

# Training Children in Wisdom

*Visiting Preachers*

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I love that song for a number of reasons but not the least of which is the fact that it's so applicable in both the old and the new covenant. We sing that song and we think about Israel waiting for her Messiah to come, waiting for the Christ child to be born, and it is true that there was that longing and that rejoicing because he would come. And now we think about it in terms of the new covenant as Christ has come and he has accomplished his work of redemption, we also rejoice and await as we anticipate his work of consummation and his coming at the end of the age. Amen? Amen.

If you have your Bibles with you, open them to the book of Proverbs, Proverbs 1. Proverbs 1. We're continuing our series, the Gospel according to Proverbs, and today we're looking at particularly verse 8, verses 8 and 9 actually, but we'll start by reading back there in verse 1 to put this in context again. Last time, we looked at those first seven verses, today we want to connect them to verses 8 and 9. The Bible reads,

1 The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; 4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth-- 5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

And then here is the thesis statement of the entire book,

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

And our text today,

8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, 9 for they are a graceful garland for your head and a pendant for your neck.

Amen.

As we examine this, let's review a few things. Remember, there is a way that we are to look at the book of Proverbs. Our tendency is to look at the book of Proverbs as though the book of Proverbs is a book of law. It's not a book of law, it's found in the wisdom literature. Proverbs is actually more akin to poetry than it is to law, and so what we find in Proverbs is not a book of guarantees, not even a book necessarily of promises, but a book about the way things generally are, a way things tend to be, a way that this world God created tends to work, and things that have been and can be observed over time as a result.

There are several rules that we gave in terms of the way that we are to read the book of Proverbs and one was that we are not to read wisdom as law because the book of Proverbs is not law, it is wisdom. The second one is that we have to understand the difference between indicatives and imperatives, and if you weren't here, we talked about indicatives being parts of speech that indicate what something are. "This is a microphone. This is a microphone," that's an indicative, I'm indicating what something is. "Speak into the microphone," that's an imperative, it's telling me something to do. And one of the things that we looked at on last time is our tendency to go to the book of Proverbs and read indicatives as though they are imperatives, where the Bible gives us a picture, "This is a picture of what the wise man is," and we turn that into an imperative, "Do this so that you will be the wise man." Well, no, that's not the way we read Proverbs. Understand the difference between indicatives and imperatives.

The third rule that we looked at was the fact that Christ is the wise son of proverbs. Christ is the wise son of Proverbs. I'll say more about that today, but that is a rule, it is a principle to keep in mind as we go through the book of Proverbs, that Christ is the wise son of the book of Proverbs. That's important for a number of reasons, not least of which is if we are reading the book of Proverbs wrongly, then here's what we're saying, "Here is the wise son. You need to work harder to be like the wise son and not like the fool." Well, if Christ is the wise son of Proverbs, and I'm telling you you need to work harder to be the wise son of Proverbs, I'm telling you that if you work hard enough you can be like Christ. You don't need redemption, you just need to work harder to be like Christ. Is it a huge categorical error. You don't need to work harder to be like Christ, you need Christ to be formed in you. Amen? Because as Christ is formed in you, you reflect the wise son of Proverbs. There's a difference between those two things.

Then the last one is that, you remember that the word picture that I gave you, the furniture hasn't moved, the furniture hasn't moved, in other words, when we look at these truths in the Old Testament and then we look at these truths in the New Testament, it's not as though we come to the New Testament and we get new furniture, it's just that the lights have been turned on. The furniture has always been there. So these truths and these principles in the book of Proverbs we see in the new covenant expressed in clearer terms and we want to look at them and understand them in that way.

