

(Proverbs) ch.26:11 - 27:17

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of avoiding folly, conceit, laziness, gossip, and insincerity, and instead cultivating humility and discipline in our lives.

Duration: 1:00:56

Scripture: Proverbs 26:1-12, Proverbs 26:16-17, Matthew 4:4

Topics: "Spiritual Discipline", "Lazy Christianity"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the various excuses that people make for not fulfilling their duties. He uses the example of a lazy man who uses the excuse of a lion in the street to avoid his responsibilities. The preacher emphasizes that these excuses are often a result of spiritual indiscipline and laziness. He quotes Proverbs 26:14, which compares a lazy man to a door swinging on its hinges, indicating a lack of progress in one's spiritual life. The sermon also highlights the importance of discipline and hard work in our attitude towards God's word, cautioning against a lazy and dependent approach.

Transcript

Chapter 26, we stopped at verse 11 in our last study. We can continue there, Proverbs 26, 11. Like a dog that returns to its own vomit, is a fool who repeats his folly.

And there is a word of encouragement there for us in that verse, if we look at it carefully. And that is that it's not that we never make any mistakes or do any foolish things, but that though we are foolish and do a lot of foolish things, when we get light on something foolish that we have done, if we can avoid repeating it, then we don't come under the category of dogs who return to their vomit. A dog who returns to its vomit is one who does something foolish, gets light on it, and vomit means rejects it out, saying, that was wrong what I did, repents, turns, and then after a little while goes right back to that foolish thing.

Then like it says in 2 Peter 2, verse 21 and 22, where this verse is quoted, those who have known the way of righteousness and turned from it, it's better for them that they had not known it at all. So we see that Peter also was one who studied the book of Proverbs, just like we see Jesus and Paul quoted from Proverbs. Peter also quotes this verse.

There we can apply that to our own life and see how we can grow in wisdom, avoiding a repetition of a folly on which we have got light once. That should be our ambition in life, that we must pray, say, Lord, help me that I will never do the same foolish thing twice. It's a good prayer to pray.

Verse 12. We mentioned that the first 11 verses, well, first 12 verses are all about fools. But actually, having described various types of fools in these verses 1 to 11, various aspects of fools, he finally says in verse 12 that of all the people, there is still someone who is worse than the fool that I've just spoken of.

That's the meaning of verse 12. Do you see a man who is conceited, who thinks much about himself? Well, then he is the worst of the lot. He's worse than all the fools we've just mentioned.

There's more hope for a fool than for him, which teaches us that conceit and having a high opinion about ourselves and our own spirituality makes us the worst fool in the list. There's more hope for a fool than for him. That means all the stupid things that are mentioned about fools in the first 11 verses are nothing compared to conceit, which puts a man at the top of the list as the worst fool of the lot.

Now, the next four verses, verse 13 to 16, are about sluggards or lazy people. We can say lazy people are those who don't have any discipline in their lives. Laziness is the same as being undisciplined.

Jesus and the Apostles lived disciplined lives. To be lazy is not to have any discipline in our lives. The lazy man says, there is a lion in the road.

A lion is in the open square. This is a verse that tells us about all the various types of silly excuses that people can make for not doing their duty. See, this is really a silly excuse to say there may be a lion in the street or I might be killed.

He takes such a ridiculous statement as coming out of the mouth of a lazy man to show that there are silly excuses that people make for the reason why they don't do certain things. The real reason, of course, is that they are spiritually undisciplined and lazy. Verse 14, it reads like this in the Good News Bible, the lazy man turns over in bed.

He gets no farther than a door swinging on its hinges. That means you know that a door can keep moving on its hinges and there's never any progress in its life, I mean in terms of distance. And it says here, a lazy man is like that.

There is no spiritual progress. There is movement. You can keep on swinging a door on its hinges for days on end and it's still in the same place.

There's movement without progress and so it is with a spiritually undisciplined lazy man. That is also possible to be involved in activity and an increase of knowledge of the word without spiritual progress. Verse 15, the sluggard buries his hand in the dish.

He's weary of bringing it to his mouth again. A number of these verses we have seen already before in earlier chapters of Proverbs. We read that the men of Hezekiah copied these Proverbs down again.

Some were copied down again for a second time because obviously the Spirit of God wants to emphasize certain things. And here the Spirit of God wants to emphasize the necessity of discipline and hard work. We can apply that verse to the way we, our attitude to God's Word.

