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## PROVERBS 8

Proverbs Series

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, thank you for the privilege to serve you. We do that as stewards, stewards of our energy, stewards of our health, stewards of our time, stewards of our money. Lord, we now dedicate ourselves to you. We know that giving is just an expression of giving our whole hearts to you. So we dedicate ourselves to you now in the midst of this offering. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ushers, you can go ahead and take that offering.

Let me just share my heart with you. I really love this church and I'm having a lot of fun here. I just want you to know that. God has done some new things in my heart in regards to pastoring and I think that's part of coming from a larger church to a small church. You never know on Sunday morning who's going to come. Will anybody come or will they not come back again? Who knows what will happen. So I am really grateful that you come. It's a ministry to me.

It's special to me to study God's work every day. Whenever I prepare a sermon I start it on the weekend. So Sunday, Monday (or tomorrow) I'll start next week's. I just know where I'm going and in the course of the week I'm able to live that.

I think about you. If you're not here, where is that person and what's going on. Or sometimes I know what's going on in your lives. So I'm grateful to be a part of that. I plan the worship here at Calvary right now and I enjoy worshiping the Lord with these songs. So as I'm worshiping, I'm thinking I can hardly wait for Sunday.

For me, coming to Sunday is a real fun time. I just enjoy Sunday mornings. It's a highlight for my week. I'm involved in a lot of things in my life, as many of you know, but Calvary Chapel Living Hope is a treasure for me and I enjoy it thoroughly and being a part of here.

Some day we may have a building. Some day we may have a worship team. When the Lord provides musicians and when the Lord provides money for a building, maybe the Lord will do that and we'll have those things. That would be great.

But I'm enjoying Calvary now. I really like where we are. So I really hope that at this stage in our church's life you're not just thinking, "Oh it'll be better when something happens." Let's enjoy where we are now. Let's enjoy the privilege of community. That's one of the greatest things. We have a smaller group of people, we know what's going on. We'll be praying for each other.

We have a Facebook prayer group. Get in the group, see the requests that are coming this week. One of the big ones is that Diana had got her surgery. It was questioned whether she'd have it this week, but then she got her surgery on Thursday, so we're just praising the Lord as she's recovering today. Thanks for being a part of this church.

And now my favorite thing – teach the word. Let's pray before we look at what God has to say for us today.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, thank you for your word. Thank you that it speaks to us. We don't know right now whether you're going to say something big or you're going to say something small to our hearts, but we ask that you'd speak to us through your word. Teach us. Grow us to be the people you want us to be. Connect with our hearts this morning. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

Last week at the picnic we had all the spread of food at the Foss' home and on the table was a bag of water in a Ziploc bag. I had never seen that before. It didn't have ice in it or anything. It was just a bag of water sitting on the table. So I asked Nancy, "Why is this bag on the table?" She told me why.

Maybe you know this. I did not know this before. If you take a bag of water in a Ziploc bag, put it on your table, it will keep the flies away. Keep the flies away! That was bizarre. It did keep the flies away.

I was eager to go study that. I went back to figure out why there's a bag of water – to keep flies away. I found out that people put it on their doorways. They'll put a bag of water hanging from their doorways and the flies don't come in their house. This is great.

Why does it happen? They're not sure why it happens, but they think it's because a fly has 8,000 lenses (that's why it's hard to kill one), so they can always see what's going on and it confuses them somehow. Or they think it's a hornet's nest or a wasp's nest and those guys like to eat flies. So they stay away, they turn around, they're confused, and they go the other direction.

I'm going, "That is bizarre. I learned something new this week." Those are called life hacks. Have you heard the word 'life hack' before? A life hack is a simple solution to a problem that makes your life easier. That's what a life hack is. There are lots of life hacks in life. Somebody was telling me today [lifehack.com](http://lifehack.com) or something like that. You can find all kinds of life hacks that are really fun.