So those are the principles in terms of the way that we look at the book, the way we read the book, but then if you remember, we also talked about these principles in terms of the goal of the book. We struggle with two things in general: legalism on the one hand, and moralism on the other. Now legalism is the word that we generally use, although it's usually not what we're talking about. Legalism is the idea that we please God by keeping the law. We please God by keeping the law and so we want to know what the law is, what the command is. Legalism asks questions like this, "Is it a sin if I....?" You ask a lot of questions like that? "Is it a sin if I.... Will you go to hell if you....?" That's legalism. Legalism wants the specific rule that is not to be violated, wants to know exactly where the beginning and end of the rule are, and then legalism proceeds to live as close to that line as possible and to judge everyone else who's gone further than me. If you can't say amen, you ought to say ouch. That's legalism. Your heart can be as wrong as a heart can be and someone can come to you and talk to you about how wrong that your heart is, but all you want to talk about is the technical aspect of the law that you technically didn't violate. Doesn't that bring up scriptural references? "These people draw near to me with their lips but their hearts are far from me." That's the legalist. That's legalism.

But there is another issue beyond legalism and it's moralism and when we talk about the book of Proverbs, the problem that we have when we approach the book of Proverbs is usually not legalism but it's moralism, and moralism is the idea that we please God by being moral people. We please God by being moral people and all of a sudden for the moralistic Christian, Jesus becomes our moral example, right? "What would Jesus do?" We even had bracelets like that for a while. Do you remember that big craze, right? "What would Jesus do?" It's the absolute wrong question for the Christian. My Christianity is not based on me doing what Jesus would do in a given situation, my Christianity, my salvation, my redemption is not even based on what Jesus would do at all, it's based on what Jesus did do. Not what would Jesus do, what did Jesus do? What did he do at the cross? What did he do with sin? What did he do for my redemption? That's where my righteousness comes from, amen?

So moralism, but there's another feature of moralism if we're going to understand the way we approach the book of Proverbs. The other feature of moralism is this, moralism has at its foundation this basic idea: when you are good, God will bless you. When you are good, God will bless you. That's the rule that sits there underneath moralism, when you are good, God will bless you. So remember we talked about the legalist and the question that the legalist always likes to ask, right? When you talk to a legalist, you get a lot of those questions, "Is it a sin if....?" Right? "Can you go to heaven if....? Will you go to hell if....?" The moralist tends to ask you questions like this, "Why, why would God punish me if....?" In other words, for the moralist, we believe that if we're good, God will bless us; we believe that blessing is an increase in wealth and a decrease in trouble, amen? That's how we define blessing, "I've got more stuff. I've got more wealth. God has blessed me. I've got less trouble, less strife, God has blessed me." So for the moralist, "I'm living my life, I'm keeping the rules, I'm being good and then something bad comes in my life and I want to know what I did wrong because everybody knows if you're a good little boy or a good little girl, God blesses you. Because something negative came into my life, that must mean that I did something wrong, or worse yet, God forgot how to

keep score. Huh? God forgot how to keep score because certainly, certainly if he's been watching me, certainly if I'm on my job and this person over here who doesn't go to church, this person who breaks all the rules that I don't break, this person who doesn't have all the..., this person got the promotion and I didn't get the promotion, what went wrong? Is there something in my life that I didn't see or has God just forgotten how to keep score because everybody knows God blesses you when you're good. I'm better than that person. I should have been blessed and not them." Are you smelling what I'm stepping in?

This is the moralist and the book of Proverbs is a breeding ground for moralism if you don't read the book rightly. It's a breeding ground for moralism if we don't read the book rightly because here's the other side of moralism. On the one side of moralism there's the person who says, "I've been a good boy, I've been a good girl, how could I get this sickness? I've been a good boy, I've been a good girl, how can they get that and I not get that?" The other side of moralism and this is the sinister side of moralism is the person who learns some moral rules and ends up being successful and believes that they are successful because God is smiling on them for being good. You come to that person with the Gospel and they look at you like you're crazy. "Why would I need the Gospel? I'm a moral person and, oh by the way, do you see how nice my car is? Do you see how big my house is? Apparently I've already done a good job of pleasing God so you can go take the Gospel somewhere else."

