

(Proverbs) ch.12:22 - 14:4

by Zac Poonen

The sermon emphasizes the importance of truthfulness, diligence, and humility in spiritual life, and warns against the dangers of lying, laziness, and hypocrisy.

Duration: 1:01:13

Scripture: Proverbs 10:4, Proverbs 12:22, Proverbs 13:14, Proverbs 14:15, Proverbs 17:28, Romans 8:28, Revelation 21:8

Topics: "Fearing God", "Discipline And Growth"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of fearing God's commandments and the rewards that come with it. He highlights the power of wise teachings, comparing them to a fountain of life that helps us avoid the snares of debt. The preacher encourages believers to control their tongues and speak words that are like a spring of fresh water, bringing life to others. He also emphasizes the need for diligence and hard work, both in our spiritual lives and in making disciples. The sermon concludes with a reminder to be trustworthy messengers of peace and to embrace discipline and criticism for growth.

Transcript

We closed with verse 21 in our last study, where it says no real harm can ever befall a good person, but there's constant trouble for the wicked, which is really Romans 8:28, that God never allows anything to work for evil for those who love him, but everything works for good. And now we come to verse 22. Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord.

Those who deal faithfully are his delights. The book of Proverbs has a great deal to speak about those who tell lies. And in Revelation 21 and verse 8, it says that the liars will find their place in the lake of fire.

God places a great importance on truthfulness in our speech. Those who deal faithfully are his delights. Just think of that latter part of that verse, how you can bring delight to the heart of God if we speak faithfully.

In the Living Bible, it's translated as, God delights in those who keep their promises and hates those who don't. It's a very serious thing to give a promise to someone. And God delights in those who keep their promises, who keep their word, unless, of course, we find that the word that we have given to a person is now contrary to what we see in God's word.

Then, of course, we have every right to break it, but otherwise, if it does not break some teaching of God's word, it is the will of God that we keep our word which we have given to others. He delights in such people. And verse 23, let me read that in the Good News Bible, sensible people keep quiet about what they know, but stupid people advertise their ignorance, which just means that a wise person does not display his knowledge.

When we have knowledge and we want to display it, say in a group Bible study, we want to display our knowledge, that's usually the indication of a fool. A wise person knows how to share it without trying to show off his knowledge. A person who wants to show off even Bible knowledge is actually a fool, and you see that particularly in new believers.

They get a little bite of Bible knowledge and they're always trying to show it off somewhere or the other. It just goes to show they're still fools. Now, that's all right when we begin, but we should grow out of that stage of being a fool, always wanting to display our knowledge.

Wise people keep quiet. They share it when there's a necessity for it, but never to show other people how much I know of the scripture or how clever I am. Verse 24, it reads like this in the Living Bible, work hard and become a leader, be lazy and never succeed.

Now, there are many people who would like to be leaders in the Christian Church, but it involves being faithful in working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. It's the principle in all areas out in the world. People prosper by working hard and with diligence, and spiritually too.

God never gives responsibility to those who are lazy. He only gives it to those who are hard-working in the situations in which He finds them. And that's one reason, I believe, why He chose fishermen to be His apostles.

If you've seen Fisherman, you'll find that it's one of the hardest professions on the face of the earth. Almost every other profession, all the professions all of us have, is ten times easier than the profession of a fisherman. He has to work so hard, day and night, in order to catch fish and earn his living, and take such risks.

And Jesus chose such people to be His apostles, teaching us that diligence and hard work is something that He looked for in those who will be His disciples. And He gives responsibility only to such. Verse 25.

Anxious hearts are very heavy, or worry can rob you of your joy. But, in contrast, a word of encouragement does wonders. And that is a word that all of us need to take heart to.

Certainly the first part, that unnecessary worry, and every type of worry is unnecessary for a Christian, because the word of God says, be anxious for nothing, robs us of our joy. But a word of encouragement does wonders. Now, I've thought of a word of encouragement as that one talent which the man wrapped up in a napkin and buried somewhere and never used.

You know the parable which Jesus spoke. Most of us don't have five talents. Many, many gifts.

Most of us don't even have three. But is there a single believer who can say, I don't have the ability even to speak a word of encouragement to somebody else. There is not such a believer under the sun, anywhere on the earth.

But what do most believers do with this ability to speak a word of encouragement, maybe to their marriage partner. Have you ever thought of speaking a word of encouragement to your husband, or to your wife, or to your children? Of course, we scold our children for a thousand and one things, but a word of encouragement. This is usually the talent we wrap up in a napkin and keep buried until the time the Lord comes.

I really believe that. There'd be a tremendous difference if people unwrapped this napkin and start using this talent with their marriage partners and their children. One word, sometimes a postcard, a word of encouragement, does wonders, can change a situation tremendously.

And those of us who don't have other spectacular gifts, I want to encourage you to think of exercising this gift towards other people. The world is full of people, and even in our own home, there are people who just need a word of encouragement in the midst of all the exhortations and the scoldings and the rebukes that we give. Verse 26.

