

Thirty Truths to Wisdom (Part 2)

Thirty Truths to Wisdom

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I invite you to open your Bibles to Proverbs 23. The 23rd Proverb. We're talking about wisdom. What is it? How do you possess it? How do you know what it looks like? Solomon, if you read the first eight chapters of Proverbs, he presents wisdom as a woman and she calls out to people. She calls out to people and she says, "If you find me, you will find the meaning of life." And of course, Lady Folly also calls out. Folly calls out to people as well and says, "What I offer to you is good." And so Solomon says you have to discern truth from error, wisdom from folly, and that's what we're trying to study. My prayer is that everyone would be wise unto the Lord, would be mature in Christ, that you would have the wisdom that God gives in order to carry out your life.

Now Solomon is going to present, if you look back to chapter 22 in the first few verses of chapter 22, he's going to give four principles or four truths regarding wisdom. I just want to briefly review these with you so you'll have something to build upon as we look at these sayings that Solomon lays out. The first truth that he gives is this, is that wisdom is outside of you therefore you must seek it out. Wisdom is outside of you. It's not something that you are intuitively born with this side of Adam; on this side of Adam we are all born sinners. Paul says that we were spiritually dead in our transgressions and sins, so we're born actually as fools, and that's why if you look at verse 17 of Proverbs 22, verse 17, he says, "Incline your ear, and hear the words of the wise." So in order for you to become wise, you must incline your ear. You must understand what God says. David says in Psalm 19:7, he says, "the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple."

So it's the truth of God's word that God brings his word to us, and that's how God gives you wisdom, and obviously God must open your heart, open your mind to the truth so

that you can receive it. Second truth that Solomon gives us is that wisdom is the applied knowledge of God. Wisdom is the applied knowledge of God. Look at the second part of verse 17, Solomon says, "apply your heart to my knowledge." Wisdom is knowledge applied. It is the knowledge of God lived. It is the truth fleshed out. It is sound doctrine embodied. What this means is, is that you must know basic truths. You must have basic knowledge of who God is, of what redemption is, in order for you to have wisdom. You can have knowledge without wisdom, there's a lot of smart people that aren't wise, but you can't have wisdom without knowledge. That's an important thing to grasp because American Christianity has descended in really an anti-intellectual Christianity where most Christians that go to the average church here in this country aren't even taught the basic truths of the faith. They're not taught the basic truths, but to have wisdom, you have to know the truth. You have to have it here in your mind and then you can begin to live it out in your life.

Third, verse 18, look what he says, "it will be pleasant if you keep them within you," if you keep this wisdom within you, it will be pleasant for you, you'll be blessed, "if all of them are ready on your lips." That's the third principle: wisdom leads to the blessed life. Wisdom leads to the blessed life. If you have wisdom, that is the most important thing that you can have. Wisdom is more important than wealth, more important than pleasure, more important than success. All those things can be taken away but if you have wisdom, Solomon says this, Proverbs 8:10, he says, "Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold," he says, "for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her." Anything else that you might desire in the world does not compare to wisdom if you possess it. There's a lot of rich fools. They get rich, lose their money or lose their spouse, cheat on their spouse. Go look at the big Fortune 500 CEOs. Look at their lives. That's the foolish life but wisdom leads to the blessed life. Remember Jesus in the Beatitudes? He says, "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who are poor in spirit, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied." The Christian life is the blessed life, and wisdom is the embodiment of that blessing.

