

**Creating Shade for Your Children, Part 4**

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

Code: 90-482

Tonight, we are going to wrap up a little four-week series that we've been calling "Shade for the Children" built around an old Chinese proverb that said, "One generation plants the trees, then the next generation enjoys the shade." And the question, of course, before us is, "Can this generation plant shade trees for the future?" There are many parents who are fearful for their children. There are many people fearful for their grandchildren, that say nothing of great-grandchildren, because of the way life is going in the world.

I've been saying to you along the way in this series that while it may seem like it's changing for us – and to some degree, relatively speaking, it is, and life is getting more difficult. And we who have been familiar with a kind of Judeo-Christian standard of living in America are watching that fade away. And while it certainly is getting worse – but evil men always get worse and worse – this is the cycle of all of human history. Every generation of believers in every nation have lived at some point in the decline of society. We have the sense that we may be experiencing the death of our culture, the death of civilization, and not only in our own country, but around the globe.

While we watch the destruction of the family, we are very aware that the germ cell of social sanity and well-being is being destroyed. Society/civilization cannot survive the death of the family, and the assault on the family has been going on in our nation for about 50 years. It is a war far more deadly and destructive than any Middle Eastern war. With the death of the family, civilization just disintegrates. It collapses into a black hole of social chaos, criminal behavior, selfish narcissism, sexual perversion, rebellion, and anarchy. And everybody experiences, to one degree or another, personal emptiness.

The assault has been systematic. The assault has been planned. It has affected every aspect of human life. It is settled in high places. It is in the very highest places in our land, educationally, and even politically. We have those in high office who are trying to destroy the family by allowing for abortion and same-sex marriage. We have candidates running for office on one party who advocate that, and another party, candidates who are leading the current trends, who have lived with women they're not married to, and been married many times over. Laws of our nation now allow the killing of unborn children, divorce, homosexuality, same-sex marriage. You name it; it's all okay.

So the question is, "How do we raise our children as Christians in this kind of environment?" And, again, I remind you, it isn't new, it's just our dose of it, our version of it in our time in human history.

Now, let me give you a bit of a review so that we sort of catch you up a little bit on what we've looked at in the preceding weeks. There's some basic truths that I want to establish. God created men and women to have children. God created man and women to have children, the husband and a wife to bring children into the world. Family is God's building block of civilization and society. God desires people to get married and have children, get married and pass on virtue, morality, and more importantly, the righteousness of God to the next generation. People who don't get married and have children can still have a great influence in many ways, but not the same influence that you have in raising up godly children for the next generation.

Some basic principles I laid out for you. Children are a blessing, not a hardship; that's what the Bible says. Parenting is a joy, not a burden; that's what the Bible says. Success is measured by what parents do, not by what children achieve. The success of a parent is in the parent's approach to parenting. And finally we looked at the very important principle: parents are the most important and most powerful influencers in the lives of their children, more powerful than the culture, than peers, because we have them 24/7.

Then we turned a little bit away from those foundational principles to identify the child's greatest need. What is it that our children need most? Number One: Salvation. Number Two: Sanctification. They need to be saved from sin and death and hell, and they need to be sanctified, separated from sin. They don't need behavioral control; that's a short-term issue. The goal of parenting is not to raise a child who is feeling good about himself or herself and has a measure of self-esteem. The object is not politeness. The object is not to raise child that is somehow isolated from the culture around them. No matter how you try to isolate a child, the flesh is not restrained by isolation.

In fact, if you look at the book of Proverbs, you find a word that is commonly used in the book of Proverbs. It sort of speaks to this point. It's the word "naïve," and you see the word "naïve" all through the book of Proverbs. It's repeated many, many times, and always in a negative sense. Always being naïve is negative. It is negative, like in chapter 1, verse 22, "How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded?" There's no benefit in naiveté.

Verse 32 of Proverbs 1, "The waywardness of the naïve will kill him." Our goal is not to isolate our children and leave them in some level of naiveté. Our goal is not to make them polite so that they say "yes, ma'am," and "yes, sir." Our goal is not to give them a good feeling about themselves. Our goal is not to just control their behavior. Our goal is their salvation and sanctification, and those are spiritual ministries; therefore, they are spiritual objectives.

Now, in order to accomplish those kinds of things, we are given two passages that we've been looking at: one in the Old Testament that I'll just remind you of: Deuteronomy 6, verses 5 through 7, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart, and you shall teach them diligently to your sons – ” your children “ – and talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.”

