

# (Proverbs) ch.25:1 - 26:11

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen's sermon explores the wisdom of Proverbs 25:1 - 26:11, emphasizing the importance of humility, discipline, and the careful use of words in relationships and community.*

**Duration:** 1:00:42

**Scripture:** Proverbs 25:1

**Topics:** "Wisdom in Relationships", "Learning from Mistakes"

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## Description

Zac Poonen emphasizes the importance of learning from the mistakes of others, as illustrated by Solomon's observations of a lazy man's overgrown field, which serves as a metaphor for neglected lives, relationships, and churches. He highlights the value of God's Word, which is preserved through time, and encourages believers to seek the hidden treasures within it. Poonen discusses the significance of wisdom in communication, the dangers of gossip, and the necessity of self-control, drawing parallels between Proverbs and New Testament teachings. He warns against the folly of pride and the importance of humility in our interactions with others, especially when disagreements arise. Ultimately, he calls for a life of discipline and wisdom, reflecting the character of Christ in our relationships and actions.

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## Transcript

In chapter 25, we concluded our last study with the last few verses of chapter 24, where Solomon says he passed by the field of the lazy man, chapter 24, verse 30, and it was completely overgrown with thistles, verse 31, and covered with nettles, the stone wall was broken down. And he saw, and he reflected, and he learned something, to learn from the folly of others, so that we don't make the same mistake ourselves. That can be a picture of a barren life, which has neglected discipline, neglected God's word.

It can be a picture of a barren family relationship, a husband-wife relationship that was meant to be like the Garden of Eden, but that has ended up like a wilderness. Or it can be also the picture of a church that was meant to be the Garden of the Lord, but has become a wilderness. In all three areas we can learn a lesson from what we see here.

Now chapter 25, verse 1, these also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed. They are obviously proverbs that were discovered during the revival in the time of King Hezekiah. Hezekiah is just a picture to us of how God preserves his word.

When we believe that God's word is inspired, and there are some very precious verses in these chapters, which are the proverbs of Solomon, which were apparently lost up to the time of Hezekiah, which was some hundreds of years later, and yet they were God's inspired word, and so God made sure that they were found so that they could be included in his words. Also, the way God has preserved his word through all these centuries, so that we can have it in our hand, that which God has intended for man to have from him, even if it is lost, God makes sure it is found. Verse 2, it is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.

We've thought about this verse before as applying to the hidden treasures in the word of God. There are treasures that are hidden in God's word, which God has concealed and hidden, and that's his glory. It's part of the glory of God to conceal a matter, because it's when he conceals a matter that he can find out who are the ones who are diligent and not lazy, who are the ones who are wholeheartedly seeking, and who will dig in order to find.

And just like it is the glory of God to conceal a matter, it says it is the glory of a king to find out that which God has hidden. And that should be our attitude to the word of God, that when we go to his word, we seek to find out there what God has hidden, so that we can become rich. Verse 3, as the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.

In other words, you don't know the thoughts that are going through in the mind of a king. We could apply it in a New Testament way to New Testament kings. In 1 Corinthians 2, there is a verse which says, verse 15, that he who is spiritual can evaluate - a praise means evaluate all things - yet he himself cannot be evaluated by any man.

A carnal person cannot usually evaluate a spiritual person. Because he cannot understand the reason why that spiritually minded person does certain things. His carnal level of reasoning and thinking cannot understand why a much more spiritual person does things in a certain way, or says things in a certain way.

And so he cannot evaluate a spiritual man, and we could apply what we read in verse 3 to that. And therefore it is foolish to try and judge those who have more wisdom than we have. Verse 4 and 5, if you take away the dross from the silver, there will come out from it a vessel which is for the silversmith.

In the same way, if you take away the wicked people, the corrupt people from the king's court, then his throne will be established in righteousness. That, of course, has application to the Old Testament situation where wicked people in the king's court could corrupt a king. Applying it in the New Testament, we see that there is a place for discipline and judgment in the church, so that the testimony of the whole church is not spoiled.

As we read in 1 Corinthians 5, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that there was even need to put a man out of the church. And that's quite a serious thing, when a person has to be put out of the church. And yet there can be a necessity even for that.

We read that in the word of God. So that the church, as it says here in verse 5, can be established in righteousness. Verse 6 and 7, do not claim honor in the presence of the king, and do not stand in the place of great men.

For it is better that it be said to you, come up here, than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince. Now, we know from Luke chapter 14, verse 8 and 9, that Jesus repeated these words when he

said, when you go to a feast, don't take the highest seat, take the lower one, so that it can be said to you, come up higher. But it's very interesting to see that that was not something new that Jesus said.

