

'Foolproof your life': Learning to read Proverbs

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Preacher: Dr. Lindsay Wilson

[0 : 00] I should say that one of the things that made me interested in Proverbs was when I was at university, I was doing a major in South Indian history and society.

! Many people who specialize in various Proverbs around the world say that Proverbs tells us a lot about the ordinary life in a place.

You talk to the academics and they'll tell you about what life is like for the academics. But Proverbs come from the people and are handed down by word of mouth and tell us something about the nature of the people.

I thought I'd start you off with a quiz. I thought I'd look for some Malaysian Proverbs, but I thought that was too difficult. So I've got some English Proverbs and I hope you're able to help me out with, can you finish these Proverbs for me?

Strike while the... Very good. It's always darkest before the... Don't bite the hand that... Misses.

[1 : 26] Tell me if you remember, a miss is as good as a... Mile. Or 1.6 qubit. If you lie down with dogs, you... Get dogs. Please.

That's right. An idle mind is... Devil's place. Devil's playground. Where there's smoke, there's... Fire. Two's company, three's.

Power. Power. Very good. A first grade teacher gave that same list of Proverbs to their students and asked them to fill in the rest of the Proverbs.

Here's what they came up with. Strike while the bug is close. It's always darkest before daylight saving time. Don't bite the hand that looks dirty.

A miss is as good as a mister. If you lie down with dogs, you'll stink in the morning. They got pretty close on that one.

[2 : 26] An idle mind is the best way to relax. Where there's smoke, there's pollution. Two's company, three's, the musketeers.

People do different things with Proverbs. But Proverbs... I mean, the fact that you knew English Proverbs so well shows how Proverbs are the kind of things that are handed down from generation to generation.

They're handed down by parents as they train children. People call them the wisdom of many, but the wit of one.

That is, a lot of people have contributed to this, made this observation, reinforced this observation over the years. But one person in the end put it into such a memorable form that we repeat it again and again, and we tend to know exactly how it goes.

So, what we have to do is when we come to the book of Proverbs, we have those kind of Proverbs from chapter 10 onwards.

[3 : 34] I was teaching this morning on Proverbs chapter 10. Proverbs chapter 1 to 9 are not so much what we would call Proverbs, but they're longer instructions or almost lectures that form the groundwork for Proverbs.

I'll come back to that. But the difficulty that most people have with understanding the book of Proverbs are the individual Proverbs from chapter 10 onwards. So, I want to focus on those in particular.

Well, what is a Proverbs? It's really a generalisation based on experience or a distillation of knowledge gained by experience.

So, it's not a law or a promise. It's not something that's been revealed by God, but almost discovered by people.

And yet, God's seen fit to include it in Scripture. And I guess God is always behind the process of gathering and discerning what is of enduring value and what should be included in Scripture or not.

[4 : 46] I think when you read a Proverbs, you have to look at how the book of Proverbs is set out. And it doesn't start with individual Proverbs on various topics.

It starts with chapter 1 to 9. And I want to think about the significance of that first. Proverbs 1 to 9 tells us that if we want to understand the individual Proverbs, we need to have a particular way of reading them.

And that's what chapters 1 to 9 provides. It starts off with the most important thing, with the right foundation. Proverbs aren't just meant like secular Proverbs, as just giving you a bit of wisdom or something smart to say in a conversation.

But the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In order to understand the Proverbs in chapter 10 onwards, you need to start with a right relationship with God.

That's the challenge, that this isn't independent of your relationship with God, but building upon your relationship with God. Since God is the one in charge of ordering everyday life, the Proverbs, which speak about different situations in everyday life, are really trying to describe how God has ordered everyday life.

[6 : 11] So that's the first principle. We'll start with the right foundation, the fear of the Lord. The second foundation is that Proverbs are designed, the book of Proverbs is designed to shape your character.

That is God, what God wants us to do is not just have the information conveyed in a proverb, but God wants us to become people of a certain kind of character.

And so chapters 1 to 9, amongst other things, will talk about how God shapes our character, the kind of things we need to do. And it's that character which will give us the right direction in life.

The third thing that chapters 1 to 9 tell us is the importance of our ongoing choice of choosing wisdom and rejecting folly.

Now, if you want to put that into Christian terms, I think you can do that fairly easily. The Christian life is one of starting with the right foundation, isn't it?

[7 : 16] The fear of the Lord, which for us means trusting in the Lord Jesus who died for our sin. The issue of character has to do with the fruit of the Spirit, as the Spirit grows his fruit in our life.

And the choosing of wisdom and rejecting of folly is part of the lifelong struggle of living under the lordship of Jesus. So when you think of Christ as our foundation because of his saving work, his ongoing control of our life because of his lordship, both in response to his word and in response to his world, and then you think of him working on shaping who we are as people, not just what we do, then you see that the book of Proverbs fits quite nicely in with the Christian understanding of how we're meant to respond.

And it's after that, the chapters 10 to 29 in particular, focus on individual Proverbs, just one small aspect of society that's picked up and you see an insight is given.

What we don't realise is how many Proverbs are around. We're used to those traditional Proverbs, but a lot of people today speak and hear a whole lot of proverb-like forms.

Advertisers build on Proverbs. So when a shoe company says, just do it, they're speaking in proverbial type language.

[8 : 59] When you see, as you often do on different social media, a meme or a gif or something like that, they're the modern contemporary forms of some Proverbs.

So we live in a Proverb-filled world and people will often respond in proverbial kind of language. Someone writing on Yusuf Proverbs said, Proverbs are everywhere in society.

We live in a Proverb-filled world. They're everywhere except in church, except in the corporate. And maybe we need to address that issue. OK.

So what we need to say about using Proverbs well, because one of the things that Proverbs itself does is to warn us against using Proverbs badly.

A classic chapter here is, I think, chapter 26. And in verses, verse 7 of chapter 26, it says, Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

[10 : 07] Now, a fool is someone who hasn't been shaped in their character and someone who hasn't granted their life for the fear of the Lord and someone who refuses to choose a way of wisdom and instead chooses a way of folly.

So someone who refuses to go through the pathway of Proverbs chapter 1 to 9 is like the useless legs of a lame person.

That is, they can't be used to walk on. They can't be used for their intended purpose. So if you don't go through chapters 1 to 9 and therefore you speak a proverb from the mouth of a fool, then your insights can be useless.