The righteous person is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. And that is the calling of every righteous person. Even if he cannot preach and teach and explain the Bible and explain the doctrines, at least he can be a guide in the sense that he can say to his neighbor, follow me.

He may not say it in so many words, but his life should be an example which his neighbor can follow. A righteous should be a guide to his neighbor, a forerunner, if his neighbor wants to follow, of course. But that is the calling of the righteous.

But the way of the wicked leads them astray. Verse 27. A slothful man does not roast his prey.

That means a lazy man won't even dress and cook the game which he has got through hunting. But the diligent man makes good use of everything he finds. And I've thought of this as a very beautiful picture of evangelism without disciple-making.

That a man goes hunting, and he shoots a deer, and then just leaves that deer to rot. Have you ever heard of a hunter like that? Who shoots the deer, and then just leaves it to rot, and for the flesh to corrupt away. Never heard of a hunter like this.

A hunter usually takes that deer, and his whole aim is finally to cook it, and to make it into a meal. And when people engage in evangelism, they say they've caught souls, they've shot the deer. And they never do anything more than that.

It's exactly what it says here. A lazy man. Because it takes time to make disciples.

It's easy to do evangelism. It's easy to shoot a deer. But then to dress it, and cut it, and cook it, that takes time.

To shoot is just so easy. And there I see a very beautiful picture of what the Word of God thinks about evangelism without disciple-making. And in the Church, we believe in leading those who have been brought into the Kingdom into discipleship.

The precious possession of a man is diligence. The Book of Proverbs, you notice as we go through, has got a lot of things to say about certain subjects, such as diligence, the use of the tongue. Diligence is one of the things that it speaks much about.

Verse 28. The path of the godly leads to life, it says in the Living Bible. So why fear death? That means there is no need for a truly godly person ever to be afraid of death.

Fear of death is that which is the possession of an ungodly person. There's no need for any godly person ever to be afraid as to when he's going to die, and how he's going to die, and where he's going to die. When will I die? How will I die? Where will I die? These are not the thoughts that should go around in a godly person's mind.

But rather, how can I use the days God has given me to increasingly use all the circumstances that come across my life to partake more of his nature, and his goodness, and his kindness, and his humility, and leave all the matters of death with God? The path of the godly leads to life, so why should he fear death? Chapter 13 now we come to. Chapter 13. It says a wise youth accepts his father's rebuke.

A young mocker does not even listen to rebuke. I believe that our pride is tested when we are corrected. And young people find it so difficult to receive correction from a father only because of one reason.

There is so much pride in them, so much pride, which makes them think that I know which way to go. And that can even be in young people. Pride is what prevents us from receiving correction from an older brother.

We need correction. And our response to correction is usually an indication of, we can find out ourselves, even if we don't show it, whether there's pride in our heart by the response to correction. We had this drama yesterday, and a lot of practices went into that drama.

And one of the things we had to do constantly in the practices was correction, correction. And not everybody takes correction in the same way. Some are quick to respond wholeheartedly to correction and to correct everything immediately and exactly as told.

And others, yeah, they take it, but they are quite clever. And they like to still do it in their own way. And there we see the lurking pride that makes a man unwilling to accept correction.

Correction is really an exposure of the pride that lurks in the hearts of people who think they are humble. A wise son accepts his father's discipline, it says in the NASB. It's not just correction, but discipline.

And humility is to accept the chastening that God sends our way, because that is the only way to become wise. And when someone older than you corrects you, brother, sister, young person, there you have an opportunity to see, however much you may think you're humble, to see the real conditions of your heart. I believe there's almost nothing that tests our pride like that.

Verse 2. From the fruit of a man's mouth he enjoys good. In other words, we reap what we sow. We sow words with our tongues.

We have got to look at our words like seeds, like a sower sowing seeds. And here I am, right through the day, sowing seeds in my home, in the office, in the church. I'm sowing seeds.

Each word is a seed. And once it's gone out, I can't take it back. I can repent of it, but I can't take it back.

And there's a man who's been very careful with the words that he has sown. Naturally, he reaps good, finally. That's not because God favors him, it's just the law, the benefit of a law that he's getting, that he reaps good and peace.

Whereas, it says here, a wicked person, an evil person, desires only to fight. His tongue is ready to sow something that'll cause a fight. And that's the mark of an evil person.

And we have to be very careful, brothers and sisters, that we don't come under that category, that we don't come under the category of people who are ready to have a fight. The world is full of people who are ready to have a fight. You see that particularly on the road.

When two people disobey the traffic laws and hit one another or something, you see very clearly what human nature is like. And there, we can see a God-fearing person. We are not interested in fighting.

It always takes two people to have a quarrel. And if only one person's interested in a quarrel, there cannot be a quarrel. It's impossible.

It's the mark of evil people. Verse 3. The one who guards his mouth, preserves his life. The one who opens his wide lips comes to ruin.