We see that it's something that was written by Solomon. It was in the book of Proverbs. And Jesus obviously had read it in the book of Proverbs.

And he was really, you find that Jesus was only pointing out to those Pharisees that they were not obeying what they themselves had read in the book of Proverbs. It was written there, don't go up there to the higher seat. And yet that's exactly what those Pharisees were doing.

It's possible to know the scriptures like the Pharisees and yet disobey it. And that's what Jesus pointed out. It's written there.

And yet, they were not doing it. It shows that despite their knowledge of the scriptures, they were really quite careless to take each word seriously. Whereas to Jesus, a word like that in Proverbs 25 was serious enough for him to repeat it in Luke 14 verse 9. Verses 8 to 10 is again something which Jesus repeated in Matthew chapter 5 verse 25.

As you read it, you'll understand. Let me read that in the Living Bible. Don't be hot-headed and rush to court.

You may start something that you can't finish and then go down before your neighbor in shameful defeat. So discuss the matter with your neighbor privately. Don't tell anyone else, lest he accuse you of slander and you can't withdraw what you said.

Now the last part of verse 7 really refers to verse 8. You know the last part of verse 7 says, whom your eyes have seen or what your eyes have seen, don't go out too hastily to argue in a court. Or as the Good News Bible says, don't be too quick to go to court about something that you have seen. That last part of verse 7 is connected to verse 8. You've seen something and you want to rush to court about it.

No, he says, you may start something that your neighbor can't finish and then go down. Shows his wrong and you go down in shameful defeat before him. And so if you and your neighbor have a difference of opinion, settle it between yourselves.

As the Good News Bible says, and don't reveal secrets. Verse 9 and 10. In the Good News Bible it says, if you and your neighbor have a difference of opinion, settle it between yourselves and don't reveal any secrets.

Otherwise everyone will learn that you can't keep a secret and you will never live down the shame. Now there are a couple of things we learn there. And that is when you have a difference of opinion with someone and we have to be very careful.

We have spoken about that in the church. That when you find that someone doesn't agree with you on something, you have to be particularly careful in your heart attitude towards that person. Because we have a flesh in which dwells nothing good.

A flesh which just does not like other people disagreeing with us. You know that there is such a lust in your flesh? I know there is such a lust in my flesh. I have discovered it.

I hope you have discovered it in yours. Your flesh is the same. That we just don't like somebody disagreeing with us.

And that's because in our flesh we think that we are Almighty God. That if somebody disagrees with us, it's such a crime. But it's not such a crime if somebody disagrees with us.

We need to humble ourselves to realize that. And therefore we have to be particularly careful when someone disagrees with us. There is a tendency to reveal something secret about that person to others which puts that person in a bad light.

And we will easily do that if we are not very watchful and careful in our attitude towards those with whom we have a difference of opinion. Don't reveal any secrets it says, in such a case. And the second thing here is, it's a sort of revenge actually.

I mean that person has done something or said something which has brought a little difficulty. And then we can take revenge on that, not in crude ways by killing him, but just by exposing some folly of his. I exposed some folly of that person and it's absolutely true what I've said.

But the intention behind it was a sort of revenge on that person who did or said something. We got to be very watchful here. And the other thing it says there is verse 10 that if you reveal secrets, everyone will learn that you can't keep a secret and you will never live down the shame of it.

You know it is possible for us to gradually build up a reputation, even in the church, as those who are always gossiping and talking all types of useless things. And gradually everybody comes to know that so and so person is a person who is always going around talking or going around making themselves busybodies in other people's matters. And then it says you'll never live down the shame of it.

It's very difficult once we have ruined our testimony like that before so many others to get rid of the shame of that. We need to be very cautious that we don't earn such a reputation in the church. You will never live down the shame of it.

Think of that. That will be the last time. It will be so difficult ever again for people to have confidence in you.

And there are cases like that. So we need to be careful that we don't go the same way. Verse 11.

Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word spoken in right circumstances. Think of giving a person a gift. And the gift is a beautiful silver plate with golden apples fixed on it as a gift.

What an expensive gift that is. Costing many thousands of rupees to make something like that. And he says here that if you can give a word in the right circumstances, in other words like it says in Isaiah chapter 50 verse 4, the Lord has opened my ear to hear so that I can have a word in season for him that is weary.

To give a word at the right time, just a brief few words at the right time to the right person is like presenting him with a gift of golden apples, real solid gold, on a plate of silver. A very expensive gift. To be able to say the right word.