That we must not, our attitude to God's Word must not be one where we are always dependent on other people's spoon feeding us. Who is this lazy man who buries his hand in the dish and doesn't bring it to his mouth? You see that sometimes in the way children eat their food. Their hand will be in the plate and they hardly ever bring it to their mouth.

And there, half an hour later the food is still there and one hour later the food is still there. And spiritually it can be like this, an indisciplined, lazy attitude to God's Word. That I have to be spoon fed and then you have to take a spoon and feed that child.

We say when is the child going to grow up? And so we can apply that to ourselves in relation to God's Word. That we, each of us needs to go to God's Word to be able to feed ourselves from it regularly. It is impossible to be spiritual merely by listening to messages if we don't read the Word of God ourselves.

Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. And there we need to hear that word that proceeds from God's mouth so that we can live by it. Verse 16.

I'll read that in the Living Bible. It says, A fool in his own opinion is smarter than seven wise men. See that's the tragedy of a fool, that even though he's a fool he doesn't realize it.

And that's one of the greatest accomplishments of Satan, that he can keep a believer spiritually foolish and make that believer think that he's spiritually wise. He can even think that he's wiser than seven wise, seven really wise men. That's the deception with which the devil deceived the Pharisees in Jesus' day.

They thought they were wise. They were absolute fools and they didn't know it. And when we read that in scripture, we need to remember that that can happen to us.

It's possible for us to think that we are wise. And that even though we do one foolish thing after another, we can excuse ourselves saying, yeah that was just one slip up there, one slip up there. And not realize that these little incidents are meant by God to show us that we really don't have any wisdom at all.

And yet in our own opinion, because we have knowledge, we can think we're wiser than any number of other wise people. Verse 17. The Good News Bible, it reads like this, Getting involved in an argument that is none of your business is like going down the street and grabbing a dog by the ears.

We've seen that verse before in the church. It basically means don't be a busybody in other people's matters, as Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 4. Where there is an argument that is none of your business, where there is a problem between two people that is none of your business, they come to you for help and you need to get involved. But they haven't come to you for help, they're having their problems among themselves.

To get to become a busybody in their matters is exactly like seeing a dog walking down the other side of the street and having a great itch to go across the street and yank its ears. And you know what will happen if you do that? The dog turns around and bites you. And there are many cases of believers who have gotten to a lot of unnecessary sufferings and problems because they had this itch to go and get involved in somebody else's problems.

And there is an itch in our flesh to, because you know, our flesh keeps on telling us that we are specialists, that we are peacemakers, we are the ones who have got wisdom and we can go and solve that problem, we can go and do that. And unnecessarily a lot of believers go and do stupid things like this, getting involved in something which is not at all their business at all. We have to be particularly careful when you visit others who don't have wisdom.

You see, we can visit a lot of homes where people don't have wisdom. They can tell you about all their problems with X, Y and Z and this, that and the other and the other thing and it's very easy to get involved

in all that. To say, no you must do this and you must do that and that person is like this and the other person like that.

Just think of this verse then, if the dog is peacefully passing by the other side of the road, just leave it alone. And you walk peacefully on this side of the road and leave them to mind their own business. If they also feel that you are such a specialist in wisdom, they will come to you for help.

But otherwise it's good for us not to be busy bodies in other people's matters and to crucify this itch to get involved with other people's matters. Verse 18 and 19, together, in the Good News Bible, a man who misleads someone and then claims that he was only joking, is like a madman playing with a deadly weapon. Well, I trust some of us older people are not going to be involved in such things but sometimes children can do that, play practical jokes on other people, deceive them and that can cause some suffering sometimes, do some stupid thing and then afterwards say, yeah I was only joking.

If such a person is a madman. Now, I believe the older people can also do things like that in the sense that we can say certain things to people unwisely and then afterwards say, yeah I was only joking. But the other person didn't take it like a joke.

The other person took it quite seriously and it caused some problems. And that's why we need to be very careful, even if we are joking with someone, that the person realizes it and that we have a good enough relationship with that person. I wouldn't advise you to joke with people with whom you don't have a good relationship because they can misunderstand.

And so, there we need some wisdom to say something and then afterwards say we were only joking. That's to be a madman, it says, playing with a deadly weapon. This joking can be a deadly weapon according to this verse.

Yeah, it's a good thing to have humor, like it's a good thing to have a pistol, sometimes useful. But it's also a deadly weapon. You got to be careful that you don't hurt anyone with it.

And this verse teaches us that it's possible to hurt people with some of our jokes. And it can be like a firebrand because we were not wise enough in saying what we said. Verse 20 to 22 is about gossipers.