Last week, remember, we learned about the ants. This week we'll learn about the flies. But the point is that Proverbs, our study of the Bible here, is a book of life hacks. Not just dealing with things about new ideas or simple things, it's about life. How we can manage life more effectively, how we're going to deal with things. We usually think of God's amazing work when we think about His creation and the beauty of creation.

I was driving through the cornfields of Illinois this week at night and there's no streetlights. It's so dark. It's really dark. We don't see dark around here. Okay, maybe you see dark on your properties because you've got so much of it. But me, I don't see dark. It is really a lot of lights of the city. But you just look up and you see the stars and you go, "Wow, God's amazing." You see that sunset and you say, "Wow, God is amazing." On a small level you think about the cell or the DNA or something like that and you go, "Wow." It's always amazing when He creates all of those things.

Solomon, here in our book of Proverbs, is calling us to a different part of God's design. Not just the creation part big and small. He's drawing us to understand how God has designed relationships and He's designed our heart and He's designed how things work.

If we can catch the life hacks about life, we can understand how to relate to a person in a particular way, then God does these amazing things. It's not just about God created an impatient plant and the seeds spring out of the impatient plant, but that God does something in relationships and He helps us change. How life works. That's really what Proverbs is about. Life hacks dealing with personal relationships, dealing with your own heart, and so on.

As you think about this subject of life hacks and the challenges that we face, I want to draw you to Proverbs 8. That's where we are today, going verse by verse through the book of Proverbs.

In Proverbs 8 we come to the place where we need the life hacks the most and that's in the daily decisions of life. We all make hundreds of decisions everyday. Some of them are little decisions, like what you're going to eat. Some of them big decisions about whether you're going to solve this conflict problem with someone or not. Or how you're going to spend your money. Whatever. Those are big decisions. There are small decisions. And we face them every day. When we face those decisions we need to know that God is calling out at that point.

Now wisdom is personified in Proverbs 8. As we personify wisdom it's going to tell us that it's calling out of the decision-making points of our life. You will make very important decisions this week. Very important. Instead of just kind of going along with your head down, you might want to stop and say, "I wonder if I should choose to do this differently this week?" Because often it's the small decisions that we make that have significant impact in our lives.

Proverbs 8:1 says, *Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?* The idea is that the world cries out and says, "Hey, I'll offer you fame or I'll offer you pleasure," or something. But wisdom calls attention to herself. As a result then there's going to be some benefits. But we seek wisdom. That's going to be very important. It's a treasure.

Now earlier in our Proverbs study I showed you these three words (knowledge, understanding, and wisdom), which are used continually before this in the book of Proverbs but are all used in this particular passage. I want to draw your attention to them again.

Basically there's noise going on in our lives. There's all kinds of things happening. It's a noisy world we live in. But then every once in a while you gain some knowledge that helps you get

above the noise and things start to make sense. Understanding says, “Oh I get it,” and then wisdom gives you something now you can put into practice. Wisdom means skill in life.

Wisdom is calling out here. I want you to see where wisdom advertises itself starting at verse 2.

*At the highest point along the way* (these are the decision points of your life), *where the paths meet, she takes her stand; beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries out.*

These are all significant places. These are all decision points of your life. Each one you need to know wisdom’s calling out, “Hey, there’s a better way to do that. Think about that there. Are you sure you want to do that? I’ve got another idea for you.” So wisdom is calling out and giving us guidelines and ideas about where we’re going to go.

The first one says *high point*. The high point is when you come over a ledge, you’re looking over, and you can see everything that’s out there, and you go, “Wow.” You kind of get perspective. Those are those moments when you see the things that are before you and you’re trying to decide your classes for the next term, trying to decide what you’re going to do, and sign this lease for another year. You’re looking forward and you see the big picture and you’re trying to make a decision about those particular things.

The second one notice it says *where the paths meet, she takes her stand*. Where the paths meet or cross you’ve got all these decisions. I’m afraid that what happens in life sometimes is I’m so used to routine and habit that change is difficult. I plow right through the decision points of my life without even thinking. My head’s down, I keep going, and maybe I’m doing something that might be counterproductive. I need to make a change. So he’s talking here about where the paths meet in our lives.