Now, it doesn't stop there because two verses later in verse 9 it says, Like a thorn bush in a drunken's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

You see the kind of proverb you're teaching painting a graphic picture and you can imagine the scenario of a drunken man wandering around the street with a big thorn bush in his hand, waving it around wildly and damaging anyone who happens to come too close to him.

[11 : 26] So it's saying here that not only can a proverb in the mouth of a fool be useless, but the proverb in the mouth of a fool can be dangerous. So that's why we must be very careful to go through the pathway of chapters 1 to 9 and not to use the book of Proverbs without seeing those important principles.

My grandmother-in-law used to have what she used to call a promise box. It was something you'd fit in your hand and inside this little plastic box were a whole lot of rolled up scrolls and she had a pair of tweezers there and she would pick one scroll out each day, unwrap it, and that was her promise for the day.

It was full of Proverbs. And so for her, Proverbs could just be arranged into a little box and you just pick one out at random and that's your promise for the day. That, I think, is not how we're meant to read the book of Proverbs.

We're meant to read it in the context of Proverbs 1 to 9. And if we do that, if we start with the fear of the Lord, if we have our character shaped by wisdom, if we commit ourselves to choose wisdom and object folly, then we will be able to understand the Proverbs better and our teaching from the Proverbs won't be useless or dangerous.

I'll give you some examples of that later on where people have used the book of Proverbs in really unhelpful ways. So the first principle, I would say, in terms of reading and understanding the book of Proverbs is don't just read from Proverbs 10 onwards, but read from chapter 1 through to 9 first.

[13 : 18] Because that's the God given context in which he's placed the Proverbs in the Bible. And those three things are there. The right foundation, the godly character, an ongoing choice of the way of wisdom and rejection of folly.

Now the second thing I want to say, builds on that to some extent, to say that Proverbs are not guarantees or promises.

Proverbs don't operate as if they always apply in every situation. So for example, there are Proverbs that seem to say, if you are wise, you will live a long life.

Proverbs chapter 9, verse 10 to 11, for example. For through wisdom, your days will be many and years will be added to your life. Well, is it always the case?

And if it isn't, does that mean the proverb is not true? Well, we only need to look at the person of Jesus, don't we? And know that he died at a young age, but perfectly wise, perfectly righteous, perfectly following God's will, a godly character, clearly fearing the Lord, choosing the way of wisdom.

[14 : 45] Despite doing all those things, he died young. Does that mean the proverb is not true? No. It means that the proverb needs to be understood as a proverb.

It's true. Based on general observations that godly people use good sense. They don't indulge in riotous living.

They make sensible choices. And that's much more likely to enable them to live long rather than to be, their lives to be cut short.

But that doesn't explain every person and every situation because it was never intended to be. A promise is something which is always true.

So, for example, if Jesus promises us, as he does, that if we turn from his sins and trust in Jesus, we will have eternal life.

[15 : 47] We're meant to read that as a promise. It's always true. It was true. It was true of us. It was true of the thief on the cross had minutes or hours before he died.

If we trust in Jesus, we will be with him forever. But a proverb is not like that. It does have perhaps exceptions or cases where it does not apply.

So, for example, in chapter 3, verse 9, Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruit of your crops, then your barns will be filled to overflowing and your vats will brim over with new wine.

Now, we all know exceptions to that rule. We know that there are some people, certainly in Australia and perhaps even in Malaysia, where there are some people who are very, very wealthy who are utterly unrighteous.

Perhaps you may have heard or read some of them. We know that every wealthy person is not righteous and we know that every poor person is not wicked.

[16:57] So, we know in our experience that there are exceptions to that rule. But we do know, too, that it is generally true.

If we choose to honour the Lord with our wealth, we will prosper more than if we don't honour the Lord with our wealth. If we give a gratefulness to God, then indeed we will often, but not always, prosper more than if we did the other.

So, we know that with a number of other proverbs, there may be exceptions, but they teach a general truth.

Not a truth that's always applicable. Chapter 21, verse 17 says, Whoever loves pleasure will become poor.

Whoever loves wine and olive oil will never be rich. And of course, that's true as a generalisation. If people are responsible in the way they use their money, they're more likely to be better off than worse off.

[18:04] That's what a proverb does. It tells us what generally, often, or typically is the case. We see that sometimes people will be poor for other reasons.

Proverbs itself tells us that. In Proverbs 13, verse 23, it says, An unploughed field produces food for the poor, but injustice sweeps it away.

And you can see the picture being painted. A person has worked hard at planting their crop, watering it, and about to harvest it. When someone sweeps in and takes it all, they steal it from them.

They're poor, not because they're unrighteous, but because other people have acted unfairly towards them. Now, the book of Proverbs talks about those kind of exceptions to the general principles.

But that proverb is true as well. But it's not always the case that a person who has a field in justice takes it away. You see, a proverb is not meant to be a promise, not meant to be a guarantee.

[19:14] And sometimes some of the things that we claim as promises were never intended to be a promise. I think that was a mistake of Job's friends.

Let me tell you another one that is actually pastorally much more important. Many parents rightly value Proverbs 22, verse 6.

Start children off on the way that they should go, or in some versions, train up a child in the way he should go. And even when they're old, they will not turn from it. I've heard some parents claim that as a promise.

Since God promises that if I faithfully train up my child, they will become a believer in the true and living God. And yet we know in our experience that the children of believers do not always become believers, or do not stay as believers, even if they appear to be believers for a certain period of time.

Now, is it because of bad parenting? Well, I've heard people use it in this way. People are complaining about their teenagers rebelling.

[20:29] And I've overheard someone say, Well, if only you'd taken the advice of Proverbs 22, verse 6, and claimed that promise. If you trained up your child in the right way, they wouldn't be rebelling against you now.

And I think how cruel to give that kind of advice. But it's based on it being a promise to claim or a guarantee of the outcome. And it's obvious when you think of why it could not be a guarantee or a promise.

Who can make a person a Christian? Well, only God can. Only God can change our hearts and cause us to trust in Him. Parenting can't do that.

Even the best of parenting can't make a person a Christian. Even the most prayerful parent cannot make their child a Christian. That's the work of God.

But what this proverb is saying is that parental input is of great value and therefore ought to be a priority for us. We ought to work hard at training up our children in the way they should go because it typically has very powerful effects on their lives.

[21 : 43] And that's why we ought to do it. So it's not just something that's untrue. It's an encouragement for us to parent faithfully. But it's not a promise to claim and it's not an excuse to blame other people for their bad parenting if their children don't turn out well.