For lack of wood, the fire goes out. And where there is no whisperer, contention quiets down. Or as the Good News Bible says, without wood, a fire goes out.

Without gossip, quarreling stops. Charcoal keeps the embers glowing, wood keeps the fire burning, and troublemakers keep arguments alive. And verse 22, gossip is so tasty, how we love to swallow it.

Is there anyone who can say that gossip is not tasty? It is. It is tasty to the flesh to hear something about someone else, like they say, juicy news about so-and-so. There is an itch, a desire in our flesh to hear it.

And there are people who are specialists in provoking that itch to say, I've got some juicy news about someone, and then act as though they're not going to say it, till all this itch gets worked up, and then we are eager to hear it and receive it. Gossipers are specialists in, you know, wetting a person's appetite to receive this gossip, because it is tasty. And when we realize it, and we see that it is contrary to the law of love, we are to refuse it.

Do you know that the fruit on the tree of knowledge of good and evil was very tasty? It was a desire for the eyes, and sure it made Eve's mouth water, and her whole being was drawn towards it. There was only one thing, God had said, you must not eat it. And God has said that about gossip too.

Whenever you think of someone coming to your house and giving you gossip, think of Eve giving Adam the fruit. To listen is to take it and eat it. You didn't pluck it off the tree yourself.

No. That Eve did. She's the gossip.

But you receive it. And if we can only keep this picture in our mind every time someone comes and brings a bit of gossip to us, that I'm not like Eve plucking off the tree, but I'm like Adam receiving and enjoying it. We have to see that in my flesh, in all of us, our flesh is the same.

We have to say, Lord, my flesh loves to hear gossip. Unless I'm willing to say that first and be honest, I will never get victory over it. I have to say, Lord, my flesh loves to hear gossip.

My flesh loves to eat of that tree which you have forbidden. But you have said no, therefore I put it to death. And I want to see that my heart's not interested in it, even if my flesh is.

I want to keep my heart pure. Verse 20 to 22 says that a gossip is exactly like wood in the fire. If you want the fire to go down and die, the only way is to make sure you pull out the wood.

If you keep the wood there and put more wood in, it's just going to keep on burning. And so we have to be careful that we don't encourage people coming and adding wood in the fire in our homes. Verse 23, the Good News Bible, it says, insincere talk that hides what you are really thinking.

You see, burning lips means lips that are full of love, apparently. Burning with love, oh, saying such good words. But inside there's a sort of a hatred, insincere talk that hides what you're really thinking is like a fine glaze, silver glaze on a cheap clay pot.

There is plenty of scope there for all of us to cleanse ourselves. Because as the children of Adam, we have learned to grow up to be diplomatic, to say a lot of things which are not really true. And now we come to see the new and living way we are to cleanse our speech from all this insincerity that is just like a silver gloss on top of an earthen vessel.

Verse 24 to 26 deals with flatterers. He who hates disguises it with his lips, but he lays up deceit in his heart. A hypocrite hides his hate behind flattering words.

They may sound fine, but don't believe him, because his heart is filled to the brim with hate. He may disguise his hatred, but finally everyone will see the evil things that he does. And so we see here that flattery is something which we have to beware of.

Whenever you find someone praising you a bit too much, you can think of these verses. Think there is something dangerous here. Why is he saying so many nice things to me? Maybe he is not saying so many nice things about me behind my back, and that's why he is saying so many nice things to my face.

We are not to be deceived. Jesus said, Be shrewd as serpents, and don't be deceived by all the nice things that people come to you and say to you. The chances are they don't say such things behind your back.

The person who comes and rebukes you and tells you to your face what he thinks of you is someone who is at least honest. And it's far better to keep a relationship with such people than with people who just say a lot of nice things, because underneath it can be a cover for an insincere, unloving attitude towards you. Verse 27, He who digs a pit will fall into it.

He who rolls a stone, it will come back on him, as the Good News Bible says. People who set traps for others will get caught themselves. People who start landslides will get crushed themselves.

We can see that this is what the New Testament says when it means you have to reap what you sow. We thought of Haman who prepared a gallows for Mordecai and finally hung on it himself. And this is a law of God that ultimately we will reap what we sow.

We cannot escape it, if not in this life, then finally when we finish this life. But there cannot be an escaping of this law that we reap what we sow. If we have done something with an insincere attitude towards someone else, it says here, one day it will come back on you.