And that means that life and death, it's again, you're talking about the speech, that our life, we can preserve our life by guarding our mouth. Be careful with what you say, and you can protect your own life. And in the Living Bible itself, self-control means controlling the tongue.

The Word of God says, One of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5.23 is self-control. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, humility, self-control. Faith, meekness, self-control.

How do I know whether I have self-control? Primarily through the use of the tongue. That's how I know whether I'm filled with the fruit of the Spirit, of self-control. Whereas a quick retort, which comes to the ungodly person, can ruin everything.

The one who opens wide his lips means the one who's quick to open his lips and say something ends up in ruin. Let's ask God for grace in this area. Verse 4. Here again it speaks about the lazy person and the hard-working person.

The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing. But the soul of the diligent is made fat, or the soul of the diligent prospers. Now, in the Old Testament, that prosperity was material.

A lazy person remained poor, and a hard-working person became rich. But for us in the New Covenant, that prosperity, or that poverty, is primarily spiritual. And we can say a lazy person is the one who craves, but he never does anything about it.

Oh God, I'd like to have victory over sin. I'd like to have it. This bad habit of mine, I'd like to get rid of it.

He craves it. He desires it. He spends ten years desiring it, never gets it.

Because he doesn't work towards it. He's not wholehearted about cleansing himself and putting something to death in his life. He just says, Oh Lord, I desire this, I desire it, I desire it.

And I tell you this, this verse tells us that I can desire all my life for something and never get it. Because I'm spiritually lazy. The soul of the lazy man craves.

Craves is a strong word. That means he strongly desires, and he still gets nothing. Think of a man who is strongly desiring and still getting nothing.

Because he's fundamentally lazy, spiritually. Think of his attitude to the Word of God, for example. He can have spare time, and he doesn't have time to study the Word.

He's lazy in his attitude to the Word. And he remains ignorant of the Word, and therefore he's not strong. He doesn't know what God says to help him in the moment of temptation.

Think if Jesus had been like that, and the devil came to tempt him. And he didn't have a word of God to quote back, to drive away the devil. He didn't have a sword of the Spirit in his hand.

He would have been like that if he were lazy. He could have craved for victory, but he'd never have got it, because he was basically lazy. But Jesus was not like that.

But the soul of the diligent, the wholehearted, really works hard towards achieving what he wants. He will prosper. Desiring victory, and then working towards it.

Maybe that is the reason why some people never come to victory. Verse 5. Here is a mark of a righteous man. And let me read it in the Living Bible.

A good man hates lies. Did you hear that? The mark of a righteous person. A good man hates lies.

Hates telling lies. Hates saying what is wrong. Hates signing a false statement, even if somebody else asked him to do it.

He hates it. It's a mark of a righteous man. And a man who doesn't hate it, he can't put him in the category of a righteous man.

Whereas wicked men tell lies constantly. You see, these people who tell lies don't just say it once or twice. It's a constant process.

And come to shame. Those who will write false accounts and make false statements. It's not just a once in a while thing.

It becomes a habit. And after a while the conscience doesn't even bother them. And finally the word of God promises that they will come to shame.

If not on earth, certainly in eternity. And I want to say the world is full of people who tell lies. The world is full of people who write false accounts and sign false statements.

And in the midst of this ungodly dark generation, God has placed a few who are upright. Even if it means they become poor. Who stand up for the truth.

Who will not tell lies. Verse 6. Now let me read this in the Living Bible. A man's goodness helps him all through life.

While evil men are being destroyed by their wickedness. And this is true. Again, it's a question of reaping what we have sown.

If the whole desire of our heart is to be good towards others, the word of God says that good attitude, that desires to help others and be good to others, will help me all through my life. And that's why it's very, very important to bless those who curse us. To do good to those who hate us.

To pray for those who prostitute us. Never to desire anything evil for another person. But always to desire the best.

Even for our enemy. To desire good. That something good will happen.

That's really difficult, you know. When someone has done something evil for you, towards you, and some calamity strikes them, the natural reaction is to think, yeah, God has judged him for treating me, his child, so badly. Well, that may be that God's business.

That's not my business. My business is to desire good for him. Not to desire evil.

That is the spirit of the Christian. And if I keep that attitude, goodness, then that will help me all through my life. But if I have wrong attitudes towards other people, evil men, they destroy themselves by their wicked attitudes.

Verse 7. Here is a very true statement, which indicates the amount of hypocrisy there is in the world. Some people pretend to be rich, but have nothing. The Good News Bible.

Others pretend to be poor, and they own a fortune. And you see both these categories of people in the world. There are poor people, who are a bit ashamed of their poverty, and who are always trying to act as though they are big people, and great people, and very rich people.

You find such people in the world. And then there are very rich people, who are always acting as if they are trying to make both ends meet, and they are very poor, and they don't have enough, and they've got millions stacked away somewhere. And you find both these people are basically hypocrites.