So proverbs are proverbs. They're not promises. They're observations of sequences that typically happen.

And they're not often merely observations. They're often observations with an implication. There the implication is work hard at parenting.

Be faithful in your parenting. Be diligent in your parenting. Because it will have real effects. But we also know that the child has to take responsibility for their own decisions in life direction.

And it's very hard in the contemporary world, at least in Australia, to resist the pressure of their peers to move in a different direction than God.

[22 : 51] So this proverb has to be understood among other proverbs and observations and truths that it's sometimes hard to train your children properly, that children have other influences in their life, and that children are responsible ultimately for their own response to the Lord Jesus.

So the proverb does help us to see that parental training has a strong impact, but it's not a promise that you can make your children a Christian, a believer, by faithful parenting.

So the third thing I'd say is that proverbs do not apply in all times and in every context. So one way to misuse a proverb is to assume that it applies all the time.

If a proverb gives you an instruction, something you should do, it's not like a command in Scripture which says, this is what you must do, honour the Lord your God.

You would always have to do something like that. But a proverb is somewhat different. Perhaps that's as clear as, again, in chapter 26 of the book of Proverbs, where we have what we call the contradictory proverbs.

[24 : 15] Now, what should we do when people speak foolishly? Well, we might look into proverbs and see if we can find the answer to that question.

So we come through to chapter 26, verse 4, and it says, Do not answer a fool according to his folly. That is, if a person is speaking foolishly, don't speak foolishly in the way you speak back to them. Or you yourself will be just like him. So that's what we now know what to do when people speak foolishly. Not answer them according to their folly.

The trouble is, if we read on to the next proverb, and it says, Answer a fool according to his folly, for he will be wise in his own eyes. And we know the wisdom of that too, that if we let a fool babble on without being confronted or corrected, then he'll just keep on babbling on.

And sometimes we need to stop and say, that's not the way of wisdom. But the trouble is, if you think of it always applying, if there's a command in a proverb that always applies, which command always applies?

[25 : 30] Verse 4 or verse 5? Do you answer a fool according to his folly? Or not answer a fool according to his folly? Because you can't do both at the same time. What you need is a wisdom of a shaped character to know when you do one and when you do the other.

And that's a matter of discernment. That's a matter of understanding. That's a matter of that wise character that God wants to shape in us. So we need to work out which proverb will apply, when a proverb applies, and when some other truth applies.

So people talk about, it's not that a proverb is untrue, but a proverb isn't applicable in every situation.

And when we've been looking at the Book of Job, we see that the friends of Job have often used proverb-like statements, but they've applied them to Job in an inappropriate way.

They've misunderstood Job's situation, and they've misapplied a proverb-like saying to the life of Job. And God says to them, you have not spoken of me what is right.

[26 : 46] Not because the things they say are necessarily untrue, but they weren't applicable to Job's situation. So we've got to be careful that we don't think that a proverb applies all the time and in every context.

Now, we're used to that in our English proverbs, aren't we? That proverbs sometimes apply, but sometimes you need a different kind of proverb. So, for example, we say on the one hand, many hands make light work, but on the other, too many cooks spoil the broth.

Which one's true? Well, they're both true, but you need to know when to use one proverb and when to use the other. We say, he who hesitates is lost, but look before you leap.

And if you're about to invest in a fairly shady company, you know which proverb you need to use. And it's not he who hesitates is lost.

Out of sight, out of mind, but absence makes the heart grow fonder. You see, they're, in one sense, seemingly contradictory proverbs, but in fact, each proverb is a true observation on life, but they're not always applicable and you need the wisdom to know when to apply one and when to apply the other.

[28 : 17] It's also the case in the New Testament, in fact. At one point, Jesus says, let your light shine before others, Matthew 5, 16. But he also cautions, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.

We need to look at when to do one and when to do the other. So, proverbs don't apply all the time and in every context.

Fourth principle I've got here is that proverbs often describe reality rather than urge actions. Sometimes proverbs can just be observing an aspect of society or observing the way things work. Chapter 25, verse 20 says, like one who takes away a garment on a cold day, or like vinegar poured on a wound, and the picture's painted for us, isn't it, is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.

Now, the implication there is probably don't do that. Don't sing those kind of songs to a heavy heart. But it seems to be as cruel as someone taking away someone's garment to keep them warm.

[29 : 40] That probably doesn't work in Malaysia because you always keep them warm, don't you? But you can understand in a colder climate that would make sense. Or like vinegar poured on a wound, that one would still work.

You know, it would sting. It would hurt. Do you want to inflict pain on someone by singing songs of joy or happiness to someone with a heavy heart?

One that might ring true in a Malaysian context, I think of it as a scenario that you see in the local markets. Chapter 20, verse 14.

It's no good. It's no good, says a buyer. Then goes off and boasts about his purchase. And you see people come away from a market stall boasting about what a bargain they got.

Now, is it endorsing that way of trading, of bartering with the local shopkeeper? No, it's just making an observation. That's how people typically act.

[30 : 39] And we all know that because we've all acted like that at different times, haven't we? Sometimes the lesson is clearly implied even when it's not explicitly stated.

So, for example, in chapter 11, verse 22, it's not a proverb I like to use very often. And you'll see why. Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

Well, it's not a very popular proverb in a lot of the verses, is it? But it's obvious that what we, what it's saying is that women, or if you like really anyone, should not be trusting in outward beauty without character, what's called here discretion.

But character is much more significant than outward beauty. But it's an observation of something that seems similar.

And it's put in such a memorable way that you get the image, and the image is stuck in your mind, and you think, I want to get rid of that image about a gold ring in a pig's snout.

[31 : 54] Now, okay, sometimes the book of Proverbs is just content to describe how life is. It talks about the difficulty of making friends when you're poor.

I think, for example, of chapter 19, verse 4, wealth attracts many friends, but even the closest friend of the poor person deserts him.

The book of Proverbs isn't saying that's the way it should be, is it? I'll come back to that because there's a parallel proverb in chapter 14 that I think helps us to see how to read a proverb like that.

But that particular proverb doesn't make anything. It doesn't say, well, you should go out and be friends with rich people. It doesn't say you should go out and care for the poor.

It doesn't say any one way or the other. You may think that you can learn a lesson from that, and we probably all could when we see people with few friends and we think, well, maybe I could befriend that person.

[33 : 00] But the proverb itself doesn't tell us that. But it may be as we reflect on that, we're convicted as to how we ought to respond. The book of Proverbs talks about bribes.