You start a landslide for example, how can we start a landslide? You start something, talking about something or some person and it multiplies and finally it boomerangs back on you. Those who start landslides finally get crushed under it themselves. And when we do get crushed under some landslide, it's good for us to ask ourselves, have I done that? Am I just reaping what I have sown? We sow the wind and we reap the whirlwind.

The trouble with a lot of believers is, when they begin to reap the whirlwind, they get all upset with people and they don't sit down and think, maybe I'm only reaping what I have sown. Why should I get upset with God or with other human beings? I'm only reaping what I have sown. Therefore we need to be careful that we ourselves don't dig pits for anyone or roll stones down on anyone, usually with our tongues.

Verse 28, a lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin. Flattery, the Living Bible says, is a form of hatred and wounds cruelly. Flattery is a form of hatred.

Let none of us be ever guilty of that form of hatred called flattery. Just saying a lot of nice things about someone which we don't really believe. You know, we can hear that in the church we must always say nice things and honor people and all that, and it can end up with some people in a form of flattery.

It doesn't change their heart. We must only speak what's in our heart. If it's not in our heart, it's far better we don't say it.

Otherwise it becomes flattery, which is an evil. And if you're really wise, you will beware of a flatterer. You'll beware of a person who just says a lot of nice things.

See, that's the stupidity of the world. The world is stupid in the sense that it appreciates those who say nice things about them and gets terribly offended with those who rebuke them or correct them. But if we belong to the Lord, we're disciples of the Lord, it's going to be the other way around.

We'll beware of those who just say a lot of nice things to us and flatter us. We'll cling close to those who love us enough to correct us and tell us the truth about ourselves, as we shall see in the next chapter, further down in chapter 27. Now we come to chapter 27, verse 1. Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.

We read in James chapter 4 and verse 13. Don't say today or tomorrow we'll go to such and such a city and spend a year there. You do not know what your life is.

Instead you should say, if the Lord wills, we shall live and do this and that. Think of the humility of James to think that he does not even know whether he will live tomorrow. It's not just if the Lord wills, I'll go there.

If the Lord wills, I shall be living tomorrow. Very often this verse, this passage of scripture is misunderstood as though all it meant is, yeah, I'm planning to go there. If the Lord wills, I'll go.

Of course, there's no doubt that I'll be living tomorrow. But here, notice carefully what he says. He says, if the Lord wills, I shall be alive tomorrow.

I don't know. Think of his humility. It really requires small thoughts about ourselves to think like that.

If the Lord wills, I shall live tomorrow. And I shall do this. And I shall do that.

It's a form of conceit, as he says in James 4, 16. As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil.

What right have I got to think that I have a right to live till tomorrow or the day after? That is a form of high thoughts, according to James. Do not boast about tomorrow, it says. No, it's good to walk with small thoughts about ourselves before God's face.

So that we say, if the Lord wills, we shall live. Even if we don't say that in all our speech, at least that is our attitude. That we don't think we can do this and we can do that and we can do the other thing.

And God has hidden the future from us with a purpose. Because he wants us to live in a helpless dependence on him. If God had given us an understanding of what's going to happen tomorrow, what's going to happen next week, what's going to happen the week after, what's going to happen next year, you know the danger is we would not depend so much upon him.

But because even the most spiritual people don't know, James is writing that, he also doesn't know whether he'll live the next day. It's good for all of us also to have that attitude then. That the most spiritual person also doesn't know what's going to happen tomorrow.

Because he also needs to lean upon God in helplessness. And that is good for us. That's why God has hidden the future from us, so that we can live by faith and lean more closely upon him than if we knew the whole future.

I've thought of the Israelites who came out of Egypt. God could have given them a map of the wilderness when they came out of Egypt and said, this is the way you've got to go. But he didn't do that.

He didn't give them a map. He gave them a pillar of cloud. He said, you just follow that pillar of cloud.

You don't know where the pillar of cloud is going to take you tomorrow. You don't know where it will take you next week. If they had a map, then they didn't need God.

But when they didn't have a map, they needed God every day. And it's good to be in that helpless dependence where we don't know what's going to happen tomorrow, but we know that God's still on the throne. He'll never forsake his own.

He's ruling the universe. He loves us. He has said he'll never forsake us or leave us.

And there we have a confidence. So that our boast is not in tomorrow or in ourselves, but that we have a father in heaven who cares for all the problems that tomorrow can bring. And that he will not allow us to face tomorrow before he himself has gone into it.

He goes ahead of us. He's prepared it for us. Make sure that all things that happen tomorrow work together for our good.

So we go into tomorrow with confidence in God and not in ourselves. We do not know what a day may bring forth. And even after we become spiritual, we still don't know what a day may bring forth.