And we read in Isaiah chapter 50 verse 4 that Jesus had that ability only because of one reason, that his spiritual antenna and aerial were always up and he was tuned to listen to what the Father was

transmitting. He could receive and he could give that. That was all.

And that's why we can follow him. To go to a person and give him a whole lot of exhortations and give him a whole lot of teaching from this verse and that verse and the other verse which I read in the morning, that any idiot can do. But to give the right word at the right time and not burden a person with a whole lot of verses that I've got my mind filled up with, that's quite a different thing.

That requires wisdom. It requires hearing. I don't need to hear God to dump a whole lot of verses on somebody.

I just need to have a good memory. But to give a word in season, sometimes it can be just one sentence. That is to have the ministry of Melchizedek.

Melchizedek came to Abraham, gave a few words and disappeared. And his name is recorded throughout history just for that one event. I think to be a part of that priesthood, to be like that.

Verse 12, in the Good News Bible it reads like this, a warning given by an experienced person or a wise person to someone who is willing to listen is much more valuable than gold rings or jewellery made of the finest gold. Verse 11 speaks of gold as a gift, words in season. Verse 12 speaks of words of warning, words of correction.

Verse 13 speaks of words of warning, be careful that you don't do that or go that way. That can also be like a golden ring or jewellery made of the finest gold. If we are willing to listen, it's a good thing to have a year to listen to those who have more wisdom than us.

And our attitude should be like someone coming to us with a very expensive gift. Think if somebody came to you on your birthday and gave you a word of rebuke as a gift. You think what a person he is to rebuke me even on my birthday.

Couldn't he wait for another day? But think if a person came to you on your birthday and gave you a gift worth 1000 rupees. It says here that word of correction is more than that gift of 1000 rupees. Think to take it like that.

You know why do I think that on my birthday a person shouldn't give me any word of correction because I think that's not a good thing. That's why I think it's not fit for birthdays. That's why it is.

Birthday is a day I should be happy. But it is to make us happy that a wise person gives us something which is good. A warning given by a wise person is an extremely valuable gift provided we have a listening ear, it says in verse 12.

Verse 13. A reliable messenger or a faithful messenger, it says in the Good News Bible, is refreshing to the one who sends him like cold water in the heat of harvest time. Harvest time, summer time is a very hot time and a drink of cold iced water is so refreshing in the hot summer time.

In exactly the same way it says a faithful messenger is equally refreshing to the one who sends him. In the Good News Bible, in the Living Bible it reads like this. A faithful employee is as refreshing as a cool day in the summer time, in the hot summer time.

You know how refreshing it is when we have one cool day in the hot summer time. And we can apply that to our own calling to be messengers of the Lord that the emphasis here is not on a clever messenger.

Because if it said here a clever messenger, many of us may not be clever and God may not be able to pick us up, but it doesn't say clever, it says a faithful messenger.

In other words, according to the light you have in your life, to that light you are faithful and you are a faithful messenger of the light you have to take it to others who don't have that light. You may not be clever, you may not be able to express it very well, but you are faithful to pass that on to others. You are as refreshing to God as a glass of cold water.

Whoever gives a cup of cold water in my name, he will not lose his reward. And you are just as refreshing as someone who gives a cup of cold water to God's heart. A faithful messenger is one who proclaims the whole counsel of God, not doesn't hold back any part of God's message.

Verse 14, it says here, like clouds and wind without rain, is a man who boasts of his gifts falsely. That's a very appropriate word for the days in which we live. What does it mean to boast of gifts falsely? There's a lot of it in our country and in America and many other parts of the world.

People claim to have a gift of healing when they don't have it. Nobody wants the gift of helps, because that's not so spectacular. But the gift of healing, particularly, people like to claim that they have it.

And there are a lot of people like that, claiming to have certain gifts. But by their fruits you shall know them. The evidence that a person has the gift is that he prays for the sick and the sick are healed.

And if a person prays for the sick and they're not healed, that means there is no gift there. It can be a boasting of a gift falsely. There's a tremendous amount of it.

I believe there are gifts of healing in the church throughout the world, but there are very few. But every Tom, Dick and Harry nowadays wants to be a healer. And there's a lot of that boasting of gifts falsely.

It says here that's like a lot of black clouds coming over and a dry, parched area that hasn't rained for many months. And you say, at last rain is coming. And you wait and then the clouds pass on and there's no rain.

There's a disappointment. I've seen that in healing meetings, people coming with great expectation. I remember once sitting in a meeting where there was an American healer about 20 years ago.

And sitting next to me was a Hindu couple with two blind babies. And they passed the offering bag around and naturally they would have put a handsome amount in because they would have thought in their Hindu minds, this is probably necessary for my children to be healed. And then of course those children were not healed.