Fourth, what is wisdom? Wisdom is trusting and fearing God. Wisdom is trusting and fearing God. Look at verse 19 of 22. He says, "That your trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to you today, even to you." So the essence of wisdom is to trust and fear the Lord. Solomon says, Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." It might be interesting to you to think about that Solomon says it's the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. We have a connotation that fear is a negative thing. If you fear something that's bad because whatever you fear is something that could harm you. Well, with God, Solomon says you have to have a holy reverence for God. You must see God for who he is and you must revere him. You must awe him. And that is the mark of the born again Christian. The mark of the born again Christian is somebody who has encountered the living God and says, "God, I do fear you. I do fear hell. I do fear the final judgment and I will come to Christ and rest in him and trust him, knowing that I can have the forgiveness of sins and his righteousness. I will fear you." And Solomon says chapter before that, he says the fear of the Lord is the hatred of evil because once you begin to

fear God and to revere God, you begin to love the things that God loves and you begin to hate the things that God hates. You begin to hate evil. Why do you have when you see on the news this hatred for perverse things? Because that begins with the fear of the Lord. That's one of the marks of the Christian is that you despise the evil that's in the world and that only happens to people that really have authentically encountered God and gained wisdom, and that begins with the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not pass go until you have become a believer in the Lord. That is where wisdom begins. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

So with those four truths established, let's pick up these thirty sayings of Solomon. We've been going through these thirty sayings. Solomon calls them the chief sayings. These are sayings that really embody what wisdom looks like fleshed out, and we are going to begin today with the sixth saying which is in chapter 23. So look at chapter 23, verse 1. Chapter 23, verse 1. He says,

1 When you sit down to eat with a ruler, observe carefully what is before you,

You could sum up this sixth saying with exercise situational awareness with people. Exercise situational awareness with people. If you happen to sit down with a great person, in this case a ruler, he says observe carefully what is before you. Now this statement is an interesting statement because it could refer to two things. It could refer to the food or it could refer to the ruler. He's saying pay attention. Look around. Observe carefully what's before you. If you're eating with a king, the king is the most important thing. Pay attention to the king. Don't pay attention to the food. When you are in the presence of a person of significance, it's not about the food, it's about the person because oftentimes, and you know this if you've interviewed people for jobs, if you've been on the other side of this, if you've interviewed people and that sort of thing, you are assessing that person. You are making an assessment, and if that person is so consumed with their food in the interview, you begin to have questions about their character. You know, are they just going to be given in to any impulse that is thrown their way?

So he says verse 2. Look at verse 2. He says,

2 and put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite.

Now obviously this is hyperbole. This is exaggeration. Remember, Jesus said if your eye causes you to stumble, what? Pluck it out. He's not literally saying pluck out your eye, it's a statement saying, "Look, you need to take extreme measures." He says put a knife to your gullet. Put a knife to your throat if you are given to appetite. If you are a Golden Corral guy or if you have a little bit more money, an Angus Barn guy, then you need to be careful, you need to go into this situation and, in a sense, put a knife to your throat.

Verse 3, he says,

3 Do not desire his delicacies, for they are deceptive food.

Now the food is deceptive in this sense, not that the ruler is trying to deceive you but that you are deceived by the food. You start looking at that rib eye and you start thinking about it instead of who you're eating with. Your stomach deceives you because you get into the food and you stop paying attention to your surroundings, right? That's what he's saying.

Last year I was out at the Shepherd's Conference and it was lunchtime and I got a big foot long sub, got a big foot long sub, started eating it and a guy named Mark MacArthur came up and started talking with me, and Mark is John MacArthur's son. And I was just a few bites in and he said, "Hey, do you want to come eat with dad?" And I said, "You mean, you mean John MacArthur?" He said, "Yeah." He said, "Let's go, let's go eat with dad." And right then I had this picture in my mind of me eating lunch with John MacArthur and tomatoes and lettuce falling out and mayo on my hands, and I remembered this verse. I remembered this verse. And Mark said, "Just bring along that sub. Just bring it along." And I said, "Uh-uh." And I threw that sub in the trash. I threw it away. It's not worth it. It's not worth it. And we walked up and had, I didn't have much of a rest of the lunch, but I was there. I was paying attention and that's what is important.

