

Wisdom at home

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[0 : 00] from their daughter who's left home. And the bits in brackets say, 'And the song goes on later to say, '!

She's lived in the house since she was a baby, yet she feels she's been living alone. Whether that's true or not, we can't say, but that's what she felt like, and if that's the case, that's a very sad thing. Anyway, we're going to be looking in Proverbs this week, we're going to look at home, then a bit of a break, and then in March we're going to be looking at business, wisdom in business, and then wisdom in politics and law, and then finally we'll look at the wife of noble character at the end of the book.

These topics, of course, at the time of Solomon, were much less separated than they are now. Most people would have been farmers, and so their business was their family in one sense, and since we're separating things out.

And anyway, can this possibly be relevant to us? Most of these sayings were probably written in the late Bronze Age, maybe eight or nine hundred years before Christ.

[1 : 34] They were edited around 500 years before Christ, we know that because there's references to Hezekiah in the book, who lived around that time. And, say it was an economy, a land of marginal desert farmers, who lived by farming sheep mostly, but also they grew things as well, of course.

And they lived in family groups, mostly not nomadic family groups, but family groups that lived on the land. Can that possibly have anything to say to families in the 21st century?

Most of us live in cities, certainly I guess all of us here live in a city. Most of our experience of farming is probably just growing a few vegetables in the back garden, or the allotment if we even get that far.

Can it have anything relevant to us at all? And yet, I would suggest to you the answer is absolutely yes. In fact, if we look at what Proverbs has to say at a family, and indeed some of these other topics about business and law as well, we would absolutely revolutionize the way that we live. Because we live in a society that's absolutely obsessed with the worship of self. Actually, even the world is beginning to appreciate the limitations of this worldview, but we can't find a way out of it.

[3 : 17] Every time that somebody comes up with some plan, maybe tax credits or something to help out the family, somebody else comes up, pops up and says, yeah, but this is an infringement of civil liberties, or infringement of the rights, or individual freedom.

We live in a world that's so obsessed with our own freedom, the worship of self, that we really can't find a way out of the trap.

But Proverbs, I would suggest to you, does indeed find us a way out of this trap. And you'll think I'm going to talk about relationships now, don't you?

Well, actually, I am going to talk about relationships, but I'm not going to start there. I thought when I started to prepare this, yes, I'd probably end up talking about relationships. But when I looked through the book of Proverbs, I found that actually, there's a bit more to it than that, and the fact there's something that needs to be said even before we start looking at this issue of relationships. Because Proverbs says the following, and this is one of the texts on your handout, that's chapter 14, 26.

[4 : 43] Or the Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous. That's chapter 3, verses 33.

The emphasis here is not on the family, but on the home. Don't make too much of the distinction in this passage between house and home, because the meaning is not quite the same as in English.

The Hebrew word for house here can mean a family home. But on the other hand, the word for home does have particular connotations of pleasantness and permanence.

It's perhaps a bit like the German word *heimat*, if you're familiar with that. It means a home place, a place where you feel secure and permanent. So, it didn't work.

No, it's better. So Proverbs actually starts talking about the family with talking about the home, not so much the building, of course, the house that we live in, but the community of the home.

[5 : 57] And here's some... And at the center of this community is, as we've just read, the fear of the Lord. In other words, there is a moral core to this community.

It's not a sort of vacuum in the center, which everybody does their own thing. The start is a community that is based around the moral core of the fear of the Lord, of the fear of God.

And then Proverbs says various things about what might go on in such a community. So, a good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children, but a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous.

In other words, there's a provision for the children. Better to be nobody and yet have a servant than pretend to be somebody and to have no food.

In other words, there should be truth at the heart of the home, not, you know, just a fancy wow factor house, but rather a real family.

[7 : 10] there should be kindness at the center of it because it says, a righteous man cares for the needs of his animal, but the kindest acts of the wicked are cruel.

The righteous man at the home is kind even to the animals of the household. And for women, Proverbs 14, 1 says, the wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down.

And again, it's clear, they're not talking about the building here. She's talking about building up her household. The Lord tears down the proud man's house, but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.

15, 25. In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has. He who pursues righteousness finds life and prosperity and honor.

Proverbs 24, 3 to 4. By wisdom a house is built and through it, understanding is it established. Through knowledge, its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures.

[8 : 30] Now that is an interesting one. What's he talking about there? Is it about interior design or is it about the way that we live in the house? Actually, I suggest it might well be about both.

I mean, a house does have contents. God is not in favor of ugliness. And a house will have some possessions in it as well as the people.