And I got so angry with that type of presentation of a Christ who was going to disappoint them. Clouds without rain. I think those people would have been turned more away from the Lord.

If at all they would have ever come to the Lord, that type of thing would ensure that they never come to Christ when they encounter that type of thing. It's better to be humble and not to claim that we have some ability which we don't have. Be honest and humble.

Yeah, brother, I don't have the gift of healing but I can pray that God will bless you and if it is His will, heal you. Or if that is not, that he'll give you grace to bear it. And let those who have the gift of healing exercise those other ministries.

It's good to have small thoughts about ourselves instead of ending up like clouds and there's no rain. Disappointing people and turning them away from the Lord. It also, another translation of this in the Living Bible reads like this, verse 14, one who does not give the gift that he promised is like a cloud blowing over a desert without dropping any rain.

And that teaches us, particularly towards our children as parents, that if you promise to give a gift for some particular thing they've done, you must make sure that you keep your word. It's wrong to promise something and then when the time comes you sort of back out of it and don't keep your word. It's far better not to promise in such cases.

Verse 15, I'll read that in the Good News Bible, it says, patient persuasion can break down the strongest resistance and can even convince rulers that we are not going to get our way and accomplish what we want to accomplish by being hard. But by patience and goodness, it says here, even a ruler can be persuaded. It's a good word for us to bear in mind when we go to all these government offices and have to deal with so many different people who are hard in various ways that it's alright for them to be hard, but we're not going to accomplish anything by being hard ourselves.

It's better to be patient. And with patience and goodness and persuasion, it says, even a ruler can be persuaded. And I like that phrase which says here in the NASB, a soft tongue.

We don't receive that when we are born. We are born with a hard tongue. When we are converted, our tongue still doesn't become soft.

But think to have that as a goal in life. Lord, three beautiful words, a soft tongue. I want to make that my goal in life.

To have a soft tongue towards all people. A very wonderful goal to have and to work towards. Verse 16 and 17, we need to read this together.

Good News Bible, it says, never eat more honey than you need. Too much may make you vomit. You know that.

Honey is a very good thing. It's very tasty. But if you eat too much of it, you'll end up vomiting.

He says in exactly the same way, don't visit your neighbor too often. Your fellowship with your neighbor may be just like honey. Wonderful.

Very good fellowship, but if you have too much of it, go too frequently to that person's house, you'll end up with each vomiting the other out. And that's very true. Familiarity breeds contempt.

Your neighbor may get tired of you and come to hate you and may want to vomit you out because you're landing up there all the time. And that's not only Christianity, that's basic good manners. I mean, even non-Christians understand that.

It's amazing to see how so many Christians don't seem to have the wisdom which non-Christians have in this area. This is not Christianity, it's just plain good manners. That you don't visit your neighbor too often.

It doesn't say don't visit your neighbor at all, but don't make the visit so frequent because you say, we're good friends. That's true, but don't eat too much honey. That can make you vomit.

It's good to have a restraint in these things. It's good to be disciplined, just like in the matter of eating, that you don't eat too much, you eat just enough. In the same way, even visiting one another, that's a good thing, it's like honey.

Fellowship is like honey, true fellowship. But one needs to be careful in visiting one another, that there is a wisdom here, that we don't act foolishly. I want to read a verse in 1 Timothy 5, 13, you've seen it before.

It speaks there about the younger women. It says there, the younger women, when they are idle, they go around from house to house and become gossips and busybodies. And that teaches us that, in this particular matter, the sisters are more in danger than the brothers.

And when you read that in the word of God, every God-caring sister will really take that seriously and say, Lord, I'm in greater danger here because I'm a sister and I'm young, and I've got a lot of free time. If you're a sister, and you're young, and you've got a lot of free time, then just meditate a little while on 1 Timothy 5, 13, because you fall into all three categories. You're young, you're a sister, and you've got a lot of free time.

That danger applies particularly to you. Now we go to verse 18. Like a club and a sword and a sharp arrow is a man who bears false witness against his neighbor.

Backbiting, it often gives a false picture of the truth. It's like, it says here, a false accusation is as deadly as a sword, a club, or a sharp arrow. What if we have been the ones who have suffered because of somebody else's sword, or club, or sharp arrow? Say somebody has backbitten against us, and it's like a club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow that somebody has hit us with.

Verse 17, Isaiah 54, 17, No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that accuses you in judgment you will condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their vindication is from me, declares the Lord. The Lord says, I will stand up for you and prove that you're right.