But we know that God knows. And therefore we lean in faith upon him. Verse 2. Let another praise you, and not your own mouth.

In our last study, in chapter 25, verse 27, it's not good to search one's own glory. Somewhat similar words here. Not to praise ourselves.

Now, even in the world, it would be very rarely or almost impossible to find someone who crudely praises himself and says, this is what I'm like and this is what I'm like. Nobody does such stupid things because it looks very ugly. Everybody who does it, does it in a very subtle way.

You see, done in such a way that we look humble, at the same time, we are saying something to draw the attention of people to ourselves. It can happen in a testimony. Nobody will get up and give a testimony saying, I'm a very spiritual man, and I'm like this, and I'm a very wholehearted brother here, and I've been a great blessing to the church here for so many years, or any stupid thing like that.

We lose our testimony immediately, and we know that. So it's all going to be covered over with humility. It's in subtle ways.

And he who judges himself can get light in this. About what part of what I said, was merely to draw attention to myself, or to what I did, or how faithful I was somewhere here or there, and the glory was not, the intention was not to let people see what a wonderful God is, or what wonderful things he can do. Very subtly, the intention was to get people to maybe to have some confidence in me, or to think I'm some great man of God, or something like that.

When we hear of, for example, you hear of these preachers and healers who get up and say, when I was over there, in the middle of Africa, or somewhere in South America, there was this lame man who came, and this happened, and the other happened. You read through the Gospels, you find Jesus ever talking like that? Yeah, the other day when I was down there walking down the road to Nain, I found a widow coming out with a dead body, and I just stopped the coffin and told the boy to get up. Can you imagine Jesus saying things like that? Or Paul? Introducing it subtly, maybe to the letter to the Corinthians, you know, once when I was down there in Troy, I'll tell you something that happened, somebody fell down from the window.

And then tell how he raised him from the dead. You never find Jesus or the Apostles doing such things. A lot of preachers going around saying things like this, all very subtly, with the intention, they say, to stir up faith in people, actually, it's just to praise themselves.

So there's a lot of it going on, in very subtle ways, and when we see it in others, we can say, yes, that man's got the same flesh as me. And I also must be doing it, perhaps, maybe not talking about the time I went to South America, because I never went there, but maybe in other subtle ways, we may be doing it also. To say something, or to add something here or there, just to get people to think something about me.

That's basically what this verse means. Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth, even in subtle ways. A stranger, if they see something in you, let them say that.

Don't try to get it all out, to get people to think that you are somebody. Verse 3. A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but the provocation of a fool is heavier. In the Good News Bible it says, the weight of stone and sand is nothing.

Listen to this. The weight of stone and sand is nothing, compared to the trouble that stupid people can cause. Think of that.

You have stones fall on your head, and the weight of sand on your head is nothing, compared to the trouble that stupid people can cause. And that's why we need to really ask God to deliver us from stupidity and foolishness, so that we don't cause trouble to other people. It's like throwing stones around in bags of sand.

Verse 4. Now this is a very interesting verse. We have seen that anger is one of those evil things. Anger is one of those evil things the Bible speaks about.

But here, it tells us about something that is even worse than anger. It's amazing. It says, wrath is fierce, and anger is a flood.

You know what happens when a flood comes. The flood destroys everything. And here it says, anger is like a flood.

When you listen to a man who is angry, you can see, it's like a flood coming out of his mouth. It doesn't stop easily. It keeps on coming.

Anger is like a flood. But, jealousy. So, anger is nothing, compared to jealousy.

That's what the Good News Bible says. Anger is cruel, it's destructive, like a flood. But it's nothing, compared to jealousy.

And a person can say, I've got victory over anger now. Good. Now what jealousy? Envy.

To feel a little unhappy that someone else has got something which you don't have. Maybe spiritually some gift. Maybe some confidence of the brothers and sisters which you don't have.

Some opportunities which you don't have. Or a more peaceful life than you have. You're having always trouble, trouble, trouble, but somebody else is having a very comfortable life.

And that can cause a little envy, a little irritation. Or materially perhaps, or the job is better, or somebody else seems to be progressing in his job, and here you are struggling away with your income. There can be so many causes.

Watch jealousy. Watch it. Be careful.

It dwells very much in our flesh. It's worse than the flood of anger. Verse 5. This is the verse I was telling you about earlier.

Verse 5 and 6. I want to read it in the Good News Bible. It's better to correct someone openly than to let him think that you don't care for him at all. To correct someone, that is better than to let him think.