And it's hypocrisy that is the common binding factor in both these groups of people. One is rich, one is poor, but both are hypocrites. And the poor person tries to pretend that he is great and rich, and the rich person is always trying to act poor.

That hypocrisy is one universal characteristic of the race of Adam. In one case, pride, in the other case, false humility. Verse 8. Being kidnapped, and held for ransom, never worries the poor man.

You know, the poor man may have many disadvantages, but one advantage he has is nobody is going to kidnap him, and hold him for ransom. And the book of Proverbs is telling us that, don't think it's all advantages to be rich. They have many things to be afraid of.

They have to be afraid of the tax people, and they have to be afraid of the decoys coming and looting their houses, or people holding their children to ransom. So many things which a poor man doesn't have to worry about at all. That's one of the things that comes through in the book of Proverbs, that earthly riches do not only bring blessings, but there is a bit of a curse in it when we have more than what we need.

Verse 9. The righteous, Good News Bible, are like a light shining brightly. The wicked are like a lamp flickering out. And this reminds us of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins, some whose lights were shining brightly, and some whose lamps were flickering out.

And this verse tells us the reason why some who appear to be virgins are actually wicked. Their lamps were flickering out. They didn't have oil.

There was no hidden life within, which is what the oil symbolizes. But the mark of a righteous person is that he's got a hidden life, the oil which makes his lamp burn more and more and more. And when we remember that that light is the light of Jesus, and him was life, and that life was the light of men, we see that the wicked only appear to have the life of Jesus.

And it flickers out in the moment of trial and temptation. But as the righteous, in the moment of trial, you see their light burning brightly. The life of Jesus comes forth, because they have worked out their own salvation in their hidden life.

Verse 10 says here in the Living Bible, Pride leads to argument. And there we see the cause of all the strife and arguments in the whole world. Pride.

But be humble. Take advice. And become wise.

When somebody gives us advice, there again we have an opportunity to test the attitude of our hearts in relation to pride or humility. It's not easy to take advice if we are proud, because we think we know so much already. But it says here, be humble, and take advice from someone who knows a little more than you, and you'll become wise.

Even if you are so wise already, you'll become wiser still. What's wrong in taking advice? But when someone gives us advice to argue, and to say it's like this, and it is because of this, yeah, that's usually an indication of pride. And it also shows us that all the arguments and strife that comes in homes between husband and wife is basically due to pride.

Pride. When Abraham and Lot, their servants, had a strife, it was due to pride. And there we see Abraham's humility in solving that strife.

You want something? Take it. You have your right first. Think if we can be wise like Abraham.

Brother, take what you want first. I'll take what's left over. And children, they don't have it.

Children grab. Pride is willing to yield and give way to the other. Verse 11.

In other words, even if we have cheated the government or somebody else and increased our bank accounts, God's blessing will not be on that. But if we have worked hard in honesty, God's blessing is on it. And I'll tell you something, it's better to have a hundred rupees a month with God's blessing than a thousand rupees by cheating someone and without God's blessing.

People don't realize that. God's blessing can make a tremendous difference in the little that we earn. It can save us unnecessary hospital expenses, for example.

And it can save us so many things, and a little can go a long way, if it's earned honestly, and God's blessing is upon it. And if we earn with labor, in fact, the word of God says that he who does not work should not eat. There is no blessing promise.

2 Thessalonians 3, verse 10 to 12. The one who does not work should not eat. That means God has determined that those who are not willing to work should not be paid.

And that is something that we must also remember when we think in terms of giving gifts to the poor. We have to see whether they are people who are making faithful use of what we give, or whether they are

willing to work hard. But if they are lazy or careless and extravagant with the gifts we give them, then it's foolish to continue giving them.

Because maybe they are poor because they are so extravagant, or because they are not willing to work hard. And then verse 12. Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.

What that basically means is that when a wish comes true, it fills your heart with joy. And for us, the greatest longing in our hearts is to partake of his nature, to have victory over sin. And that is not a hope that God puts before us which cannot be fulfilled.

But it is a hope which can be fulfilled, and when it is fulfilled, it becomes like a tree of life to us, that we can partake increasingly of God's nature. Verse 13. The one who despises the word will be in debt to it.

And this is why all sinners are pictured as debtors to God. Every sin, every disobedience of God's Word is a debt that I owe to God. It's like going and buying something from a shop without paying for it.

Every disobedience of a commandment is like buying something from a shop without paying for it. I am in debt. And when it says Jesus paid our debts on the cross, that's true.

Because it says here that the one who despises the word is in debt to it, and we have despised so many words, and we have become debtors. And Jesus has cleared our debt with the intention that in future we do not despise the word anymore. There is forgiveness with God so that we may be feared, so that He may be feared.

The one who fears the commandment will be rewarded. Verse 14. The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life to turn aside from the snares of death.