*Beside the gate leading into the city, at the entrance, she cries aloud*. Now if you understand the Hebrew culture of the day, they didn’t have some of the technology that we have. When people wanted to find out the latest news they would go to the city gates where people were talking. You could hang out there at the city gates, fellowship with other people. “Meet you at the gates,” and you’d go and hang out there. Or business was transacted there at the gates. So the elders at the city would often sit out there and important decisions were made at the city gates.

I was trying to think this week in my life where are the city gates? Where are the places where I make decisions and I hang out with people? I would suggest that much of that is done on my computer. The computer becomes the city gate for me, where I’m buying stuff on Amazon or purchasing things from this place or that place. Purchases take place on my computer. That’s a pathway for me. Wisdom’s calling out to me as I get on my computer. “Do the right thing. Is that the right decision you’re making?”

It’s also a place where I hang out, where I’m emailing people, where I’m on Facebook, and I’m interacting with people. It’s a place where we have to be wise. There’s a way to post on Facebook that’s good and there’s a way to post on Facebook that’s not good. We want to be able to understand that and move in a right direction so that we don’t get ourselves into trouble. That’s the idea here.

So he says wisdom is taking place, it's at the crossroads, it's at the high place, it's at the city gates and it's calling out saying these words starting in verse 4. *"To you, O people, I call out; I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, set your hearts on it."*

That's the word *levav*. That's one of our Hebrew words that I'm trying to draw your attention to. The word *levav* is the heart. It's the operating principle of a person. It's where decisions are made. If you're going to adjust something, it's going to happen in your heart. If you're going to adjust a life practice that you're doing, it's going to start in your heart. That's what Jesus said. He emphasized the heart a lot. So here we're learning about the heart and how to respond to it.

I want you to see that in this passage he says that *you who are simple, you are foolish*. You don't have to have a PhD to learn wisdom. You have to have an open heart. That's what you have. You don't have to know Greek and Hebrew to learn wisdom. You have to have an open heart. *Set your hearts on it*, it says.

Verse 6: *Listen, for I have trustworthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right.* Wisdom is calling at us. When things happen what are the cues in life that cause you to move forward?

Last week we were talking about emotional cues. When emotional cues start happening in your home or they start happening somewhere else, some people use those emotional cues to start speaking when maybe they should not or they should just start reacting normally. Maybe we should try something else. Maybe we respond in a different way.

When someone reams you out [sound effect] and you feel like going [sound effect] back to them, maybe you need to do something different. Because wisdom's calling out to you. Proverbs says that a gentle answer turns away anger. So I said, "Maybe I'll try something different this time." In those change points we need to listen to what's going on. There's a different way to live is what it's saying here.

We learn as we go forward in our study that some people blame problems on others. They can't get well because they have a hard time realizing that they need to change. But the wise person is different.

Look at verse 7 as we continue on. Wisdom is speaking. *My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.*

Verse 9: *To the discerning (that's our word understanding) all of them are right; they are upright to those who have found knowledge.*

Those are our words. Knowledge is getting more information, understanding is getting it and realizing, "oh this makes sense," and then wisdom is applying it in a way that's valuable. So those words become very important.

We continue on. He's saying here I haven't withheld them for you; they're made available to each one of us as we're going forward.

Verse 10: *Choose my instruction (that's another word up there) instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.*

There's no depression when it comes to wisdom. There's no market crash when it comes to wisdom. All of the wealth that comes from rubies or gold or silver can't compare to what happens when you experience wisdom in your life. You're trying to make a decision about what to do. You need wisdom about how to do that. That's going to be strategic as you're trying to move forward.

Notice verse 12 it says, *"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence."* Prudence isn't the name of a person or a woman here. *I, wisdom dwell together with prudence.* It means crafty. It means clever. It means someone who understands life hacks in regards to relationships. Someone understands how to maneuver through life situations.

I'm trying to be wise in my life. That means skillful in life. That's what wisdom means.