And then further it says, “Bind them as a sign on your hand and on the frontals on your forehead. Write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.” In other words, the knowledge of God is what is to be taught to your children, not just to know the Lord, “the Lord, the Lord is one,” but to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. And everything in loving the Lord that God has commanded is to be taught to children.

We saw a New Testament passage. We looked at that in detail, Ephesians, chapter 6, which says, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” And then, “Fathers – ” or parents, “ – do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

So we looked at Deuteronomy 6 a little bit, and we looked at Ephesians, chapter 6. And, again, the reiteration of what I said, what your child needs is salvation and sanctification. That is a work of God that is accomplished in the heart of a child through the proclamation of divine truth.

Now, having looked at those texts – and that’s a fast rundown on where we’ve been – we have now turned to the book of Proverbs, and you can go there if you’re not already there. And I want in these last couple of messages, last week and tonight, to just do a little bit of a Bible study with you, particularly in the early chapters of Proverbs, to consider the practical wisdom that is collected in the book of Proverbs that is to be given as instruction to children. And now I remind you of what we saw last week all through the opening ten chapters. The very obvious pattern here is this is someone speaking to children. This is someone saying, “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction. Do not forsake your mother’s teaching. My son, receive my words, receive my commandments. Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father. Do not forget my teaching.” This is reiterated again and again and again in these early chapters.

So what we have here is the wisdom of God collected together in the Proverbs to be given to children, and particularly to sons. Why to sons? Because sons are the leaders in the family and the leaders in the nation. It is an admission of a fallen nation when leadership is in the hands of women. That is always a battle, because ever since the fall, women have been battling for supremacy along with men. But the responsibility for the culture and the civilization and society lies with the fathers. It lies with the fathers as it does in the family. So here is the instruction from fathers to sons, mothers to sons; and the implication, of course, beyond sons to the daughters as well. But the sons bear the weight of leadership responsibility in the world, and therefore, in the family.

Now, in the book of Proverbs, there are concise statements about wise living. There are over 500 very concise statements about wise living, and you hear words like wisdom, understanding, insight, knowledge, discretion, discernment all the way through the Proverbs. This is the pathway to all of those things. Now what I've done is to pull out ten great lessons that we are to teach our children from Proverbs.

Last week, we looked at the opening ones – let me remind you. Lesson Number One – and I'm going to expand this a little bit, so stick with me on this one. Lesson Number One that you teach your children: "Fear your God. Fear your God." Be a true worshiper.

Chapter 1, verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." The first lesson to teach children: Fear your God. Do everything in your life to show your honor to Him, to show your respect to Him, to worship Him.

I take you back for just a moment to the book of Leviticus; I want you to go with me there. I just want to show you a repeated pattern in the book of Leviticus. The book of Leviticus is calling the people of God to holiness. All through the book of Leviticus, that's the emphasis. But I want you to know what's behind this. There are many laws given in the book of Leviticus to the people of God. But what is behind those laws, let's begin in chapter 18 – and you're just going to have to track with me a little bit – and I'm going to show you a repeated phrase.

The Lord speaks to Moses in chapter 18 and it says, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'I am the Lord your God.' Let's establish this: 'I am in charge. I am the Lord your God. You shall not do what is done in the land of Egypt,'" verse 3. Verse 4, "You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God." Verse 5, "So shall you keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the Lord. None of you shall approach any blood relative of his to uncover nakedness; I am the Lord." Down in verse 21, "You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the Lord." The chapter ends that way. "You're not to defile yourselves; I am the Lord your God."

Next chapter, the Lord again spoke to Moses saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, 'You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy. Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols or make for yourselves molten gods; I am the Lord your God.'"

Down in verse 10, "Don't glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the needy and for the stranger. Why? Because I am the Lord your God. You

shall not swear falsely –” verse 12 “ – as to profane the name of your God; I am the Lord. You shall not curse –” in verse 14 “ – a deaf man, nor place a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall revere your God; I am the Lord.” Verse 16, “You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people. You’re not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the Lord.”

Verse 18, “You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself –” why? “ – I am the Lord. I am the Lord and this is what I say. In the fifth year –” verse 25 “ – you are to eat of its fruit, and its yield may increase for you; I am the Lord your God.” Even something that seems as temporal and physical as that is a command from God. It had its place and it’s had its time. “I am the Lord your God.” Verse 31, “Do not turn to mediums or spiritists; do not seek them out to be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God.”

