



Sermon Transcription • Abbotsford

Wise Up - June 10/11 2017 - Jeff Bucknam

**Wisdom and Her Benefits - (Proverbs 2:1-11)**

**[Please Note: This transcript has been lightly edited for ease of reading. Also, some headings have been added in square brackets to aid the reader in locating portions of the sermon.]**

You know, proverbs are things that we are very accustomed to in our culture. We have our own. They are easy, pithy ways to say something without having to go into long detail to explain it to people. Especially if you are talking to somebody younger, it's just easier to give them the little proverb and say, "This is basically the way life works and if you want to be a smart guy, do this." We have them in every area of life. If you're going to train to be a carpenter and they put the big thing of tin in front of you and they give you the tin snips, it's not uncommon for someone (the foreman or some older guy) to lean over your shoulder and say, "Measure twice, cut once." I never did that and that is why I am a pastor today [laughter].

In other areas as well, if you have a heavy handed boss in your workplace, you might say over the water cooler to a friend (quietly of course, so they don't hear), "You know, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." And the boss's son shows up someday and he shows the same irritating qualities of his father and you say, "The apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Your love might go off for a long trip, and you miss her dearly, and you say, "Absence makes the heart grow fonder." Or you want your love to go on a long trip [laughter] and you say, "Familiarity breeds contempt" [laughter]. You meet a goofy looking guy with a beautiful wife and after they leave, one of you says to the other, "You know, love is blind." If you're a parent and you're worrying about your children going off on an evening, maybe they're in high school and the first time they are away, you just want to remind them. You don't want to be one of those parents who is like, "Curfew, curfew," but you want to remind them of some wise things, so you say to your kids (as they're walking out the door), "You know son, nothing good happens after 10pm." Right? Nothing. Now, when I brought that up in our office this week (we were talking about these modern proverbs) I said that, "Yeah, nothing good happens after 10pm. I tell my kids that all the time." One of our interns, his name is Fredy and he has a Mexican background, and he said, "My mom used to say, 'Nothing good happens after 9:00pm.'" Then there's a Dutch guy in the room who said, "Actually, my parents said, 'Nothing good happens after 2:00am.'" [Laughter] So I don't know what's -- I mean, I know that's when the bars close, but... Ezra was in the room too (Ezra is our campus pastor up in Mission) and he was laughing because he thought it was funny, all the North American proverbs. He said that the proverbs in Africa are far more graphic. So then we were like, "Okay, lay it on us." So here are some proverbs compliments of Ezra Okoti. If you have complaints about them, I'll give you his email in a minute, okay? So we will start with some of the easier ones. Apparently in Africa (where he's from), he said when you're the problem and all your friends know that you're the one who's causing all the difficulty, but you think everyone else is to blame, they might come to you at some point -- you're really irritated and they come to you and say,



“Whatever is eating you is inside your clothes.” You. You’re the problem. Or when you’re wronged and somebody has done something really bad to you, and you’re tempted to fight back with violence and you want to punch him in the mouth (but you shouldn’t give back to your oppressor that way because there are other more clever ways that are less violent to get back at those who are giving you grief), you say, “If your enemy wrongs you, buy each of his children a drum” [laughter]. These are the PG ones now. When you’re just flat out matched - you know, you’re in a competition, maybe it’s a basketball game or you’re up for a job and everyone else is completely more qualified than you are - before you go into the ring against your opponent, your African friend might lean over to you and say, “You know, you can’t compete with the rhino to poop” [laughter]. Along the same lines, you know how we say, “You shouldn’t burn bridges? “Don’t burn the bridge behind you because you might need to come back.” Well, apparently in Africa they don’t use that. I don’t know if there are not a lot of bridges or they prefer this other one, but here’s what they say: “Don’t poop under the tree that provided you shade” [laughter]. You can see the theme in the last two for some reason. I’m not sure.

