

Proverbs:

Wise & Joyful living in a world opposed to God

"Faith Forged in the Fire of Fear"

Proverbs 1:7

Good morning! Thank you for being here in worship! Before we dive into the Bible, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the warm prayers and unwavering support you've shown my wife and me. Your love and prayers made huge difference - **THANK YOU!**

Prayer:

In light of the recent tragedies at Assumption Church and the death of conservative our brother in Christ Charlie Kirk, I invite you to join me in humble prayer this morning:

Gracious Father,

"Teach (Us), O LORD, the way of your statutes; and (We) will keep it to the end.

Give (Us) understanding, that (We) may keep your law and observe it with (Our) whole heart.

Lead (Us) in the path of your commandments, for (We) delight in it.

Incline (Our) heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

Turn (Our) eyes from looking at worthless things; and give (Us) life in your ways.

Confirm to your servant(s) your promise, that you may be feared.

Turn away the reproach that (We) dread, for your rules are good.

Behold, (We) long for your precepts; in your righteousness give me life!

AMEN!

[based upon Psalms 119:33-40 (ESV)]

Introduction:

My original plan was to preach a 15 message sermon series from the book of Proverbs, but due to my recent health challenges God has adjusted those plans and reduced that number to 10-11. Taking one's time to slowly work through God's word and ingest its truth and grace is extremely valuable. However, God moves us often in mysterious ways.

Let's talk about the Book of Proverbs. On the screen behind me, is a picture of a Bible that I received in 1981. It reveals God's drawing me into his word in the book of Proverbs Chapter 2. If someone is new to Christianity and just starting out, reading the Gospel of John and the Book of Proverbs from end to end would be a great way to strengthen their faith and walk with Jesus.

Proverbs is a collection of divine wisdom from God, often attributed to Solomon, the son of King David - but he is not its only contributor - there are proverbs from a person or group called "the wise" in Pr 22:17-24:22; there are "Oracles" from Agur in Pr 30:1-33; and also contributions from "Lemuel" in Pr 24:23-34; and Pr 31:10-31 is anonymous.

Proverbs touches on a variety of everyday topic in very practical ways and sometimes it gets very personal and stands very heavily upon the readers toes, consider:

Proverbs 21:9 (ESV) 9 It is better to live in a corner of the housetop
than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

Proverbs 27:15-16 (ESV)

15 A continual dripping on a rainy day
and a quarrelsome wife are alike;
16 to restrain her is to restrain the wind
or to grasp oil in one's right hand.

Proverbs 30:33 (ESV)

33 For pressing milk produces curds,
pressing the nose produces blood,
and pressing anger produces strife.

Proverbs 30:17 (ESV)

17 The eye that mocks a father
and scorns to obey a mother
will be picked out by the ravens of the valley
and eaten by the vultures.

Proverbs 29:27 (ESV)

27 An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous,
but one whose way is straight is an abomination to the wicked.

Proverbs are not only found in the book of Proverbs, they can be found or mentioned in other places of the Bible like

Psalms 49:3-4 (ESV) 3 My mouth shall speak wisdom; the meditation of my heart shall be understanding. 4 I will incline my ear to **a proverb**; I will solve my riddle to the music of the lyre.

Dt 28:37; Ezekiel 12:22; 16:44; in the NT there is Luke 2:22 and 2 Peter 2:22 saying, "What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire." (which quotes Pr 26:11)

In the Bible "**Proverbs**" are wise, divine general truths intended to help the hearer live a God honoring life, for the glory of Christ and the joy of his people.

The **purpose of the book of Proverbs** is to help the reader understand God's ways, learn how to live wisely according to God, and in ways that please God. It's intent is to produce a greater joy in God, to show us what "practical theology" or "Practical godly living" looks like. Ultimately it seeks to point us to living that pleases God, constantly pointing us and others to God, to Christ.

Proverbs lays out its own purpose statement in **Proverbs 1:2-6**

It says, the purpose of a proverb is:

2 To know wisdom and instruction,

to understand words of insight,

3 to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice, and equity;

4 to give prudence to the simple,
knowledge and discretion to the youth—

5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning,
and the one who understands obtain guidance,

6 to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.

To Know wisdom & instruction -
To Understand words of insight -
To Receive instruction -
To Give prudence (knowledge/discretion) -
To Understand the words of the wise/riddles-

Turn to **Proverbs 2:1-15 (ESV)** where God explains:

Motivation

1 My son, **if** you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
3 yes, **if** you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
4 **if** you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,

Result

5 **then** you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.

Explanation

6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.