And that's a very beautiful word that we can think of as the that our speech and the words we speak to others can become like a spring of fresh water. And that is the place towards which we should work. Controlling our tongues, judging ourselves, and increasing in wisdom in our private life so that when we share with people and we speak to people that what we say will be like a spring of fresh water.

You know, brothers and sisters, the world has been corrupted, particularly in the area... As I said, the book of Proverbs has got a lot to say about speech. And in the midst of a world which is full of people who speak sinful things and useless things, it is God's will that there should be a few who are like springs of living water, who speak forth that which is refreshing. Think to be a brother or sister like that, that people feel that anything you say, whether in a meeting or in private conversation or anywhere, it's always so refreshing compared to the words of people out in the world which are so heavy and so bitter.

I want to exhort everyone here to be a brother and sister like that, to have a testimony like that, that people long to hear what you have to say, because your words are like a spring that refreshes. You know, that can be our portion, the teaching of the wise. We are willing to be wise according to the book of Proverbs.

Our words can be like that, and we can turn others aside from the snares of death. Verse 15. It says here, good understanding produces favor, somewhat similar to what we said earlier, that a man with wisdom is appreciated by others, naturally, because that wins the respect of others.

But the way of the treacherous is hard. The way of a sinner is hard. It may look smooth and easy, but it turns out finally to be hard.

And that is not the way that we desire to walk. Verse 16. In the Living Bible it says, a wise man thinks ahead, a fool does not, and he even boasts about it.

You know, to think ahead, and to plan ahead, is the mark of a wise person. A lot of people who just say, I'm trusting the Lord, are actually fools. There is a trusting in the Lord, which is genuine, but most people whom I say, whom I have seen, who speak high-sounding language about trusting in the Lord, are actually just downright fools, who don't think ahead, and boast about it.

But a wise man, he realizes that God has given him a mind. God hasn't made him like a stone or a brick. He's given him wisdom, he's given him intelligence, and he's given him the Holy Spirit.

And he wants to think ahead. There's nothing wrong in that. A wise man thinks ahead.

It says that when the people wanted to kill Jesus in Judea, he didn't go there. And that was wisdom. It would have been folly to say, oh yeah, I trust in the Lord, and I'm going there.

That would have been the mark of a fool, but Jesus was wise. That's sensible. Yeah, a wise man thinks ahead.

And God wants all of us to be people who think and plan ahead. How is it going to go if I do this? How will it be in four or five years if I go this way? Particularly in spiritual things. If you keep on nagging your husband, how will it be after five years? What will your home be like? If you keep on criticizing your wife, how will it be five years from now? What will your home be like? It'll be a ruin.

It'll be a wilderness. Think ahead. Think ahead in all the things that we do, and say, be wise.

A wise man thinks ahead, and says, yeah, I've got to deny myself a little here, so that there's some good fruit that'll come later on. But a fool just displays his folly. Verse 17.

In the Good News Bible, it says, Unreliable messengers cause trouble, but those who can be trusted bring peace. And God does not commit himself to unreliable messengers. And it's very important that all of us come quickly to the place where God can find us to be trustworthy messengers who bring peace, not unreliable messengers who cause trouble.

Verse 18. Here it speaks about poverty and shame coming to the one who neglects discipline, or, as the Living Bible says, if you refuse criticism, you will end in poverty and disgrace. Now the thing is, we may think, well, we've already got quite a bit of wisdom compared to a lot of other people around us.

That may be true. And that may be the reason why we are too proud to receive any more correction. And we will discover in eternity that we could have been a lot wiser if we had humbled ourselves and accepted correction.

But we never became any wiser because we were proud that we are already so much better than so many other believers. And I want to say, brothers and sisters, be particularly careful when people come to you for advice. Somebody comes to you for advice, and you give advice.

Then someone else comes, then someone else comes. And gradually, you begin to think of yourself as a little storehouse of wisdom. And that pride is what can prevent you, brother or sister, from getting any more wisdom.

Because you think you're already one, you're one of those who's already one who has won the confidence of others and people come to you and don't need much correction now. That's a dangerous thing. It's true.

You are wise, but you could have been wiser if you had humbled yourself and been willing to receive correction and discipline. A man who is unwilling to receive criticism will end in poverty and disgrace, but, the Living Bible says, if you accept criticism, you are on the road to spiritual fame. Think to be all our life like that.

To say, Lord, I want correction. There are blind spots in me that I don't see. And I need my brothers.

There's a song that, um, in which one line goes, Lord, your spirit and my brothers are showing me where I've got to change. Your spirit and my brothers are showing me where I've got to change. That's a good attitude to have to the end of our life.

And we can grow in wisdom. And verse 19, it says here again in the Living Bible, it's pleasant to see the way plans develop. Desire realized is sweet to the soul.

And that is why fools refuse to give them up even when they are wrong. And that's one mark of a fool, that even when someone points out to him that these plans that you have made, they're not very wise, his pride refuses to make him change his plans. And, even when it's wrong.