Leave that to me. So we can afford to be hit by the clubs, and the arrows, and the swords of others, and not retaliate, because we know that God will ensure that none of those weapons will ever prosper against us. It's a tremendous verse.

I remember reading a true story of a missionary lady out in China many years ago who was faced by a band of pirates on a ship who pulled out a pistol, and came into her cabin on the ship, and were about to fire at her, and she had such boldness, she turned around and told that man, put that pistol down because it says, no weapon that is formed against me will ever prosper. And the man was so terrified, he just put the pistol down, and she came out alive from that situation. There's a fantastic power in the word of God, if we have faith in it.

We go now to verse 19, it reads like this in the Good News Bible, depending on an unreliable person, now this is the opposite of the faithful messenger which we considered in verse 13. This is an unfaithful person. To depend on an unfaithful person in a crisis is like trying to chew your food with a loose tooth, or trying to walk with a crippled foot.

Think of that. That at the time when you want to bite that, your tooth is loose and lets you down. When you want to walk, your foot is crippled.

And think, it's like that, to be an unfaithful messenger. One who wants to share the word with others, but you are unfaithful in your life. God finds you like a loose tooth with which he can't chew his food.

We're not to be like that. Verse 20, in the Good News Bible it says, singing to a person who is depressed is like taking off his clothes on a cold day, or like rubbing salt into his wound. That's a foolish thing to do, to go to a person who is depressed and slap him on the back and say, well praise the Lord brother, just cheer up.

You need to understand what he's going through. It says, weep with those who weep, Romans 12, 15, and rejoice with those who rejoice. And there is no wisdom in always being a happy-go-lucky person around everyone.

It's like taking off his clothes on a cold day, or rubbing salt in a wound. There's a great need for wisdom in dealing with people who are depressed, of course. We come across such people all the time, who don't understand victory, who have not understood how to rejoice in the Lord always, how to keep the commandments, who have not understood that sin shall not have dominion over you, which includes depression and discouragement.

And we need to help them. Verse 21 and 22, if your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat, and if he's thirsty, give him water to drink. For you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.

We know that these words were quoted by Paul in Romans 12, verse 20 and 21. Exactly the same words, which teaches us that Paul also studied Proverbs, just like Jesus. The book of Proverbs is quoted by Jesus and Paul in the New Testament, teaching us that there are many things in Proverbs that is good for us, who are new covenant believers, to understand.

But that's something we have spoken about much in the Church. We don't need to go too much into it, that we are to love our enemy and seek to do good. If the enemy is hungry, give him food to eat.

In fact, a very good thing to do when you find somebody is your enemy and somebody hates you, is to pray and say, Lord, give me some opportunity to serve him, some opportunity to do good to him in a practical way. That's the thing, to do good to him in a practical way. That's what it's speaking about here, to do good in a practical way to that person in some way, and to pray that God will do that, give you that opportunity.

And this matter of heaping burning coals on his head, what does it mean? We can think if somebody actually put live coals on our head, how would you feel? You'd feel very uncomfortable. And that's exactly what it means, that when you show goodness to a person who has been evil to you, he will burn, in the Good News Bible it says, he will burn with shame. He'll feel ashamed that he's treated you so badly, that in his time of need you go out to help him, and then he thinks back of how he treated you, he'll feel so ashamed, he'll burn with shame, he'll feel so uncomfortable that his relationship with you will be restored perhaps, and the Lord will reward you.

Verse 23, the north wind brings forth rain, and a backbiting tongue brings forth an angry countenance. Most people in the world don't have victory over sin, most believers don't have victory over sin. And therefore, if you have backbitten against someone, and that person doesn't have victory over sin, that person is going to be angry with you for having backbitten against him.

And then of course you've got to only blame yourself for that person losing his temper. That's basically the meaning here. Verse 24 is a repetition of what we saw in an earlier chapter, it is better to live in a corner of the roof than in a house shared with a nagging contentious wife.

And it's interesting that the men of Hezekiah decided that this is one of the Proverbs of Solomon that needed to be copied out once more, here in this chapter. That even though it was already there, they wanted to repeat it. And it's interesting to see that, how many times it's repeated about this nagging wife who's driving, like they say, driving a person off the wall to the roof and to the desert and all over the place.

It's good for us to work on our salvation so that no sister in the church ever becomes a wife like that. Verse 25, like cold water to a weary soul, so is good news from a distant land. Now I've often thought of this verse, I mean not often, but I've thought of this verse in relation to children who go away from their parents to some distant town.