So what Solomon is saying is, look, have situational awareness. If you are a wise person, you value people. You understand situations. This is what wisdom looks like. Seventh saying. Look at verse 4. You could summarize this saying, this whole saying as do not chase wealth. Do not chase wealth. He says,

4 Do not toil to acquire wealth; be discerning enough to desist.

What's interesting about this Proverb, the next Proverb, the Proverb before it, they're all saying that really things are not like what they seem. Things are not like what they seem. You go have lunch with an important person, it's not about the food. You have wealth, you think you have security, guess what? Wealth can go away. You're wined and dined by somebody, you think it's about friendship, really this is the next Proverb, somebody's trying to put you in your debt. Things are not always what they seem, and so it is with wealth. Wealth is one of those, you know, we like wealth, we like having padded bank accounts because it says security. I can pay my debts. I can buy food. I can pay my mortgage. I can do all those things. I have a secure position. But the problem is that money is ultimately something that's temporal, and it can be taken away. And so you don't want to spend your life on the rat race chasing money. You don't want to be counting dimes at the expense of the kingdom of God or people. Remember Ebenezer Scrooge and Bob Cratchit? For Scrooge the most important thing was the bottom line. "I don't care about the workers. I really don't care about the people working for me. It's about the money and I'm chasing the money."

Now I'm all for capitalism. I think capitalism is in the Bible, but early on in America, what would happen is the Italians would start immigrating or the Irish would start immigrating and they would work for less money in the factories. The factory owners would say, "Okay, I'm going to fire all the normal workers. I'm going to go hire the

Italians because they'll work for \$0.50 less," and that's why people hated the Italians and then the Irish. That's why there was so much prejudice, and the fact that they were Roman Catholic. What Solomon is saying is don't do that. Don't let simply the dollar be the bottom line of how you live your life. You want to chase excellence. You want to be about the kingdom of God. You don't want to spend your life chasing wealth because the problem is, 1, it can do evil to your soul, that's what Paul tells Timothy that the love of money is the root of all sorts of evil but, second, look at verse 5. He says,

5 When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings,
flying like an eagle toward heaven.

This is a play on words. He says when your eyes light on wealth, when you get, "Yes, I love this wealth that I have!" When you do that, he says what happens is wealth sprouts wings and flies away like an eagle. Has anyone here ever lost a significant amount of money? Maybe you made a bad investment. Maybe someone filed a lawsuit against you. Maybe you had a spouse walk out on you and take away half your estate. Maybe you lost a lot of money in the '08 crash. Money is transient and also you can't take it with you. It's here, you use it here, but you can't take it onto the other side into eternity. Jesus said this, this is Luke 12:15, he says, "Take care and be on guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in abundance of possessions." Your life does not consist in what you own. What you own today will be in the garbage heaps of tomorrow. What you own today will be in your son's house as an antique that they don't want in their dining room. Jesus said Matthew 6:19, he says, "Do not lay up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourself treasures," where? In heaven. You see, it's playing the long game. It's playing the long game. I want treasures there. I want a heavenly reward there therefore the money that God gives me here I'm going to leverage for the treasure there. That's what Jesus is saying. That's the long game.

It's not wrong to be wealthy. It's not wrong to be wealthy. What's dangerous, in terms of being wealthy, is to put your security in the wealth. If you're wealthy, what you want to do is leverage your wealth for the kingdom that is to come. Does the name J. Howard Pew ring a bell? Owned Sun Oil. He partnered with a guy by the name of Billy Graham and Pew sponsored many of the Graham Crusades and he put up the money to start a little magazine called "Christianity Today," which for a long time was the periodical of note for born again evangelicals.

When I was growing up, my grandparents lived in Longview, TX and we would go visit the campus of LeTourneau University. Has anybody ever heard of LeTourneau University? A guy by the name of R. G. LeTourneau and his wife started LeTourneau University. He made his money, he developed rubber tires to be used on machinery. And during World War II they supplied basically all the earth moving vehicles for the Allied Forces. World War II, they made an absolute killing and they took that money and they said, "We're going to start a Christian university that is going to stand for truth, that's going to train missionaries." And guess what? It still does.

