

# Introduction to Proverbs

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Date: 05 July 2026

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, good morning again. My name is Kirk. I'm one of the pastors here at City Grace. And a few announcements before I begin. Remember to check the app. That's where everything in church life happens.

And you can read about the details and see that. In July, we take a break. We really want to rest and kind of pause from all the activity and some of the events. There's one event, though, that I want to highlight.

And that is the Young Adults Lake Day. Okay. Yeah. On July 18th. Okay. So, young adults, check that out. July 18th. Well, it's my privilege this morning to start a new series.

We're going to begin looking at the book of Proverbs. And so, today I'm doing, it's going to be an introduction, really. And I need to acknowledge this up front. Usually at City Grace, we take a whole passage or a chapter from a text.

And we love to look at it and see what God is saying in it. What God is saying to His people in that time and through it. And then hopefully apply it to our lives. Today, I'm going to be talking more about Proverbs and about God's Word than technically diving in.

[ 1 : 0 7 ] We're going to be in this series for a while. I think we have eight or nine more sermons to come on this. So, we're going to dive in. And Jesse and Elliot will be digging into it, into the text.

But this morning, it will be more about some biblical principles. We're going to want to look at how should we read the Bible? How should we look at this book? And so, if you're new to City Grace and you're like, man, that guy talked a whole lot and really didn't use a lot of Bible verses.

That's the reason. It's not typical to what we do. But we're going to look at the chapter. Sorry, the book of Proverbs and what it means. And so, this morning, I want to do a little Bible study.

Okay? If you can kind of pretend we're all back in a Bible class or a Navigator study or something, you know, into Bible college. So, we're going to look at a lot of things that have to do with what is going on when this book was written.

And I think that's important to do. Not all the time, but we need to know how it was written and why it was written because the Bible is old. The context is a different time and culture than ours.

[ 2 : 0 5 ] There's a lot of complex themes, things that we wouldn't understand unless we know what's happening. There's a lot of different authors. It's compiled in different ways. So, there's a lot of things external to the text that I want to look at and make sure we understand this morning.

I'm just, honestly, I love teaching about the Bible. So, I'm just taking an opportunity today to get some of that just good Bible study methods in. And when I say study, this can be done in different ways. Okay? There's obviously the academic way of studying the Bible where you can look at the text and the languages and the criticism of how the text fits together and the date and the time and the genres.

And we're going to do some of that today. But I really, really believe any time we approach the Bible and we want to study it, not only should we do it academically, but we should also do it devotionally. And what I mean by that is, like, when we look at God's Word, we open it up, we are always asking for the Holy Spirit to teach us, to guide us, to show us.

We use the word illumination. Okay? To bring to our minds and our hearts something that we don't know unless God's Holy Spirit gives us that wisdom and understanding. So, we're going to do that in both ways. And here's the goal.

The goal of Bible study is not knowledge, but obedience. Okay? Maybe you heard this, like, you know, what's the opposite of ignorance? It's obedience, right? The opposite of ignorance is not knowledge.

[ 3 : 16 ] If you know something, you don't do it. Well, that's no good. The goal is obedience. And I believe we're in this culture now. If you grew up in school, you got good at playing the system, right?

You learned how to, like, fill your head with the kind of knowledge the teacher wanted you to say and write on the test and pass the test. When I pass the test, I'm good. But I can walk out of the classroom and not apply that knowledge. And did I really learn it?

When we do that with God's Word, if I continually look in God's Word, and even if I study it with the best of methods, and I go to Bible studies all week long, and I'm digging in, and I go away, and I know, I learned something new today.

I found something out I didn't know. But I never obey. I never apply it. That's actually a very dangerous model of life to be in. And here's what James says about this, right?

In the New Testament, James talks about God's Word. He says, Know this, beloved brothers, let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.

[ 4 : 14 ] For the anger of a man does not produce the righteousness of God. Therefore, put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted Word, which is able to save your souls.

Be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the Word and not a doer, he's like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror.

For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he's like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

To be honest with you guys, I try to read my Bible every morning. It's just a great way to start the day. If I don't, you know, do it in the morning, my life tends to get away from me. But I'm really honest, a lot of times I'm sitting down with my coffee and I'm reading my Bible, and by the time I close it, get ready and change and get to my car, I'm really not thinking about what I read.

And if you ask me, I'm like, ah, I don't know, I kind of forgot it actually, you know. That's not good. It's not good. I'm not saying it's not beneficial. But James warns us of continually going and just listening and reading and seeking but not really doing, not really obeying, not living it out.