Proverbs are general truths that lead to the good life. <squeaky voice> Right!? </squeaky voice> They’re general truths that lead to the good life. You share them with your kids because you think, “Look, if you follow these instructions, it will lead you to a path of success in your life.” But they are general truths. Familiarity doesn’t always breed contempt, and absence doesn’t always make the heart grow fonder, right? Broccoli has been absent from my life for a long time. I am not fond of it yet. And you might go away for a holiday on the weekend and come back and say, “Honey, I’m home” and she’s like, “You were gone?” Not always. Maybe 80 percent of the time? 70 percent of the time? You need to know that because we are going to get into a series here on the book of Proverbs and if you walk out thinking that proverbs are guarantees, you’re not reading them right. “Raise up a child in the way you should go and he will not depart from it.” Well yeah, generally. You should raise up a child in the way they should go and generally they won’t depart from it, but you all know people who have. They are general truths that lead to a successful life, not guarantees. One of the beauties of the Bible is that they are so practical, these proverbs. That’s why we share them all the time in all these areas of life. We have a whole book of them - the Book of Proverbs. The series we’re going to be in in the next few weeks, we’re calling it *Wise Up* because Proverbs is all about wisdom. Today we’re going to be looking at Proverbs 2:1-11, mostly because it kind of provides a framework, like a thinking framework, for how proverbs work. I prefer preaching on just a single proverb and really digging our teeth into it. This is going to give you kind of like, “How should we approach the proverbs in this passage?” Proverbs 2:1-11, so here’s kind of the approach I want to take if you want to keep track of where we are in the whole thing. There are two steps I want to take here:

- 1) We Should Embrace Wisdom
- 2) The Results of Embracing Wisdom

Proverbs usually work on an if-then. *If* you do this, *then* this will be the result. So, I want to deal with the *if* first, okay? The embracing of wisdom. *If* you embrace wisdom, *then* these will be the results. So, let’s deal with the first of those.



### [We Should Embrace Wisdom]

We Should Embrace Wisdom. Look at verses one to four of Proverbs chapter 2 with me:

“My son...” [please note those words], “My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding-- indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure [dot, dot, dot]...”

Now, there's a couple *thens* coming - we will get to those in a second. What I want you to focus on here though, is *WHO* is being addressed and who is doing the addressing. “My son...” Who is saying that? Well, if you go to Proverbs 1:1, you learn very quickly who is talking here. It identifies the author as Solomon, the son of David. He is the current King of Israel. Now, Solomon is the wisest guy around and he did not come by his wisdom by just being born and just being really, really smart. He came to his wisdom by a supernatural gift from God. It's a really interesting little story and it's found in 1 Kings 3:5. Here's how it goes. This is how Solomon gets his wisdom that is contained in this book,

“At Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’ Solomon answered, ‘You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day [“That’s me,” Solomon is saying]. Now, Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David [who is like the best king ever]. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties [I don’t know if you’ve noticed this God, but I am completely inadequate for the work. There are a lot of people out there and they’ve got a lot of problems and I have no idea how to do any of it]. Your servant [verse 8] is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So [you asked me what I want] give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?’ [So] The Lord the pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, ‘Since you have asked for this and not for long life [or a Ferrari] or wealth for yourself, nor have you asked for the death of your enemies but [instead you have asked] for discernment in administering justice, [because you’ve asked for that] I will do what you’ve asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.’”

And man was he wise. I mean, people from all over the world came to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Even from Egypt [“gasp”]. Why does nobody gasp when I say that. Egypt was a really wise place with lots of wise people, in fact, you can google and you can find that there are a lot of Egyptian proverbs that mirror those in the book of Proverbs. But even from there people came, and so you find then in 1 Kings 4:29-30 --just listen to how the international acclaim of Solomon is described.

“God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon’s wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt...” [“Gasp.” Thank-you.]



“From all the nations...” [verse 34] “From all nations people came to listen to Solomon’s wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.”

