



Scott Turansky, Senior Pastor
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PROVERBS 10-11

Proverbs Series

[Abrupt start to audio]

[PRAYER] That you would look into our hearts and measure us and that you would teach us today from your word. Lord, we ask that you would infuse us with your love so that we would be open and receptive to the teaching that you have for us. I pray that you would teach us how to pray and remind us to pray often. Because then we will be filled, then we will be satisfied, then we will have what we need inside so then we can praise you with all of our hearts, then we can share the message that you've given to us because you've changed us as people. So, Lord, we ask this morning that you would use your word to do a miracle in our lives. Train us, teach us do something special as you often do during this period of time. We open our hearts to that end. In Jesus' name, amen.

Today I'm going to do something different than I've ever done before in my teaching in thirty years and that I'll ever do again, but I'm going to do it today. I'm going to give you a sermon that has more than three points. Not that I've never done more than three points before, but usually they say a good sermon has three points because three points is about as many as you could remember. But today I'm going to give you a sermon that has sixty-three points. This is going to be so many points you obviously won't remember them all.

Right now we've come to the place in the book of Proverbs (we're in Proverbs 10) and we have random proverbs. So if you take the 32 verses from chapter 10 and you put them together with the 31 verses of chapter 11, you've got sixty-three different proverbs about different things. You're going to hear a lot about proverbs this morning and you're going to hear them come at you pretty quickly.

Some of you in the next few minutes will feel overwhelmed by what you see in the text as we're reading forward because there's a lot of application from a lot of different subjects, unlike a typical sermon or like we've done already through Proverbs 9 by dwelling on things a little bit. So you're going to get a lot of stuff in a little bit of time.

Now hopefully the things you're getting in this next half hour will fill in some of the things we've talked about over the last several weeks in chapters 1-9. In the last several weeks they've given you a framework from which to hang many of these proverbs.

For example, I've shared with you seven characters in the book of Proverbs and how they respond to sin and how they respond to correction. That was last week. I've also shared with you

a wisdom map that contains eleven different stops on the wisdom map that will help you know how to be wise according to God's standard. I've also shared with you a plan that God has to move us from knowledge to understanding to wisdom through instruction so that we can move in that direction.

So you'll see some of those words in here. I've also taught you about the fear of the Lord and how wisdom starts with the fear of the Lord. All that is tied in to this. That becomes the teaching from before.

But today as we launch in chapter 10 I'm going to pelt you with sixty-three different proverbs and during this time I want to make a suggestion to you about how to listen to this. It depends on your learning style.

Some of you would benefit from sitting and listening and closing your eyes and just letting it all come at you and just trying to absorb something out of it.

Others are more analytical and you'll have your piece of paper that I've provided for you. This is the kind of paper I use and that you can use throughout your book of Proverbs. Maybe you'll change the different topics, but you'll look and you'll peg them. That one goes here, that one goes here. Later you can look at all the proverbs about integrity or money or following God or speech and you can assimilate them better. If that's your learning style, go for it. You're going to be writing fast during these next few minutes.

But I want you to do this. I want you to allow God to speak to you. All you need is one thing today by the time you leave. One area of your life that God can touch you in this morning to help you be a different person. So in the midst of the sixty-three, ignore the other sixty-two and take whatever one that God impresses on your heart, and that's what you leave here with knowing that someday you'll come back to this book.

I would suggest that you read a chapter of Proverbs every day. Because the verse that hit you today will be different than the ones that hit you next month when you come to the same ones again. The day of the month might be the chapter that you read as you go through and you will learn valuable things through the book of Proverbs.

So we're going to go through a spiritual exercise now of pegging verses wherever they are. I'm going to go through a bunch of verses. Hold onto your hats. Let's go through sixty-three different points in this sermon.

Proverbs 10:1 – *The proverbs of Solomon: A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son brings grief to his mother.* So you've got joy and grief.

Now I think some parents would say, "Yeah, but kids make me angry." Well maybe that's true, but if you peel away the anger for a moment then you'll see that behind the anger is really a sadness that you have or maybe you're angry because of your sadness. But there's a sadness because of what your child is doing.