In the Old Testament when they were building the tabernacle, God said, "Find people who are skilled (or wise) in working with purple cloth. Those who are wise are working with brass." That's the same word here. Skillful people. I want to be skillful in the way that I handle certain situations. You want to be skillful in the way you handle a professor, the way you handle fellow students, the way you handle relationship. You want to be skillful. And we don't always do the right thing. We want wisdom to know how to do it here. So that's what it's talking about here in order to understand what's going on.

Now what I want to do is I want to show you a short video. This is a *TED* video, a 3-minute *TED* video. This *TED* video is going to show you a life hack, something really simple. You can put this into practice in your life today. That's what it's going to do.

I'm just using this as an example of what I think cleverness, craftiness. When I saw this I went, "Wow." I saw this video and I thought this would be an intriguing video for you to see because it gives you a solution to a simple problem in life that you never thought of before.

Here's why I want you to see this. I believe that sometimes in our lives we're going along and we've been doing the same thing over and over again for fifty years and then we come along to a new idea. We go, "Wow. I never thought of that," and God takes us to a new level in our spiritual lives.

This isn't a spiritual thing we're going to learn, but I want to apply it spiritually because I want you to see that sometimes you're in a habit of doing things and wisdom says, "Think about something different. Maybe you ought to try something different here." Because if you try something different, you might be more successful in that relationship or in your heart or deal with that habit or your finances or your emotions or whatever.

Watch this particular video and let's learn something...

[Start of Video]

I'm used to thinking of the *TED* audience as a wonderful collection of some of the most effective, intelligent, intellectual, savvy, worldly, and innovative people in the world. I think that's true. However I also have reason to believe that many, if not most of you, are actually tying your shoes incorrectly.

I know that seems ludicrous. I know that seems ludicrous and, believe me, I lived the same sad life until about three years ago.

What happened to me was I bought what was for me a very expensive pair of shoes, but those shoes came with round nylon laces and I couldn't keep them tied. So I went back to the store and said to the owner, "I love the shoes, but I hate the laces." He took a look and said, "You're tying them wrong."

Now up until that moment I would've thought that by age 50 one of the life skills that I had really nailed was tying my shoes. But not so.

Let me demonstrate. This is the way that most of us were taught to tie our shoes. [applause] Wait there's more.

As it turns out there's a strong form and a weak form of this knot. We were taught to tie the weak form. Here's how to tell. If you pull the strands at the base on the knot, you can see that the bow will reorient itself down the long axis of the shoe. That's the weak form of the knot.

But not to worry. If we start over and simply go the other direction around the bow, we get this, the strong form of the knot. If you pull the cords under the knot you will see that the bow orients itself along the transverse axis of the shoe. This is a stronger knot. It will come untied less often. It will let you down less. And not only that, it looks better.

We're going to do this one more time. Start as usual, go the other way around the loop (this is a little harder for children, but I think you can handle it), pull the knot, there it is – the strong form of the shoe knot.

Now in keeping with today's theme, I'd like to point out, and something you already know, that sometimes a small advantage some place in life can yield tremendous results someplace else.

Live long and prosper.

[End of Video]

Now I know you're all looking at each other's shoelaces to see if they're tied correctly. I love counseling with people because often when I'm counseling I'm looking, trying to understand that person. Because every person is so different. If I can understand that person or that couple and I can say, "Hey, I've got an idea. Maybe try this. Do this a little bit differently. If you do this a little bit differently you're going to have a different result." I'm just challenging you today to

think a little bit differently because that's what wisdom does in the decision-making points of our lives.

As often in my personal life, I prepare my sermon and then I'm living it in the course of my life and things happen. So this week I go walking, as Fred Thompson and I do sometimes. Fred Thompson and I were out walking. So we're out walking, we walk for about a half hour and he stops twice to tie his shoes. I'm thinking, "Do I tell him about this? Should I tell him he's tying his shoes wrong? It's kind of an embarrassing thing to say. Or do I send him the video later?" So I said, "Hey, check this out. This is a video I'm going to show on Sunday." So I think Fred is learning how to tie his shoes.