And it develops to his ruin. It's an abomination to fools to depart from evil. Basically speaking in the same context of correction, that when a fool is told that this way is not the best way, this is something better, but because this is the way he's chosen, he's unwilling to receive that correction from someone who has a little more wisdom than him.

And it's amazing how long it takes for us to get that humility that's willing to be corrected. Verse 20 speaks of the type of company we keep. He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Now that's very simple, that if you keep making friends with stupid people, you'll be ruined. In other words, the type of company we keep is a pretty good indication of what's going to happen to us finally. I want to read a verse in 1 Corinthians 15, in verse 33, in this connection, because I believe there's a word here, particularly for us as believers, in the type of people we spend our time with, either through our visiting their homes or their visiting our homes.

Tell me the type of people whom you visit, and the type of people who visit you, and with whom you spend most of your time, and I'll tell you fairly well what type of person you are. 1 Corinthians 15, 33, and here is where we can be deceived. We can think that, no, I'm not going to be affected.

But it says here in 1 Corinthians 15, 33, don't be deceived. Bad company will corrupt your good morals. That's the word of God.

And here is where we can be deceived, by saying, yeah, it's not going to corrupt, particularly young people, you know. The company you keep, you may think, yeah, yeah, I'm a wholehearted, zealous brother. If you are, as far as possible, keep company with the zealous brothers.

Let that be your desire. I'm not saying we shouldn't talk to anyone else. You have to go to school, college, or in your place of work, meet with others, but let your longing be to be with the wholehearted, not with the

half-hearted and the worldly.

You may think that they don't affect you, but it will affect you. Don't be deceived. Particularly young brothers and sisters, listen to that very carefully.

Learn that lesson in youth, so that you don't make a folly when you do foolish things when you are grown up. Seek the company of the wholehearted. Let that be your greatest longing and desire, not the company of fools and the half-hearted, a companion of fools who suffer harm.

Then verse 21, Adversity pursues sinners, but the righteous will be rewarded with prosperity. Again, we apply that spiritually. It is basically the same thing that it says in Galatians 6-9, and that's the theme that recurs again and again in Proverbs.

What we sow, we will reap. And usually, whatever we sow, we're going to reap one hundred times, or ten times, or thirty times, or sixty times, or a hundred times. Whatever it is, it's going to be much more than what we have sown.

And here's a simple principle that we must bear in mind, that we cannot avoid sowing. Let me use a very simple illustration. Supposing I am a farmer and I've sown potatoes at the time of sowing, and then near harvest time, I say, Oh, I didn't want potatoes, I wanted tomatoes.

And I kneel down and I have prayer meetings, fasting and prayer, and say, Oh God, please give me tomatoes. Do a miracle and give me tomatoes at harvest time. I just want to say that you're not going to get tomatoes, despite all the fasting and prayer.

You can say, Lord, please forgive me for sowing those potatoes, God will forgive you, but what will come forth is still potatoes. We mustn't forget that. That even when God forgives us, there is still a reaping of what we have sown in the past.

Let me give you an example of that. Adversity pursues sinners. Here is a young man who is indulged in reading dirty sexual novels, and read pornographic books, and seen pornographic pictures, indulged in them, and indulged in them, say up to the age of 25.

Here's another young man who avoided all that, and was just a morally good person. Both were not converted. Both got converted at the same time, at the age of 25.

And you'll find this person who had not indulged in all this pornographic literature has an easier time later on as a Christian with his dreams and his thoughts than that other person who indulged in it so much. Both are forgiven. But one person is constantly harassed in his thoughts and his dreams by the potatoes that he has sown for so many years.

And that's why you've got to be very careful for each book you read and picture you put into your mind is like a seed sown there. It's going to come back ten times later on in life. Later on in life when you would wish that you could be free from some of these things and God forgives you, He forgives you, but the reaping is still going to be there.

It's not going to be tomatoes, it's going to be potatoes, even though you're forgiven. And that's the thing that should put a fear into our hearts about what we sow. Because it says adversity pursues sinners.

This harvest sort of runs after the seed that is sown. But it can be the other way around too. That what we sow good, here we fill our mind with the Word of God and the Word of God and something good, we're thinking good thoughts of others and avoid all that's evil.

That's also going to produce a harvest of good. The righteous will be rewarded with prosperity. So forgiveness is not everything.

And we can be forgiven and still be tremendously harassed by the memory of our past life. And there you can think what a wonderful inheritance it is for young people to grow up without all this sexually polluting literature and dirty thoughts. I'll tell you this, ten years from now, some of you who are in your teens today will be thankful if you listen to what you heard tonight.

If the Lord carries, you'll be very thankful when you become a wholehearted brother and sister that you kept your early youth pure from all the filthy things that others in your school and college are indulging in. Be careful in this area. Verse 22, it says, A good man leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren also, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous.

Well, that's certainly true in the Old Testament. What Abraham gave to Isaac, what Abraham had when he died descended even to Jacob. And we can apply that also in the New Testament spiritually, that if you live a God-fearing, upright, righteous life, you can give an inheritance that affects not only your children, but also your grandchildren.