[ 5 : 37 ] We get in this sort of like this knowledge cycle, this loop. He says it's actually dangerous. It actually leads to deception where we feel like we have knowledge but we don't. That's a scary thing. It's almost worse if I didn't have knowledge.

What if instead I was really seeking? Like think of it this way. Like every time I looked in God's Word, I was just anticipating something, asking God by His Holy Spirit to enlighten me somehow, even a small thing, some way to think and act differently, something to say today, something to do, just to change my life a little bit.

And what if as I read, I sought to actually obey what I read? Like, man, if I'm going to read this today, I'm going to obey whatever God gives me today to do. Wow. I know that would probably change my life, and I'm guilty of not doing that. So as we study Proverbs today and as we go into this series, I really want us to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Guide us in maybe new ways, things we're not ready for. We didn't know God had for us, not only individually but as a church and corporately. Let's be praying into that and invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us. So here we go.

As we do this introduction to Proverbs, step back into Bible college. Every program, every Bible scholar is going to look for certain things, right, when they look at books. And they're going to look for, like, this book's authenticity and the purpose, right, as you look at where it fits in the Bible.

[ 6 : 53 ] That can sound a little bit dry, okay? But I kind of like to nerd out about it, and I get excited. Because when you know who the author was, well, like any book today, you're like, well, who wrote that? Was it John Grisham? Was it whatever?

You know, if you know who the author was, why they wrote this, when it was written, the culture and the customs at that time, it just brings it to life. Things that don't make sense all of a sudden make sense. You see these are real people.

And all of a sudden you realize, like, oh, some of the things they're dealing with actually, it looks different for us, but it's kind of the same issues. We're the same kind of humans. And so God will really bring things to life when we do this.

And so my first point, real quick, I just want to encourage you, if you don't have one, get a good study Bible, okay? It doesn't have to be black leather, look giant like the pastor Bible, right? My kids are like, Dad, what's the deal?

But anyway, get a good study Bible. This, honestly, what I'm speaking from today is the introduction to Proverbs. This is the NIV. This is the 1985 edition. I love it. I've had it forever. It's just got a really clear, like, introduction to each book of the Bible.

[ 7 : 54 ] There's lots of different, what I'm going to say, different translations. There's the word, right? There's some of them where paraphrases. There's some of them where follow the Greek and the Hebrew.

There's maps. There's chronological things that show you all the Old Testament, New Testament. There's pictures. I just got one that had pictures in it for adults. Yeah, for real. And there's lots of commentary.

Like, you'll hit a verse and you're like, I do not know what that means. And you look down and there's a little commentary and it'll explain it. And so a lot of people have done a lot of work to explain a lot of the things that we don't understand. So I want to encourage you, get a good study Bible. It's really going to help you out as you seek to just understand more of what God's word is saying to us today.

And so I want to just, again, give highlight and recognize the NIV version there. What I'm saying is not, like, new and earth-shattering. And I hope you know some of it already.

But here we go. The first thing we look at, every Bible scholar, when we look at a book, we look at who's the author. And this one's easy for Solomon because it says in the heading, you know, this is written by Solomon.

[ 8 : 56 ] Proverbs 1.1. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. Also in the chapter headings in chapter 10, chapter 25. And this fits the historical context, right?

When we look back at the book of Kings, here's what it says in 1 Kings 4. Verse 4.

He spoke of trees from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of the beasts, of the birds, of the reptiles, of the fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon from all the kings of the earth who heard his wisdom.

I love the wisdom. I'm not going to get too much into wisdom because that's coming up next week and things. But I love how it's so practical. He knows about plants. It isn't just like this ethereal thing. Like, man, he taught them about what's growing out of the rocks and the trees.

And amazing. So knowing that this is Solomon, it gives us a chance to look at that time period. It looks like a chance to look at his life and go, man, what is going on in community life at this time?

[ 10 : 19 ] What is God doing with his people? What does their life look like? Why is he writing this? Okay, and I love that. And then we can also, it gives us a chance to look at the context of kings and how that fits in the Old Testament as well.

There are other authors. Okay, there's a guy named Agar who is known as a wise man. There's also King Lemuel. I cited as one of the authors in the headings of the different Proverbs.

And here's an interesting note. It was compiled. When you look at it, well, do they all sit down together and write it and then bind it and boom, put it on the presses? No. It was actually compiled later. It was compiled by King Hezekiah.