Verse 36, “Use just balances and just weights, a just ephah and a just hin.” In other words, when you weigh out things and you’re buying and selling, be fair. Why? “I am the Lord your God.” Verse 37 ends the chapter, “You shall thus observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them; I am the Lord.”

In the next chapter, verse 3, “Don’t defile My sanctuary, don’t profane My holy name.” Verse 7, You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the Lord you God.” Down in verse 24, “I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples.” Verse 26, “You’re to be holy, for I the Lord am holy.”

It’s the same in chapter 21, “I the Lord sanctify you and I am holy. I am the Lord. I am the Lord who sanctifies.” The same in chapter 22, all through chapter 22. The same in chapter 23, “I am the Lord your God.”

Chapter 24, go to verse 16, “The one who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him. The alien as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death.” Verse 22, “There shall be one standard for you; it shall be for the stranger as well as the native, for I am the Lord your God.”

He says it again in the next chapter, and the next chapter, “I am the Lord your God.” This ringing repeated phrase was to be banging around in the minds of the people, “I am the Lord your God. I’m in charge and this is what I say: fear your God, obey Him, honor Him, worship Him above all.” So that is the first lesson to teach your child.

The second is “to guard your mind, to guard your mind,” and that is scattered all throughout the Proverbs. But chapter 4, verse 23 is a good place to sort of locate it: “Watch over your heart –” or your mind, means the same. “Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.” Guard your mind. Not only do we lead our children to fear and worship God, but we become the

protectors of our children's minds. We are responsible for that very important task.

The third thing that we looked at already in Proverbs, the third lesson is "obey your parents, obey your parents." It's repeated again and again, as all of these are: obey your parents.

The first lessons of submission and critical obedience are in childhood. Look, you can't live in the world if you're a rebel. You can't break laws in the world and have a peaceful life. You're going to end up dead or you're going to end up in prison. You're going to end up as a nomad, as a criminal on the run. You can't live in rebellion; and teaching submission is the responsibility first and foremost of parents in the home. We teach children the law of God and their conscience is the weapon that strikes them when they violate it. In the family, we teach children the law of God, and the rod is the weapon that strikes them when they violate it.

The government also represents God and upholds the law, and if you break the law of the government, the sword is the weapon and it's a death weapon. God has put those restraints in society. Personally in the conscience, in the family, it's the rod of discipline; and in society, it's the sword. So teach your children, "Fear your God, guard your mind, obey your parents."

And fourth, last time, we said "select your companions, select your companions." We looked at lots of scriptures about that, we won't go back. Just simply to say, we looked at chapter 1, verse 10, "My son, if sinners entice you, don't consent. Don't go with those people who are drawing you into sin and iniquity." And he has a lot to say about that in the early chapters of Proverbs.

All right, fear your God, guard your mind, obey your parents, choose your friends – very, very important. Now we come to Number Five in our list, and we'll finish the list up: "Control your desires. Control your desires." This takes up a lot of space in the early chapters of Proverbs.

In chapter 5, verse 22, it says regarding the ways of a man, "His own iniquities will capture the wicked, and he will be held with the cords of his sin. He will die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he will go astray." You cannot leave children uninstructed about the deadliness of sin. They have to be instructed or their own iniquities will capture them, and their own sin will bind them, and they will die for lack of instruction and go astray in the midst of folly. This opens up the whole matter of morality, and the major concern the Holy Spirit is writing through this section of Proverbs comes down to sexual purity, to sexual purity. There's so much here – you can look at it on your own, but I want to just draw your attention to a few places.

Chapter 2, verse 16, "Wisdom is important to deliver you from the strange woman, from the adulteress who flatters with her words. That's the one that leaves the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God." She's an adulteress because she violates her marriage and her husband. "Her house sinks down to death and her tracks lead to the dead; none who go to her return

again, nor do they reach the paths of life.” “Stay away from the strange woman, the adulteress. She sinks down to death. Her house will bring you to death.”

Why such an extreme comment? Because adultery was punishable by death. Teach your children morality. Teach them self-control. Teach them to live a pure life, not to put themselves in a place where they can be seduced and tempted.