Charles Spurgeon. Charles Spurgeon, Prince of Preachers, the greatest preacher of the 19th century made quite a bit of money. When Spurgeon died at 58, his wife Susannah took that money and she started a book distribution ministry where she bought good theological books and gave them to pastors who couldn't afford to buy books, and then she invested the money in the orphanages and helped rebuild the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

My point in all this is saying, look, you want to not cling to wealth, you want to use wealth in the advance of the kingdom, in the cause of Christ and for your own future reward. The people who toil after wealth, wealth leaves them. The people who try to remain faithful to the Lord and exercise wisdom, it just so happens it just seems that wealth keeps on finding those people and they're generous and they keep giving it away. It's amazing how that works. As soon as you become close-fisted, God says, "I'm done. You're done."

So that's the seventh saying. Eighth, look at verse 6.

6 Do not eat the bread of a man who is stingy; do not desire his delicacies,

You could summarize this with avoid the company of the greedy. Avoid the company of the greedy. Have you ever been wined and dined and at the end of the meal found out that there were strings attached to what was going on? I remember when I was in college, some guys said, "Hey, come over to the student union, you know, we'll buy you lunch." And I showed up and they were wearing suits. I was like, "Man, this is interesting." So I sit down. They buy me lunch and then at the end of the lunch they introduced me to this pyramid scheme that they're a part of and said, "Hey, you can be a part of this," and at that point I was like, "Man, I just wasted an hour and a half of my life."

Solomon says be careful with a man who is stingy. That word stingy literally, he says, who has an evil eye. Be careful with a man who has an evil eye and by evil eye he means somebody that's greedy, somebody whose eye is simply on the bottom line, somebody who's just out for them. And he says, if that's the case, do not desire their delicacies, their morsels, their little pieces of good food that they're waving in front of you. In Texas we have these things called jalapeno poppers. It's a jalapeno, they dig out the hot seeds and they put some chicken or some beef in there and then they put cheese in there and they wrap it in bacon and they put it in the oven. That's what I thought about like a dainty morsel that somebody waves in front of you and they want you to eat their food and then you're going to be in their debt.

Look at verse 7. This one with the evil eye, he says,

7 ... he is like one who is inwardly calculating. "Eat and drink!" [He says, "Eat these little morsels in front of you,"] but his heart is not with you.

He's not really into being a friend. He wants you to be in his debt. He wants to use you like a pawn.

Verse 8, once you eat he says,

8 You will vomit up the morsels that you have eaten, [in other words, you will wish that you hadn't have eaten his delicacies, you will wish that you hadn't of eaten that steak, and he says you will realize you] wasted your pleasant words.

That this whole thing was a charade and now you're going to be in an uncomfortable position of explaining your way out of the situation. So the key is that if you know that somebody is stingy, you know that somebody is greedy, you know that somebody has an ulterior motive, don't take anything that they have to offer. Don't take anything that they have to offer. Remember Daniel when he was in the court in Babylon, the king said, "Take my food. Take my wine. Take my food and drink." And that food and drink had been dedicated to idols and Daniel, this is Daniel 1:8, "Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food or with the wine that he drank." And he and his three friends said, "Look, you don't give us the king's food. We'll take water and vegetables. And then at the end of that you compare us to the people who take the king's food and you see who looks healthier." And God blessed that. And what Daniel was saying is, "We're not going to be in debt to the king. We're not going to be in his debt. We're not going to take his food. We're not going to take the food that's sacrificed to idols. We're going to dedicate ourselves to God, to Yahweh," and those types of things.

So that's the eighth saying. Ninth, don't waste time on fools. Don't waste time on fools. Look at verse 9,

9 Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words.