I'm grateful for my kids. I have five of them and they all bring great joy to my heart. Joy or grief... which reminds me... we're all kids and we affect those around us. We affect our parents. We affect other people. Keep that in mind as you look at that proverb.

Number 2 – *Ill-gotten treasures have no lasting value, but righteousness delivers from death.*

I might put this one in the integrity category in my mind. It talks about true riches and how they're evaluated in the context of eternity. *Ill-gotten treasures have not lasting value.* They're worthless. *But righteousness delivers from death.*

As I read the word *righteousness* over and over today in chapters 10 and 11, think about following God. And that's why there's a section there for following God. You might throw it in there. Following God is an important thing and here it says it *delivers from death.*

Verse 3 – *The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.*

The idea here is that the Lord cares for the righteous, those who are following Him. This is the compassionate side of God. He has a special place in His heart for those who are doing right.

Number 4 – *Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth.*

This is our first proverb in this section dealing with money. One of your success principles in the book of Proverbs for dealing with money is to work hard. So it talks here about diligent hands bringing wealth. In other words, one of your success principles for dealing with finances.

Number 5 – *He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son, but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*

This is another one about money that has to do with opportunity. You're looking for the opportunities that are there. When it's harvest time, you're out there working hard. You're not just goofing around. You recognize the opportunity and even though it's going to require some hard work, I want to take advantage of this opportunity right now. I would put this one on your finance page or money side.

The next one – *Blessings crown the head of the righteous, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.*

Over and over again you're going to see some about speech. The wicked person's speech is violent it's saying here. But it also says that the blessings crown the head of the righteous. In other words there's some that you can just look at them and you go, "Wow. That person is righteous." There's blessing on that person maybe because of what they say, maybe just because they're following God, according to that verse.

Verse 7 – *The name of the righteous is used in blessings, but the name of the wicked will rot.*

We're going to see several times here the righteous and wicked compared as they are in this verse, the end of them. The righteous ending here, the wicked ending here. *The name of the wicked* is going to rot, but the righteous is going to end with this blessing. It's used in a blessing and so you want to have this sense of following God in your life.

Verse 8 – *The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.*

The chattering fool. The person who talks too much. The *chattering fool comes to ruin*. But notice the wise in heart and chattering fool are put in contrast. The wise in heart is someone who accepts commands. They're willing to listen to advice we'll see later on about this same person. But the fool just keeps talking. He doesn't want to listen. He just wants to talk about himself.

You know some people like that. You could help them if they'd stop talking, but they just talk and talk and talk and talk. They don't listen. That's what it's talking about here. The difference between the wise person (I want to be the wise person who accepts commands) and the foolish who talks and talks.

Verse 9 – *Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*

When you have a life of integrity you do what you say you're going to do. When you say you're going to be there at a certain time, you're there. When you say you're going to do something, you do it. You have this life of integrity then that is a security for you, as opposed to the guy on the crooked path who will be found out.

Integrity is a very important quality mentioned throughout Proverbs. I would put this one on the integrity page. There is a security in your life. You don't always have to be looking over your shoulder wondering if somebody's going to get you because you're doing the right thing.

Number 10 – *Whoever winks maliciously causes grief, and a chattering fool (chatter, chatter, chatter, chatter) comes to ruin.*

Now notice you've got grief and ruin. Those are the ends of both of these people. Notice what they have in common. One of them is winking maliciously. That means using signals in order to deceive someone. In other words, someone who's tricking people, versus the other, the chattering fool. They both come to ruin. Important for us to consider that. I put that in the speech page because of the chattering fool part.

Number 11 – *The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.*

So what's coming out of your mouth is going to determine where you are in this process of whether you're a fool or a righteous person. They'll be able to tell by your mouth.

Notice what it says about the speech of the righteous person or this wise person. He's the person who has a *fountain of life* coming out. Very important. He's nurturing other people with his mouth, *the mouth of the righteous*.

Number 12 – *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs*.

That should remind you of a New Testament Bible verse. Peter takes off on that in 1 Peter 4:8 when he says, *Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*. It comes from this proverb here. *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs*. Amazing what happens when we have love how we can overlook an insult, we can overlook some things because we love each other and we can move forward.

Verse 13 – *Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of one who has no sense*.