Do you remember --there was a movie that came out a number of years ago that had a --it was a sad story. It was basically about a father who had contracted cancer at the same time that he learned his wife was pregnant with their first child. He learns that his cancer was terminal and he was going to die prior to the birth of the child. He had, for most of his life, wanted to be a dad. He learned during the period of her pregnancy that it was going to be a son and so what this dad did, knowing he was never going to be able to give advice to his child in person, he decided that he was going to take a video camera and he was going to videotape himself in all sorts of different locations, giving advice to his son about all sorts of things that he’s going to need to know in his life. “Here’s how you throw a baseball, son. This is what a curveball looks like. This is the grip.” “Don’t play hockey,” that kind of important stuff, right? [laughter]. “This is how you ask a girl out.” “This is what you dress like when you want to get the job.” “This is the path to the good life, son.” Over and over again in front of this video camera. Every area of life, his father just unloaded everything he knew to him about the practical things and the big picture things and all of that. When you read the book of Proverbs, what you’re reading is essentially a written videotape of a wise old grandfather, grey hair and polyester pants, sitting in that rocking chair, and telling you, “Listen, this is how to live. You want to experience success in this life? You want to know what it looks like to grow old... Happy? Well listen to my voice my son.”

Now, I have to pause here because I have to tell you, when I say things like, or give you an image like, “The Book of Proverbs is like listening to an old grandfather sitting in a chair with the grey hair and the polyester pants,” when I say that kind of thing, you need to understand that in our culture here, that sounds like the worst afternoon ever for a lot of people [laughter]. There’s a reason for that. Listen, if you go to the East today, that’s not the worst afternoon ever. You don’t have a right to speak unless you’ve got some grey hair, in the East. But in the West (where we live), if you want advice about how to live and what the good life looks like, you should find the guy with the skinny jeans and the Yeezies because he’s the coolest guy around. So whatever he’s doing, that’s the thing you should do. Young is better, smarter, more technologically savvy. He knows how to Google. The grey haired guy? He doesn’t know what Google is. It’s something to do with wayward eyes. This difference between the East and the West came to fore for me in a comparison between two experiences that I had. One was when I was in China. I went there and I visited a number of different people. One of the places was a church that was led by a bunch of elderly women and I remember sitting at a dinner with them and I said to them at one point (through the interpreter), “Do you have any young people who are involved in leadership of your church?” When I asked this, the interpreter asked it and I looked at all of them, waiting for a reply, and all they did was laugh. All of them went, “Ha ha ha ha” and they said in response to me, “Young people don’t have anything worth hearing. They don’t say anything worth listening to, so no, we don’t have young people. When they get old we will listen to them, but until then they just keep quiet.” Now, that’s actually the way it worked. They would come into the room, these young people, when we were sitting having these meals and they’d come up and (often times their heads bowed very low) they’d kiss the hands of these older women and then they would sit in the room and never say a word at all. Even if I asked a question to one of them, the answer would come from one of the ladies. “You don’t need to talk to them.” They were the most honored leaders. Wise.



Now you compare that image to an experience I had a few years prior. My wife's grandfather had been remarried. His first wife had died and he was remarried. The woman that he married had some children who were kind of in the 18-25 year old range. She had about four or five of them and they all owned a store together in the Seattle area. So we went down to visit and Grandpa Joe (my wife's grandfather) said let's go to the store and I'll introduce you to my new family. Great. Well, we get there and he introduces us to his family. He walks in the door, he's got a cane and he's an older gentleman, bald for years, actually ran a crane in the Seattle area for years and years and years. Just an old savvy sailor who was in the navy. Old tattoo on his arm. He came hobbling in and he sat on this stool by the door and we met the new family. All the kids started to go out the door to leave and as they were leaving, Grandpa Joe said, "Hey, I just came from the I-5 out here and I want you to know that it's really, really busy, you should probably avoid it and maybe take the 405 if you're going back up North or maybe take one of the arterial streets or a couple others (this is before the days of Google where you could check these things). And they all (these young people) came to Grandpa Joe and they walked right up to him and they looked him in the eye and they said, <mocking voice> "Thank-you Grandpa Joe. Okay" </mocking voice> and they literally patted him on the head and laughed as they walked out. Right. That's the difference. To have grey hair in our society is not a sign of greatness --don't speak! Younger people know more than you do. If you want wisdom, listen to your hip friends, not your dumb father. You and I, we struggle accepting the words of grey-haired fathers who drive slow and don't like technology. But what I want you to see in this passage, is the escalating verbs, alright? This passage is so Eastern. Listen to the verses again, okay? You know what verbs are right? Action words. Just listen to the verbs of the first four verses and listen to how they move.