It says in there it's compiled by Hezekiah and many wise men and scribes. So it wasn't all done in one setting. There's many authors. There's compilers. This was usually done similar to the exile when God's people were left in the exile, right?

And all of a sudden they're away from their homeland and the temple in their country, right, in their Babylon. That's when a lot of the scripture got put together as well. The prophets, they put the writings together because they want to preserve their cultural heritage. They want to put together and remind ourselves, like, this is who we are and whose we are.

[ 11 : 24 ] That's a good thing. I want to make a quick note about that. God uses humans in the formation of His Word that we read today.

That's okay. It would be great if God just dropped the Bible we have today right out of heaven. You know, like the stone tablets that Moses got? I always thought as a kid, that's amazing. Like, he's carrying these stone tablets.

Kind of shattered the first one. That was a bummer. But anyway, like, it's amazing. Why didn't God just like, boom, here it is, you know, and you got it. It'd be a little less messy. A little less

complicated. Sometimes you read through scripture and it's like, I don't get this, right? I was like, who wrote this? Or when exactly? What was the date this was written? Or when was it? It can be a little tricky. But, you know, I'm not threatened by that. I'm actually encouraged that God uses people.

It feels like a high-risk investment, high-risk, low return. You know, if you've ever worked with other humans or you know yourself well enough, you might be like, I don't know if that's a good plan, God, to stake all of your, you know, the kingdom on this earth of people.

[ 12 : 26 ] But it seems like that's what God does. That kind of fits his MO. When I think of the church, I studied church history in seminary. And man, the thing that hit me the most was like, how did this church survive?

There were times when it was very small. I mean, it starts with a handful of people. Like an outpost in Galilee. It's like, these are not the best and the brightest. There were some dark times, the Middle Ages.

The church got consumed with power. And man, how did this thing survive? But God continually does things that are unconventional. I mean, his plan to change the world, right?

By coming, being born to nobodies, raised in a little tiny nothing town in Nazareth. I mean, short ministry, dying young. Like that doesn't seem like a good plan for changing the world.

But God has his ways. And he was willing to get down in the dirt with us. And I'm encouraged by that. I'm encouraged because God uses people to advance his kingdom.

[ 13 : 23 ] He uses people to build his church. He used people, imperfect people like Solomon, to put together the word that we read today that will guide us.

And the real power, like Paul says, I'm not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes. Man, the word is powerful. And when you go to it and God's Holy Spirit enlightens into your heart and mind, we're not the same.

He can still use people like you and me today. Okay. So be encouraged. All right. That's the authors. Let's look at the date here. Okay. And this, again, is an easy one because we know the author.

We know when Solomon was around. In the 10th century BC, it says. And this is also important because we need to understand the Bible is not written in a cultural vacuum. It was written in the context of real life.

And this is what Bible scholars look to. When they look at a book, they're trying to look like, what's happening here? And generally in the Old Testament, we say it's like the ancient Near East. Okay. It's kind of a big, broad term for that time period and before that.

[ 14 : 29 ] Bible scholars will look at other writings and things. There's a writing that's very similar to Proverbs called the book of Menomoop. And it's from Egypt. And it's from this instructor who's writing to his son.

And he says, like, almost, I'm telling you, it's like strikingly similar to Proverbs. And again, I'm not like wound up like that. It's like, what, did they plagiarize?

Again, the rules are a little different with oral history and traditions and writing. But what that means is, like, it gives credibility that, hey, this really did come from that time.

Like, this is what people were saying in that time. This is how they wrote in that time. This is normal. Like, it's not a few centuries before or after. And then we can look at what's happening there. So for Proverbs in the 10th century, you can be able to read it.

And there's going to be a lot of agricultural metaphors. It's a lot of scales and balances. And, like, they're weighing stuff to trade it and barter. You're like, what is going on here? It's really about integrity.

[ 15 : 27 ] Yeah, I'm not going to weigh out my thing and trade you for what you have and, like, put a little weight in there to make it uneven. And so I'm really, like, cheating you. But do I have ways of getting ahead in life? Do I have ways of, like, maybe skewing my financial books or my reports or things?

You know, can I get ahead and cheat someone else? Yeah, it's possible. I need to have integrity. In that time, culture was very close. They lived in community, like, close houses, lots of people all around.