Chapter 18, verse 6. A gift. That's the translation here, but it's a word that perhaps could be translated as a bribe. A bribe opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great.

And you know people who get access to the rich and powerful by giving a bribe. Why does Elon Musk attend US cabinet meetings?

And I've said... And I've said... So, this is not an endorsement of the practice of bribery.

It's an observation that those who have bribed often gain from bribing others. And you need to think about that in the way of wisdom.

[34 : 13] Is that a good thing or is that a bad thing? Should we simply adopt that because it works? Or is there a better way, a way of integrity?

But Proverbs doesn't develop all the so-therefores. It simply, at times, makes the observation. And a similar observation in chapter 21, verse 14.

A gift given in secret soothes anger. And a bribe concealed in the cloak pacifies great wrath. So, the book of Proverbs is simply observing in that society and perhaps in some other society, bribes have a real effect.

Without evaluating that, people call that technically a non-evaluative description of reality, which I barely understand. But I think it means that it's described as not either commended or criticised there.

Okay. Now, I guess what we do find, therefore, in Proverbs is some of the Proverbs are just making sense of the world, trying to order the world by making observations about how the world runs.

[35 : 33] And once you know how the world runs, you are able to live in the world more successfully. So, it's very practice of making these observations in a whole range of areas of life, of dating life in terms of friendship, in terms of wealth, in terms of speech, in terms of conflict.

In all those areas and many others, having all those areas of life explored and some patterns and practices observed helps you to understand how you can manage to live life successfully, which is what the book of Proverbs is about, skilfulness in living.

Well, the fifth thing I want to say is that Proverbs often have to be nuanced by and nuance each other. So, Proverbs are often stated in an absolute form.

That is, they're stated as if they're almost always true or true without exception. That's just the form of a proverb. A stitch in time saves nine.

Well, it doesn't say, well, typically or commonly or characteristically or often or usually, a stitch in time saves nine.

[37 : 03] It just says the words, a stitch in time saves nine. But we know that those Proverbs are not intended to be always applicable.

So, they're in an, if you like, formally in an unqualified, exceptionless, absolute form. But we need to actually work out when they apply and when they don't.

So, a proverb will still make or describe something truly, but that does not mean that it then pushes you in a certain direction.

So, for example, when we talk about a poor person having few friends and a rich person having many friends, I read to you the example from Proverbs 19.

But it's interesting if you look back to chapter 14, verse 20, you find a very similar proverb. The poor are shunned even by their neighbours, but the rich have many friends.

[38 : 23] Now, you might think, therefore, that what you ought to do is to make your friends the rich people, because you're, or even to become rich, so that you have many friends.

It might send you off on the wrong track. But it's interesting that the very next proverb helps us to clarify what's intended there.

It's a sin to despise one's neighbour, but blessed is one who is kind to the needy. If you want to work out how to put that observation into practice, and verse 20 is just an observation, it's interesting how verse 21 fills that out by a responsibility to provide for the needy in the community.

And I guess that's saying that each proverb needs to be understood in the context of other proverbs. And if we push one proverb to always apply, then we are refusing to listen to the other proverbs that ought to have impact on that topic.

And I think within the wider canon of the Bible, books like Job and Ecclesiastes are nuancing the teachings of proverbs, and particularly clarifying people's misunderstandings in the book of proverbs, where people push one observation too far.

[39 : 56] So for example, in the book of Job, Job's friends are pushing the observation too far that God acts with justice, that he rewards righteousness, and punishes wickedness.

And they use that as a stick to beat Job with and say, you're suffering, therefore you must be wicked. And God said the opposite, so we have a, if you like, a reading guide. But the book of Job is trying to correct a misunderstanding of the book of proverbs, taking a proverb as almost a mathematical calculation.

And if it works this way, it works the other way. If wickedness leads to suffering, then if you're suffering, you're wicked. And that's the kind of conclusion they reach.

And Ecclesiastes often says that the way God orders the world can sometimes be a bit more confused or confusing than what we might have understood from the book of proverbs.

[40 : 56] In other words, the book of proverbs itself needs to be nuanced by other books in the Bible. It's already there in the book of proverbs.

We saw the example in 1323 where a poor person becomes poor because someone else acted in just being towards men, took all their crops. We see in chapter 24, verse 16, that a righteous person can fall seven times before they finally prosper.

So proverbs itself allows for exceptions, but other books of the Bible will nuance some misunderstandings of proverbs by allowing for exceptions.

So what we need to do is to realize that in many of our proverbs, we have observations of what is generally true, what is stated in, if you like, an absolute form, sometimes without any real endorsement one way or the other.

It is simply an observation. But sometimes the observation is meant to help us to see that there is an obvious way to respond if you have this shaped wisdom inside you.

[42 : 22] And as well as I say, it's so important for us, not just to know the proverbs, not just to be able to teach the individual proverbs, but to do what the book of proverbs does, to read these individual proverbs through the lens of chapters one to nine.

So, start with the right foundation, start with the right foundation, the fear of the Lord. Anything inconsistent with the fear of the Lord, which for us, I take it means to trust in Christ, anything inconsistent with that is obviously not a good application of a proverb.

It then says we need to build a godly character, a character shaped by wisdom. We need to be therefore be able to build the discernment and understanding to distinguish when to apply certain proverbs, to have the kind of graciousness in which when people are suffering, we might reach out to them, because that's the right thing to do.

And so, if we see an observation about the rich having many friends and the poor having few friends, if we are characterised by a character of generosity, kindness, thoughtfulness, what would we do in this situation?

Well, presumably, we'd reach out to those who felt were abandoned by others. And so, we might reach out to the poor. But that's the influence of our godly character.

[43 : 55] And to keep on choosing the way of wisdom. Proverbs itself will often give us examples of how to choose wisdom and how to reject folly.

And so, we need to keep on training our minds and shaping our values and priorities according to God's instructions. So, all those things are important reading principles for the way we read the book of Proverbs.

Okay. In a minute, I'm going to ask if there are any questions that you might have to ask. You've listened to me for long enough. I think there must be a proverb like, stand up, speak up and shut up. But let me, just before I do it, let me read you Trempe Longman's Principles for Reading Proverbs as an idea.

And perhaps I should say something about reading the Proverbs in the light of Christ before I hand over to you. Here's Trempe Longman's 13 Principles for Reading Proverbs.

