



## Proverbs

### Family

We are going back to Proverbs 2 today.

We'll be doing studies in Proverbs this Sunday and next Sunday, and then jump into Matthew 1 the Sunday after Labor Day, and we plan on being in Matthew for well over a year. We'll only be in the first 5 chapters between September and Christmas because we'll do a slow burn in the Sermon on the Mount, but if you want to read ahead - start jumping in to Matthew's Gospel.

But we've spent the summer in topics in Proverbs, where we've been shown a very different way to think and to live. It presents us with the way of wisdom, which begins with the fear of the Lord.

### **Proverbs 1:7 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;**

So everything we've been taught in this book can only begin to be understood if we are living in the fear of the Lord, or living with a sense of awe at the reality of how great and holy God is. If God is who He claims to be in His word, then He is everywhere present, perfectly holy, searching us, knowing us, watching us, giving us his grace and love - and living in the fear of the Lord is living like that is true everywhere we go.

If God created the world, and God created us, then it is impossible to have a full understanding of what the world is for and what our place is in it without a fear, or high, trembling regard for the Creator - who gave it all a design, a purpose, and a right use.

You can certainly gain knowledge without knowing the Lord. You can certainly be brilliant without knowing the Lord. You can invent things and improve things.

But you will always lack a unifying principle - why does all of this stuff that you know about exist, what is it for, what unifies it all? What is the reason behind its design? What is its purpose?

And once we fear the Lord, all other things can fall into place, and we can begin to understand how the world works. We can begin to gain wisdom, which is the application

of knowledge. It's understanding how the world works, how people work, and applying that understanding to real life.

Wisdom knows that God made the world, and he made it to work a certain way. Which means there is a way things work that we can figure out and conform ourselves to so our lives work better.

So the Proverbs exist to teach us to know wisdom for living in the world as it is, under the good hand of God.

And an area where we desperately need God's wisdom in our day is in in the categories of marriage and parenting. For many of us, the relationship between with a spouse and the relationship between parents and children will be some of the most important we ever have.

Which doesn't mean those who never marry or never parent are somehow less important - we worship a Jesus who never married or had biological children, so those things can't be requirements for being complete and fulfilled Christians - they weren't requirements for being a complete and fulfilled Christ.

But because many will marry and raise children or be in close community with those who are married or have kids, its important to have the Lord's wisdom about these relationships flowing freely in the church community.

So we'll look today at a few proverbs on marriage and a few on parenting to help guide us in the ways of wisdom in those categories. Obviously because there is so much to say here, there will be a lot left unsaid, so we'll focus on some of the primary things that we need to know to be wise about marriage and parenting.

Look at Proverbs 2:16-18 - I'll unpack why I went with this passage to expose a couple of facets of marriage in a second. In this section, Solomon is teaching his son some of the effects of wisdom in his life, and one of the effects of wisdom is that it keeps a wise son from committing adultery with a woman who is likewise willing to commit adultery against her husband:

**Proverbs 2:[16] So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, [17] who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; [18] for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; [19] none who go to her come back,nor do they regain the paths of life. (ESV)**

So Solomon is warning his son about adultery with an adulterous woman. And in describing what that woman is doing by committing adultery, he says in verse 17 that:

She forsakes the **companion of her youth**

And forgets the **covenant of her God.**

So to break up your marriage is to **forsake your companion** and **forget your covenant.**

Which means that a marriage is a friendship, a relationship with a companion, and a covenant. There's more, and we'll look at another Proverb to see more, but here, it is those two things: a friendship and a covenant.

**So marriage is companionship. It is a friendship.**

We may say, "Of course," but the world Solomon was writing in would not have said, "Of course." They would have said, "That is really strange." In many world cultures at that time, and in too many today, women were and are treated more as property in marriage relationships.

This happens here today in very legalistic pseudo-Christian cultures, where wives are treated as if they are owned, or as if they are one of the children in the home. It's relationship that's demeaning to the wives.

But Solomon here says that a husband and wife are **companions. They're friends.**

Which tells us something about the dynamics of a healthy marriage.

In CS Lewis' "The Four Loves," he distinguishes between the love of a friend and the love of a lover. And marriages should be both, but notice the way he explains what a friendship is:

*"Lovers are always talking to one another about their love; Friends hardly ever about their Friendship. Lovers are normally face to face, absorbed in each other; Friends, side by side, absorbed in some common interest."*

So a good marriage has face-to-face romance, but also side-by-side, shoulder to shoulder, engagement together in a common interest. The friendship dimension is incredibly important.