In chapter 5, there is much instruction about this, starting at verse 1, “My son, give attention to my wisdom, incline your ear to my understanding; that you may observe discretion and your lips may reserve knowledge. For the lips of an adulteress drip honey and smoother than oil is her speech; but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of Sheol. She does not ponder the path of life; her ways are unstable, she does not know it.” That is a true biblical description of an adulteress, of a harlot, of an immoral woman.

Verse 7, “Then, my sons, listen to me. Do not depart from the words of my mouth. Keep your way far from her. Do not go near the door of her house, or you will give your vigor to other and your years to the cruel one; and strangers will be filled with your strength and your hard-earned good will go to the house of an alien; and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed.” It could be that there’s even a view here toward venereal disease.

You want to stay away from an adulteress woman. You don’t want to subject yourself to her kisses and her enticements. You don’t want to be trapped in losing self-control and coming to a groaning final end, and even public punishment. Verse 14, “I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation.” What does that refer to? A public death penalty, a public execution by stoning. That’s where it could take you.

Chapter 6, verse 20, “My son, observe the commandment of your father. Do not forsake the teaching of your mother; bind them continually on your heart; tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you; when you wake, they will talk to you.” Sounds like Deuteronomy 6. “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; and reproofs for discipline are the way of life to keep you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her capture you with her eyelids. For on account of a harlot one is reduced to a loaf of bread, and an adulteress hunts for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can a man walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife. Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.”

Verse 31 says, “When he is found, he must repay – ” a thief, “ – he must give all the substance of his house sevenfold. The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking sense.” What is that going to cost? “He who would destroy himself does that.” Self-destruction. Again, the emphasis on death

and destruction from immorality.

Chapter 7 picks up the same theme again: “My son, keep my words, treasure my commandments.” And we can drop down to verse 6, “For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw the naïve –” and this is like a seductive woman looking out on the street and she sees this naïve, undiscerning youth, “ – a young man lacking sense, passing through the street near her corner. And he takes the way to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night and in the darkness.” Always a clandestine meeting. “And behold, a woman comes to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart. She’s boisterous and rebellious, her feet do not remain at home, her feet do not remain at home.” Godly women’s feet remain at home.

“She is in the streets, in the square, lurking by every corner. She seizes him, kisses him. With a brazen face she says to him, ‘I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows. Therefore I have come out to meet you, to seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, with colored linens of Egypt. I’ve sprinkled my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning. Let us delight ourselves with caresses. For my husband is not at home, he’s gone on a long journey. He’s taken a bag of money with him –’ which means he’ll be gone a long time, ‘ – at the full moon he will come home.’ With her many persuasions, she entices him; with her flattering lips she seduces him. Suddenly he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool, until an arrow pierces through his liver; as a bird hastens to the snare, so he does not know that it will cost him his life. Now therefore, my sons, listen to me. Pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the victims she has cast down, and numerous are all her slain. Her house is the way to Sheol, descending to the chambers of death.” She goes for the kill. She goes for the kill.

As if that’s not enough shocking information, you have more in chapter 9. In chapter 9, the warning comes again in verse 13, “The woman of folly is boisterous. She’s naïve and knows nothing. She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city, calling to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight: ‘Whoever is naïve, let him turn in here,’ and to him who lacks understanding she says, ‘Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.’ But he doesn’t know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.”

Teach your children to guard their desires, to guard their body. This is critical. This is the pathway to death. Even in a society that doesn’t bring about capital punishment for adultery, death can come many ways, many ways. It can come through a disease. It can come through a murder. It can come because it’s simply an early death because of iniquity. It can come in a profoundly spiritual way and be the death of all hope for a good and noble and meaningful life.



The apostle Paul gives us a warning in 1 Thessalonians 4:3. “This is the will of God, you sanctification –” what do you mean, Paul? “ – that you abstain from sexual immorality, abstain from sexual immorality.” Any sexual act that is not between a husband and a wife is immorality, it is sin. “Abstain from it, so that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor.”

What’s vessel? Body. “You have to control your body in sanctification in honor and not operate in lustful passion, like the pagans who don’t know God.” You can’t live like that as a child of God. “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit,” Paul says to the Corinthians. So that’s a negative. I admit, that is a negative.

That is definitely a negative, but it’s a very essential negative in raising your children. They have to be taught to control their desires. Part of that teaching is to keep them away from those things that excite their desires.

There’s a positive side to that, however, and that’s the sixth principle: “Be faithful to your wife. Be faithful to your spouse.” Again, this is predominantly pictured as fathers to sons. But, of course, again, the fathers and the sons are the heads of the families and the nation, and they set the pace.