It's not about tying our shoes; it's about following the Lord and doing what He wants to do. Sometimes it's a small change we make in our lives that prevents a big calamity or gives us some advantage in life.

Verse 12 continues. *I possess knowledge and discretion.* It says, *To fear the Lord is to hate evil.* The fear of the Lord was the other part on our chart there. Fear of the Lord means this: We're not just talking about life hacks humanistically because the greatest life hack you could have is to tie your person into the fear of the Lord, which is *the beginning of wisdom*, the Bible tells us.

*Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, recognizing that God is the one who designed all this. We're tying ourselves into the God who created the flowers, He created the sunset, He created the stars, He created the cells. We tie ourselves into that. We know that He's the one who designed relationships as well. That is the greatest life hack that we could have is to fear the Lord.

It says in verse 12 *to hate evil.* It says, *I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.* Why does it say that wisdom hates pride and arrogance? Because those things hinder a person from getting the help they need. "Oh I've got it taken care of." "It's the government's fault that I have this problem." "Those rules are foolish rules." Or whatever people say in order to hinder them from moving forward. It's pride and arrogance that stops the process.

Verse 14: *Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power.*

This word *power* is important. It's the power that empowers you. Some people feel like they're victims in life. "If everybody else would change, I could be happy." The first thing we've got to help people do is realize they've got a problem. If we do help people realize they have a problem then change comes quickly and amazing things happen. It gives you power. Because now it's not somebody else's problem. It's your ability to make some changes in your life. This is amazing.

*I have power.* And notice the power's described – *By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just; by me princes govern, and nobles—all who rule on earth.*

There's a secret here, folks. A secret that God is sharing with us. A key verse. There's the power involved and wisdom provides these amazing things.



Verse 17: *I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.* Notice wisdom principles are not hidden. Sometimes you have to stop and listen because wisdom's calling out, but we don't listen and we have to pay attention to what it's saying.

We're about to go into verse 18 and I have to prepare you before we go into verse 18 to understand this and put it in context. Because we don't preach here a health and wealth gospel that says, "Come to Christ and you're going to get rich or you're going to be healthy!" That's not what we're saying here. But the next passage is going to kind of talk about that. You need to understand the greatest thing you can do is accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. When you do that, He changes your thinking, He changes your framework. When that happens then people change.

God does things in people's lives. An alcoholic can get over the alcohol addiction. It's amazing what God does in a person's life. Marriages get healed. Children value their parents in different ways than they ever did before. They're reconciled to them in many cases. God does some amazing things in relationships. God does things in life when we trust Him as our Lord and Savior. So you're about to see some of the results in wisdom put in context.

Make sure to understand this because look at verse 18. *With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit (that is the results of being wise) is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full.*

The idea is those who walk in wisdom will flourish in life. These are life hacks. It makes life easier when you understand God's wisdom and you put it into practice in your life.

Now in verse 22 in order to help you catch this, in order to make this so valuable that you say, "I want it. I want to embrace it," we go back to the history of wisdom in all of the world. Where does wisdom come from? We see that starting in verse 22.

*The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works.* So when God was creating things before He even created the world, He created wisdom first, and then wisdom is embedded in everything that we see around us.

*The first of his works before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, wisdom says, at the very beginning, when the world came to be. When there were no watery depths, I was given birth, when there were no springs overflowing with water.*

So before creation was made, wisdom was put into all of that. It's not like you have a choice in life, it depends on whatever you believe. Well some people believe in Christianity, some people believe in yoga, and some people believe in this other religion. You just choose whatever you want to satisfy that little hole in your heart. But that's not what we're talking about here.

At first as Christians we are truth-seekers. We recognize that God has created this world and He's embedded wisdom in it. So once we find God, we understand that, it opens up this whole new avenue of life for us. It's embedded in the system, and he uses water to describe that.