And that is really the greatest inheritance that a man can leave, not only his children, but his grandchildren. The influence of a godly life, the memory that a son or a daughter has of a father who was God-fearing, a father who wouldn't tell lies, a father who did not yell at his mother, a mother who knew how to submit to father as the church to Christ. Think what an inheritance it can be to children.

Much more than money. A father who was upright, who wouldn't do anything wrong to make money. A father who was righteous, a father who longed to obey the word of God, a mother who longed to obey the word of God.

Such parents can leave an inheritance to their children, and it will affect those children in such a way that it will be manifest in their grandchildren. Wonderful inheritance. But the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous, not perhaps in this life, but certainly it's going to be true in the next life, that all that this earth has, which sinners consider their wealth, is finally going to be taken by God and handed over to the righteous.

The meek will inherit the earth and everything in it. Verse 23. Abundant food is in the fallow ground of the poor, but it is swept away by injustice.

Now, I understand that verse to mean that a poor man may have a small little farm, and he can think that nothing much can come out of it, but it says here a tremendous lot can come out of that little that a poor man has. Like I said earlier about the one talent, the poor man is a man with one talent, and he says, oh, what can come out of this one talent? A tremendous lot can come out of that one talent. Think of that one talent as the word of encouragement.

What a lot can come out of that one talent. You can produce a hundred talents with that one talent if you use it, and don't wrap it up in a napkin and bury it so that you spend year after year after year never giving a word of encouragement to anybody in your home or outside your home. But in many other areas too,

you know, all of us can tend to think we have so little, we have so little gifts, we have so little abilities, we have so little of this and this, that and the other, but a tremendous lot can come out of that little.

I thought of that in relation to the drama we presented yesterday, how the expense in that, if it were out there in the world, would have been some fantastic figure, but we may do with old curtains and so many other things, and so much can be produced out of so little. Out of so little, we can produce so much, provided the person does not ruin his whole life by being unrighteous, it says. If he's unrighteous in his life, then of course, whether he's got little or much, it's just going to ruin.

It's all going to be ruined. But a tremendous lot can come out of the little resources you have, the little abilities you have, the little wisdom you have, the little spirituality you have, the little you have of gift and talent, a tremendous lot can come out of it. There's abundant food possible out of that.

If we humble ourselves and use it faithfully for the glory of God, much can come from the little that you possess. For example, even materially, you may have little compared to some other brothers, but you can use that little so carefully that not only much comes out of that little that you have, but such character develops in your life of being careful in the use of material things, which a rich person never develops that character. He can tend to be more free and loose with things, buying a whole lot of things that are unnecessary, and so many things which are quite unnecessary.

There's abundant food in the fallow ground of the poor, provided it's not wasted through unrighteousness. Verse 24. This is a verse repeated many times in the book of Proverbs concerning the discipline of children.

The Living Bible says, If you refuse to discipline your son, that is the clearest proof that you don't love him. You know that? How do you know that a father does not love his son? He doesn't discipline him. He doesn't punish him.

He never uses the rod on him. That is the clearest proof that a father does not love his son. How do you know that a father loves his son? He beats him with a rod.

If you love him, it says here, you will be diligent. That means you'll be wholehearted with that rod in disciplining him. Not just, Oh darling.

Not that way. But you'll be wholehearted in disciplining him. That's what it says.

Diligently. Just like we are to seek God diligently. Think to be a wholehearted loving father like that.

You know, I tell you all these worldly ideas can creep into us so easily. And there we need to follow the teaching of the word of God and the discipline of our children. The proof of love.

Because you don't want your child to grow up to be a nuisance to society, a nuisance in the church, a nuisance in the home, a nuisance to the neighbors, and finally land in the lap of the devil for all eternity. You don't want that. And therefore, because you love your son, you want your son to be a testimony, to be an example.

Therefore, you discipline him. You teach him obedience. You teach him to obey when you have spoken one word.

That's how we must teach our children. Discipline. They may not all grow up to be wholehearted brothers and sisters.

They have to take their own decision when they grow up in life. But one thing, as long as they are in our homes, even if they are not born again, they must know that father's and mother's words have to be obeyed. There is no two ways about that.

They must know who is in authority in the home. It's the proof of love. They don't understand it, just like sometimes believers don't understand it when God disciplines them and chastens them.

But it is the mark of love. And then, verse 25, and it's very beautifully says, the righteous is enough to satisfy his appetites, but the stomach of the wicked doesn't want, and very beautifully paraphrased in the Living Bible, as the righteous man eats to live, and the evil man lives to eat. There's a world of difference between eating in order to live, which is the mark of a righteous man, and the unrighteous man who just lives to eat.