If you are married, your marriage should be your best friendship. And the things that make a friendship healthy should be characteristics of your marriage.

A mutual companionship should characterize your marriage.

And to have a good friendship, you both have to make the efforts, you both have to communicate with each other, you both have to work on it. Because friendships happen side-by-side, there's very little talk of who is in charge. If you have a friend who says, "I'd like to be in charge of our friendship," you'd probably say, "That's weird - that changes the friendship."

I believe and teach what Ephesians 5 says about a husband's calling to lead his home like Christ leads, by sacrificially laying down his life to gently lead his family godward. There's no need to modify what the Bible says about that. But keep in mind, that even Christ led by calling the disciples his friends.

**John 15:12-13 [12] "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. [13] Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends."**

Jesus, who is high above us, leads sacrificially, as a loving friend. And husbands, who are not above their wives in value or worth, should lead also as loving friends, not as demanding to be in charge. Companionship should characterize our marriages. So the definition of the headship of a husband needs to be tempered by everything scripture says about marriage, and if marriage is a companionship, you're doing it wrong if it looks more like a tyranny. In no good friendship does one friend always get his way and the other always doesn't. Nobody wants a companion who is an uncaring dictator.

Husbands are called to lead like Jesus - who gave himself for the good of his bride the church. Who called his disciples friends. Who, yes, was against sin entering the relationship and led the relationship godward, but ultimately gave His life for the good of his bride.

So the fact that marriage is a friendship tells us there is a strong side-by-side component to marriage.

And, as Lewis says, friendships usually form because of something you have in common - you want to play the same games in the neighborhood as a child, you play a sport together, you're in a school together or you work in church ministries together, you go into the military and fight battles together, you team up on some endeavors, you're doing the same things with your life at the time.

Our friendships form around some commonality.

So one of the things that strengthens a marriage is the side-by-side friendship that is working not just on your marriage, but also on a common interest.

And the main common interest in a Christian marriage should be the endeavor to both build a home that glorifies the Lord and enjoys him forever, that is a visible witness of the love of Jesus for the church. Some of the common interests should be that you're both learning from God, you're both involved in serving him and working to see his church and kingdom thrive, you are both caring for those in need around you in the name of Jesus.

If you have kids, you are both raising them with the main priority of training them to know and walk with the Lord and follow all of his ways. You live side-by-side, shoulder to shoulder in all of those endeavors. The best friendships are formed between two people following the same Lord and endeavoring side-by-side to learn from Him, serve Him, and build for Him.

A question that often comes up is can a Christian marry an unbeliever. And the answer is no, but it isn't because we're so much better than them, it's because we have different main interests.

**2 Corinthians 6:14 Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? 15 What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? 16 What agreement has the temple of God with idols? ...**

This passage says Christians are not to be yoked with unbelievers, which is often applied to marriage but also applies to any permanent equal relationships.

And notice why it says not be be yoked with an unbeliever: because you can't have a partnership (14), fellowship (14), accord (15), a shared portion (15), agreement (16).

So marriage is supposed to be those things - a partnership where side-by-side you are headed in the same direction. You have agreement on how we make decisions, where we go for wisdom. You have fellowship - we are in this same mission together. And a shared portion - all that you have in life belongs to each other.

**Marriage is companionship.**

**It's also a covenant.** Proverbs 2:17 warns against the woman who forsakes her companion and also "forgets the covenant of her God."

(And in case you think the Bible is being misogynistic by singling out the women, later in Malachi 2:13 God calls out the men:

**Malachi 2:13-14 "And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand.14 But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.**

So breaking the marriage covenant is bad whether its a woman or man doing it in scripture. And here, as in proverbs, it calls a spouse a companion and a marriage a covenant.

A covenant is a solemn bond, administered by God. Notice how verse 14 says "The Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth." In other words, God administers the marriage covenant. It's His work.

**(Mark 10:9 "9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.")**

A marriage is not just a deal that two people strike together, but when you go to the altar or the justice of the peace or the Elvis wedding chapel - if its a legal marriage between a man and woman, God is doing that work.

Marriage is not just something we decide to do because it fulfills me. It is something God does - God administers the covenant.