Maybe you would put this in the speech one – *the lips of the discerning*. Or maybe you would put this in the correction one – the rod of correction has no sense to that person. So the idea is that the wise person says wise things. But you can't even get wisdom into the fool. That's basically what it's saying there.

Verse 14 – *The wise store up knowledge, but the mouth of a fool invites ruin*.

So *the mouth of a fool* – he just gets himself into trouble all the time by the way he talks. I know you know some people like that. But it's the wise person who stores up knowledge, so he's bringing it in, bringing it in, but the fool just doesn't have any idea of what's going on.

Verse 15 – *The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor*. I want to read it again. I want you to understand this. *The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor*.

Money can be a reserve or having a reserve of money can be like a fortified city so you are secure. You're prepared. You have a disaster come, you're okay. You have some money put away. That's the idea of being a fortified city.

The other part of the verse talks about poverty and I just want to say poverty is a terrible thing. There are people who get stuck in the cycle of poverty. They're in a family, they're just living in a place where they're living every week with next week's paycheck. It's just hard to stay on top of things. And it's really hard. It's not necessarily their fault, but they're there. They're just in this cycle of poverty.

One of the purposes of government is to help people get out of the cycle of poverty where a lot of violence and crime and power are used to get what you want. It's a terrible thing. Poverty and the cycle of poverty is terrible.

As Christians (in addition to education and in addition to opportunity that the government tries to provide for people, which are great things when the government's able to do that successfully),

we also want to bring wisdom and faith into that picture because there are off-ramps for the cycle of poverty. When people are stuck in the traffic jam of poverty, they can get off of that through wisdom, by making wise decisions regarding their finances in their life, and by trusting in God because God empowers them in ways to clean up their life or to do things that will help them to move forward. So as Christians we come to this idea very compassionately. We don't hit people over the head because they're poor. Some people are stuck there.

We want to do everything we can and giving money is part of that. Generosity is important for us as Christians. But not just giving people money, but helping them with the off-ramp so that they can be understanding of this particular verse. *The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.*

If it is in your control, it's an opportunity you have to set yourself up financially by putting money aside in savings and not impulse buying and not going into debt and avoiding credit cards. If you can do that, you'll avoid *the ruin of the poor* that it says here. As much as you have control, do it.

Verse 16 – *The wages of the righteous is life, but the earnings of the wicked are sin and death.*

This is wages and earning. What happens to the righteous versus the wicked. We're going to have righteous and wicked compared and this is the ending to them. One it works out well; one it doesn't work well. They both have wages. That's an illustration, again, of living for the Lord. I would put that one in the following God side because it uses the word *righteous*.

Verse 17 – *Whoever heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray.*

Last week we spent our whole time talking about the value of correction and the wise person pays attention to it. So this verse is just amplifying that idea of heeding and responding well to correction.

Verse 18 – *Whoever conceals hatred with lying lips and spreads slander is a fool.*

Spreading slander has to do with speech, but it also has to do with hiding, lying. That's integrity. So you might put this in the integrity category or the speech category. The two sometimes go together. But honesty is important and not being honest is foolish. That's the idea it's communicating in verse 18.

In verse 19 it says, *Sin is not ended by multiplying words, but the prudent hold their tongues.*

There are a lot of sins of the mouth. It might be sin of cursing, it might be sin of bad language, it might be sin of lying. But one sin of the mouth is talking too much, the chattering fool. Chatter, chatter, chatter. Keep that in mind as you look at that because next it says *but the prudent person holds their tongue.*

I like the American proverb. I don't know exactly where it comes from. Some say it came from Abraham Lincoln. Others say it came from Mark Twain. I'm not sure, but here's what it says. "Better to remain quiet and allow people to wonder if you're a fool than to speak and to remove all doubt."

So sometimes just being quiet, people think you're wise even when you may not be. Be careful of speaking too much. There's actually another proverb that gives us some idea in the Bible about that. But that statement comes from one of those great guys probably.

Verse 20 – *The tongue of the righteous is choice silver, but the heart of the wicked is of little value.*

You've heard someone referred to maybe as a silver tongue, the idea of someone who the speech that they have is just immaculate. You love listening to them. Well the righteous person here is like that, the person following God. *But the heart of the wicked is of little value* where you really should have value in your heart. The wicked person has little value even there.