Again, I lived in Southeast Asia. People are coming and going out of your house. Like, it's, you know, everyone's all together. There's a lot of Proverbs about community life. Not nagging your

spouse, how you treat your kids.

Not talking too loud to your neighbor in the morning. Or it sounds like a curse, right? You don't want to be that guy. At 6 a.m., you're like, hey! And the guy's like, ah, I just woke up. Drink my coffee. Stop. You know, community life. They live close.

This is very practical stuff. It applies to us today. Again, this is encouraging to me today. God spoke and used the wisdom in their cultural context.

[16:34] He's not in a hurry. He doesn't want to just rush through history. Like, he could have just dropped it out of nowhere. Like, these time capsules, like, shaboom. Here's all you're going to need to know for the next whatever.

18,000 years, you know, whatever. Like, no, he doesn't do that. He speaks to them in their time. About what they're doing. And how they're farming. And how they're treating each other. And, like, and it makes sense to them.

He's compassionate with us. It's graceful for them. Again, that's awesome. Because he speaks to us in our time. And it gives me confidence and, like, encouragement. Like, God can use me in my time.

We're not lost on him. He still knows where the world is at today. He can speak to us and use us and guide us. Give us wisdom for this day. Okay, one more note on the date.

Proverbs was written during the United Kingdom of Israel. This was a great time for Israel. Maybe the best. The best time. They were prosperous. There was peace.

[17:29] They enjoyed wealth. And when you think about that time, it's like, well, you have a little space to think, to reflect. And so that's when the wisdom literature comes out of that time. I don't know about you.

But when you pause. When you, like, maybe you go on vacation. I don't know if you take the first couple of days and you're detoxing. You're, like, you feel like your mind's still running. But then after, like, day three, four, you're on the beach or in the mountains or whatever. And you're, like, you start thinking and reflecting.

I don't know if you've ever done that. And you're, like, oh, maybe I should journal. You know, whatever. Like, you start thinking about where you've been. You locate yourself. You know. There's a reason for that. We need to pause. We need to slow down. We need to take breaks.

That's what Proverbs is asking us. Quick question for you. Clarifying question. Is my life too hurried to pause, reflect, and gain wisdom? Now, I don't want to put it.

I'm not trying to put guilt on you. I'm not. That's not the point. Or even, like, prescribe a frequency. You may, like, every day take a few minutes just to breathe. You may take every couple months. You go on a silent retreat or something, right?

[18:29] Whatever works for you. But do you pause? The Proverbs, when we look at it, has all these things that are about our life. And it causes us to stop. Take a look at our life. Compare our life to God's ideal.

And then have these course corrections if I'm needed. Before I get way down the path and I'm not even listening to the Holy Spirit anymore. It's kind of like those of you who exercise. You know what I mean? You're runners. You know, people say you've got to listen to your body, right?

You get to mile four and, like, your knee starts hurting. It's like, you don't, like, I'm going to speed up. I'm going to push through, right? Or by mile five, you're like, oh, I can't walk. Or, you know, whatever. You guys in the gym, you know, you're, what do you call that?

Bench press. Do people bench press still anymore? I don't know. Whatever. I'm going to do this a hundred times, right? Whatever. Maybe don't do it. Yoga? Can you ever do yoga? I don't know. Whatever. But, like, you've got to listen to your body, right? We all know when we're like, something's off.

And I'm like, I've got to take a break, right? The Proverbs, like, that's giving us that. Like, the Holy Spirit's telling us through the Proverbs, like, hey, if something's off here, stop. Reflect. Look at your life.

[19:27] Hey, when we don't, we miss it. We miss the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit usually doesn't shout. Usually whispers. So, my next encouragement with Proverbs is to read it intentionally and slowly and reflectively.

This next month or so, as we look in the Proverbs, I want to encourage you to get in and start reading it. Maybe you want to read it as a supplement. You're like, you know, I'm reading a gospel,

but I'm just going to read a little bit of the Proverbs each day.

Or you maybe want to read it as sort of a daily office. Like, maybe at noon, like, right after I have my lunch, I'm just going to read a little bit or a few verses or whatever. Maybe you read a chapter. Well, I have one friend who he likes to read, and he'll read until something hits him.

He'll like, I'm just going to start reading, and then when I feel like God's Holy Spirit, like, you know, kind of make something jump off the page at me. Like, oh, what is that about? He'll stop. And I like that. Again, maybe not all the time, but maybe that will work for you.