Do you see this? This is the sinister side of moralism when we're reading and understanding the book of Proverbs wrongly, and so now all of a sudden we read Proverbs as law, turn indicatives into imperatives, forget that Christ is the wise son of Proverbs, believe that we are the wise son of Proverbs, or if we try hard enough we can be, believe that when wealth increases or trouble decreases we've been blessed, keep a few of these things in our pocket and try to live according to them, success comes our way and boom, we believe that we don't need the Gospel. This is why I shared to you last time the huge problem I have with books that are out there in abundance that are basically books about taking the principles of Proverbs and using them as a roadmap to success in business or sports or whatever else, and we completely miss the wise son of Proverbs, which means we miss the Gospel.

Now all of that by way of review. Let's look at this idea of producing wise sons, and you hear that, right, producing wise sons? Wait a minute, that sounds like moralism. It sounds like we can make our sons wise. Well, just hang on because here's another thing that you need to get ahold of and that is this: that God is sovereign over ends as well as means. God is sovereign over ends as well as means and the best way for us to understand this is through an illustration. Oftentimes when we don't understand this issue of God being sovereign over ends as well as means, we'll find out about something like election, the doctrine of election, right, and we find out about the doctrine of election and we'll say something like, "Well, why do we need to be praying? If God is sovereign, if God is electing, why do we need to be praying? Why do we need to be preaching? I mean, if God is sovereign, it's already decided, why do we need to be doing that? If God is sovereign, if it's already done, why do we need to be doing that?" Let me ask you a

question: a farmer who is going to get a crop next year or who is not going to get a crop next year, is God sovereign over that? He most assuredly is but the farmer who believes in God's sovereignty does not say, "Because God is sovereign, I won't plant. I won't irrigate. I won't fertilize." Do you follow? He knows that he can do all of those things, he can plant good seed in the ground and he can work his field and watch his field and something comes, some form of blight comes and the next thing you know, all of your working and watching ends up with a crop that doesn't come in. God is sovereign. But because he knows God is sovereign doesn't mean that he doesn't do all of those things that he knows to do in order to receive a crop. Same thing with us, saints. God is sovereign over the salvation of the sinner and yet he has given us the means, the proclamation of the Gospel. That is our planting and our watering and our tending, amen? And so we do it and when it comes to producing wise sons, the idea here is not that we don't believe that God is sovereign over the production of wise sons, but that he gives us means and that we trust and use those means.

A couple of things here. Although I'm talking about producing wise sons, we know that I'm using that in the generic term, in the generic sense rather. It's not that, you know, here's how we produce wise sons and here's how we produce wise daughters. When the author says, "My son," he's not just exclusively referring to his male children.

Here's the second thing. When the book of Proverbs talks about raising up and producing and discipling wise sons, it's also not limited to those who are our children. The same process whereby we produce, by God's grace, wise sons is the process whereby we produce wise disciples in general. Amen? A great example of this is the book of Timothy 1 & 2 Timothy. Paul is using the language of the father/son relationship because that is the way that he mentored and disciplined his protegee Timothy. It's the same principle. It's the same principle. So you don't even have to have children for this to apply to you, amen? You just have to be an individual who's committed to making disciples.

With that in mind, let's look at this text. First, producing wise sons is the ultimate goal of godly parents. Producing wise sons is the ultimate goal of godly parents. Think about that for a moment. What do we want? And sometimes we even forget, we'll even get off track and we live our lives as though the ultimate goal is to produce successful children, or the ultimate goal is to produce wealthy children, or the ultimate goal is to produce mannerable children, respectable children. But here's what you know, Christian, if you have a child, again if you are a godly mother or a godly father, a godly man or woman who is pouring your life into another, and that person becomes rich and godless, you do not say, "I've achieved." Huh? If that person becomes respectable in the eyes of men but wicked in the sight of God, you do not say, "Mission accomplished," because the ultimate goal of godly parents is not to produce rich children, not to produce successful children, not to produce well-educated children, not to produce respectable children, the ultimate goal is to produce wise children. And be careful here, when I say wise, I'm speaking about wisdom in the way that the book of Proverbs uses wisdom. Wisdom in Proverbs is not just having information and understanding, wisdom according to the book of Proverbs is being found in the wise son of Proverbs and as the wise son of Proverbs. Who

is the wise son of Proverbs? Christ. Christ. In other words, being wise according to the book of Proverbs is living your life in a way that reflects the very character of Christ.