Verse 21 – *The lips of the righteous nourish many, but fools die for lack of sense.*

Here's another speech one. Do you see the words tied there to speech? It says *the lips of the righteous nourish many*. They are nutritious in their speech. I would suggest that some people are toxic in their speech. Always criticizing, negative, complaining, whining, and so on. But *the lips of the righteous nourish many*. So if you're following after the Lord with righteousness then you'll be able to nourish other people.

Verse 22 – *The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, without painful toil for it.*

In other words we pray that God's blessing would be on us, not so we can have wealth, but that one of the byproducts of it often is that you're living a life that's following the Lord. As you're obeying God's principles of finance and other things, your bank account increases just because you're doing the right thing, *without painful toil for it*.

Verse 23 – *A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom.*

Following God – that's where I would put this one. Someone who is following God is someone who delights in wisdom. "Ah wow. Tell me something more. I want to learn about God. I want to learn more." That's what delighting in wisdom is.

But it says the *fool has pleasure in wicked schemes*. It reminds you of the teenager who had kind of done something, runs away real quick. You know, the wicked schemes that he has pleasure in.

Verse 24 – *What the wicked dread will overtake them; what the righteous desire will be granted.*

That's the end again. Wicked, righteous in the end, and this is what's going to happen. There's a good life for the righteous, a bad life for the wicked. That's what he's saying there.

Verse 25 – *When the storm has swept by (some of you right now are in the storm), the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.*

Does it say there that the righteous won't have storms? No, it doesn't say that. The storms are going to come to the righteous and the wicked. But the righteous have a way because they're following God and withstanding the storm and knowing how to address it.

Beautiful proverb. I love that. I'm glad I know Jesus. I have eternal life. In the midst of the storm it keeps me going.

Verse 26 – *As vinegar to the teeth...* Now there must be something about vinegar and teeth. I don't drink vinegar so I don't know, but it must be irritating. *As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes* (you know how irritating it is at a campfire when the smoke is blowing your way so you move to the other side, it blows over there and you can't get away from it – that's the irritation of the smoke to the eye), *so are sluggards* (those are lazy people) *to those who send them.*

It's really irritating to have to work with a lazy person. That's the idea there. So be careful.

Verse 27 – *The fear of the Lord adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.*

The fear of the Lord is trusting in the Lord, putting yourself under the umbrella of God's leadership. It's talking about how that's going to add to your life. Following God, that's where I put that one.

Verse 28 – *The prospect of the righteous is joy, but the hopes of the wicked come to nothing.*

What can the righteous look forward to? Something good. Joyfulness. *But the hope of the wicked comes to nothing.* There's nothing there. Following God.

Verse 29 – *The way of the Lord is a refuge* (the way of the Lord, that is living God's ways, is a refuge) *for the blameless, but it is the ruin of those who do evil.*

The way of the Lord is just going to damage anybody who's doing evil, so they're in trouble. Following God is the important thing, again, there.

Verse 30 is also about following God. *The righteous will never be uprooted, but the wicked will not remain in the land.*

They're temporary. There's a permanence about what happens in your life when you're following God.

Verse 31 – *From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced.*

So the *mouth of the righteous* (again, we're talking about speech), *comes* what? *The fruit of wisdom*. Another thing that comes out of the person's mouth who's righteous is that he has things to say that are wise. You can listen to his nuggets of wisdom.

Verse 32 – *The lips of the righteous know what finds favor, but the mouth of the wicked only what is perverse.*

Another speech one. The lips of the righteous know what finds favor so they know how to speak things that are favorable.

Okay. I'm just going to pause right there. We've just finished 32 verses. We're going to read 31 in a minute. Take a deep breath. We're going to dive back in because we're looking at Proverbs, we're trying to categorize them, and we're trying to see what God has to say for us.

I would just suggest so far we're seeing verses about money, we're seeing verses about following God, we're seeing verses about speech. We're going to see more of that as we go forward. You may be thinking, "I'm going to go back and look at just those verses." Maybe God has already shared with you something that you need to think about now, so you can tune me out for the rest of it and just pause and talk to the Lord during that time. Or just write it down so you don't forget it because more good ones are about to come.