Look at chapter 5 for a minute. “Drink water from your own cistern,” which is a metaphoric way of saying, “Be content with your own wife or your own husband. Drink fresh water from your own well.”

“Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love. For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress and embrace the bosom of a foreigner? For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths.” Fidelity in marriage. Teach your children fidelity in marriage.

Proverbs says, “A wife is a precious gift from God, to be your friend and your companion.” Proverbs says, “A wife is a gift from God to serve your needs and those of your children.” Proverbs 31 literally enhances everything that is said elsewhere in Proverbs about the blessing of a good wife, and how rewarding she becomes to the family and the husband.

The image of these texts is of complete fidelity: mentally, physically, emotionally to your spouse. Don’t throw your affections around. Don’t spread your emotions around. God sees; it’s all before the eyes of the Lord. It is important to teach your sons, “Love your wife,” to teach your daughters, “Love your husband.” And you can go to Ephesians and you find that enriched, don’t you? “As Christ loved the church, you love your wife; and the wife submits to her husband as to the Lord.” So a wise parent teaches children: fear your God, guard your mind, obey your parents, select your companions, control your desires, enjoy your spouse.

Number Seven: “Watch your words. Watch your words.” Just looking at the very page I’m on, Proverbs 4:24, “Put away from you a deceitful mouth, and put devious speech far from you.” What’s devious speech? Lying. Stop lying. Stop lying.

“When you speak – ” chapter 5, verse 2, “ – your lips should communicate knowledge.” Chapter 6, verse 12, “A worthless person, a wicked man, is the one who walks with a perverse tongue.” Again, perversity is described in verse 14 as, “devising evil, spreading strife, and bringing about his own calamity. Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing.” If you’re a liar, if you’re speaking devious speech, you literally are sowing the seeds of your own destruction.

There is so much about this in the book of Proverbs; we won’t look at all of it. But I would draw you for a minute to chapter 10, because this seems to be a feature of the 10th chapter, and starting in verse 11 we read, “The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.” In verse 13, “On the lips of the discerning, wisdom is found.” Verse 14, “With the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.” Verse 18, “He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who spreads slander is a fool.”

Verse 19, “When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” That is really practically true, isn’t it? The less you say, the less likely you are to say something evil or wrong.

Verse 20, “The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver.” Verse 21, “The lips of the righteous feed many.” Verse 31, “The mouth of the righteous flows with wisdom.” Verse 32, “The lips of the righteous bring forth what is acceptable,” and all those are contrasted as well with the speech of the wicked. All through Proverbs, the matter of words, words, is an issue with wisdom.

Wisdom is behavior in Hebrew. Wisdom, *chakam*, is behavior. It’s not something that’s ethereal or cognitive, it’s behavior. If you are wise, you act wisely and you speak wisely and you think wisely – you behave wisely. “The lips of the righteous – ” Proverbs says “ – speak wisely. The lips of the righteous endure forever. The lips of the righteous are a fountain of life. The lips of the righteous – ” in chapter 15, verse 4, “ – are a tree of life. The lips of the righteous – ” we read “ – are like choice silver.”

In chapter 12, “The lips of the righteous speak things that are satisfying. The lips of the righteous – ” we read “ – feed others, bring healing, bring deliverance. The lips of the righteous speak what is patient, kind, truthful, honest, pure, soft, gentle, slow to anger.” And, “The lips of the righteous are mouthpieces for the Lord God.”

On the other hand in Proverbs, “The mouth of fools pours out crooked speech, folly, violence, hatred, malice, too many words, strife, ruin, slander, belittlement, gossip, disgrace, scorching fire, mischief, and perversity.” Teach your children to watch their words.

This is, of course, a very important matter in the New Testament, and in the book of Ephesians we read this from the apostle Paul, Ephesians 4:29, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” Unwholesome speech grieves the Holy Spirit of God. That could not be more direct.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.” And that is expressed in speech.

James, the 3rd chapter, has so much to say about speech. The 3rd chapter of James begins, “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we will incur a stricter judgment.” If you take on the responsibility to talk all the time, you’re potentially putting yourself in a very, very dangerous place, unless your heart and mind are prepared.

