listen carefully to this because this is going to help me work out my salvation with fear and trembling. That's a godly person. He wants to listen carefully lest he miss one word of all this criticism that's coming over the phone.

Think of that. And that was a godly brother who said it. You won't find such a person ending up as a fool.

Because when he hears something, he says, Yes, I know there's nothing good in my flesh and here's somebody who's helping me to find something which I may not have found out yet. I really believe, brothers, that we are not as wholehearted as we often think we are in wanting to find out what dwells in our flesh. We say, Yes, I'm wholehearted.

I want to find out what dwells in my flesh and somebody else tells me what dwells in my flesh and I get all upset. That shows I'm not really wholehearted in wanting to find out. But here was a brother who was wholehearted.

He wanted to find out. And the proof of it was that when somebody criticized him, he wanted to get every word of it. There we find out whether we are really wholehearted or whether we are deceiving ourselves.

So, accept all the criticism you can. You get and apply your heart to it and it says here, get this help. This is a help if we are really interested in a godly life.

And then exhortation number 12 which is in verses 13 and 14. Again, here it speaks about something the book of Proverbs repeats many times. The need of discipline.

Do not for children that is. Do not hold back discipline from the child. Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die.

Think of that. What does that mean? That means it's quite a painful beating. Not just a little tap.

No danger of him dying with a tap. But when he says that you beat him with a rod, he will not die. That means he is thinking of quite a severe beating.

He won't die. Don't worry. God's provided sufficient flesh at that part of the body for that purpose and that will protect him from injury and death.

That's the wisdom of God. And he will not die. You will beat him with the rod and you will deliver his soul from hell.

That's what God's word says. You will teach him obedience when he is small and you will deliver his soul from hell when he grows up. But you'll be soft with him and you'll grow up to see him going to hell.

Or you'll be angry with him and beat him with a rod of anger. He may still go to hell. But if you humble yourself and use the rod of discipline and really make him feel the pain, you can save his soul from hell.

What a need there is for us to be delivered from a foolish softness with our children. A foolish softness. I think of the words of the father of Samson.

I don't know whether you've noticed it in Judges. I believe that's a prayer that every father and mother should pray who've got small children. As we considered in another study particularly those who are under 12.

Children under 12. In Judges chapter 13 there was an angel who came to Samson's parents and told them about the birth of this child and in Judges chapter 13 verse 8 Manoah he was the man there Samson had not yet been born it was just a promise which the angel of the Lord had given to the woman in verse 3 that you're going to have a son and she told her husband in verse 6 and the husband said Lord please let the man of God thou hast sent come to us again that he may teach us what to do for the boy who is to be born. Or as the Living Bible says in the same passage it says how we should bring this child up Judges chapter 13 that he may give us more instructions about the child you're going to give us and then when the man of God came Manoah said to him in verse 12 can you give us any special instructions about how we should raise this baby after he is born.

What a prayer to pray to God Lord can you please give me some special instruction how to bring up this child when he is born.

Pray that prayer brothers and sisters who are married and who have children Lord I pray the prayer of Manoah please give me instruction and I will follow your instruction which I read in Proverbs we come back to Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 15 and 16 this is exhortation number 13 in this section and I want to read that in the Good News Bible it says son if you become wise we can say this is a continuation of the previous instruction that a father has disciplined this child and saved him from hell not only saved him from hell but the father is now speaking to the son and we consider from the beginning of the book of Proverbs this is the older generation in the church speaking to a younger generation son if you become wise I'll be really happy I won't be so happy if you just get a good job

or get a good house or get a good wife or a good husband these are not the main things but that if you become wise then I'll be really happy there's nothing that will delight my heart as much as you're becoming wise even if you don't come first in the class if you become wise spiritually wise in your life and you can see that there are very few fathers who are really eager for that but we pray that in the church we will have a generation of fathers and mothers who even if they don't say it their longing of their heart is son daughter we'll really be happy if you become wise we'll be proud I'll be proud of you when I hear you speaking words of wisdom when I see you my son growing up and speaking with wisdom not a whole lot of stupid things that unbelievers and carnal believers talk about

but when I see you speaking with wisdom when I see you that you don't gossip when other people around you do that when I see that you speak words of goodness and gentleness and kindness I'll be proud of you my son whatever other defects there may be in you as far as the world is concerned that is the goal that we should have for our children the next exhortation number 14 is in verses 17 and 18 and I want to read this here in the living bible don't envy evil men but continue to fear the lord all the time see when we fear the lord there are many things on earth that we lose but we see that evil men who don't fear the lord get those things by cheating, telling lies and then sometimes even unconsciously a little envy can come in

us that if I did it like that I could also have those benefits

and here the word of god comes to my mind and don't envy that evil man that unrighteous man but reverence the lord all the time, be in the fear of the lord always live in the fear of the lord always what an exhortation to believe that Jesus obeyed that exhortation to live in the fear of the lord all the time one of the things the bible says we must do all the time live in the fear of the lord all the time when you get up in the morning to say here is another day I have to live in the fear of the lord right through this day in what I say, in what I do I have to live in the fear of the lord I have to live as one who recognizes that I have to give an account of what I do in my body one day to god and I want to live in the fear of the lord the whole day blessed are those who live like that it