That's wisdom. That's why the author says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It's the starting point of wisdom. It's the epicenter of wisdom. It's where wisdom comes from, from God himself. The fear of God, reverence for God, a relationship with God. So when I say producing wise sons is the ultimate goal of godly parents, what I'm saying is the ultimate goal of godly parents is producing godly children. Not just children who are smart. Not just what my grandma used to call an educated fool. Amen? If you haven't met a few educated fools, just keep living and you will. People with a list of degrees as long as their arm who are absolute fools. That's not what we're talking about here when we talk about wise sons.

Look at verse 8,

8 Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching,

This entire book, this entire book is about King Solomon's plea, King Solomon's desire for his sons and Israel's future kings, for Israel in general to be characterized by godly wisdom. That's why he takes the time to write the book, to collect these wise sayings, to put these wise sayings together, and over and over and over again to plead with his sons, over and over and over again to plead with coming generations, to plead with those who will be in his line who will lead the nation of Israel, to plead with them to be examples of godly wisdom so that Israel will be a nation filled with people who are marked by godly wisdom. That's his goal. That's his desire and that is our desire if we are godly parents. It is the greatest desire that we could have.

Proverbs 10:1, "A wise son makes a glad father, but a foolish son is a sorrow to his mother." Proverbs 17:21, "He who sires a fool gets himself sorrow, and the father of a fool has no joy." Proverbs 29:3, "He who loves wisdom makes his father glad." Over and over again Solomon alludes to this principle, there are a number of Proverbs that allude to this principle and the principle is this: that the greatest sorrow a parent can have is to raise children and produce children who do not walk in wisdom but walk in folly.

It is a painful thing. All of the pain that our children experience is painful, amen? Parents understand this. There is nothing for a parent like watching a child suffer. There is nothing for a parent like watching a child be in pain. I remember, I remember when we brought Jasmine home from the hospital and, again, here we are, young parents, our first child was born 10 months after we got married. I remember being there in the room and here she is and she comes and this all of a sudden, and I've said this ever since she was born, I don't know why this thought came to my mind but this thought was here is this baby, they put this baby in my hand, we cut the cord, right? Here's this baby in my hands and I remember two thoughts coming just quickly. Thought #1 was, "Can we clean her up?" That's just, that was my thought. "Like can we just get her clean?" But then the other thought that came to my mind was as I'm sitting here holding this child, who I could

literally hold like this, I thought, "Are they really going to let us leave the hospital with her?" I was terrified. It's just us.

So we take her home and when we get home, we get a call. We get a call from the hospital and I thought, "Ah, see? Somebody figured it out. You let them take her home? They don't know what they're doing." So we got a call from the hospital and they had forgotten to do the little pinprick where they do, you know, the blood typing and the blood thing. They had forgotten to do that so here's Bridget, she's back at the house, she's resting and recovering, I have to take my little baby back to the hospital so that they can prick her foot and make her bleed and scream and cry. And they did that and I came back home and Bridget said, "How did it go?" I said, "It was alright." Then she looked at me and she said, "You cried, didn't you?" To which I responded, "Not a lot."

It was a little pinprick on the foot but it was my little baby in pain. We don't want that. That's just a little pinprick on the foot but there's also the emotional pain that our children endure, relational pain that they endure. They endure the pain and suffering that they bring upon themselves from their own folly and no parent wants that for their child, and we want to do everything that we can to keep them from that pain, and certainly the pain of separation from God in hell we are desperate that our children would know Christ and the pardon of their sin because it is absolutely unimaginable to us that our children would continue to rest under the judgment of Almighty God. And so our ultimate goal is to produce children who walk in wisdom.