“We all stumble in many ways. If anyone doesn’t stumble in what he says, he’s a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well. Now if we put bits in the horses’ mouths so that they will obey us, we direct their entire body as well. Look at the ships also, though they are so great and driven by strong winds, are still directed by a very small rudder wherever the inclination of the pilot desires. So also is the tongue. It is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. See how great a forest is aflame by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity. The tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell.” What a description of the tongue.

You can sin more readily with your tongue than any other physical component. You can say anything. It’s a fire; it’s a destroyer. Teach your children to guard their speech, their words – so very obvious, and so very basic. Watch your words. You need to discipline your children seriously and consistently when their speech is not wholesome and edifying and grace-giving.

All right, Number Eight: Teach your children to “pursue your work, pursue your work.” Teach them to work. Teach them to work.

Proverbs 6:6, “Go to the ant, O sluggard.” You know what a sluggard is? A lazy person. “Go to the ant, O sluggard, observe her ways and be wise.” Go watch ants; see what they do. “They have no chief, no officer or ruler, but they prepare her food in the summer and gather her provision in the harvest. How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep,

a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – ” guess what, “ – your poverty will come in like a vagabond and your need like an armed man.” In other words, you’re going to be robbed. Pursue your work.

A sluggard man, and lazy people always have a whole lot of excuses, a whole lot of sad stories about what went wrong, and how they’ve been victimized, and how they have aches and pains and issues. “Look at the ant; no leaders, yet they work and they plan for the future. If you don’t work, you rob yourself. You waste your time, you waste your talent, you waste your earning power, you waste precious hours, you waste opportunities. If they pass without accomplishment, you have squandered them. That is wasteful.”

We’re not talking about ill-gotten gains, because chapter 10, verse 2 says, “Ill-gotten gains do not profit. Ill-gotten gains do not profit.” Lazy people will spend whatever little money they have to buy a lottery ticket. According to Proverbs, the lazy man will suffer hunger, poverty, failure, because he is sleeping through the harvest, wants but won’t work to get, loves sleep, is glued to his bed, and follows worthless pursuits – all those get rich quick schemes.

On the other hand, Proverbs says, “The man who pursues his work earns a good living, has plenty of food, is rewarded for his effort, earns the right to have respect, and even stand before kings.” Proverbs 22:29 says that. Teach your children to work, not to waste their lives. Teach them to work. That don’t mean they all get a job. Teach your daughters to work at home, to be a Proverbs 31 woman, and do everything possible with all skills and diligence for the benefit of the family and the honor of God.

Number Nine: Teach your children to “manage your money, manage your money.” Don’t be foolish with money.

Chapter 3 of Proverbs, verses 9 and 10, “Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce, so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.” Here’s the first thing you do in managing your money; you honor the Lord, you honor the Lord, you honor the Lord. You start by giving the first fruits to the Lord. And then there’s some really practical advice. You’ve already been told that if you work hard, you’re going to have plenty. If you work hard, you’re going to prosper. If you work hard, you will be wealthy, live a full life – we’ve heard all that. But, specifically, there are some things that you need to be careful about in managing your money.

Here’s one in chapter 6, verse 1, “My son, if you have become surety for your neighbor, have given a pledge for a stranger, if you have been snared with the words of your mouth, have been caught with the words of your mouth, do this then, my son, and deliver yourself. Since you have come into the hand of your neighbor, go humble yourself and importune, or plead, with your neighbor. Give no sleep to your eyes, nor slumber to your eyelids. Deliver yourself like a gazelle from the hunter’s hand and

like a bird from the hand of the fowler.”

Well, what is that? Don't cosign a debt for somebody else. Don't put all of your assets on the line for how someone else conducts their life; don't do that. This doesn't forbid generosity, this forbids foolishness.

Certainly you can use your money at your discretion; and if you know somebody has a need, you give to them what they need. And there may be times when there's a reasonable loan to be made. Even Jesus said, "You should have put your money in the bank and earned interest. And if you're putting it in and earning interest, the bank is putting it out to gain that interest." So Jesus affirmed that. But what this is saying is, "Do not put your money in the control of someone else's hand."

Your stewardship is your stewardship. Take care of your own financial obligation. And if you've gotten yourself in a situation where you are liable for somebody else's debt, go to that person and get out of that relationship, get out of it, because now what God has given you is at the discretion of someone else. Negotiate a settlement as fast as you can is what verses 4 and 5 are saying. Get out of being surety or being a cosigner or a guarantee of a stranger. Doesn't mean you wouldn't help your children or somebody that's near and dear to you, but you don't do this with people you don't know.