"My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you [okay, so when you accept something, you're kind of a passive recipient of that thing, right? You sit back, someone says something to you and you're like, "Okay, I accept it. I let it in. I welcome it." There's no pursuing going on, really. Verse two], turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding [okay, a little more movement now. It's not just receiving it, you kind of incline your ear to it. I'm going to move toward it a little bit. Verse three]-- indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding [okay, now we're in it. "I would like to have that. Give it to me," and verse four], if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure..."

If you've ever searched for hidden treasure, you're usually pretty active in it. Just watch *National Treasure*. You're just going for it and you're so focused on the thing. You've got to find it. See the movement? It's escalation. So what this passage is essentially saying is, "Listen, when you listen to the wisdom," when Solomon is saying, "Listen, I know it's hard at the front end for you to accept what it is that I am going to say, but if you let it in, what is going to end up happening, is it's going to move in you. You're going to see the results of it as you grow and eventually you're going to search for it like hidden treasure. You're going to cry out for it and you're going to search for it like it's a treasure because that is what it is. You can't live without it." It's like coffee in that way, acquiring a taste for coffee. I don't know anybody who likes coffee on the first go. Maybe you do and you're weird. I don't like coffee, I think it's gross. I've been told by wife (who desperately wants me to like coffee), "Jeff, I know that when you first taste it it doesn't seem great, so what we need to do is we need to make it palatable for you. So I'm going to go out and buy these french vanilla syrupy things from Tim Horton's



and give them to you - and by the way, i'll do those things all day but that's just sugar, right? I'll also eat sugar all day - so she gives those to me and then you reduce it a little bit as we go along and then eventually you're just going to have the black coffee and you'll really like what it does for you. Then, you'll wake up at eight o'clock one morning some day and think, "I cannot live without this. Don't talk to me before I have it." Right? [laughter] There's this growth in it. He's saying that wisdom is like that. It's got a tough beginning, but as it goes, the benefits of it are so great that you'll just have to have it. That's essentially what he's after here.

My father, I was talking to him on the phone the other day, and there was something that went on in my mind. When I was twelve, I thought my dad was really smart. Then when I turned thirteen he just became colossally dumb in my mind. From thirteen to about twenty I was like, "What happened to him?" It was me, okay, I understand that at this point. But in that period, I thought he was really silly. So I was talking to my dad on the phone. I've been used to not listening to my father's advice because I got into this habit back in those days. My father, of course, has gotten into the habit of not sharing his advice because he got sick and tired of telling the dimwit that wasn't going to listen to him anyways. I was talking to my dad on the phone the other day and he said, "Jeff, I've been hesitating in telling you this for the last couple years, but I've been watching you. You're in your mid forties now and I remember when I was in my mid forties and a lot of the things that you're doing - the time you're spending, how busy you are, the running yourself ragged, all the things that you're doing - I just remember doing. So can I just tell you --I know you don't always love my advice, but can I just tell you..." Then he gave me advice and it was like the man had opened up my brain and listened to my thoughts over the last couple years of my life and he was addressing each and every feeling I had had. I actually sat at the end and said, "Thank-you for that, dad." Kind of in a stunned silence. "Okay I'll talk to you later." He hung up and I hung up and I sat there thinking, "Where did he learn that?" [laughter].