Proverbs 11:1 – *The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.*

The idea is that in the marketplace if someone was dishonest they would have a weight here that weighs one pound and they want to sell one pound of sugar, so they'll put a little bit less than one pound on this side and when it balances it out then this person gets a little less of the product. But when they want to buy something they put on the weight something that weighs a little bit more so they'd have something on the other side that weighs more, so they're going to get more. That's a dishonest scale.

In America many of our laws were developed based on Christian principles. In fact there is an institution within our government called the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Within that institute they have the Office of Weights and Measures.

This is a direct quote from the Office of Weights and Measures. "The Office of Weights and Measures promotes uniformity in U.S. weights and measures laws, regulations, and standards to achieve equity between buyers and sellers in the marketplace. This enhances consumer confidence, and enables U.S. businesses to compete fairly at home and abroad, and strengthens the U.S. economy."

It's a great exhortation for us business people. Those of us who are businessmen we need to keep this in mind because people should be getting what they pay for. Now I'm going to read the proverb again and then we'll go on. That proverb says, *The Lord detests dishonest scales, but accurate weights find favor with him.*

Verse 2 – *When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.* Humility is connected to wisdom. It's a valuable quality that we need.

Verse 3 – *The integrity of the upright guides them, but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*

Here we have integrity again and this sense of having integrity means that it guides you. There's something about that in your life that keeps you going in the right direction. That's what it's saying. You want to have integrity in your life.

Verse 4 – *Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.*

We've already seen proverbs that talk about the value of wealth. Wealth is like a fortified city so that you're protected in case of a disaster or some problem in your life. But this proverb is warning us to be careful that we don't overemphasize wealth. Notice what it says. It says it's *worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death.* It's the righteousness of following God that provides the salvation for us, that provides us the ability to be rescued in the end. It's not money, so be careful there. Verse 4 gives us a balance to the money question.

Verse 5 – *The righteousness of the blameless makes their paths straight, but the wicked are brought down by their own wickedness.* Again righteous, wickedness compared. We want to be righteous, following God so that we can have straight paths.

Verse 6 – *The righteousness of the upright delivers them, but the unfaithful are trapped by evil desires.*

This is another one about following God. Notice that God rescues them. When you're living the right way you're rescued in a number of different ways. But by being evil or unfaithful you get entrapped. Be careful.

Verse 7 – *Hopes placed in mortals (that is, you put your hope in a person) die with them; all the promise of their power comes to nothing.*

Again, I would put this under following God. The most important thing you want to do is follow the Lord. That's where you put your hope. Don't put your hope in a person. If you put your hope in a person you're going to be angry, you're going to be upset, you're going to be disappointed. Don't put your hopes in a person. Put your hopes in the Lord.

Verse 8 – *The righteous person is rescued from trouble, and it falls on the wicked instead.*

Again, following God, comparing the righteous and the wicked. Trouble comes to the wicked person.

Verse 9 – *With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape.*

This is a speech one again. It's talking about your neighbors. How you talk to your neighbors is important. Some people talk poorly about their neighbors and it just destroys their relationship they have with them.

Verse 10 – *When the righteous prosper, the city rejoices; when the wicked perish, there are shouts of joy.*

Notice there's joy and the city rejoices. Both are mentioned there. One, they rejoice because the righteous are prospering. Those who are following God are moving in the right direction. But also when the wicked perish they also rejoice because there's a sense here of equity that takes place of the pressure that's placed on people underneath them. So there's joy that takes place when righteousness prevails.

Verse 11 – *Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted, but by the mouth of the wicked it is destroyed.*

Again, speech here. Whether blessing or destroying, what does your speech do? This is just another verse that amplifies that idea.

Verse 12 – *Whoever derides their neighbor has no sense, but the one who has understanding holds their tongue.*

It's one thing to put somebody down, "oh boy, he's got all kinds of problems," and deride your neighbor. It's another thing to hold your tongue and be quiet. The wise person holds his tongue. He has understanding. That's a very good speech proverb that we consider.

Another speech one – verse 13. *A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret.*

You don't share private information. It's another sin of the mouth to betray a confidence and share a secret. A trustworthy person keeps a secret.