[45 : 06] And he'll put things differently than I will, but you might find that useful. And he's written a little book called How to Read Proverbs. Keep in mind the structure of the whole book as you read any part of it.

In particular, make sure you read any passage of the book in the light of the imagery concerning the path and the two women that is developed in Proverbs 1 to 9 and reaches its climax in Proverbs 8 to 9.

Two, reflect on the parallelism of a proverb. I haven't mentioned that. By asking how the second sharpens or intensifies the thought of the first.

And there are different kinds of Proverbs, some which have opposite parallelism, some which will say the same thing in both arms, and some which will say one thing is better than another. And better is a dish of vegetables with love than an absolute feast with hatred, for example. Is it better than saying? Thirdly, identify the imagery in a passage and asking how the two things compared are similar and how they're different.

[46 : 13] Fourthly, think about the source of wisdom in a passage. Does it come from observation, experience, tradition, revelation, or any combination of the sources?

Fifthly, is a passage an observation, a bit of advice, a warning, a reflection, or some other kind of teaching? A variety of ways of teaching in the book of Proverbs.

Six, since Proverbs are not true in any and every circumstance, ask under what circumstance the proverb may or may not apply in a situation.

Seven, does the proverb mention or imply a reward or punishment that will result from obedience or disobedience? Here's an example from Proverbs chapter 10, verses 24 and 25, for example, there. So, what the wicked dread will overtake them, what the righteous desire will be granted. When the storm has swept by, the wicked are gone, but the righteous stand firm forever.

[47 : 17] Clearly, an implication, we ought to be part of the righteous rather than part of the wicked.

Eight, if a passage is addressed to a young man, a few young men here, ask how it applies to you.

Nine, use a commentary and study the ancient Near Eastern background of the passage you are considering. That's if you want to dig deeper.

Ten, when doing a topical study, read through the book of Proverbs and pinpoint the relevant verses, group them together and study each group. Eleven, try to identify biblical stories or characters who may illustrate the truthfulness of the Proverbs you are studying.

That's a very interesting exercise. Twelve, does the New Testament address the topic or teaching of the passage? For example, when James 3 picks up the teaching of the book of Proverbs on the use of the tongue.

Thirteen, think of Christ as the fulfilment of wisdom and how he might illustrate the wisdom of the passage you are reading. So I should say something just quickly about reading these Proverbs in the light of Christ.

[48 : 29] It doesn't mean that we need to read Christ back into the Proverbs. So when we have a proverb, I go to the ant, you sluggard, you lazy person, consider its ways and be wise, how it stores up its food in summer.

And when there's no food left, it's got food stored up ready to use. That's my paraphrase of it. Now, you don't have to ask in a passage like that, where is Christ?

Is Christ the ant or the food or the summer? Now, that's reading Christ into a passage and trying to identify which part of the passage is Jesus. But we need to acknowledge that all Scripture climax in Christ, even though the wisdom books like Proverbs don't largely focus on God's saving rescue of his chosen people.

But Christ is actually Lord of creation. In Colossians 1, we see that the God who sustained the world and ordered the world in the Old Testament is, of course, the same as Jesus, who upholds the world by his word of power.

And we see that, therefore, all of the creation is held together by Christ, who's described by Paul as the wisdom of God, the one in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[49 : 56] And I guess we see in Jesus' teaching an emphasis on character in the Beatitudes, for example, in Matthew 5, building on the right foundation, build on the rock and not upon the sand.

That's strongly reminiscent of the book of Proverbs. And the constant exhortation to choose what honours Christ rather than what dishonours Christ and to specify what fits in which category is, of course, part of what the New Testament is doing.

So I think the Proverbs need to be read in the heart of Christ in the end. But I think the Proverbs is endorsing the book of Proverbs grounded on the fear of the Lord, that is, trusting in Jesus, having who we are shaped, the work of the Spirit to grow his character in us, making us more and more like Jesus, and keeping on choosing to submit to the worship of Christ as we choose the way of wisdom and reject the way of folly.

Well, it's now time to put into practice, stand up, speak up, shut up. So I'll open it up now to some questions and then maybe things you want to explore further.

Yeah, if anyone want to ask questions, just put up your hand and, yeah, I think James already has a question over there.

[51 : 24] Maybe you can stand up, James, and we hear you a little bit better. I'm so sorry, I'm a bit hard of hearing, so you may need to speak up loudly.

Speak of Proverbs chapter 3. Proverbs chapter 3, yep. Turn your door to voice, and you don't deny a book and this thing. What you, what it does for me, but you can't deny a book and this thing. Right. Revive that to me, sometimes we, we're not taking care of it. Yes. And, and yet, to work 3 is a very difficult situation to work for 3.

Yeah, right. Yes. That's a very interesting proverb, isn't it?

Because you were thinking... Sorry, but it's a bit fine. Can you repeat the question for the right context? Well, yeah, can I repeat the question? I'll answer it anyway. Yeah, sure. I'm not sure I heard all of it, but how do you read Proverbs chapter 3, verse 5 and 6 effectively?

[52 : 39] Yes. Yes. I mean, we just put God to use our own understanding. Yes. But if you like, we have to use our understanding.

Yes. Yes. It's always good to look at it. It doesn't say don't use your own understanding, but lean not on your own understanding.

That is, don't rely on your understanding as an infallible guide to what life is about. So don't think of your understanding separate from your trust in the Lord.

So it's not saying don't use your understanding because the Book of Proverbs is appealing to our understanding. The very prelogue to the book talks about giving words for gaining wisdom and instruction, for understanding words of insight.

So it talks about gaining in understanding. But what I thought you were asking, maybe I've got this wrong, was what do we do with a proverb like trust in the Lord? I think it's one of those proverbs that you think you would almost always want to say, yes, do that.

[53 : 50] Always trust in the Lord. But what is the case about not always applying is the whole proverb.

It's not just trust in the Lord. Yes, we should always trust in the Lord. In your ways, submit to him, yes. And he will make your path straight. Now, if we think that just by trusting the Lord, we will always have an easy path through life, that is, he will make our path straight, then we're using that as a promise, not as a proverb.

But the command to trust in the Lord is something that I can't think of any time when you wouldn't need to trust in the Lord rather than leaning on your own understanding in contrast to trusting in the Lord.

So, yes, we will always need to trust in the Lord, but the consequence will not always come. So, and that's true of many of the proverbs there in chapter 3. For example, where it says in chapter 3, 9 and 10, honour the Lord with your wealth.