Furthermore, look at chapter 13, verse 22. Teach your children this, "A good man leaves an inheritance." Did you listen to this? To his children? No. "A good man leaves an inheritance to his – " what? " – children's children, and the wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous." A good man actually leaves an inheritance to his grandchildren. The Lord has provided all of us the power to earn wealth, Deuteronomy says. He's put us in a world where there are riches abounding; and if we work hard and do well, we have something for the future generations.

By the way, Proverbs 22: 7 reminds us, "The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender's slave." Teach your children to manage their money, be responsible for their money. They work hard for it. There are legitimate means for earning money. They work hard for it; they take care of it; they maintain their own responsibility for it. They don't get themselves in compromising situations where somebody else's behavior affects their money. Control your money to honor the Lord. You start by giving the first fruits to Him. Take care of your financial obligations immediately, get out of debt, and leave an inheritance.

Then Number Ten – and more could be said about all of these; I'm just giving you kind of the cursory overview: "Serve your neighbors. Serve your neighbors."

In the midst of you being wise with your money, you still are called to love your neighbor as yourself – we read that, didn't we, in Leviticus – and you serve your neighbors needs. Look at chapter 3, verse 27, "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it." If somebody

has a need and you have the resources, it's your obligation: do it. You have the power to do it: do it.

“Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Oh, go, come back, and tomorrow I will give it,’ when you have it with you. Why would you devise harm against your neighbor, while he lives securely beside you?” No. If he has a need and you have the supply, meet his need; serve your neighbor. Don't argue. Don't be reluctant. Don't say, “I'll think about it, I'll come back, “ when you have the resources with you. All that's going to do is make life difficult for you if you're living nearby.

Verse 31 says, “Do not envy a man of violence and do not choose any of his ways.” Don't ever be jealous of people who resolve issues with violence. Don't ever resolve issues with violence. “Such devious people are an abomination to the Lord. But He is intimate with the upright. The curse of the Lord is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the dwelling of the righteous. Though He scoffs at the scoffers, He gives grace to the afflicted. The wise will inherit honor; fools display dishonor.” All of that in the context of: help your neighbor, reach out to your neighbor.

Such is the duty of parents to teach their children: fear your God, guard your mind, obey your parents, select your companions, control your desires, enjoy your spouse, watch your words, pursue your work, manage your money, help your neighbor. It's amazing lessons, amazing lessons.

Let's look at them a little bit in reverse. Fail to teach your child to fear God and the devil will teach them to hate God. Fail to teach your son to guard his mind and the devil will teach him to have an open mind. Fail to teach your child to obey his parents and the devil will teach him to rebel and break his parents' heart. Fail to teach your child to select his companions and the devil choose them for him. Fail to teach your children to control their body and the devil will gladly teach them to give it over completely to lust. Fail to teach your children to enjoy the marriage partner and the devil will teach them to destroy the marriage. Fail to teach your children to watch their words and the devil will fill their mouths. Fail to teach your children to pursue their work and the devil will make laziness a tool of unrighteousness. Fail to teach your children to manage their money and the devil will teach them to waste it. Fail to teach your children to love their neighbor and the devil will gladly teach them to love only themselves.

Now you might think we're done, but not so fast. This is a profound and compelling matter that we've been looking at in Proverbs – life lived wisely. But behind the scenes, are you feeling a little of the sort of nagging reality that this all was written, according to chapter 1, verse 1, by a man named Solomon, the son of David, king of Israel, who also in chapter 31 is identified by name Lemuel. The inspired writer of Proverbs, the man the Holy Spirit used to be the transmitter of all this divine wisdom was David's son Solomon, Solomon. It is Solomon who basically writes and collects all of this wisdom.

Now, we need to know Solomon's story to close out, so go back to 1 Kings, chapter 3; 1 Kings, chapter 3. Listen to this, verse 3: "Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. The king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. In Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream at night, and God said, 'Ask what you wish Me to give you.'" Solomon makes this massive offering to God, a thousand burnt offerings to God, and God says, "I appreciate that. What do you want?"

Verse 6, "Solomon said, 'You've shown great lovingkindness to your servant David my father, according as he walked before You in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward You. You have reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that You have given him a son, me, to sit on his throne, as it is this day. Now, O Lord my God – " here comes his request, " – You have made Your servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people which You have chosen, a great people who are too many to be numbered or counted. So give Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?'