Secondly, producing wise sons is a dependent process. It's our ultimate goal and it's a dependent process. Notice, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching." Do you know what's being acknowledged there? You can refuse to hear. You can refuse to heed. You can grow up in a home where you are disciplined and mentored, you can grow up in a home where you are catechized, you can grow up in a home where you are brought to church, where you hear the Gospel, where you hear the Gospel in that home as well, you can grow up in a home where there's family altar, you can grow up in a home where there's family devotions, and you can still not hear and not heed.

This is a hard thing for us as parents because what we want to believe, what we want desperately to believe is that there is a formula, that there is a formula and if we lead in accordance with the formula, we will get godly children and wise children. This is why when a Christian parent has a child that makes a wrong turn, the response, what do we always say? "Where did I go wrong? Where did I go wrong?" And then if we have other children who did right, we go, "Now listen, listen, we did the same thing with these children as we did with that child. Why are these going this way and those going that way?" Do you know what you are confessing? You are confessing that you believe you are in control and you're also confessing that you believe that your children who go right did so because you were good. On your best day, you were an unfit parent. On your best day, you were less than you needed to be and any child of ours who comes to faith in Christ, any child of ours who walks in wisdom is a gift of God's grace to us, not something he owes us because we were good.

This is a dependent process that keeps us on our face before God. Psalm 127:1, "Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." And this is true of producing wise children, that we are utterly dependent upon God.

Now we only understand this to the degree that we understand what wisdom is. If we believe that wisdom is not moral in nature but wisdom is just information, then, yes, you give your children the right education, you send your children to the right school, you give your children the right information, and you can produce children who are wise but wise according to the world.

Open your Bibles to the book of 1 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 18. 1 Corinthians 1, beginning in verse 18, For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.'" Now the word "wisdom" being used here is not being used the same way that it's used in Proverbs. When he talks about the wisdom of the wise, he's talking about people who are wise by the world's standards; people who are wise in terms of the information that they possess, not the moral wisdom that's spoken of in the book of Proverbs.

Verse 20, "Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." This is a dependent process. We are dependent on God to produce this kind of wisdom and it drives us to our knees, and because we're dependent on God to produce this kind of wisdom, ultimately what we must do is depend on the wise son of Proverbs.

Colossians 2:1-3, "For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." They are hidden in Christ. They are hidden in Christ. I can give my child worldly wisdom but that does not give them the wisdom that is hidden in Christ.

Luke 2:52, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Even Christ went through this process. He is the wise son of Proverbs and went through the process of every son of Proverbs in his earthly life attaining to this wisdom. Try to wrap your head around that.

And so what do we do? We trust in that same process. We trust in the means and we trust God for the ends.

Thirdly, producing wise sons is also a comprehensive process. Look at the text again, Proverbs 1. "The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel," and then he gives us this picture of his goal, "To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth-- Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles." Now that is not everything, it's a summary statement, and then there are 31 chapters unpacking what he's summarizing here, and even the 31 chapters of the book of Proverbs does not capture the totality of the wisdom that is hidden in Christ. This is a comprehensive process. In other words, producing wise sons is not about gathering together a few lessons, taking them through the lessons and saying, "You're finished." It's not a destination, it's a journey and it's one that doesn't end. Nor is producing a wise son about getting your child to 18, getting them out on their own and then patting yourself on your back and saying, "Now I'm finished." It doesn't end.