It's so easy there not to think of writing a letter to your parents, to be selfish in a sense, enjoy one's own happiness, and not think of the anxiety with which parents and loved ones are eager to have news about you. To give a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus in such a situation, it says here, like cold water to a weary soul, is just to drop a letter. And if any of you ever in some situation happen to go away from your parents, I'd advise you to give them a cup of cold water once in a while.

It's a very good thing to do, costs almost nothing, and yet many people neglect it. It's like not giving that cup of cold water to a thirsty person. There's a thirsty person waiting at the door, and you won't even give a cup of cold water.

He's not asking for some expensive drink, just a cup of cold water, just a postcard. Yeah, that's a good thing to keep in mind. Verse 26, like a trampled spring and a polluted well, is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked.

We can say that's a compromiser, who gives in to the pressure of some wicked person. And when a godly man compromises, it says here in the Living Bible, it's like polluting a fountain. And that's the reason why the waters that are flowing in so many churches today are polluted waters, dirty waters, because there's been compromise in the leadership.

And when a righteous person, one who is a leader, compromises, then the only waters that can flow out from him, in his home or in his church, will be muddy waters. It's not good for one who is called to be a righteous son of God to yield before to the pressure of the wicked. Verse 27, we'll read it in the Living Bible, Just as it is harmful to eat too much honey, we thought about eating too much honey before in the context of visiting your neighbor, here it's another context, just as it is harmful to eat too much honey, so also it is bad for men to think and to keep on thinking about all the honors they deserve.

You know, to sit down and think about how you've done this for that person, and how you've done this for the other person, and how so and so should be grateful to you for what you've done for them there, and how you've helped these people here, and done the other thing for them there, and to sit down and think about all this and pat oneself on the back, is exactly the same as eating too much honey. Of course, in public we are there to act humble, not wanting anybody's honor and all. It's all a bogus and a humbug, because when we are alone, we can be thinking about all the honor that I deserve for what I have done for other people, and what a spiritual person I am.

Yeah, that's just as bad as visiting your neighbor too often. That's got to be vomited out. Vomit out all such thoughts.

It's not good to eat too much honey. Verse 28 reads like this in the Good News Bible, If you cannot control your anger, you are as helpless as a city without walls open to attack. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control, Galatians 5.23. And here it teaches us that self-control is like a wall that protects us against Satan.

If I don't have this wall around me, I am defenseless. I can have the knowledge of the Bible, I can have activity, I can do so many things for the Lord, but I am helpless against the enemy's attacks, because this wall of self-control I don't have. I am not able to control my anger.

And when we read in the Word of God that even a mighty man like Moses, about whom you read in Numbers chapter 12, that he was the meekest man in the face of all the earth, and you read eight chapters later in Numbers chapter 20 that he got angry with the people, and one would think, yeah, God should condone him, because after all, imagine if you had to take care of two million people for forty years. Think of that, with all their complaints about this and that and the other thing. You know how difficult it is to organize a small picnic just for one day for a few people.

You can imagine how it was for Moses, for two million people for forty years. And one would think that, yeah, if he slipped up once, that's not bad, but God took it seriously. One slip up like that, God said, you can't enter the promised land, sorry.

Think of that. That's written for our warning. There's much we can miss if we are not careful, and particularly when you're young, inexperienced, foolish, then we do a lot of stupid things, God overlooks it, but as we grow older, and we have more, we have received more, and more wisdom is expected from us, and then we get irritated and lose our temper, that's a very serious thing, extremely serious.

That is like not having any walls at all. You know, in the Living Bible it says, a man without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken down walls. I was reading something in a medical book the other day, that they did an experiment on dogs, and when they removed a certain part of a dog's brain, or a cat's brain, they found that the dogs and cats became very touchy.

You just touch the cat, and suddenly it's going to scream, and its lashes are stale, and the hair lifts up, and that was very amusing for me to read, that when a person gets angry, he's acting like a brainless character, because it's been physically proved that if you remove a part of the brain of the cat, it becomes so touchy, a small little thing, and it's worked up and upset. And I say, Lord, that's really something, that God's given us brains, no part of it is cut out, and yet we can act like that, to be so touchy about some small thing, get so upset and irritated about some little thing. No, God wants us to have walls, not broken down.

We saw in the end of the last chapter, chapter 24 verse 31, about a stone wall broken down. And here at the end of chapter 25, again we see a man with walls broken down, in that case due to laziness, in this case due to a lack of discipline and self-control. God wants us to have walls around our life, walls of obedience to God's word, walls of self-control.

And this is the fruit of the Spirit, that's what encourages us. If it is something that we have to develop, grit our teeth, we'd say, Lord, I don't seem to have got it, even after so many years. But we praise God for that wonderful word in Galatians 5.23, which says, it is the fruit which the Spirit produces.