Result

9 **Then** you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
11 discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,
12 delivering you from the way of evil,
from men of perverted speech,
13 who forsake the paths of uprightness
to walk in the ways of darkness,
14 who rejoice in doing evil
and delight in the perverseness of evil,
15 men whose paths are crooked,
and who are devious in their ways.

If / Then = its reasonable to expect

We'll cover more insight about the significance of Proverbs for the believer in Christ in the weeks to come.

Now let's turn our attention to Proverbs 1:7

“Faith Forged in the Fire of Fear”

Text: Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

It's hard to imagine that anything good can come from fear. In fact according to many modern Christian songs, which you've probably heard:

Kari Jobe - No Fear

The Afters - I will fear no more

Bethel Music - No longer slaves

Zach Williams - Fear is a liar

For King & Country + Dolly Parton - God only knows

In each of these songs we find the idea of getting rid of fear, no longer being a slave to fear, and fighting against fear. Yet on the other side the Bible says in many places "There is no fear of God before their eyes." ["Romans 3:18 (ESV)] inferring that fear is very important to the relationship of the believer with God. In 2 Corinthians 5:11 the "fear of the Lord" is a motivation behind Paul's mission of proclaiming the Gospel to the lost.

What gives, are we suppose to be "fear free" or is "fear" suppose to be part of the Christian life?

1. The Fear of the Lord [The Reality of the Believer]

A. "**Fear**" (explanation)

Fear in this passage refers to "reverence, respect and highest regard".

B. Fear of the Lord (application) - REVERENCE, RESPECT, HIGHEST HONOR, VENERATION, ADORATION

God forges our faith in the crucible of reverence for him. It is in the fiery tests of trust, obedience, respect and worship that faith becomes real. It is there that our love for God is truly tested.

- Do we love him more than life?
- Do we put him above ALL THINGS: children, spouses, material things, goals, ambitions, etc...
- Will we give him first place in every aspect of life?

*Tomb of the Unknown Soldier -

3. The Beginning of "Knowledge" [The reward for the believer]

A. "**Knowledge**" (explanation and application)

Knowledge in Proverbs generally points to gaining experiential knowledge through a faithful obedience to revealed "moral truth" - for example:

Proverbs 2:4-5 (ESV)

4 if you seek it (insight, wisdom) like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,

5 then **you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.**

Proverbs 9:10 (ESV)

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

The NT bears out this same idea.

John 7:17 (ESV) 17 If anyone's will is to do God's will, **he will know** whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

1 John 4:6 (ESV) 6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. **By this we know** the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

The Knowledge of God

One pastor wrote about the knowledge of God in this way: "It's a knowledge that is so real, so precious, so satisfying to your soul, that any thought, any attitude, any emotion, any addiction which threatens to hinder this knowledge will be attacked with all the spiritual zeal of a threatened life. This is the fight of faith that rages in the godly soul when lust lures the mind away from God."¹

¹ John Piper, "Battling the Unbelief of Lust," 1 Thess 4:1-8, Nov 13, 1988

Faith or the “knowledge of God” is formed and fired in the crucible of reverence for God.
Where there is no reverence there is no faith or knowledge of God.

Proverbs 1:7 (ESV)

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.**

4. The Fool's Failure [The contrasting reality of the Non-believer]

A. The Bible's definition and application of the title “Fool” (explanation)

A **FOOL** is a deliberate sinner - a shameless person, who hates knowledge and treats sinning like a sport, or a joke.

Proverbs 1:22 asks, “...How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and **fools hate knowledge?**”

Proverbs 18:2 says, “**A fool** takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”

Proverbs 10:23 says, “Doing wrong is like a joke to a **fool**...”

Proverbs 26:11 says, “Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a **fool** who repeats his folly.

Fool, Foolish, Folly and the like in the book of Proverbs and generally throughout the Bible is not a good description and may even be a description of one who has no faith in God. He has been tested by opportunity to know God through doing good or experiencing good but rejects it, through it to the side and into the ditch, as if it were nothing.

In the NT the fool is generally described as one who has no sense,

Luke 11:39-40 (ESV) And the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. 40 **You fools!** Did not he who made the outside make the inside also?”

These Pharisees were like people who hide their bitter spirits or lack of faith in God behind a mask of outward beauty, makeup and fine clothes. A modern proverb says, “Some of the most outwardly beautiful women in the world can be some of the most ugly on the inside.” - that's Jesus' point and why he calls the Pharisees “fools.”

How does this work in my world today?

God gives knowledge of himself today to those who will humble themselves before him, reverence him, obey him and seek to know him through his wisdom, and follow his wise instruction.