Verse 14 – *For lack of guidance a nation falls, but victory is won through many advisers.*

This is one of my favorite proverbs in the whole book. It happens to be in this chapter. But this is one that I would highlight as a favorite. Why? Because it talks about advisers and having advisers.

There's lots of ways to learn things and Proverbs tells us that. One of the ways we have to learn things sometimes is through correction. I want to respond well to the correction that comes in my life. But I have advisers in my life too that I go to for advice, I go to to see their impressions about what's going on in my life. How am I doing? I need an answer to a question. Some of those are big things, some of those are small things.

One of the advisers in my life is my son, Joshua. He's a pastor in Southern California. One of the ways he advises me is my style of clothing. I happen to be buying some new clothes right now,

so I was at the store yesterday trying to pick out some clothes and I shoot him a text. I said, “Josh, I’m going to wear this sweater that’s a V-neck sweater. Should I wear a t-shirt under it or not? What do I do?”

He shoots me back a text. “Yes, you can wear a V-neck or you can wear a round t-shirt, the crew-neck one, but don’t have it white. Make sure it’s black.”

So I’m saying, “Thank you.” I just gave you a tip on style from my son Josh who’s very good at style, and I really appreciate his advice.

Advisers. It’s so important. Not just of simple things like that. We want to be able to have many advisers in our lives to keep us from having to be corrected in our lives.

Let’s go to the next one. Verse 15 – *Whoever puts up security for a stranger will surely suffer, but whoever refuses to shake hands in pledge is safe.*

We already talked about this and how loaning money to people or to sign or cosign something for someone is dangerous. It’s really dangerous. That’s what it’s saying here. If you refuse to do it, you’re safe.

Verse 16 – *A kindhearted woman gains honor, but ruthless men gain only wealth.*

Notice *kindhearted*. You might create a new category for kindness, generosity. It’s not on your page; you may create it yourself. The *kindhearted woman gains honor*, but notice what it says about the ruthless person. The ruthless person, *ruthless men gain only wealth*. Some people say, “Okay. Give me the wealth. I’ll take the wealth.” Notice that’s all they get. Money is not the end. The kind person who shares with other people, they may get wealth, but really what they get is honor, a valuable thing that we need.

Verse 17 – *Those who are kind benefit themselves, but the cruel bring ruin on themselves.*

That’s the proverb that is the basis for what I say in this to people that a cruel person or that person who’s being mean to you, their greatest punishment is they have to live with themselves. That’s their greatest punishment. I think that’s what it’s saying here. *The cruel bring ruin on themselves.*

Verse 18 – *A wicked person earns deceptive wages, but the one who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward.*

Integrity. Do the right thing. Don’t trick people and get deceptive wages. Get a sure reward.

Verse 19 – *Truly the righteous attain life, but whoever pursues evil finds death.*

Now the word *life* and *death* in the book of Proverbs have to do with the quality of life. We’re talking again about the righteous and wicked person and what there is in the end. A quality of life increases when you’re following God and you’re doing the right thing.

Verse 20 – *The Lord detests those whose hearts are perverse, but he delights in those whose ways are blameless.*

Notice that last part. God *delights in those whose ways are blameless*. “Oh God, may my actions today bring delight to you, bring joy to you.” That’s what we want to pray.

Verse 21 – *Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free.*

Yes! I love the freedom that comes by following God. It’s a privilege that we enjoy.

Verse 22 – *Like a gold ring in a pig’s snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.*

This is one of the favorite verses people quote out of the book of Proverbs. It’s used often. This is what this is saying. If you were to take a pig, a pig in the mud, and you were to take a nice piece of jewelry and stick it on his nose, you would say, “That’s silly. Why do that?” In the same way, a woman who’s really beautiful but has problems in her heart of greed and anger and lying and resentment and evil inside of her, that’s like having a pig with beauty on the outside. It just doesn’t fit.

It doesn’t make sense, which obviously is the implication for us, men and women, that we need to be working on internal qualities. Have the qualities inside and not just try to put beauty, external beauty on the outside of something that’s ugly. So we need to work on the internal qualities that we have.

Verse 23 – *The desire of the righteous ends only in good, but the hope of the wicked only in wrath.*

Again, righteous, wicked – the end result good or wrath.