Open rebuke is better than secret love. That is to let him think that you don't care for him. It's better to speak and to correct someone.

Even openly it says. Open rebuke. It's not speaking about private rebuke.

Open rebuke is better than secret love. A wise man understands that. A person who is not wise thinks that love is better than open rebuke.

And that if a person loves, there cannot be open rebuke. But the word of God says, it is better to correct someone openly than to let him think you don't care for him at all. Like Jesus.

I thought of when Peter said to Jesus, Lord, you shouldn't go to the cross. You know, Jesus could have said, listen Peter, just come here. I just want to tell you something privately.

And he could have whispered in his ear, you know, that's from the devil, that thought you had. But he didn't say that. If he'd said it like that, we'd probably have never got it recorded in scripture.

As to what he told Peter privately. But he said to Peter openly, in presence of everyone, get behind me Satan. And see how much help it has come to us, 2000 years later and for 2000 years, how many Christians have been helped by that open rebuke of Jesus that we see that to be interested in the things of man is to hear the voice of Satan.

So there is a, that's why the Bible says that through open rebuke, others are also helped. Besides just that one person, Peter. If Jesus had spoken to Peter privately, only he would have been helped.

But now not only him, but all others. A friend, verse 6, means well. Even when he hurts you.

But when an enemy puts his arm around your shoulder, watch out. That's verse 6. When an enemy puts an arm around your shoulder, watch out. But a friend means well, even when he hurts you.

And so we see that the word of God in the book of Proverbs, we've seen it many times. It speaks about rebuke. And Jesus said in Revelation chapter 3 that those whom he loves he rebukes.

And so that's how it must be in the church as well. Verse 7. In the Good News Bible it reads like this. When you are full, you will refuse even honey.

But when you are hungry, even bitter food tastes sweet. A poor man, doesn't have so much to eat. Very simple food.

He's very thankful because he's only thinking of keeping his stomach from hunger. But a very rich person can be so selective. The taste here is not so good.

That's got a little too much salt. This is a little less chili here. He's a rich man.

This man who's got so much. He's so particular. Whereas a poor man is thankful that he can get something to fill his stomach.

And there is a danger with many of us brothers and sisters of not being thankful to God for small mercies. We can take so much for granted that we can ruin ourselves. We need to learn to be thankful for whatever we get.

We need to learn to teach children to be thankful for whatever food is placed on the table. And not to complain that this is that and this is like that. Everyday we are having this.

No. That's what they did in the wilderness in the Old Testament. Everyday this wretched manner.

Have you heard that at home sometimes? Children saying everyday the same thing. Think if you're getting it for 40 years. 365 days a year the same old diet.

Think that God did not vary the diet from heaven. Same thing in the morning. Next day.

For 40 years. Yeah. And they grumbled and they complained and said the serpents came and bit them.

We need to protect our children from being bitten by the serpents by complaining this thing, the same thing everyday. Yeah. A poor man is thankful that his stomach can be filled and we are not to become those who are so particular about our food.

We are not to allow our children to become like that either. We can apply that spiritually also to the food we receive in the church. It's very easy to take spiritually rich food for granted in the church.

To think yes, we get this. That is our what we deserve everyday. I've sometimes felt that people have grown up in the midst of us for many years.

They sometimes need to spend six months or one year in some other denomination. Somewhere else. To appreciate sufficiently the word of God that is received in the church.

Otherwise it can be just like this rich man that even if you give honey, he is not much bothered. We have to be very careful dear brothers and sisters that we don't take God's mercies for granted. That can happen spiritually and we can apply that verse to ourselves and see what application it has.

Verse 8 Like a bird that wanders from her nest, so is a man who wanders from his place. It says in the margin. The one who wanders from his appointed place.

God has an appointed place for every one of us and it's wisdom to be there. That may not always be the most comfortable place. It may not always be the place where it's very convenient to our flesh.

But it's the place God has appointed. And I need to see the place God has put for me in the church and say Lord, I want to be in that place. You've given me a place and I don't want to be like a bird wandering away from my nest.

You've called me to live in a particular place. I want to find my salvation and my sanctification there and to do the will of God there. I'm not interested in looking at all the other people and seeing what they are doing.

That's none of my business. You've given me a place. I'm so thankful that you have given me a nest.

A home. A spiritual home. And it is possible because we have had the spiritual home for so many years that we can begin to take it for granted and be critical of various things in this nest.

This thing is like that and that thing is like this. We have become so rich in our own self and critical and wonder and then of course we become targets for Satan. It's possible to sit physically in a meeting place with other believers and be critical.