We should always honour the Lord with our wealth. But it doesn't necessarily mean that our barns will be always filled to overflowing. So it's a consequence that won't necessarily always be the case, will not necessarily flow, because it's not a promise that the consequence will always follow that appropriate attitude of trusting in the Lord or honouring the Lord with our wealth.

[55 : 27] Thank you. Any other questions? And then I'll repeat the question for the mic before I say you've got answers. If anyone has any other questions. Susanna at the back.

Yeah. Proverbs 31, we always say this, referring to the woman. People say, that people go there in Proverbs 31, but how does it mean?

Where do the man go? The other thing is, I know this, in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is always referred to as a sh.

So I'm not sure whether Proverbs 31 is actually wisdom. Okay, I'll just repeat the question. I think there are really two questions there. So the first question is, we often refer to the Proverbs 31, lady as a very capable woman and applied in that way.

So how does that fit with what you've just said so far? So that's question number one. And number two, that's the observation that wisdom is personified as a lady. So does that have any significance of bearing at all?

[56 : 43] Okay. Let me answer them in reverse order. Wisdom is personified as a woman because the Hebrew word for wisdom is feminine in gender.

But so is folly personified as a woman. So wisdom and folly are contrasted in chapters 1 to 9 by contrasting two women.

The two women who make the invitations in Proverbs chapter 9, for example, and the invitation of woman wisdom, lady wisdom, is better than the invitation of dame folly.

But there's nothing either pro or anti-women in making wisdom personified as a woman because it's very natural in a lot of cultures to personify abstract ideas as feminine in gender.

And in some way that people always talk about ships as she. Now, there's nothing particularly feminine about a ship, but sailors always talk about ships as, you know, she sails well, doesn't she?

[57 : 52] So we can really try too much into a grammatical observation, and I think it just fits in well. But perhaps it works well with the intended audience of young men, perhaps training to take on positions in the court, where effectively he's saying to these young men, choose which woman you'll follow.

And it wouldn't work quite as well if we had two men choose which man you want to take. So, you know, it really does, I think, work rhetorically quite powerfully.

Now, I don't think it's done for any reason other than that. As to the Proverbs 31 woman, I find this a fascinating passage, because she is a woman of worth, a valiant woman.

Some people would say a woman of strength. Where does that fit into the book? Well, many people at women's conventions keep on talking about this passage in Proverbs 31 women.

Be a Proverbs 31 woman. And that's a way to a successful life as God's woman. Listen, I always want to speak at a men's convention on how you men, how you should be like the Proverbs 31 woman.

[59 : 14] But no one's invited me to do that. But I think it's really appropriate, because I think the picture of the Proverbs 31 woman, who incidentally, in the second and last verse, it says, a woman who fears the Lord is to be prayed.

I think she's a worked out example of what a life, the life of Proverbs, the life of wisdom really looks like. When you see her initiative, her enterprise, her genuine care for others, her ability to form positive relationships, to take risks, and to succeed and prosper.

I think in all of that, you see a very great example of what it means to move wisely in God's world in a way that's not...

She's certainly not a shrinking violet. She's a strong, powerful, taking initiative and making a real impact on her world. And I think all people need to hear that message.

I think it's summing up, distilling the message of the book of Proverbs. I once come across a book called In Search of the Proverbs 31 Man. But when I opened the book, I was deeply disappointed, because it was only a book about what kind of man do you need to be to attract a Proverbs 31 woman?

[60 : 32] That can get me anywhere further. But, you know, I think it's a great passage. It makes no sense if it's just describing a woman at the end of Proverbs, the book of Proverbs, because the book of Proverbs is about training largely young men to live life successfully.

But it makes perfect sense as an example of what wisdom looks like in practice. And so that's how I would read that chapter. Another question?

Let me ask you one. A tricky one, this one. I don't tell. I see it glint in his eye. No, no, no. I don't think it's a fairly straightforward question.

But because you've emphasized that we need to read in light of Proverbs 1 to 9, and you've talked about building on the right foundation, which is the fear of the Lord.

But you haven't actually elaborated much on what the fear of the Lord actually is. So can you just tell us a little bit what it means to fear the Lord? Sure. The fear of the Lord is an idea that's found right through Scripture.

[61 : 42] It's even found in the New Testament. It basically means to trust God as God, to respect God for who he is and what he does. That is, to have an appropriate attitude.

People, a friend of mine translates it as reverential awe, but I'm like a shorthand, like respecting God as God, treating God as he is.

And that's what we mean by the fear of God. That's why in whole Bible terms, treating God as he is, we now know that God is Trinitarian. We know that God is Father, Son, and Spirit.

So we not only need to treat the God of the Old Testament appropriately and respect him and treat him with reverential awe, but we need to have the same kind of attitude towards the Son, Jesus,

and towards the Spirit.

So allowing God to be God and allowing him to be God in our lives, in his world, and allowing him, therefore, to be able to shape our lives because he is our owner, he is our maker, he's our rescuer, he's our redeemer.

[62 : 52] And so for us, we can think of the appropriate expression of the fear of the Lord as being trusting in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Someone who's dealt with the core problem we have as people who asks that we sit under his lordship and that we allow him to shape our lives and shape who we want to become.

And so that's a perfect foundation for the kind of God in life that Proverbs is trying to create in us.

So I said a bit more about that in my sermon this morning, so I thought I'd leave that out here.

But thank you, Brian, for that reminder because not all of you were in church here. You may have been in church, but you weren't in church here this morning. Some of you were right now.

Another question? In fact, with Proverbs 31, such a great woman is supposed to be an example for men to choose a white man.

That is my observation that most men will run away from such a great woman. So the question is, why don't men appreciate Proverbs 31 women?

[64 : 17] Is that the question? Well, the question mentioned too, this Proverbs 31 woman is scary.

Scary because she is so confident, so organised, so enterprising. It's not she's scary because of some bad characteristic, but scarily good and would intimidate.

Just as some males today say, they feel intimidated by a really competent or attractive woman.

Someone who they feel is out of their league.

And it would be easy to think of this woman as being out of your league. I don't think it's simply trying to describe a woman. That's what I say. Some people say this is difficult for women to live up to anyway.

And it may well be a composite picture of the very best of a whole lot of women because it's almost, you need 10 lifetimes to do all the things that this woman managed to do almost in a day.

[65 : 21] So it may well be a composite picture. But if you think of it as a work example of the kind of things that illustrate wisdom, the kind of actions and approaches that earth wisdom in daily life, then it's not really trying to tell you what kind of woman you should look for in a wife.