Look, I want to apply this. Number one: I think you and I ought to be more willing to hear Godly wisdom. There are people in our lives who have the right to say, "My son..." They might not actually be your parents, but they are people who God, in His providence, has placed in your life who are older than you, who have gone this way before and know what to expect. Do you remember Pokemon Go? Pokemon Go was this game on the --it was like six months ago, or a year or whatever and it was a game on your iPhone or Samsung and you'd walk around and there would be these digital little Pokemon guys that you could flick balls at and capture, right? They weren't real. Somebody might be standing in front of you like this [motioning]. You're like, "What are you doing?" "There's a Pokemon on you." Out in front of our church here was one of the Poke-stops and so there is like a gaggle of twelve guys (not talking to each other), but walking around like this [motioning] on their phones, you know? Flicking and everything. My son thought this was the greatest game ever. "Dad, Pokemon Go! It's going to be around forever!" "Ha ha. Two weeks, son." So I said, "Two weeks and it will be dead." "No, two weeks? No way. You're so dumb." "Two weeks." Two weeks later, guess what. Pokemon Go is gone. "Why aren't you playing Pokemon Go anymore?" He's like, "I don't know, I'm just bored of it." "See, I told you so!" He said, "How did you know that it was going to go away?" "Because I used to wear parachute pants! [laughter]. When I was a kid we used to tie bandanas around our legs and walk around. 'Check it out, I've got a bandana around my legs. So cool.' [laughter]. I know what a fad is. You're fidget spinner is just a mini hula-hoop. That's all it is." [Laughter]. Right? But see, you've been



there before and you know more. There are people in our lives who know so much more than us, and when they come and speak to us about things - like sexuality and things about your future and whether you should go to college at this place or that place, or what's really going to lead you into Godliness - man, you should be perking up because that's treasure that they hold there. You should be crying out for it and say, "I can't live without that. Please tell me." Not sitting back and saying, "You're so old." My wife Jeanne has a --we've been talking about this for quite a while now. She has an older sister who has raised some really excellent young men. My nephews are great guys who love Jesus and are faithful. A couple of them are married now. Just great guys. We're in our first go-around with figuring out how to raise kids in highschool so that they succeed in life and love Jesus. So we sit down sometimes in the evening and just pray and plead with God, "Help us, help us, help us, help us." It's come to our attention that the Lord, in His kindness, has surrounded us with people who have actually gone that way before. So one day, my wife said, "You know what, I'm done with it. I'm just going to ask Carrie (my sister-in-law) how --give me advice." So she went out for a walk with Carrie, she came back and I said, "How did it go?" and she said "Unbelievable. She said things that I kind of knew or whatever, but some things I didn't. Things that I really want to incorporate into our parenting. I'm going to ask everybody from now on," Jeanne said. "I never knew all of that wisdom was just right here." We ought to be more willing to hear that wisdom. It should be sought like a treasure.

Secondly, I think we ought to be more willing to share it. Now listen, I'm not giving you --you have a lot of experience and a lot of wisdom about what it looks like to follow Jesus. Most of us in the room have that, but because of the cultural forces around us, we really hesitate to share it because we don't want to look geeky and dumb and I know you'd rather listen to your friends. Their friends are dumb and you're not. You've lived through this. You're passed dumb, mostly [laughter]. I'm not saying that we should nag them. "Do this, do this, do this, do this. When I was a child..." Do it kindly, winsomely, but the truth is, don't keep your mouth shut. God has you there. Not just with your kids, but in several circumstances. God has you there so that you can speak up and lead them. You might not know what *Despacito* is, you might not know what it means to be "lit." Praise God. [laughter] But you know what it looks like to follow Jesus through their age and the ages after them. Don't bottle that up, right? You have something you can give there. Lead them.

### **[The Results of Embracing Wisdom]**

Right. So here's the second part. If-then. So, "If you hear my words" says Solomon. "If you listen to my wisdom and you embrace it and cry out for it and treat it like a treasure, then..." Now there are two *thens* that he gives. I am going to read the first *then* and then I am going to explain the second one. Here's the first one,

"Then you will understand [verse 5] the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones."

He's basically saying there, "Listen, you'll know God better. If you listen to what I'm saying, it's the pathway to knowing God better. You will know his character in ways that you have not known it up to



this point and he is the greatest thing in all the universe, so you should want to know the greatest thing in all the universe.” So you’ll know Him better, but secondly, and this is what I want to focus on here, in verse 9,

“Then you will understand what is right and just and fair -- every good path.”