The idea of like, is it better to read a whole chapter every day and forget about it or read one verse and obey it? All right? So, don't be in a hurry through Proverbs. Don't feel like, all right, 30 days, 30 chapters.

[ 20 : 36 ] This is the way God put it. And boom, I'll knock it out in 30. You know, it's okay. Read the way that fits you best. But I want to encourage you to reflect. And when something jumps out at you, stop. Listen to that. See what God's got for you. All right, moving on.

Here we go. Let's go to the genre. The genre is important. This is wisdom literature. We've talked about the author, the date, and the genre. And when you study the Bible, it's very important to know what kind of genre it is.

Like, just like today, right? No one walks into a bookstore and just grabs a book. I mean, you might. That's pretty. Right? No, but you're not going to. Like, you want to know, like, is this fiction or is this nonfiction?

Right? Is this a scientific journal? You're going to read that very differently. Is this a financial? Is this a magazine? U.S. News and World Report? Or is this like Harry Potter? Like, those are very different. You don't read those the same way. All right?

And so it's important to know the genre. Like, what is this? What am I reading here? The genre is wisdom literature. And the idea behind literature, the purpose is to teach us how to live and how to thrive when we follow God's ways.

[ 21 : 40 ] The wisdom literature includes writings, not just Proverbs, but Psalms and Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes. And there's both encouragements and there's advice.

And there's also, like, these warnings, right? This sort of a reckoning. You can see it as sort of, like, optimistic or pessimistic, I guess, in some ways of how we look at life and things.

So the Psalms and Proverbs really look at, like, this is how life should be. Okay? This is how life is supposed to work. This is how we prosper in God's ways. This Job, Ecclesiastes, really wrestles through the theological, the difficulties of philosophical problems of the world.

Right? This problem of evil. And it gives us caution in these realities. And listen, we can appreciate both views. Here's how life is supposed to work. When we live in God's ways, here's the outcome. Usually. And I really believe we can read in the Proverbs. We can pray into it. We can live according to the directions of this wisdom literature with expectations.

[ 22 : 46 ] Proverbs 16.3. I love this verse. It says this. In popular there. Commit your work to the Lord and your plans will be established. Like, that's just one of those general rules.

You commit your way to the Lord. NIV says your plans will succeed. Like, it's just this basic principle. Like, that actually is prosperous, right? We're committing everything we do to the Lord. But then there's times in life when, man, I committed it to the Lord and it didn't turn out like I hoped or expected.

And I'm wrestling through that. And the Bible doesn't shy away from the problems of pain. When things don't go like they should. When there's evil involved. When we're wronged by others. Like, the Bible looks at that in wisdom literature.

And it says, here's how you wrestle through that well. Doesn't always give the answers. Doesn't always give the whys. But it says, man, this is how it should be. And when it doesn't, here's how you wrestle well. And again, I'm really thankful for that.

Because life is, you know, life is glorious. And it's hard. And committing yourself to God's way, living God's way in life, it is glorious.

[ 23 : 48 ] And it's hard. And we need both. We need both. Final note here. And sort of bring this home on this is, a little sunshine, let me back this up.

Is how we got this wisdom literature. How we got the Proverbs. In the ancient Near East, wisdom was passed down to younger people by these, they literally called wise men.

Or we were like wise ones. Or we would say probably sages. And they were part of community life. They would usually sit in public places. And young people would come to these older, wise people. And they'd give them advice on life. Warnings about how not to make mistakes. Encouragements on what the right thing to do is. They're different from the priest and the prophet, right? So priests and prophets were really, they taught about religious life.

But these sages, they spoke on philosophy and practical life. Because when you're reading Proverbs, it has that feeling. Like, man, this is very practical. Some of it's philosophical, but it's very practical. I'm just going to share an opinion with you.

[ 24 : 49 ] I don't know if it's true, but when I grew up, I just felt like life was very intergenerational. Again, I grew up in a small town in Iowa until I was 10. Lots of farmers. And that farm wisdom was really like, don't be a fool.

I didn't know until later in life. It's like my aunties and uncles were preaching the Proverbs to me. Everyone in our church was like, auntie this, uncle that, right? And I just felt like I was around older people all the time.

Probably because my parents wanted to get us out of the house. We literally, like the farmers were our babysitters. And I think they just let us run free. Like, can we just drop our kids off at the farm, right? That's actually no joke there.

One of my friends, they had four brothers. And their dads and uncles were all farmers, the Watneys. And I remember going down to have lunch. It was really like a snack.