As I was doing some research on water this week, I found these things. The surface area of our world is two-thirds water. Actually 70% of the Earth's surface is covered by water. There are 197 million square miles on the surface on the world and 14 million square miles are ocean. That ratio of land to water is perfect. It produces the perfect amount of evaporation, perfect tide and flow from equator to the poles, it produces the necessary hydro flow of water on the land. There are 1.5 trillion tons of rain on the land surface of the earth which is just enough for our world. I know some of you wish we had more, you wish you had less, but God designed this ecosystem and wisdom's in that making it all work for us.

That is the physical world, but He's also created the relational world, the life success principles that you and I need to be wise. God designed this world. It's not just a bunch of noise going on. He designed it and we can rise above that and we can understand what that looks like in practical terms.

I was working with a man recently who's been a Christian for all of his life. He came to this place where he's questioning God. The reason he's questioning God is because his marriage relationship is falling apart. He's just really frustrated in his marriage.

I'm working with him in his marriage relationship, but he's questioning God because he says, "Whenever I try to be godly, I get into trouble. It doesn't work. Godliness doesn't work. I don't think God's principles work in this situation."

I'm saying, "Wait, wait, wait. Tell me your godliness that you're working out in your marriage relationship." So he tells me and I'm saying, "Hmm. Those are interesting ideas. Those are actually good ideas. Maybe they would be godly somewhere else, but those are not for your wife. First we have to study your wife. Don't just take those ideas and apply them to her."

I helped him come to this understanding in his life that there's a new way to relate. He needs to try some different things. He's saying, "I don't know if I can do that. I've never been there before." When he said those words it rang a verse in my mind. I said, "Let me show you a Bible passage that you're going to want to see."

Joshua 3:2-4. This is when Joshua's about to lead the people into the Promised Land. The officers were given these instructions to go throughout the camp, *giving orders to the people.* "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, and the Levitical priests carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it. Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before.

Whoa. I think God wants us to go some ways we've never been before. He says, "Follow me. Follow the ark of the covenant. I'll take you to some places you've never been before."

I would suggest that if you're running into roadblocks in life, you're having trouble in life, things are not working, maybe it's time to say, "Okay. Maybe I need to try something different. Maybe I need to try something. I know what I think is right, but maybe what I think is right isn't the best thing. Maybe I need to try to move in a different direction."

That's what's helping this particular gentleman be successful. His marriage relationship with his wife is to take a different path, to move a different direction.

Wisdom's been around a long time, you notice in the verses. Verse 25: *Before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the world or its field, or any of the dust of the earth.*

Wisdom is saying I'm the one who puts the weights on the world so when it's spinning... Our world is spinning so fast we're all sitting here relaxed. God designed all of that. He put it into practice and He also knows the weakness of your husband, the weakness of your wife. He knows what it's like to be out of a job and say, "I can help you." He says, "I have solutions for every area of life."

Wisdom says, "I was there before this world was created." Not just the physical world, but the world that texts and talks, that grows. All of that. The smiles and groans. "I know your heart, I know your emotions, I know how hard it is to live your life, and I've got solutions to you problems that are just for you. "

You need this. Young people, if you can tie wisdom into your life today and see the solutions that God has beyond what other people see, you 'll see what works. You'll see how God has designed you. Not just humanistically but God has designed you in a way that you follow Him, and good things, amazing things can happen inside of your heart. You get to choose. Choose life.

I had fun creating this little piece of art. That's what it is. This is a treasure map that I created with an artist and I gave him instructions and he designed every one of these pieces on here when I told him. As I study the book of Proverbs these are the eleven things that pop out to me that say you want wisdom – go after these things.

You can see the treasure map start here, upper left-hand corner. Fear the Lord, then seek wisdom. Get wise counsel. Guard your heart. We've talked about a number of these already. We've got more to come as we continue on. Next one – respond well to correction. Choose friends wisely. Choose your words carefully. Manage your anger. Have a plan for sexual purity. Work with integrity. Honor God with your money. And then notice at the bottom go back to the beginning, continue again. And you're starting to develop this wisdom.