I just want to encourage you to beware of that spirit because the loss will be yours if you live like that. God has given to each of us a particular task, a particular place, a particular gift a particular calling and it's good for us to humble ourselves and take that. For example, a sister.

The Bible says that the sisters have got a place in the church under the brothers. It's good for a sister to take that place always. That's her appointed place.

If she doesn't take that place she becomes like a bird who wanders away from her nest. Like a wife who submits to her husband at home. That's her place to submit.

If she does that it will go well with her. If she doesn't, it will be like wandering away from the nest and then you become the target of the arrows of those who are hunting birds. Verse 9 In the Living Bible it reads like this Friendly suggestions are as pleasant as perfume.

Of course, when we get a suggestion it's very easy to accept it if we know that the person who is giving that suggestion is a friend. But if you are not too sure whether the person who is giving the suggestion is a friend then it's difficult to accept that suggestion. Isn't it like that? This person who is giving that suggestion is a friend of mine and I'll take it.

But this person who is giving that suggestion I'm not too sure whether he really loves me or not I won't take it. Isn't that right? That is right for all worldly people and for all worldly carnal believers. But for those who are spiritually minded they just don't bother whether it comes from a friend or someone who is not a friend.

The only thing a spiritually minded man asks himself is that thing which that person said is it right? Yeah, then let me take it. Whoever said it whether he is my friend or not Yeah, there I need to take heed to that. A person who is interested in his own sanctification is not bothered as to who made the suggestion.

He is only bothered about can this help to cleanse me and make me a more wholehearted disciple of Jesus. That's all he is interested in. And there we need to change our way of thinking.

So that when we hear some advice from someone we don't inwardly check is this person a friend or not a friend? We have to say that's unimportant. Is this advice good or bad? That's all that matters. That's a spiritual man's attitude.

And there we can see how much carnality can be in us. A man's counsel is sweet to his friend. Verse 10 In the Living Bible it says Never abandon a friend either yours or your father's.

Then you will not need to go to a distant relative for help in your time of need. And ideally speaking that's how it should be in the brotherhood in the church that the relationship between the brothers and between the sisters must be of such a nature that it is far deeper than the relationship that we have with our own flesh and blood relatives. That is the goal towards which God is working to make his church like that that

my flesh and blood brother is not the one to whom I can look for help as much as to the fellowship in the church.

And there we pray that it will be like that in our midst. But it says here in verse 10 Do not forsake your friend or your father's friend. In other words it's possible to have such a relationship only if you have cultivated that spiritual friendship and fellowship with one another in the church.

It's possible for us just not to cultivate it at all and then suddenly in my time of need I expect everybody to come running to my help and I get very upset when somebody doesn't come to my help. I need to sit there and ask myself have I ever cultivated humble myself and cultivated a fellowship and a relationship with my brothers and sisters? No? Then why in the world should I sit here and expect them all to come running to help me when a mosquito bites me somewhere? That's just conceit and stupidity. But build up that relationship and build up that friendship and then there will be a bond there where you don't need to go to your distant relative for help.

That is God's will that we build up a relationship and that we can stand by one another. Verse 11 Be wise my son and make my heart glad that I may reply to him who reproaches me. We can take that as a word that God is speaking to us.

Think of God saying to each one of us be wise my son, my daughter and make my heart glad says the Lord so that when Satan points out something in you to reproach me I have a reply to give to him. You know when David sinned with Bathsheba Nathan the prophet came to him and said something to him. He said do you know David? 2nd Samuel 12 14 that by what you have done you have given an occasion for the enemies of the Lord to reproach the Lord's name.

By what you have done the enemies of the Lord have got a chance to say ah this so called man of God David look what he did. And so the Lord says be wise my son my daughter that people don't have to point at you and say this person talks about the new and living way. See what they do.

Be wise my son and make my heart glad so that when somebody reproaches me I will have a proper reply to give to him. Verse 12 A wise man sees the evil and hides himself whereas the simple person just walks right into it and regrets it later. A wise person when he sees trouble coming will avoid it but a simple person will walk right into it.

How does this apply to us? We can think of that verse in 2nd Timothy chapter 2 verse 22 which says flee from youthful lusts. We know that certain things can be sources of tremendous temptation. Yeah? A wise person will be careful there and avoid it.

For example if you find that you tend to become very free in your conversation and very humorous with the opposite sex particularly than with people in your own sex then you say yes there is a danger for me there that I can lose out spiritually. Let me be a little more careful in mingling with people of the opposite sex. Young people need to be particularly careful there.