"It was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing. God said to him, 'Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but you have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice; behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you,' the wisest person who ever lived. "I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.'

"Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants." What an incredibly wonderful beginning for Solomon.

Go over to chapter 4, chapter 4: "Solomon – " verse 29. "God gave Solomon wisdom, very great discernment, breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda – " obviously famous wise men " – the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall. He spoke also of animals, and birds, and creeping things, and fish. Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom," 3,000 proverbs expressing this astonishing wisdom. Over 500 of those 3,000 are contained in the book of

Proverbs, along with some proverbs from other writers that he collected, along with chapter 30 from a man named Agur, which is included. Solomon also wrote Psalm 72 and Psalm 127. He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Proverbs is a goldmine of biblical theology brought down to practical righteousness in thought and action by the wisest man who ever lived; and on top of that, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

The general message is this: Here is wisdom. If you live wisely, God will cause you to live longer, to prosper more, to experience greater joy and fulfillment, and will bless you. If you don't apply this wisdom and you live foolishly, you will suffer shame and death. Those two themes are woven through Proverbs: wisdom and foolishness.

Early in his life, Solomon was married to a maiden from Shunem. Shunem is near Jezreel in the southern part of Galilee. Married to a maiden, his bride, his wife. In celebrating the bliss of that marriage, the Holy Spirit inspired him to write this most amazing long love poem to his beloved wife called Song of Solomon. He wrote it as a very young man to his wife.

Subsequent to that, he married 699 other women, and then had sexual relationships with 300 concubines – 1,000 women. This is the man who wrote Proverbs? This is the wisest man who ever lived? What did his son turn out like? A disaster. Are you surprised? Rehoboam rejected God – chapter 12 of 1 Kings – rebelled. Sad, sad story.

How is it possible that a man with all that wisdom who could write all of that, a man who knew what it was to have a righteous love for a woman and wrote Song of Solomon and the beauty of that, how in the world is it possible that he could have 1,000 women – 700 wives? Solomon was a hypocrite; he was a hypocrite. I think in kindness to him, the Lord gave him one more chance for a final word, and he wrote Ecclesiastes. At the end of his life, he looked back over his life and his foolishness and he wrote Ecclesiastes, which means “the preacher.”

“The words of the preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.” This is all you need to know. “Vanity of vanities,” says the preacher, “vanity of vanities! All is vanity.” That's the postmortem on his life: waste, empty, useless. His whole life was empty – empty, empty, empty.

For eleven chapters in Ecclesiastes, he spins the calendar back and rehearses the emptiness of his wretched life, a man who knew so much wisdom and who lived the life of an absolute fool. But he came to the right end. The final chapter of Ecclesiastes, the final legacy of Solomon – listen to his words: “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come. Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the evil days come. Remember Him, because vanity of vanities – ” says the preacher, “ – all is vanity. Don't forget God.”



And this is the final section of chapter 12: “In addition to being a wise man, the preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out, and arranged many proverbs. The preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly – ” 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs “ – and the words of wise men are like goads, and masters of these collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd – ” from God. “But beyond all this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. The conclusion, when all has been heard is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

He sort of ended where he began, didn't he? Those are the kinds of things that we hear him say in Proverbs: “Fear God, keep His commandments; for God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.”

He also said this, chapter 9, verse 9, just a little footnote: “Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.” Enjoy life with the woman you love. Literally was turning his back on everything that had made his life so vacuous.

The point is this: you can know all this and you can live like Solomon. That is just epically tragic. Or, you can listen to Solomon when he looks back over his life and follow his wisdom to “remember your Creator in the days of your youth, to honor God, keep His commandments, fear Him. This applies to every person.”

Lord, we thank You that we've been able to go through these really rich proverbs and see them in the context of a man who, in such a strange way, found it well-nigh impossible to live what he preached. He's the preacher. He's the one who writes the proverbs. He's the one who puts the truth in correct words. He's the one who pounds them in like well-driven nails. But he lives as a man who is the wisest man on earth, and maybe by some measures, the most dissolute.

It's a frightening thing to see, and it speaks to the issue that you can know something to be true and fail to live it. Here was a man whose life was not only empty on his part, but left an empty legacy to his son who was a rebel, not only against the advise of the elder of his nation, but even against You, O God. May we take the wisdom that is there, know it, live it, proclaim it to our children, and entrust them into Your care. For Your glory, we pray in Christ's name. Amen.

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).