goes on to say there if you live like that surely you have a wonderful future ahead of you and that's absolutely true as far as god is concerned there is a wonderful future ahead of those who live in the fear of the lord always and there is a wonderful little sentence at the end of this in the living bible the last part of verse 18 there is hope for you yet that's a word of encouragement for those who have failed and stumbled and done many foolish things in the past the word of encouragement comes there is still hope for you if even now we begin to live in the fear of the lord always there is still hope for you now we go to verses 19 to 21 which is exhortation number 15 and that reads like this in the living bible oh my son be wise and stay in god's paths don't carouse with drunkards and

gluttons for they are on their way to poverty and remember that too much sleep will clothe a man with rags it's really telling us there to overcome the love of food again and overcome the love of sleep overcome the love of food and overcome the love of sleep we need food we need to sleep there is nothing wrong with that god gives us food to eat god gives us sleep so that we can be refreshed but he is speaking about those who love it so much that they do not fulfill their responsibilities on earth or to god verses 22 to 25 is exhortation number 16 and these are very good words this speaks about a man's relationship to his parents and that's another area where the book of proverbs has much to say honor your father and mother the first commandment with promise listen to your father without

him you would not even be existing today and when your mother is old show her your appreciation good exhortations for all of us to follow truth, wisdom learning and good sense these are all worth paying for but too valuable for you to sell because in the context it means that you receive these things from god fearing parents a righteous man's father has good reason to be happy and you can take pride in a wise son make your father and mother proud of you give your mother that happiness these are words that we really need to take seriously because the book of proverbs repeats them again and again and again particularly where we find that sometimes parents don't have the same light that we have in the church on various truths and then we may have to disagree with them on certain things all

the more reason why we have to be careful to honor them in other areas even where we have to take a stand for the truth in many areas that may cause offense in the living bible it says listen to your father's advice and don't despise an old mother's experience and then I just want to say a word about verse 23 because there's something special here that applies not only to truth that we receive from god fearing parents but truth that we get in the new covenant from the holy spirit it says here buy the truth and do not sell it in other words there are two things there one in order to get truth I have to pay a price and that price may be I may lose my reputation I may even lose my job I may lose friends I may lose many things I say lord I'm willing to pay that price in order to get the truth

and to hold on to it and once you get the truth don't sell it don't be a compromiser at any cost it's a fantastic verse don't ever give up that truth just because you're going to get a little profit here or a little gain there if you compromise on the truth there buy the truth pay any price to get the whole truth of god and once you get it don't ever give it up to please your wife or to please your relatives or to please somebody else never never sell it that is the mark of a whole hearted person that one sentence he's willing to pay any price to get the truth and once he gets it he will never part with it no matter what he's going to gain and there can be so many things we can gain it may not be money it may be that I'll get somebody's good pleasure if I keep quiet on something and I end

up as a compromiser I've sold the truth for the sake of friendship with someone no stand for it at any cost and we can also look at it another way another aspect of it when it says don't sell the truth we can say that also means we must give it freely not put a fee on it and charge people that's why we believe in preaching the gospel freely and never taking a collection in our meetings one reason is this because we don't believe that anyone has to pay a charge even 10 paise on the collection bag in order to listen to the truth he can come and sit comfortably knowing that there's no collection bag going to be passed around at any time during the meeting no it's free all are welcome to receive it free no collection will be taken that's how it must be always offered freely never a charge for

the truth we don't sell it we give it free the truth itself verse 24 sorry verses 26 to 28 here it speaks about our heart and our eyes we saw in chapter 22 verse 11 about our heart and our mouth speech here it speaks about our heart and our eyes the lord says give me your heart my son and let your eyes delight in my ways and if you give me your heart and you let your eyes delight in my ways then you'll be protected from that seductive woman for the harlot is a deep pit and you know the problem with a deep pit that you can't climb out a small pit you could climb out but a harlot is a deep pit a seductive woman is a deep pit be careful there are many deep pits around you in school in college in your place of work there are deep pits women who don't dress properly women who are flirting

types think of them always as deep pits and here you have to walk in the office or in the place of work so carefully think how you would walk in a place where there are so many deep pits all around you you'd be an idiot if you just walk carelessly there I've got to be careful here and an adulterous woman is a narrow well not much hope of anybody climbing in to pull you out either a narrow well she lurks as a robber one who wants to rob your physical health one who wants to rob you spiritually and increases the number of unfaithful people among men the number of unfaithful people among men unfaithful to their wives are increased by these deep pits and these narrow wells be careful in your neighborhood in your office among your relatives on the streets everywhere be careful of these deep

pits and these narrow wells and don't make a fool of yourself how shall we protect ourselves? the lord says give me your heart that you don't allow your heart to think about these things and give me your eyes that your eyes will be under my control that's it your heart and your eyes give them to god and you need not fear these deep wells and narrow wells and these deep pits anymore very practical instruction and it applies also to spiritual harlotry those who fall into Babylon the harlot that is also a narrow well and a deep pit not easy to come out when we are in a harlot system if god has delivered us be careful that we don't fall into that by the way we live all over again verses 29 to 35 speak about the evils of drink most of us probably don't have any problem here I'll just read

through it but it is a problem for many people and the word of god speaks much about this evil of drinking whose heart is filled with anguish living bible and sorrow who is always fighting and quarreling who is the

man with blood shot eyes and many wounds it's the man who spends long hours in the wine taverns trying out new mixtures it says in verse 31 don't look on the wine when it is red when it is fermented when it sparkles in the cup when it goes down smoothly down your gullet at the last it bites like a poisonous serpent and stings like an adder you will end up seeing hallucinations you will say foolish silly things that would embarrass you

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