Verse 24 – *One person gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.*

The principle about money here is to be generous. Be generous with your finances. Sharing with other people. It will come back to you. That’s the idea that it’s talking here. Yet he *gains even more*, it says.

Verse 25 – *A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.*

Generosity can take place with money; probably even the more costly thing is time. When you donate your time to someone and help them out, it’s saying, you refresh others, you’ll be refreshed yourself. You know as well as I do if someone’s depressed and come to me and say, “I’m depressed,” I say, “Okay. Let’s try to get you a way that you can be helping somebody else. How can you serve, what can you do to be helping someone else? Because that will refresh you. It will help you move out of your depression into somewhere that God wants you to be.”

Verse 26 – *People curse the one who hoards grain, but they pray God's blessing on the one who is willing to sell.*

So if you're hoarding stuff and you're the only one who has it, that's not what we need to be doing. We need to be sharing with other people. Willing, in this case, to sell what you have to help other people. It's generosity in business.

Verse 27 – *Whoever seeks good finds favor, but evil comes to one who searches for it.*

Notice both are searching. The good person's searching and, it says, the one who's searching for evil. I'd like to say this. If you're looking for good, you're going to find it. If you're looking for evil, you're going to find it. Be careful what you look for. Because if you're looking for evil, you're going to find it. Stay away from that. If you're looking for good, you're going to find it. Stay on the right track. In an office environment, there's good and there's evil. Stay on the right track and do what's right.

Verse 28 – *Those who trust in their riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf.*

Again, be careful about trusting in money. Money has a purpose. It can be valuable. Don't trust in it or you're in trouble.

Verse 29 – *Whoever brings ruin on their family will inherit only wind, and the fool will be servant to the wise.*

Why is that? Because the wise person is making decisions that are wise and fools have to kind of fit in to the wise. You want to be a wise person. You want to follow God. Don't bring ruin on your family. There's no future for you. Do what's right.

Verse 30 – *The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and the one who is wise saves lives.*

I love that. That's what I want to be. I want to be wise and I want to save lives. I want to help other people understand what it means to trust Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. I want to help other people understand what it means to follow a godly life. I want people to understand that there is a way to live that's different than the way they're living so they can receive the blessing of God. There is a way that's better. Often when we have the way that seems right to use, it leads to death. Here it's talking about *the one who is wise saves lives*. They're looking to bless other people.

And the last verse, verse 31 – *If the righteous receive their due on earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner!* Again, the end of what happens when a person's righteous or a sinner.

That's a lot. Today we've talked money, and we've talked about following God, we've talked about integrity, we've talked about being wise, we've talked about kindness. I don't know what God's saying to you, but I trust God will speak to you this morning. You don't want to leave here just having heard some words. You want to take Jesus home. You want to take Jesus home

into your workplace, into your home, into your private life. Because when you take Jesus home then it makes a difference, then it helps you live in the challenging place that you live right now.

God has a way of living. Some of that is described here, but please don't think that our study of the word is designed to result in good ideas. The Bible is not just a success book that teaches us some new good ideas. The Bible is a book that takes the heart of God and communicates to humanity or the heart of man. So when we understand God better through His word as He designed it, and we understand ourselves better as He designed us to learn from His word, and we understand the plan from His word that God has for us, that's when we connect to God's word in the most effective way. God has designed His word to be that vehicle that helps us know how to have a personal, active, vital relationship with Him.

If you don't have it, you can have it today. You can have a relationship with Jesus Christ that will power you forward and you'll have the wisdom of following God in your life.

If God is speaking to your heart in a particular way then as we sing this next song I want to encourage you to go to the prayer counselors who will be on the sides. Ask them to pray for you and just make a commitment this morning, "Lord, this week I want to dedicate myself to you. I want to live differently," this week in whatever area of life that God is calling you to.

Let's pause for just a moment in some quietness before the Lord and allow God to speak to you today before I pray.

[PRAYER] Lord, your Spirit speaks to us in our hearts. It reveals truths from your word. We ask you to do that right now in our lives as we sing this song. Embed some truth in our hearts so that we will remember this week as we go forward, as we serve you. May this song, Lord, be the testimony of our hearts. You're the most important thing that we have. We value you in every area of our lives. We dedicate ourselves to you. In Jesus' name, amen.