And again, we said this is a broader discussion about making disciples in general, and unfortunately the way that we have begun to look at discipleship is we've looked at discipleship as a process of taking someone through a few steps. Usually there's a four step process. Okay, you've come to faith. Great. Step 1, we're gonna talk to you about assurance of salvation. Great, you got that? Good. Step 2, we're gonna talk to you about having a quiet time, right? And then step 3, we're gonna talk to you about discovering your spiritual gifts. And then step 4, go and do this with someone else. Congratulations, you're now discipled. Nothing could be further from the truth. That is not what we find in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus. Paul did not see his duty of discipling and mentoring those men as merely taking them through a few steps and then saying, "Great. Now you're on your own. Go. Go. Go." When we read the pastoral epistles, we're reading a letter written by a man who had poured years, years into these men, who all the way up to the end of his life kept pouring into these men. He's saying, "Come to me quickly," when he knows he's about to die in Rome. He's put all of his life doing it.

This is a comprehensive process, that there's not a list of books that you go, "Okay, we've been through these. We're done." It's a comprehensive process. This is all of life. This is the truth of God's word and the righteousness that is found in Christ being applied to every area and aspect of life. It's comprehensive.

It's also complicated, amen? It's complex. It is a crucial process. Look at verse 10. This is crucial, this is critical,

10 My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.

Now watch how specific he gets here with this illustration, and that's what this is, this is an illustration right off the bat.

11 If they say, "Come with us, let us lie in wait for blood; let us ambush the innocent without reason; 12 like Sheol let us swallow them alive, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; 13 we shall find all precious goods, we shall fill our houses with plunder; 14 throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse"-- 15 my son, do not walk in the way with them; hold back your foot from their paths, 16 for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. 17 For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, 18 but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives. 19 Such are the ways of everyone who is greedy for unjust gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.

In other words, this is about life and death and this is first illustration, by the way. He doesn't just ease into it. Here are these first seven verses, "I'm gonna give you my thesis statement," right? "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom." That's what we're talking about, right? And then in verses 8 and 9, he urges him to listen to instruction and teaching. Then in verse 10, he goes deep deep deep deep into an illustration about lying in wait to ambush people and to kill them for their money.

This is crucial. We're not talking about a small thing here. This is crucial. This is life and death. And notice here that he talks about life and death both in the physical term and in the spiritual term. Literally foolishness can cost you your life and it can cost you your eternity. This is critical. This is critical. There is nothing more significant, there is nothing more serious than this. Our children come into our home and when our children come into our home, we have an opportunity and an obligation to disciple them, to point them to Christ, to point them to wisdom, to continually do this in this comprehensive process, and our goal is not just to produce children who don't embarrass us, our goal in making disciples is that their souls might be saved from hell and that their very lives might be saved from the destruction that can be wrought through engaging in folly.

This is serious and life teaches us this over time. I've been involved in pastoral ministry now for the better part of three decades and one of the things about being involved in pastoral ministry for that long is you get to see folly grow up. Amen? You get to see folly grow up and it is incredibly sad but do you know what's more sad than that? What's more sad than looking at someone's life that has been shipwrecked because of the horrible decisions that they made, is sitting down in front of another person who is about to make the same decision, warning them and saying to them, "I have seen where this leads. Please don't go here." And then seeing that look in their eye, this one right here, you look at them and without saying a word, they say to you, "Yeah, that might have happened to them but it won't happen to me." And they go down the same road and they reap the same whirlwind and then they come back and say what no pastor really wants to hear, what no father or mother really wants to hear because there's no satisfaction in it, when someone looks at you in the backside of folly and says, "I should have listened."

This is critical. There are people who are dead, whose lives are completely shipwrecked because of the folly in which they chose to walk. This is critical. It is our ultimate goal, there's nothing more significant, nothing more important. It is a comprehensive process applying this wisdom to every area and aspect of life. It is a dependent process because we can't force it to happen. We can hold out the truth of the Gospel and continue to teach the truth of God's word, but unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain who build it. And yet we can't know and so we build and we build and we build, being utterly dependent upon God, pointing them again and again to the person and work of Jesus Christ and the implications of the person and work in Jesus Christ in every area and aspect of life, trusting, hoping, praying, believing that God will get ahold of the heart and that God will save and that God will sanctify, that God will redeem, that God will transform, and all the while recognizing that this is a critical process. Everything is at stake. Eternity is at stake. Lives are at stake. In the case of parenting, my children's children's children are at stake and so this is not something that we take lightly. This is something to which we devote maximum effort both in terms of our prayerful dependence upon God and in terms of our faithful commitment to means.