You’ve got to just listen to that for a minute. You will know what to do in all the sticky situations. What’s interesting is that Solomon, when in 1 Kings, his wisdom is being shown to be remarkable. All the kings are coming to visit him and he has received it as a supernatural gift from God. There’s a story that shows up there to say, “Let me explain to you how great his wisdom was. There once was a time and then this story happens, a famous story. Here’s how it goes, you might have heard it before. There was a time when Solomon (when he’s sitting on his throne as king) is approached by two women. They are prostitute mothers - not mothers of prostitutes, but prostitutes who are mothers recently of infant children. They approach him and they tell him this story. They say, “Listen, here’s what happened. We were sleeping in our brothe,l upstairs in a similar room (a lot of the prostitutes sleep in the same room). We’re sleeping in that room and next to us is this baby. Each one of us has our own baby next to us and we’re nursing the baby overnight. We both fell asleep next to our babies, and one of us woke up to realize that we had rolled over on top of the baby and suffocated him or her to death. In horror, sat up in our bed shaking and looked around the room and realized that our child (my child) is the same age as the child of this other one.” So the mother of the dead child took the dead child over, dropped it quietly next to the sleeping mother of the live child, took the live child and brought it back to her side of the bed and layed down. Of course the mother of the living child, who is now laying next to the dead child, awakes and she realizes, in her horror, that she too has killed the child. She’s freaking out until she looks at the baby and says, “Wait a minute, that’s not my nose. That’s your nose!” She sits up in the bed and she starts yelling, “This isn’t my child, this is your child! That’s my child! That’s my child! Look at the birth mark. That’s my child!” “No, it’s not your child, it’s my child.” “My child!” “My child!” “My child!” Until they go to the king. And that is basically the way the conversation goes before the king. “My child!” “My child!” “My child!” “My child!” So the king says [*<waves hands> Whoa -daa -daa -daa </waves hands>*], wise Solomon, “Wait, wait, wait. Here’s what I want you to do --somebody get me a sword. You both want the child? Cool.” So he takes him, “I am going to cut him in half. Bring him here and I’ll chop him right down the middle [*whack*] and you can each have a part.” *<questioning> Wise Solomon? </questioning>* Well, the actual mother of the child says, “Oh no, no, no, no, no. It doesn’t matter who has the baby. As long as the baby lives, give him to the other mother. I won’t fight anymore.” The other mother says, “No, I’d like half.” Solomon then says, “Listen, give it to the mother who wants the child to live, because clearly that’s a mother’s love.” Now this story became famous. What it shows is this man and this wisdom that he conveys, gives you the ability to make decisions in the toughest of moral and ethical situations. Would you like to have that ability? Like, would you like to be faced with a moral dilemma in your workplace, in your relational life, where you don’t know what to do and you plead with God, “Oh Lord, show me the way.” Would you like to have it so that God, through wisdom, has been forming your mind and heart in such a way because you’ve been so used to listening to it, that it is obvious which way you should go. That’s what he promises. If you let this in and you cry out for it and you seek it like a treasure, you can have it. You’ll understand what is right and just and fair -- every good path.





Then in verse 10,

“For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.”

From what? You need protection and guarding from what? What do you mean “guard me?” Well the answer to that is actually is in the next couple verses. Listen to what you’re being guarded from. Verse 12,

“Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse, who have left the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways. [It’s those wicked men out there who are using their words to try and sway you. Wisdom will protect you from them and their words, and verse 16], Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words, who has left the partner of her youth and ignored the covenant she made before God.”

See, these people - this adulterous woman and this wicked man - are calling out to you just like I am calling out to you,” says Solomon. “I’m telling you, ‘Come this way. This is the path to the good life’, but they are at the same time saying, ‘No, come this way. This is the path to the good life.’ The railroad tracks diverge and you have to choose, my boy. Which way will you follow?”