A wise person will see there is a danger for me there I find that I become very light hearted when I am with people of the opposite sex. I seem to lose that sense of seriousness. Then be careful and don't get involved too much in that.

A wise person sees a danger and holds himself back. But a simple person walks right into it and it says in the Living Bible, regrets it later. It says here in the Good News Bible.

Regrets it later. Afterwards he says oh yeah that's stupid thing that I did. Yeah that's sad.

Be wise and avoid youthful lusts particularly. Flee from temptation like the word of God says. Verse 13.

Now this is referring to standing guarantee for someone. Anyone stupid enough to promise to be responsible for a stranger's debts deserves to have his own property held to guarantee payment. Amazing the number of times it says in the Book of Proverbs about don't stand guarantee for a stranger.

Here it also says about a strange woman in verse 13. Sometimes it can be the charm that a woman has that you can fall for. Be very careful that we are not deceived, that we don't stand guarantee and think that that is a manifestation of love.

It is not. Amazing how many times this is repeated in the Book of Proverbs. Verse 14.

In the Good News Bible it reads like this. You might as well curse your friend as wake him up early in the morning with a loud greeting. Think of going outside somebody's house at 4.30 in the morning and shouting out and say you're a wonderful brother praising him out there early in the morning with a loud voice and the chap's trying to sleep.

He says it's just as good as cursing him. You know we have to be sensible in our trying to be a blessing to others. You may want to be a blessing to your neighbor by saying something good but don't do it at 4.30 in the morning.

I mean that's just an example that if you want to bless a brother in some way you got to be wise in how you do it. Go at a more sensible time and say it. Now that's got many practical applications.

You know we say we must help one another in the church. And you can go and say yeah I'm going to be one of those zealous brothers and sisters going to help others. You can go to someone's house and make an absolute nuisance of yourself trying to be a blessing to them.

That's right. It's like cursing him at 4.30 in the morning to be a nuisance to him instead of being a blessing. But your aim is to be a blessing but it's done so stupidly you might as well curse him.

Yeah there we need wisdom in even trying to be a blessing to other people. Say Lord I want to be a blessing but don't let me do it in such a stupid way that people just think of me as an absolute pest. And a nuisance.

That happens. And if we take these simple exhortations in the word of God seriously, we can be protected from multitudes of stupidities. I've often said if young people particularly would take the book of Proverbs seriously they can grow up without the reputation of being foolish.

You as ears to hear can hear. Verse 15 and 16 in the Living Bible it reads like this. A constant dripping on a rainy day and a cranky woman are very much alike.

These men of Hizikai really were keen on repeating this part again and again. He says you can no more stop her complaints than you can stop the wind. Think of that illustration.

That when a woman got all upset and she's complaining about something to try and stop her is like trying to stop the wind. Or trying to hold something with oily hands. It just slips out.

You can't do it. And that's a verse not for the brothers. That's not a verse for the brothers to go home and hit their wives on the head with.

That's a verse for the sisters. That's not a verse for the brothers. Brothers can forget about that verse.

That's a verse for the sisters. To say Lord help me that I'll never be like this drip drip drip drip drip drip drip drip all the time in the house. Nag nag nag this thing or the other thing or this thing is not done or that thing is not done this other thing this other thing this other thing.

Lord help me that I shall never be a wife like this. Pray that prayer. Verse 17 It says in the Living Bible a friendly discussion is as stimulating as the sparks that fly when iron strikes iron.

Iron sharpens iron. You can't sharpen iron with wood. And that teaches us that God wants each of us to be strong in ourselves so that we can sharpen one another if we can love one another.

When you sharpen one iron with another iron there are some sparks but both pieces of iron get sharpened. God wants each of us to have convictions to be strong in the Lord so that we can help one another and love one another enough to be able to discuss something freely. That's a good question to ask ourselves.

Can you discuss something with someone who is completely of the opposite opinion with yourself and still love him? That's a good test of whether we have understood divine love or not. Or do I find always I like to discuss with those who agree with me and everything. Yeah that's the way to spiritual babyhood.

But when that is like one iron on clay. You know sometimes we can have some one strong minded person. Can be a man, can be a woman.

Always going, making his impression on all the clay around. But here it's not talking about iron and clay, it's iron and iron. They love one another.

They may disagree on some trivial things, unimportant. They can speak freely to one another and still love one another and both are sharp in their love for one another at the end of it all. Wonderful.

When we can come to that maturity or as it says in the

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