What does that look like? I'm glad you asked. What that looks like is committing ourselves to the proclamation of the Gospel and pointing again and again to Christ as our only hope of salvation, and then committing ourselves like Solomon, and this, it's a great opportunity for us, committing ourselves like Solomon to pointing again and again and again to the importance of applying this godly wisdom in every area and aspect of life.

And I urge you and encourage you to do this. Sit down over the course of the month, 31 days in a month, 31 chapters in Proverbs. Sit down over the course of the month and read through the chapters, holding in mind those four rules that I gave you when we started. Let's read this chapter and let's remember this is wisdom and not law. Let's read this chapter and let's look at the difference between indicatives and imperatives. Is it telling us something to do or is it telling us something to be? And usually the imperatives here are like the ones that we just read, the imperatives are, "Listen. Don't forsake. Pay attention." Amen? And then as we read, remember Christ is the wise son of Proverbs, so that as we're reading and applying these truths and we see this is what the fool looks like, this is what the fool does, do you recognize yourself in the fool? Yes. This is because you need the wise son of Proverbs to be formed in you. You need to flee to Christ. And when we see ourselves reflecting the wise son, do you see this reflected in you? Yes, then praise God that Christ is being formed in you and there's evidence of that. But in both instances, we're pointing to the cross. And then remember that these truths are found elsewhere in Scripture and in many instances in those other places, those lights are turned on and we see them more clearly.

Do this and you will be amazed at this comprehensive picture of producing godly wisdom in those under our care, and as you do it, all the while remember this process is your ultimate goal, this process is comprehensive, it doesn't end, this process is one that is utterly dependent, dependent on God not the process, and this process is critical. Everything's at stake. And when you put all of those together, rest in the sovereignty of God knowing that he is sovereign over the ends as well as the means, and knowing that

this is a marathon and not a sprint. As long as there's life and breath, there's hope. Amen? And we say this to those of you who have children and maybe not even your children but other people in your life into whom you've poured your life and these truths and they're all following fools right now, if there's life and breath there's hope. Amen? If there's life and breath there's hope. It's a marathon and not a sprint.

Continue to go back here again and again and again. How many of us in this room left home without having gotten this but subsequently it bore fruit? There are many around you who could testify to this. Do not grow weary in doing well for in due season we will reap if we faint not.

Let's pray.

*Gracious God, our heavenly Father, how we thank you and praise you for your goodness and kindness and mercy toward us. Thank you for your wisdom and that you not only save us, save our lives from an eternity in hell, but you save our lives from so much folly, heartache, pain. Grant by your grace that we might walk in the wisdom that is found only in Christ and that it might bear fruit in us, and grant that we might do this not only in our own lives but that we might encourage those whom you've entrusted to us whether it be our children, or others whom you've called us to mentor and disciple. And grant that by your grace, we might be found faithful to this task for we know that you will indeed be faithful to your word and to your promises. Grant that we might trust you regardless of what we see or when we see it, that we might trust you, knowing that we are called to faithful obedience and that we are not in charge of results. And grant that this process might cause us to be more dependent upon you, to seek you on behalf of those whom we desperately desire to see walking in truth for as the Apostle John has said, we have no greater joy than to know that our children are walking in the truth. And grant that as we pursue this, we might never lose sight of the fact that ultimately our goal is not for ourselves, for our own pleasure though we do delight in seeing our children walk in truth, but that ultimately our goal is that Christ might have the fullness of the reward for which he died. Make this our plea as it is our prayer. In Christ's name. Amen.*