So I say, Lord, I want it, produce it in my life. Here is the ground, humility and the fear of the Lord in my life, I offer it to you, produce it in my life, build these walls, so that I will be one who has defences against the enemy. Now we come to chapter 26, and the first 12 verses here are about fools.

Of course the book of Proverbs says a lot about fools, spiritual fools, but here it says particularly a few things about fools all put together. It says here, to praise a fool is as out of place as snow falling in summer time, or rain falling at harvest time. Rain doesn't usually fall at harvest time and snow doesn't fall in summer time, but to praise a fool, to give honour to a fool, is just as out of place.

And that just teaches us that we must be careful whom we give honour to. Don't be foolish to go around giving honour to people who cannot bear it, particularly who are young. We can say a lot of big things about some young people and they can't bear it because it's out of place to give it.

It goes to their head, it puffs them up and they have a spiritual fall in pride and our giving them honour, though it was a good thing, was actually out of place, just like snow falling in summer time. Another proverb here, verse 2, it says here in the Good News Bible, that curses cannot hurt you unless you deserve them. Some people get scared when somebody has cursed them, or done some witchcraft on them, which is another form of curse.

They are scared, somebody has put a curse on me, somebody has done some witchcraft on me. It can't hurt you unless you deserve it. They are like birds that fly by, but they don't settle down.

It's like the bird that flies over your head, it's not able to come and settle down on your head. And like that, a curse which is made against you can accomplish nothing. You read in the Old Testament in 1 Samuel 17.43, that when David went to fight against Goliath, it says in 1 Samuel 17.43, the last part of that verse, that the Philistine Goliath cursed David by his gods.

He said, in the name of this whatever god the Philistines had, this curse, and that curse, and the other curse. But whatever he said, nothing happened to David. The curse just went back on the Philistine, and that curse was useless.

It was a very beautiful promise which we pointed out once before in the church here, in Numbers 23. In verse 23, very easy to remember, Numbers 23.23, which Balaam said about Israel, that no one can do any witchcraft against Israel. No one can do that.

There is no bad omen that people can put on God's people. And if that was true for people under the Old Covenant, how much more when we are under Christ? And that's something that we must have a great confidence in. No one can put a curse on me, because Jesus has become a curse for me, and I have been freed.

No witchcraft can ever be done upon me, because Jesus has overcome every single demon that there is, that exists in the universe. He's overcome all of them, and he is my Savior and my Lord. It cannot come upon my life as long as I live with a clear conscience.

I need not be afraid of any of these things. Verse 3, a whip for the horse. You have to whip a horse, you have to bridle a donkey, and you have to beat a fool.

Now, that's one reason why we are to punish children, because that's the only way to drive folly out of their hearts. And it's interesting to see the use of the whip and the bridle here. You see, that shows us one mark

of a fool is this.

A whip is to make the horse go when it's unwilling to go. You whip it. And a bridle is exactly the opposite.

When it's running off, to hold it back. And this has always been the tendency of man, to either run off in some direction without waiting for God to tell him to move, or the other is that even when God tells him to do something, he won't move. That's the mark of a fool.

Either this extreme, or the other extreme. Either running off without any leading from God doing something, or that even when God's spoken something clearly, they refuse to do it. Yeah, that's the mark of a fool.

Think of so many things that are clearly written down in the word of God, which there are many people who don't obey. Yeah, what they need is a whip. This stubborn horse that doesn't move even though God has spoken.

Verse four and five. These are amazing verses. It says, Don't answer a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him.

And then it says, Answer a fool as his folly deserves, lest he be wise in his own eyes. That's a wonderful verse, to stumble the people who say there are contradictions in the Bible. It's two verses that apparently say exactly the opposite.

And in one place it says, If a fool speaks in a particular way, don't answer him. Keep quiet, otherwise you'll also be like him. And the very next verse, it says, Yeah, give him an answer as his folly deserves.

That means, give him some silly reply. That's basically what it means. And otherwise he will become conceited in his own eyes.

What does that teach us? That teaches us that to have wisdom means that we don't answer everybody in the same way. I mean, we're in a world which is full of fools, spiritually speaking. And wisdom teaches us to keep quiet with one person and to answer another person.

We know that Pilate was a fool and Herod was a fool. But when Jesus stood before Pilate, he answered him. But when Jesus stood before Herod, he answered him nothing.

Never said a word. That was wisdom, to know where to speak and where to be silent. And particularly, where to give a silly reply.

Whereas sometimes the Pharisees would come to Jesus with a question and he would ask them some other question in turn. And they couldn't answer that and he'd say, Well, neither am I going to answer your question. And at other times, he wouldn't answer at all.