This is kind of an outline, if you could say. The reason it isn't in a pointed outline is because Proverbs isn't in a pointed outline. It's kind of random. So I've tried to give you a map that I think will guide you in this path as we're working forward in this book of Proverbs.

Verse 27 of Proverbs 8: *I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was constantly at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.*

Following God's wisdom. God has designed our world so that it contains success principles. When we follow God's plan then it opens up these doors, we flourish. When we don't follow His plan, we run into roadblocks. Some people have a hard time.

We were just talking about a guy, during our corporate prayer time before church, who's having trouble right now. He's on the street. Tim had some good words to describe the fact that he's not responding, so he's out on the street. The words he used were something like "he's doing some more research." I think that's true. If you keep bumping into the walls, you're just doing research. That's what you're doing. But at some point you're going to say, "Oh I finally get it," and you say, "I'm going to try something different. I'm going to go after wisdom."

Now here's wisdom's invitation, the last part of the verses, verses 30-36. So listen up because this is the invitation of the passage, wisdom's invitation for you and me.

*"Now then, my children, listen to me (the word listen isn't just pay attention with your ears, but get ready to do something about it); blessed (that's the word 'happy') are those who keep my ways (that's the word derekh).*

These are all words that we've talked about. These are Hebrew words that we've talked about before. *Derekh* is the way I'm living. So *happy are those who keep these ways. Listen to my instruction and be wise (that's hakham – skillful in life); do not disregard it.*

Verse 34: *Blessed (or happy) are those who listen to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway.* There's a sense of anticipation. I'm going to learn something new today. I'm going to follow the Lord in a new way I haven't done before. I'm at the doorway.

*For those who find me find (this is my favorite word in the book of Proverbs – chaya) life. Quality of life. Those who find me find life and receive favor from the Lord. But those who fail to find me harm themselves; all who hate me love death.*

*Life and death.* In the book of Proverbs, the words *life* and *death* aren't speaking so much as physical life and death; they're talking about equality of life, equality of death. We can live our lives in a way that embraces one or the other. I would suggest there's an easy way and a hard way to live life. God wants to reveal the easy way.

Wisdom is calling out to us, saying, "Embrace this. Try something new. There's a different way to do this, a different way to handle that problem in your heart, different way to deal with different things in your life." Listen to what God has to say, and when you do, God does some amazing things. He comes into your heart.

When God comes into your heart He changes you from the inside out. Now you're given the resources and you're given the tools. You're given the strength to move forward in some powerful ways.

I love it. I love studying God's word. I love sharing it with other people. I love what we do at Calvary Chapel. That is, help people grow spiritually.

If you're stuck somewhere in your spiritual life, talk to me. I'd love to help you get unstuck. I'd love to help you move forward. Come to the Lord and talk to Him. Allow Him to do a deeper work in your heart.

God has answers for your situation. He understands technology. He understands difficulty in the job market. He understands the stock market. God understands all kinds of difficult things and it's our job to come and talk to Him in our lives.

Would you stand with me? We're going to sing a song and as we sing, if the Lord is speaking to your heart and you want prayer for a particular area of your life, we have some prayer counselors right over here ready to pray for you. Just go over and talk to them and say, "Hey, will you just pray for me?" You can share as much of your situation with them as you want or you don't have to. Just go with them, talk to them, and let them pray for you today.

If you haven't accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, today's the day. It's the beginning, not the end. It's the beginning of a beautiful adventure as you move forward in your Christian life. Let's come before the Lord and dedicate ourselves to Him today.

[PRAYER] Heavenly Father, I come before you on behalf of my brothers and sisters. Lord, I love them, and I know you love them too. I ask that you'd help each of them to understand more of what it means to follow you. I pray that you'd make us all relational architects. Help us to understand what it means to change our hearts and follow you. Lord, that's different for each one of us. You know what we're going to face this week. We ask that you'd empower us, you'd encourage us, you'd inspire us. Provide us with the hope we need to be the people that you've called us to be. Do that this week, Lord. We ask in Jesus' name, amen.

God bless you. Have a great week in the Lord.