And so we don't only stay in marriage as long as we sense it is fulfilling me, we sense it is working, we have all the right feelings. We stay in it because it's a covenant that God made, and to break it is to break his work.

We don't break it because romance fades. Romance can and should be rekindled, but don't depend on your romance to sustain your marriage. It is too flimsy. A marriage needs to be sustained by your covenant with each other where you say, "I'm as committed to you as christ is to his church, we're not going anywhere, and whatever comes our way we're going to work through it. The only option is to fix things when they break and persevere. We are getting through this and we are getting through this as WE."

You need to stand on a solid covenant. You won't be endlessly entertained by your spouse, you won't always have the butterflies and excitement. The excitement and romance often have to be rekindled.

But keep that firm covenant with each other as your anchor.

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "It is not your love that sustains the marriage, but from now on, the marriage that sustains your love".**

So marriage in Proverbs is a deep friendship, it's a covenant and not at all flimsy.

We live in a culture that has simultaneously very high expectations for what a marriage can be, but a very low view of what a marriage is.

What I mean is we wrongly believe a marriage essentially saves us. This person completes me, satisfies me forever, complements me in every conceivable way, really gets me, and will make me happy for the rest of my life. But our low view of marriage is that it's basically just a deal we made, and if it doesn't do those things for me we get out of it. It's just dating with a contract.

Where the Biblical view does not tell us that a marriage completes us or saves us or satisfies us - Jesus does that. But a marriage is joined together by God, He made the marriage. Which means we don't break what He made. And it exists to paint a picture of the love of Jesus for his church - Ephesians 5. The biblical view is a very high view of marriage, but lower expectations of marriage - we don't expect marriage to do for us what only Jesus can do for us. It's a solid covenant, but not salvation.

(Now this is beyond the scope of the sermon today - but this doesn't mean there is never a reason to divorce. A divorce is allowable in response to the breaking of the covenant by the other - so if the other is adulterous, or abandons the other through abuse or moving out, it is allowed because that partner broke the covenant.) So not all initiating of a divorce is breaking the covenant, sometimes that happens in response to a broken covenant.

But a covenant is not exited lightly. And if we simply sense that the marriage isn't benefiting me like I had hoped, that isn't a reason to get out.

That's why, in any good wedding ceremony, you don't just express your current love - to make a vow - you vow future love.

It doesn't really matter if you use traditional vows or write your own - the vows aren't in the Bible. But the principle behind traditional vows is that you are pledging future love:

For richer or for poorer  
In sickness or in health  
To have and to hold from this day forward - till death do us part.

This is different than saying, "We're doing this because I love how you make me feel today." It's saying, "We are making this vow to the death - ride or die - even if we encounter circumstances that make us not feel that way in all of our tomorrows."

Marriage is a covenant, it is a friendship, and the Bible doesn't take all the fun out of it, it is designed to be a romantic relationship as well.

**Proverbs 5:18-21 "18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.20 Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? 21 For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths."**

Yes, it is a covenant, a life-long obligation. It's your closest friendship, working side-by-side toward a common end. And it is also face-to-face, the relationship of lovers.

It's rare that anyone believes a marriage should be all 3 of these things, and even rarer to see it done well.

It can be a covenant, where we're stuck in this and will stay in it to honor God, but there isn't companionship, and we're ok with the fact that the romance is gone.

Or it can start as all romance, but when that fades, there's little left because there was never a friendship. Or if our view of marriage is flimsy, and not a covenant, then when the romance fades at times we think it must not have been a real marriage.

Or it can just be a friendship, without romance.

But the design we are given by God is that we work hard to see it as all three, and to make all three work together. When the friendship fades, we get shoulder-to-shoulder again on our common interest. When the romance grows weak, we get face to face again



as lovers. When we wonder if I married the right one, we remember that God was the witness at that altar and He joined us together.

So a marriage is a covenant, a friendship, and a romance.

And when that is going well, we are creating a good environment for the raising of children. Time is short, so I can't do a whole separate sermon on parenting, but there are a couple main things parents are called to do for their children in Proverbs:

- 1) Provide a place of refuge in the Lord
- 2) Shape them in godly wisdom

### **1) Provide a place of refuge in the Lord:**

**Proverbs 14:26 26 In the fear of the LORD one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge**

Let's allow our kids to see parents who really trust in God. Never make them think they're safe because there's enough money in the bank or because dad is strong and healthy and can provide. Because then what happens when there is no money in the bank and mom or dad gets sick? Show them your confidence in God who never fails.