When he says do not speak in the hearing of a fool, he's talking about speaking truth. He's not just talking about, you know, like ordering a hamburger or something. He's talking about you speaking truth, you perhaps even presenting the gospel, you telling them about God, you pointing out the error of their ways. He says if you do that, he will despise the good sense of your words. That word he uses for fool is the Hebrew word k'sil. It means a stupid and complacent person. A stupid and complacent person is someone who decides to live their life as if God doesn't exist. David says, Psalm 14, "The fool says in his heart that there is no God." So the fool says, "I will live my life as if God does not exist. I will live my life the way that I see fit. I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul." And Solomon says, Proverbs 1:32, "the complacency of fools will destroy them." If you keep going down the foolish path, you will ultimately end in ruin. It will destroy you.

But the fool does not have the ears apart from the supernatural work of God to hear divine revelation. They reject it. Paul says 1 Corinthians 2:14, listen, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned." When you give divine

instruction to a fool, they will resent you. They will resent you because they will see your instruction to them as unneeded correction. As unneeded correction. That's why when you go to present the gospel to so many people and you say, "Okay, God exists. There is a coming judgment and you are guilty in that judgment, you are a sinner," that's why the world rejects the gospel. The world does not want to hear that they're sinners. They don't want you meddling in their life. They don't want you telling them that something in their lifestyle is out of step with who God is, and so that's why the gospel is so often rejected, that's why there's so much antagonism towards the truth. And what Solomon is saying here is obviously we want to present the gospel, we want to speak the truth, but if somebody is pushing back like a fool does, Solomon's saying don't waste your breath. Don't waste your breath.

There was a kid in my Scout troop and we lived probably a mile from the junior high and our parents thought it would be a good idea starting in 7th grade that we would walk to school together because our houses were close to each other, and this kid was probably the polar opposite of me. He despised God, I'm just being honest. He despised God. He made fun of me. He was rude to me. He was a Longhorn, maybe that's.... just incidental. I don't know, that might have had something to do with it. But we would on our walk to the junior high, we would get in these debates and I would start talking to him about God. I would start talking to him about Christ. I would start talking to him about sin, and all he did was ridicule me, made fun of me. He made fun of my cowboy boots. And at some point, my mom just said, she sat me down and we would normally read a Proverb a day and she pointed me to this verse, Proverbs 9:7, "Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury," and my mom basically said, "Stop arguing with him. Stop talking about metaphysical things with him, things that talk about ultimate meaning, about wisdom, about God. He simply does not have ears to hear." So at that point I would be nice to him, but I would not debate him. I would not talk to him about the things of God. Jesus would sometimes answer the foolish man, but he responded in such a way so that their mouth would be shut. Sometimes he wouldn't even answer. Remember, Pilate was asking him those questions, he was just not even going to talk to you. But sometimes he would answer in such a way that the mouth would be shut. You know, "Jesus, are we to pay taxes?" "Take out a denarius. Let me see that. Whose inscription is on that? Oh, it's Caesar's. Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, to God the things that are God's," and he shut their mouths. So with a foolish person exercise wisdom. Don't spend your life chasing them. They will just resent you.

10th saying. Don't take advantage of the fatherless. You could summarize it with don't take advantage of the fatherless. Look at verse 10.

10 Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless,
11 for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you.

Now we talked about moving ancient landmarks and in practicing injustice towards the poor, that was in the first saying, practicing injustice and we also saw earlier about moving landmarks but this saying introduces something unique and that is this aspect of the fatherless, those whose fathers have died prematurely. You know, a child needs a

father and a mother, and the father is the one who provides and protects for the family. That's what a father is. And so, in America, when you have less than 50% of households that are where kids are growing out without fathers, you see the great need and the issue with where our country is. But a father is the provider, the protector, and so a child growing up without a father is at a grave disadvantage and Solomon says don't take advantage of the fatherless because they can't help themselves. That is a grievous thing to do. Verse 11 he says their Redeemer is strong. Their Redeemer is God. The one who comes to the aid of the fatherless is the Lord and Solomon says he will plead their cause against you. So he says be very careful about doing something to hurt a widow or the fatherless because God is their Redeemer. God is the one who fights for them. God is the one who comes to their help.