Ah, another chance to eat. And the righteous man who says, well, I've got to be careful about what I eat, and particularly in the days in which we live where, I don't know, how many of us have a lot of opportunity for exercise? Almost none of us. Is there anybody carrying bricks here? Perhaps such a person would have opportunity.

But most of us, we really are not much opportunity to exercise, and therefore we have to really be more careful in this area. All of us, that we don't live to eat, but eat in order to live. And in the margin of the living Bible, it says that the wicked never get enough.

In other words, they're never satisfied no matter how much is on their plate. But clearly, if it's good, tasty food, they're never, never satisfied no matter how much there is. And that teaches us that the one mark of a righteous man is that he knows how to discipline himself in the area of eating.

You see, we can discipline ourselves in public, in eating, just to have a good testimony. Otherwise, it would look horrible if I go and grab everything that I want to. I mean, that's not necessarily the proof of a righteous man.

It just means that I want to keep my testimony. And that's quite different from what I desire in my heart. And that is the thing which I need to see.

It's not a question of what I'm doing to get a good reputation before the brothers are being self-denying and not eating much. But rather, what do I desire in my heart? Supposing nobody was looking, would I gobble up or would I say, well, I want to eat to live. I believe it's a very important area because the New Testament speaks about those whose belly is their God.

They are so particular about tasty food. And it must be like this. And how can we possibly live without eating this in our homes? How can we do that? The thing is, so many people do do that, do live without so many things.

But we can think, we can become so crazy after certain types of food that we think we cannot live without. How can my children live without these things? And then, our belly can become our God. And then it says in Philippians 3 where that verse is, that such people are enemies of the cross.

We are not to be enemies of the cross while speaking about the new and living way. Chapter 14, verse 1. The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands. And that teaches us that it's not the man primarily who builds the house.

Did you see that? It's the woman. And why does it speak about the wife rather than the husband when it comes to building the house? And I'll tell you a simple reason for that. The wife spends more than double the time at home that her husband does in most cases.

And all, the whole atmosphere of a home to a large extent is influenced by the wife, by what she desires. The mother spends much more time with her children than the father in most cases. And that's why this tremendous need for a woman who is married to be wise because she's either building her home or, she's not wise, tearing it down with her own hands.

Now none of us, no woman here would ever be so foolish as to take a hammer and chisel and break down the walls of your own house. But I tell you this, those brick walls are nothing compared to the spiritual home that you wives are building, that you mothers are building inside that brick home. And that's the thing which we can easily tear down by foolishness, by doing all types of foolish things and saying all types of foolish things.

It's just like taking a hammer and chisel and breaking the house to pieces. Yeah? Be wise. You know what the beginning of wisdom is? The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

I'll tell you, if there's one person in every house that needs to have the fear of God, it's the wife and the mother because she's the one who's got to build the house. A wise woman builds her house by her God-fearing attitude. I can't remember the number of stories that I have read, true stories, of people, men of God, who spoke about a God-fearing praying mother who influenced them tremendously in their life.

Think of that, dear sisters, that you can leave your inheritance, your children an inheritance that they know you as a God-fearing praying mother. Build your home. Build your home.

So much depends upon you according to the word of God. So much. And that, of course, finally affects the church as well.

You can say the sisters don't have much of a ministry in the church. I tell you, they have a fantastic ministry in the church because the strength of a church is the strength of the homes. It's not all the number of seats that are filled up here.

I couldn't care less for that. It's not about the size of a building we have. It's about the strength of each home represented in this church is the strength of this church.

And that's sort of an invisible thing. And who's building those homes? The women. Who said sisters don't have a ministry in our church? I believe they have one of the most important ministries towards their husbands and their children.

Tremendous. That's why you need to pray for the fear of God upon your life so that you can be a wise woman. Verse 2, in the Good News Bible, it says, Be honest and thus you will show that you obey the Lord.

Be dishonest and you show that you don't obey the Lord or fear the Lord. Again, the question of lies and truthfulness, honesty and dishonesty. By honesty, we show that we fear God.

By dishonesty, whatever else we may say, we show that we don't fear God at all. Verse 3, Good News Bible, A fool's pride makes him talk too much. A wise man's words protect him.

And we've considered that before, that one mark of a fool is that he speaks a lot. In fact, it says in Ecclesiastes chapter 5, verse 3. It's a beautiful verse, Ecclesiastes 5, verse 3, that you can recognize the voice of a fool by the many words that he speaks. And you'll find that that in a group of people the person who speaks the most, I don't mean God fearing things from Scripture, but in general conversation where the person who has the maximum to speak about useless things, that is the greatest fool in that crowd.

A fool's voice is known by the multitude of words. A wise man's words, on the other hand, protect him. Our words are not only seeds, but words by which we build a citadel that protects us.

Verse 4. Where there are no oxen the manger is clean, but much increase comes by the strength of the ox. That basically means that if you are too lazy to clean all the dung that will be there when you have oxen and cows, yeah, you can say my stable is very clean, but you don't get much profit out of it either. And people can think in terms of cleanliness.

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