And if you have that confidence, your normal disposition will be loving and joyful.

You'll be a parent who isn't perfect, but can usually maintain a steady calm because whatever the circumstance, you trust God. This verse in proverbs says you will be a refuge to your children if you fear God.

If you've ever been outside when a storm comes in quickly, you know how much you just want to get inside! A thunderstorm has just come over the hill, lightning is striking, hail is pounding down, and you'll run any place you can find for refuge. You look for a place to be safe. And parents who fear the Lord provide that for their children.

*Mark Sayers, in his book, A Non-Anxious Presence, speaks of how this is a strategy for influencing the world. He doesn't apply this to child-rearing but more to the church in society in an anxious age. But his central illustration is imagine we are all in a theater. There are some people at the doors of the theater wearing badges, they're in charge of*

*this place. And a fire breaks out - and everyone panics.*

*The first place people look is to the people with the badges - but if they're panicked too they lose all authority.*

*But if someone walks up on stage and calmly grabs a microphone and says, "There are exits to your left and right, head out patiently, we'll all be ok," that non-anxious person instantly gains authority and leadership capital.*

If kids know there's a real, reliable, non-anxious shelter at home, Lord willing, that's where they'll run when the trials come. And only the mom and dad who fear God can provide that shelter. Again, Proverbs aren't air-tight, "it always works this way" guarantees, but rather truisms: this is how the world often works.

Today, there are so few good homes with godly parents, that good parents find their homes becoming places of refuge for their children and for all the children's friends. Because that's the place that's fun, but safe. That's the place where the mom and dad love one another. That's the place where there isn't constant anger and there isn't abuse. There's joy and fun, confidence in the Lord.

That doesn't mean there's no discipline.

Proverbs speaks a lot about the parent's need to discipline their children, because we have a calling to

2) Shape them in godly wisdom.

There should be discipline, but not like you see it in many homes. So much discipline is done out of pride or anger or panic, not love. We discipline, not because we want their best, but because we want them to make us look good as parents and to not embarrass us at Wegmans or we're amd at them. That's not right, but we bring consequences for wrong things they do as part of a great vision we have for what God is doing on earth with them:

**Proverbs 3:11-12 11 My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline or be weary of his reproof, 12 for the LORD reproofs him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.**

We should not be parents who neglect to correct our kids. Well controlled, deliberate discipline is good and biblical. And the point of it is to bring wisdom: to teach that actions have consequences. To teach them about God. How could a kid conceive of a God who loves them but who would also allow consequences for actions? By seeing it first in a mom and dad that love them, but are willing to give consequences for their actions.

And the goal is always to make them wise. It's not to control them or tamp them down, it's to bring wisdom about actions and consequences and the wages of sin.

But shaping them for godly wisdom is not just about reacting to the wrongs, but positively shaping and instructing them:

**Proverbs 1:8 says, "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching"**

So fathers and mothers have a responsibility to instruct our kids in the ways of the Lord.

And most of that happens not through sit-down working through of curriculum, but walking through life, instruction on the road as we go and discuss. As we prioritize. As we set an example. As we shape the week so they start with worship and prioritize Christian community and friendships.

The church can help with that - every week if you have kids in our classes you get an email with what we're going through in classes, we work to provide community in youth group and support other ministries like FCA on school campuses. We all need all the help we can get, but parents do have the high honor and responsibility of instructing our kids.

We are the full-time youth pastors of our kids. And we are responsible for raising and discipline them in a way that will be a blessing to generations.

**Proverbs 17:6 "Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their fathers."**

So parents raise kids with the hope of wisdom and godliness for generations to come, and do so in such a way that the kids are glad for it.

**"the glory of children is their fathers."**

They won't love all the correction in the moment, the instruction may feel like a burden at times, but our hope is that they will look at their parents one day and be so glad We take all the potential in our children and channel it into the ways of wisdom, while deliberately working to instruct against the ways of folly.

We aren't trying to tamp them down and make them small. But we also aren't affirming all of their desires.

**Proverbs 22:6 6 Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.**

**Lord's Supper**

**Assurance:**

**Colossians 1:13-14 "He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.**