It's not trying to tell you what kind of woman you should be to attract a husband. It's not really trying to operate at that level, but it's trying to say if you want to put wisdom into practice, look at this example and learn from this example and allow this example to change the way you exercise your freedom, change your values, look at your goals in life, look at how you handle yourself in life.

So that both men and women would learn from this example not in terms of what kind of woman they should be or should be attracted to, but what kind of person they could become and how that would shape who they are, what they're committed to in life.

The reality of this song is the worst thing of words can describe it. It's a question online, no. Another question, I'll go back.

Okay, I just see, Susanna, you've already asked one, so I'll just see if there's anyone else before I get back to you. Michael, yeah, Michael. I was reading previously that when we looked at the books of wisdom, they said that we need to see when it was written in the night of King Solomon.

[67 : 05] Some would say some of songs were written at his young stage, Proverbs at his middle age stage and at the beginning of his life. So they said that would help us to understand the tone that Proverbs, for example, is being written and how to understand why it's written in that way.

So is that a five ways to help us to understand better? Okay, I'll try to summarize that question. So some scholars tie the wisdom books quite tightly to the historical setting or the life of Solomon, saying that certain books were written either at the early stage or at the end of his life and that kind of affects the tone of the book.

Is that a right way of interpreting the books? The reservation I have is that the only book that's specifically tied to Solomon is the book of Proverbs.

Ecclesiastes alludes to Solomon in describing a ruler with all the opportunities of Solomon, but doesn't claim to be about Solomon or by Solomon.

The book of Solomon's songs uses Solomon as an example that, again, doesn't claim to be written by Solomon. So I'm not sure that the assumption behind that works, but I think that what we see here is not so much one following and maybe even qualifying the other by saying that's no longer

applicable because I'm older now or I'm wiser now, but I think Derek Kidner spoke of it in terms of voices in counterpoint.

[68 : 53] That is, we need to hear the voices together to understand. I think that the book of Proverbs and the book of Solomon's songs describe the mainstream wisdom attitude. Proverbs in a whole lot of areas in everyday life, but Solomon's songs specifically in the area of relationships, love and sexuality.

So it's a much narrower focus, but it's in the same vein. It's trying to teach something about the way things ought to be ultimately.

And Proverbs, Job and Ecclesiastes are more responding against some kind of people pushing ideas from Proverbs, maybe even so on and so on, too far far so that they become too hard to fossilise, to be calcified, if you like, don't have the flexibility that they had in the book of Proverbs. And the book of Job is saying, look, sometimes the way in which God orders the world is hidden from us as it was hidden from Job and his friends. Ecclesiastes will often say, well, sometimes the world is a bit more confused or confusing.

We kind of can see some order in the world. So in Ecclesiastes 3.11 it talks about God has done this so that people will fear before him. That is, God has revealed something of his nature but hasn't fully disclosed it so that people will enter into a relationship with him.

[70 : 28] So I think I probably see all four books as applicable at every time and not just reflecting particular ages because the view that they reflect particular ages of Solomon doesn't count for Job in that but leaving that aside the view that it reflects different ages of Solomon means that he's almost grown out of some books and I don't think that's an appropriate way to read it.

I think they're all still meant to apply in their richness but they all contribute something different. but together you find the full-blind teaching of wisdom.

Another question? I can't hold. Dr Lindsay you're still on the issue of dating. Those of us who had Job yesterday mentioned that problems is actually a good background to Job.

In terms of the dating Job seems to be describing a much older period compared to problems which seems to be more recent because he's talking about the kings and all that.

So can you help us to reconcile the two thousand things or the new one to be a background to the other books? Thank you. So the question is the book of Job seems to be pretty old and quite early on and the book of Proverbs seems to be more recent and yet we are saying that Job is a response to Proverbs on one level so how can we reconcile that?

[72 : 13] The way to do that I think Keiho is to realise that there's a difference between the time in which the story of the book of Job is set that is the life of Job and when the book of Job was written as a wisdom book reflecting on the story of Job.

So you're right in saying that the book of Job reflects an early era Job as the head of the clan offering up sacrifices reference to people giving him money which is described as a piece of money that we see elsewhere in the story of Jacob and I think in Joshua it's early on in Israel before Israel became a nation in Jacob's case.

So there are a number of people living in a more semi-nomadic existence. So that does reflect an earlier period. But I think the book of Job is written at a later time.

In terms of when it was written I think we have to then look at the book of Proverbs 1 verse 1 talks about the Proverbs of Solomon. Solomon lived in the 10th century BC probably about 800 years after Job was a real historical figure.

We know that from Ezekiel 14 verse 14 and 20 James 5 11 talks about Job alongside Elijah as if he is a real figure.

[73 : 42] Not necessarily but probably. So we have good grounds to think of Job as a real historical figure. But the book doesn't kindly be written by Job and I think it's written at a much later time.

Proverbs 1 talks about Solomon and so if Solomon lived in the 10th century it can't be written until then. Proverbs chapter 10 verse 1 there's the Proverbs of Solomon again.

So at least those sections of Proverbs seem to date from Solomon. Being Proverbs I suspect have been passed down generation to generation. They've probably been passed down for a long time and maybe it's Solomon who either gathered them or sometimes crystallized some of them.

We do know from 1 Kings that he wrote about 3,000 Proverbs so more than what we have in the book of Proverbs so no real problem about him writing that many Proverbs but it also has sections in it words of the wise in chapter 22 verse 17 and in chapter 24 more words of the wise in chapter

25 verse 1 it says the Proverbs of Solomon was the men of Hezekiah copied. Now Hezekiah was king in Israel really at the end of the 8th century beginning of the 7th century so they finished about 100 years before the exile.

[75 : 07] So if in fact the book of Job is written as a wisdom response to people's misunderstanding of the book of Proverbs oh I should say the other headings in the book the sayings of Agur who appears not to be an Israelite but it's being incorporated in the book and the saying of King Memo in chapter 31 again who's not an Israelite king.

So we have the book of Proverbs written over a period of perhaps several hundred years from at least Solomon to Hezekiah. time for people to misunderstand the book of Proverbs maybe it doesn't take very long for people to misunderstand scripture but you're only 100 years before the exile so I would say the book of Job is probably written around about the late period of the pre just before the exile or more likely during the exile itself.

We know that Ezekiel refers to Job and he's writing in the time of the exile Job, Daniel and Noah as men of faith so he knows of Job at that point.