When I was a little boy, my father was killed in a plane crash and my mom would rock me to sleep at night and I would be just sad, missing my father, and my mom would remind me of this truth, Psalm 68:5, that God is the "Father of the fatherless and a protector of widows is God in his holy habitation." It's the Lord who comes to the aid of the orphan, the widow. God provides for them. And so if you want to be on the side of God, you take care of the orphan and the widow. You take care of the fatherless. That is as close to the heart of God as it gets, taking care of orphans and widows in their distress. That puts you in the stream of where God can honor you when you come to the aid of an orphan and widow.

We had a young lady in our church whose husband passed away a little over a year ago and I was stunned to see the people in this church, people outside of this church, call and say, "Look, I want to give money to those kids so they can go to college. I want to give money so she's supported." That's what the body of Christ is about. That's what God's about. That's godliness.

Verse 12, look at verse 12. Verse 12 is a transition verse so he's going to introduce sayings 11 through 30 and he says,

12 Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge.

You've heard that before. This is what Solomon said earlier in chapter 22. He says, "Look, remember these are instructions that you need to keep applying in your life. These are words of knowledge that you need to listen to and that you need to apply. You need to understand this. This is wisdom." And what he says next, I think, is something that we definitely need to hear and understand in our generation. Look what he says, the 11th saying. How practical is this? He says, 11th saying, discipline your children. Discipline your children. Look at verse 13,

13 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you strike him with a rod, he will not die.

One of the fatal mistakes, one of the fatal mistakes of Christians in our generation is that they fail to apply discipline to their children because our culture has said that any type of

discipline, not talking about abuse, I'm talking about simple discipline, that any type of discipline is abuse. That's what our culture has said but God says discipline is important for a child. He says parents have the responsibility to discipline their child, that's verbal discipline and also physical discipline. He says if you strike him with a rod, he will not die. If you strike him with a rod, he will not die. Now the funny thing is you could take that two ways. Sometimes as parents we think, "Man, if we discipline that child, it's not going to be good for him." And Solomon is saying, "You need to know they're not going to die. They're going to be okay. You discipline the child. They're going to be okay." The other sense is if you discipline your child, you're going to prevent them from death. They will not die if you discipline them.

So it's a double meaning and, by the way, if you don't discipline your child, someone else will. If you don't discipline your child, someone else will. It'll be a future boss will discipline them. Could be a judge will discipline them. And if you don't discipline them, it could be God who disciplines them in the end. So it's not if we will be disciplined, it's by who we will be disciplined. I would rather be disciplined by my parents, put me on the way of wisdom and then not be disciplined later on. If you apply right administered verbal and physical discipline, the child will not die and you will put them on the path of wisdom. Proverbs 22:15, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him." And obviously this discipline is done in love. It's not done in harshness. It's not done in anger. It's not done out of judgment. It's done as a course of discipline, as a course of correction to put the child on the right path and not the path of folly. Paul says Ephesians 6:4, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

So you are training that child to respect you and then ultimately to respect God. If they don't respect you, it will be difficult for them to ultimately respect God. Look at verse 14. This is a really amazing statement. He says,

14 If you strike him with the rod, you will save his soul from Sheol.

Wow, so if you teach them discipline early, you will save their soul from hell. So you might think that by withholding discipline you are doing your child a favor, that you know what's best for them, but you are actually putting them on the path to hell, Solomon says, whereas rightly administered discipline puts the child on the path of wisdom, the path to heaven, the path of the fear of the Lord. Who do you think Solomon learned this from? David. Solomon learned this from David. Who did David learn it from? Jesse. Who did Jesse learn it from? Obed. Who did Obed learn it from? Boaz. If you want the line of godliness to continue, you have to do this. It starts with you, your children, the generation after you. It's better to cry now than to cry later. Better to cry now than to cry later.