He'd just ignore them. And that teaches us that to follow the leading of the Spirit is not a matter of following a book of rules. Thou shalt always answer fools, or thou shalt never answer fools.

God has not made it like that for us. There is a time and a season for everything. And we need to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit to say what to do here and what to do there.

A very wonderful verse that teaches us the necessity of knowing how to reply. For example, a fool boasts but we don't boast. In our speech, a fool gets angry, we don't get angry.

But at the same time, we are willing to earnestly contend for the faith. Verse 6, again a verse about God's need for wise messengers. If you let a fool deliver a message, it says in the Good News Bible, you might as well cut off your own feet.

You're asking for trouble. A message has to be delivered, according to this verse, by a wise person. And that applies spiritually in the sense that the extent to which God can give his word through any of us is dependent on the level of our wisdom, not on the level of our knowledge.

It's a very simple truth, but if only we can understand it, it makes a tremendous difference in our life. That it's the level of our wisdom that determines how much God can communicate his word through us, not the level of our knowledge. Our knowledge level may be very high, but as far as God's concerned, he sees the level of our wisdom.

And that's the thing that determines how much God can communicate his word through us. Verse 7, like the legs which hang down from the lame, so is a proverb in the mouth of fools. Or like we can say, uneven legs, it says in one translation.

Legs which are not of equal length, so is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. It's a very wise proverb he's speaking, but it's in the mouth of a fool. I think the reference here is to a person whose life does not match the words he speaks.

It says that's like a man with uneven legs, a crippled man. Paul said to Timothy, take heed to your life and to your teaching. We can say they are like two legs.

When we are born, our legs are small, but both legs are the same size. And as we grow, the wonderful thing is that both legs grow the same size. How terrible it would be if one grew longer than the other.

And yet, that is the danger in Christianity, that when we are initially converted, we have neither knowledge nor life. Our legs are small. But as we grow up, the great tendency in the vast majority of Christians is for the knowledge leg to grow so long, and the life leg to be quite small.

And then of course, we're like this, a man with uneven legs. Verse 8, like one who binds a stone in a sling, so is he who gives honor to a fool. Now a stone is not meant to be bound in a sling.

It says in the Good News Bible, praising someone who is stupid makes as much sense as tying a stone in a catapult. Now you don't tie a stone in a catapult. A stone must be loose in a catapult for it to fly out.

If you tie the stone in the catapult, however much you may stretch it, and you release the catapult, the stone still sticks to the catapult. And I try to think what is the meaning of this, and I look at it like this, that when you praise a person, if he's a wise man, he lets the praise go on to God, like the stone flies out of the catapult. If the person is a fool, the praise sticks on to him, and he meditates on it for the next few months, that this brother said this about me, or thought that about me.

The stone is stuck there, it's bound to the catapult. And that's an indication of whether we are fools or wise. When somebody praises us, we can think whether the stone is stuck to the catapult, tied up there, or whether we are quick to let it fly out straight to God, who deserves that honor.

But we don't keep it to ourselves, because we don't deserve that honor. The Lord alone is worthy. Verse 9 reads in the Living Bible like this, A rebel or a fool will misapply a proverb so that the point of that proverb or illustration is no more felt than a thorn in the hand of a drunkard.

You know, when a drunkard gets a thorn in his hand, he doesn't feel it, because he's so drunk. In the same way, a fool can listen to proverbs, and he doesn't take it, he misapplies it. He says, that's for so-and-so, or that's for the other brother, that's for the other sister, they never think, this could be for me.

He doesn't feel it. Just like this drunkard doesn't feel a thorn in his own hand. And that teaches us to be humble, that when we go to the word, we don't misapply it.

We say in the volume of the book, it is written of me, so that if there's a sharp point in a proverb, I feel it, like a thorn getting into my hand. Not that I'm so drunk with my own conceit, that I think it's only for other people. Verse 10, an employer who hires a fool, any fool that comes along, is only hurting everybody who is concerned.

There again, the necessity of using wise people as messengers. Notice the repetition of that many times. God needs wise people to be his messengers.

Verse 11, a fool doing some stupid thing a second time is like a dog going back to its own vomit. That's quoted by Peter in 2 Peter 2, verse 21 and 22. To know the word of righteousness, and then to go back from it.

It's like a dog turning to its own vomit. And in this verse it says, a dog turning to its own vomit is doing the same foolish thing a second time. That's the meaning.

And therefore we should be wholehearted, that if I have done a foolish thing once, I get light on it, I say, Lord, I never want to do that foolish thing a second time.

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