It's like mid-morning. Among all these fun, there's like five brothers, right? All the Watney uncles I had. And they'd be like talking to us young guys, you know? And like, you got to work hard, guys. Don't waste your life.

[ 25 : 44 ] And they'd talk about the town drunkard. Don't be like the town drunkard. We're like 10 years old. We're like, okay, I won't be the town drunkard. You know, it's like so funny. But they were trying to get us, like, think about your life. You know, like measure your life.

Don't waste your life. I'm really thankful for that. You know, they said things that I still remember today that at that time, I didn't really understand or knew. You know, I was like, what? But it came back to me. Okay, and this is my opinion.

I don't know if this is true or not. But I feel like our culture is becoming a little more disjointed. Maybe a little bit. And maybe it's just because I'm older. I don't notice. Like, maybe kids would tell me differently. I'm thankful for the church.

I think the church brings us together in generations. But I feel like we aren't as intergenerational. We don't have as many aunties and uncles in our life. I'm not talking about just kids either.

I'm talking about adults. I don't know if I can. I can't prove that. But I feel like we're missing out on hearing from our sages. And our wise ones, they don't have the opportunity to share as much anymore because we're not listening.

[ 26 : 38 ] I include myself in that. So here's an encouragement, a question. Do you have a system of wise counsel in your life? Man, I really want to encourage you to find those people. Create a system of wise counsel.

Grandparents, mentors, teachers, older friends, men and women you see who they're just like they're faithful, they're wise, they're listeners, they're learners themselves. And they just, man, they just would be kind enough to pass on what they know to you.

And here's how it works, okay? If you're like, man, I don't have anybody in my life like that. What do I do? Here's how it works. You ask them. You go find somebody. You're like, hey, I just, I recognize I'm young and I need experience.

I need to grow in wisdom. And you're old. You're like so old. No, I'm just kidding. Don't say that. Look, I work with middle schoolers and they think 35 is old. They're like, you're fast. Oh my gosh, you're so old, right?

So, no, the biblical view on old is good. Trust. The older you get, the wiser you are. Sort of. I will throw this in.

[ 27 : 43 ] Maturity is not chronological. It's Christological, right? The more we become like Christ. I've met very mature, younger people. Some immature, older people. And I see that myself as well.

Sometimes I'm like, I can't believe I don't know this by now, whatever. But maturity is Christological, not chronological. But seriously, go find someone like that. And just say, hey, once a month, once a week, once every single, whatever.

Will you just sit with me? Will you listen to my life? Let me talk. And like, will you listen? Then will you just give me some advice? Give me some direction. And will you pray for me? You know? Man, if you have someone in your life praying for you.

The wisdom and the literature, the wisdom literature in the Bible, it came from the sages of their day. Like in our day, we are in need of counsel. Find your people of wise counsel.

All right. I'm going to wrap it up here. There's so much more I can say about the Proverbs. Literally, there's just like tons of things. We have time. Jesse and Elliot are going to be diving in more over this next few weeks.

[ 28 : 42 ] Please, I want to encourage you as a church, like jump in, start reading it. Ask God to give you the Holy Spirit to bring things to light in your own life. That you can obey and understand.

And I want to encourage you also to pray for each other. Pray for each other. Pray for our church. As we go through this, we will gain wisdom as a community. And then let's see what the Father has in store for us.

I'm going to invite you to stand. We're going to do communion together today. So here's what we're going to do. I just want you to stand. We're going to celebrate. I know our nation just celebrated a big milestone in freedom. Pretty awesome, right?

But man, tell you what. The freedom we have in Jesus is so much different. So much better. So much bigger. It's not measured in years. It's measured in eternity.

Incredible. So as we come to the table and we take communion, we're celebrating the freedom that we have in Christ. He bought us back. He bought us out of darkness, out of slavery, into freedom.

So I'm going to invite you.

[ 29 : 44 ] If you would, just like we're going to go to the tables and get the elements. And then please bring it back to your seat. And you can just stay standing and just have your own personal time of prayer. Maybe you just want to ask God for understanding. Maybe you want to ask for wisdom. Maybe there's something on your heart you want to confess.

That's always good. Maybe you just want to worship. You just want to be grateful to God for all we have as a country, all we have as a church, all you have as a family. Just what he's done in your life. We're just going to celebrate.

So yeah, I want to invite you now. Just go ahead. Make your way to the tables. Get the elements. Bring it back in stand. And we'll take it together.