So this is important and then what it leads to is the 12th saying, what it leads to is the 12th saying which is this: wise children make the heart glad. Wise children make the heart glad. Look at verse 16. He says,

16 My inmost being will exult when your lips speak what is right.

You speak what is right because you have wisdom in the heart. Children who are wise bring incredible joy to the heart. It means that Christianity, when your child speaks the truth, it means that that Christianity is not going to die with you, that you have passed it on to the next generation, that the truth will go forward, that righteousness will go forward. Proverbs 10:1 says, "A wise son makes a glad father." And so we need to be praying and imploring our children to take up the baton, to take up this baton of fearing the Lord, of walking in wisdom.

I remember when I visit my grandfather, every time, every time when I'd go to leave, leave the house, my grandparents would come outside and my grandfather would put his hand on my head and he would say, "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious to thee. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace. Go." And he would pray over me and I just felt the Lord in those moments and I felt him saying, "Carry on this legacy of Christ standing for truth. Carry this forward. Walk in this narrow way."

Verse 17, look what he says to his son. He says,

17 Let not your heart envy sinners, but continue in the fear of the LORD all the day.

That's what we want from our children. Don't be envious of the ungodly. Don't covet those on the wide path but continue in the fear of the Lord, continue in the reverence of God. By the way, the fear of the Lord, David says in Psalm 19:9, is Scripture itself. He says, "the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever." So you continue in the word of God and to do that there needs to be purposeful conversations between you and your children and your grandchildren where you are imploring them to continue in the word of the Lord, to continue to hold the line, to continue to stand for truth where you are praying for them, praying with them. And if they do that, if they hold the line, if they walk in the narrow way, look at verse 18.

18 Surely there is a future, and your hope will not be cut off.

They will have an eternal future. They will reap the heavenly reward. They will not be cut off. That word "cut off" is like a tree being cut down. You will not be cut off before the Lord if you do this. They will be blessed all the days of their life and that's the heart that we have for our children, isn't it, to walk in the way of wisdom, to implore them, to pray for them.

There was a young man that was, he lived 1,700 years ago, named Aurelius Augustine. We know him as St. Augustine, and he was born, his father was a pagan, but he was born to a Christian mother named Monica, and from the moment he was born she began to pray for him and she began to pray that he would become a believer. Guess what he did? He ran the opposite direction. He ran the opposite direction. He ran into licentiousness.

He ran into fornication. He ran away from Christianity. He became a member of a cult called the Cult of Manichee, Manichaeism. Manichee was what was called the Prophet of Light. He said Jesus is not enough. We need other revelation. Buddha is not enough. He brought in all sorts of weird teachings. He became a Manichee. He took a mistress for himself. He moved away from North Africa all the way up to Italy, to Milan, where he became a rhetorician where he was teaching the art of rhetoric. And it was there in Milan, his mother followed him, that he went to a church that was pastored by a guy named Ambrose, and it was under Ambrose that he heard the gospel, that he came under conviction and was eventually saved. And here's what he said about all of this, he said, this is in a prayer to God, he says, "You stretched forth your hand from above and drew up my soul out of that profound darkness because my mother, your faithful one, wept to you on my behalf more than mothers are accustomed to weep for the bodily deaths of their children." He said, "It was the tears and prayers of my mother that ultimately led you to save me and bring me into the kingdom." That was it.

And so that's the best thing, right there, is that wise children make the heart glad, that you have passed on the truth of Christianity to the next generation. That's wisdom. That's wisdom.

Heavenly Father, Lord, we thank you for these truths this morning. We pray, Lord, that in all that we do that we would embody wisdom, that we would embody truth. And we pray, Lord, that you would put us on this path of wisdom if we're not on it already, that we would come to know the fear of the Lord, that we would come to the living Christ and repent of our sins and trust him in faith, that we would be born again, that we would know the living God, that we would fear the living God, that we would love the things that God loves, that we would hate the things that God hates, and that we would walk in the path of wisdom which is the path of life everlasting all the days of our lives, and not only would we walk in that path but that we would train our children to walk in that path, and our grandchildren to walk in that path, that we would set them on the path of life and that they would not depart from it. We ask all these things in Christ's name. Amen.

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