So that's how I reconcile distinguish between when the story of Job was set and when the book of Job was written. Another question from me.

Oh no she has first second thing. Fair enough. Susanna you can ask your question first. Susanna you have a second question for you.

[76 : 49] My question is slightly similar to what the brother says but probably a bit different. In King Solomon it's inspired by Noah to write all these words of wisdom how come in him sharing 700 wives and 300 pocumis?

300 pocumis? So yeah that's a good question. So the question is if King Solomon is often described as you know one of the wisest people who ever lived and was the author of inspired scripture why did he end up going off track so much in his life.

one Indian preacher he was very sure he was not sure in his teaching that King Solomon is not there.

It's based on how he believed. Well it's interesting that probably the Bible knows more than we preachers and the Bible talks about him as the greatest wisest man King Solomon is a wisdom figure and if you like he's a poster person for wisdom.

Now when does Solomon go wrong? Some people think that Solomon went wrong very early in his life. Some people think he went wrong at the end of his life.

[78 : 22] Clearly he does go wrong at some part of his life and it's a salutary warning for us but he is described in one kings and his description is really there in one kings three to eleven.

He's described one kings four when the queen of sheen becomes I think it's one kings ten in very exalted terms at that point being the wisest man in all the earth.

So there's no doubt that he had wisdom but wisdom can have a shady side too. You know who else is described as wise? The serpent in Genesis three.

He was more clever or shrewd or subtle than any other creature. And that's a wisdom word. It's a wisdom word that's picked up in the book of Proverbs and said we need to become shrewd.

We need to become crafty as a positive characteristic. You see wisdom is basically skill in moving. It's not being clever. clever. Being clever is a good thing.

[79 : 30] Knowing how to marshal your resources and achieve your goals is a good thing. But we always need to ask to what end are you using this wisdom?

So I suspect that Solomon did never cease to become wise but where he erred was that he separated his wisdom from the fear of God and in building temples for his pagan wives which were probably entered into for political reasons to seal the lives but to build temples for his pagan wives and perhaps even to offer sacrifice at those temples that at that point he has clearly separated his wisdom his obvious skill his insights into what works in the world from the fear of the Lord so I leave it up to God to work out who's going to be in heaven the new testament picture of heaven is there will be a lot of reversals and a lot of surprises but we do know that for each of us if we trust genuinely in the

Lord Jesus we will be there and we want others to be there on that same basis so don't worry too much about whether Solomon is in heaven or not but do always concern yourself as whether you combine your wisdom your skill your insight with the proper foundation of the fear of Lord because once you lose sight of those moorings in the fear of the Lord once you depart from those

foundations the building becomes very shaky and it can come crashing down as I think it did in Solomon's life I just thought I'll ask you this because I think you haven't quite touched on it but the book of Proverbs I mean it comments wise cabling but it also has several descriptions of the fools different types of fools I think can you just tell us a little bit about those fools can you read your question can you read your question the book of

Proverbs contains a few descriptions of fools as well so I just thought I'll ask Dr Lindsay to give us a short description of those fools one of the features of the book of Proverbs speaks in terms of stereotypical characters so they're characters that almost exaggerated they're sometimes caricatures rather than characters that is you see one aspect of them magnified so much as you might in a caricature or drawing and so there are fairly standard figures you have three key figures probably in the opening chapters the simple person the fool the wicked person now you have a number of others developed you've got things like the lazy person you've got you know I guess the greedy person and a number of other stereotypical figures in there but the more generic negative descriptions or seemingly negative descriptions of the simple the fool and the wicked now in one sense we can all know what the wicked is they're people who've chosen the way of folly and not the way of wisdom and indeed the fool does the same thing regardless of whatever foundation they have their determination is not to choose wisdom but to choose folly and the two illustrations in chapters one to nine of folly two and the the description of the adulterous woman in chapter five six and seven and also chapter two verses sixteen to nineteen and the if you like the wicked men who try to lead people astray so the gangs of young men in chapter one verses eight to nineteen or further described in chapter two verses twelve to fifteen so there are those figures that describe different kinds of foolishness and you also get some more generic descriptions in chapter six verses one to nineteen but they're the two two main ones in there describing folly so if you want to see how Proverbs does it what's more useful is I think to think about how it talks about the simple person if you look back to the beginning of the book of Proverbs in the opening it says it's for giving prudence to those who are simple now who are the simple it doesn't mean simple minded it doesn't mean people of low intelligence it's referring to the people who have not yet had their character formed by wisdom who've not yet made their fundamental choice in life it's like the young teenager who's not sure whether they want to follow God or follow the world they're in the in-between stage where they might get in one path or they might get in another path so let's say the simple person is the unformed untrained if you like undecided person so that's one form of the negative figure if of course you choose to remain simple then you become another version of the fool and the fools are really versions of the wicked because they're choosing a way of folly over a way of wisdom they're choosing the way of wickedness over the path of righteousness so the fool is not someone who is in of a low intellectual standard but has made the fundamental foolish choice of not building on the right foundation

not allowing wisdom to shape their character and not pursuing wisdom and rejecting foolish actions in life so that's what a fool is according to the book of Proverbs it is 3.30 or just after 3.30 and I think actually it might be an appropriate time to end I think we've heard a lot of good teaching from Dr.

[86 : 19] Lindsay and I think we've had some good questions asked and so hopefully that will whet your appetite for more the book that Dr. Lindsay mentioned how to read Proverbs by Trumper Longman is actually in our church library so if you want to dig further you can always check out that book as well so maybe let's just thank Dr.

Lindsay for his and let me just close in prayer Father thank you again for all that we've heard and we pray that as a result of what we've heard today that first of all we would learn to handle this portion of scripture better so that we might be able to apply it in the right way in the right situations and not misapply it and Father we especially pray Lord that of course we don't want Proverbs to be just information because that is not the purpose for which you have given it but we pray that we would take the words of scripture here seriously so that we might be transformed so that whenever we face choices to walk down the path of wisdom or the path of folly that we will make the right choice that as Jesus told us that we will build our house upon the rock and not upon the sand ultimately upon the foundation of the

Lord Jesus himself so help us to do that more and more and help us to encourage one another to keep doing that not to live according to the proverbs of the world but according to the proverbs of your word so we pray and ask for that to be true of everyone here in this room and yeah we just thank you again for the teaching we've heard and also for the grace that you've given us in Christ in

the name of Jesus we pray Amen Amen