I was a camp counsellor for a number of years. My go-to Bible study, like if I hadn’t had any time to prep or anything like that, you do the same Bible study week after week after week after week. My go-to Bible study, the most impactful one I ever did, was this. I would set up three cones on the floor and I would say to one of the guys in the room, “Look, so here’s the thing. I am going to blindfold you. I want you take the bandana off the leg and blindfold you and you’re going to have to walk through these cones. “Well how am I going to do that? I’m blindfolded.” “Okay, you get to select a friend to lead you through.” “Okay, I select Joe.” “Do you trust Joe?” “Yes, I trust Joe.” “Now, Joe is not allowed to touch you. He can’t hold your hand, lead you through, anything like that, but he can call to you. He can walk in front of you and you can follow his voice, or he can stand on the side and say, ‘Right, left, right, left.’ Whatever, as long as he doesn’t touch you, he gets to call to you and tell you how to go. Okay, ready? Go.” So they lead them through. They were always able to get through the course. Get to the other end, “All right! We did it!” “Okay great, well done. We’re going to go back the opposite way, but I’m going to add a little bit of a monkey wrench now. Here’s what I want to do. Two of the other guys in the room, what I want you guys to do is I want you to do the same thing that Joe is doing, but your goal is to lead him away. You can’t touch him, but you can yell as loud as you want, you can emulate Joe’s voice, whatever. If you...” (I used to give them extra points). “If you can lead them out that door and get them to the edge of the deck so that if the railing wasn’t there they would fall to their death, extra points.” The railing was there, it was fine, right [laughter]. I never once had any of those kids be able to get to the final with all those voices of kids yelling in their ear, “Come this way, come this way.” One kid just went up to the kids ear and went, “Peas and carrots, peas and carrots,



peas and carrots” [laughter]. The most successful ones were those that emulated the voice of the person who was trying to lead them and they mistook it and they ended up going the other way. Now, you can see why this is a great image for what we’re looking at here. Because essentially what Proverbs is saying in the rest of the book is, “Listen, there are two ways to hear. They are competing voices in your life. There are those that are calling you to think that the good life is held at the end of valuing the things they are saying you should value, but Solomon is saying the good life is actually the opposite.” So in very practical places, Solomon is going to say things like, “You know what, the reason that you have money, give me neither poverty nor riches, but only my daily bread. You have money to be generous and you should settle for just enough like they did in the wilderness when they got the manna every day. You should be settled with that.” But the other voices are saying, “Are you kidding me? The goal of money is to hoard it. He who has the most toys wins. Buy, buy, buy, pleasure, pleasure, pleasure - that’s the goal of money. The good life is had at the accumulation of hoarding wealth.” Or you’ll have Solomon say things about sex, about faithful monogamy. That the good life is had by you being faithful to your spouse your whole life or having chastity if you’re single. That is --at the end of your life, you’ll be able to smile and say, “I have lived a full life following the ways of God.” But our society and the wicked men and adulterous woman are going, “Are you kidding me? Taste all the colours man! Are you nuts? You don’t need to be repressed! You fool! The wise way to go is to follow the sexuality of our ways - promiscuous and free. That’s fulfilling. Solomon will say, “The path of forgiveness will lead to your good” and the others, “No, the path of revenge. That will fulfill you.” “Use your power to help others,” says Solomon. “No, no. Use your power to help you.” Two roads. Two voices. So, the question that proverbs keeps asking over and over is, “To whom are you listening?” So, to whom are you listening?

### [Addendum]

That should be the end of the sermon. It’s not going to be, okay? Addendum. The sermon is over there. Do you know what the answer to that question is for most of us? Uh, the wrong one. Like seriously, most of us have fallen off of that deck. Even with the railing there we’ve gone right over. We just listen to the wrong voices all the time. We value our culture's viewpoints on these matters all the time. Here’s the good news. We have walked away from God and His ways so many times. Here’s the good news. Jesus never did. He never walked away from God and he died in your place for the unwise. The wise for the unwise. So, if you have failed in this, you qualify to be a follower of Jesus [*<whispered exclamation> “Yes” </whispered exclamation>*] and what he wants to do, no matter where you were laying in this particular moment (and maybe it’s at the foot of the deck), what he wants to do is say, “Look, just turn around, agree with me regarding the wrong path, and let’s go back to the beginning and listen to what I have to say to you and follow my voice. It’s time to wise up. Let me pray for us.

Father, I’m so thankful for your word and for the Book of Proverbs and how exciting it’s going to be in the next little while for us to study it. Would you help us to see the goodness of your ways. In Jesus name, Amen.