And in a sense, those things are part of the house. So perhaps it's about good taste. But I'm sure more than that, it's about the treasure that is found among the people there.

And finally, let me just bring you an interesting comment from Proverbs on individualism, this worship of self that we find around so much today. Proverbs 14, 10 to 11 says, each heart knows its own bitterness and no one else can share its joy.

Okay, we can go with that. You can't, in a sense, share your joy or your bitterness with anybody.

And yet, it goes on to say, the house of the wicked will be destroyed, but the tent of the upright will flourish.

[9 : 44] Now, a tent, of course, is a temporary house, but he's saying here that even if there is times of bitterness and joy or times of joy, that, in a sense, we can't share those even with the members of our own family.

But on the other hand, there is a support to be found if there is righteousness in the house, if the fear of the Lord is there, because then people will come indeed to be able to share their joy and find there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother or to share even their grief.

There are plenty more such texts where those came from and at the end of your handout, I've actually listed a lot more texts of various comments that you can look at if you want to.

I hope you can read that. Yeah, the green is all right, isn't it? So, the point I want to make here is that in Proverbs, a family is seen firstly as a community, as a commonwealth.

The prosperity, or indeed the poverty, of the house belongs not to each member individually, but to the whole. And so the family itself doesn't exist for the benefit of any individual member, but for the common good.

[11 : 15] And I would suggest to you that that's quite a revolutionary thought. Because we find it so difficult to move away from this worship of self and that we have to develop our own self and express ourselves in everything.

Proverbs offers a different vision. It says, why not express your family? And why would we do that? Well, because actually it's better in the end for each of us for ourselves also.

as Jesus said, the one who wants to gain his self must lose it first. And that is to be found in this idea of family as community, where we have things in common, where we put things to the common good rather than our individual needs and wants.

And I think it's important to grasp this because also if we don't, we will think of a family as being mum, dad and 2.4 children if we think of the family at all.

Nowadays, you may think of two people living together, several children who are probably at least one of the people living with is a parent. But even if we think of family in more traditional terms, we'll think of mum and dad and a few children.

[12 : 40] we don't think of it as a community and maybe even something bigger than the nuclear family as somebody once called it. The family contains young and old, it can even contain masters and servants and animals.

It is true that ideally a husband and wife are at its core, but even if it's not, it can still be a family. I think it's worth making that point also, because did we notice one of those verses says, the Lord tears down the prowess man's house, but he keeps the widow's boundaries intact.

So even if there isn't a man of the house, even if there's a widow looking after a single parent, looking after some children, and yet that can still be a family, of course we may need to provide extra support for that sort of family, in fact we certainly will do, and indeed that is one of the things the church can and should do, but it's still a family because it's still a community with a common interest, so let's not forget that.

One problem with this is that today so many people, including many Christians, live alone. Can you have a community of one? Well, possibly not.

Proverbs even actually has something to say about that. In Proverbs 27 verses 8 to 10, it says, like a bird that strays from its nest is a man who strays from his home.

[14 : 22] Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel. Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father.

do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you. Better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away. So the suggestion here is that if you do live alone, then there is all the more need to build the relationships perhaps in the church or in other ways to build the relationships of a community so that you have the support that is need, that you're not like a bird who's strayed from the nest.

So at the heart of the family is a common interest, common values. The core value is wisdom and the fear of the Lord. But of course the family will have other common interests.

I've listed a few things there, some of which we've already read about, some of which we will look at when we look at one or two other things, some of which are just common sense really.

So we'll have values, I've listed there, values we might seek of love, of discipline, of protection, mutual protection, and of hope for the future.

[15 : 52] There will certainly be economic issues involved in a family, even if you don't live as a peasant farmer you've still got to work to eat or somebody does have to and so there will be a common economic interest in the family and of course we don't actually live with nothing, we all have stuff of some sort and so there will be a common interest in even the possessions of the family, the things that the family owns and to some extent these will be seen as community things also I think that means you can't have your own Xbox but nevertheless even the possessions of the family will be seen as part of the community rather than something we shut ourselves away in our room and keep from everybody else and there will be roles within the family any community has roles we don't all do the same thing

Poirot's view of those roles actually is quite flexible surprisingly so in some ways it's certainly not a you know it doesn't go father breadwinner mother sticks to the kitchen children should be seen and not heard it's not like that at all when we get later to look at the wife of noble character at the end we'll find that this super woman has nothing on this lady but roles are not rigid ones but there are roles within a family we don't all have to be the same one of the problems we have with the family

nowadays is that we feel that we do all have to be the same you know we all have to have it all as we say that's a word that gets bandied around isn't it have it all we don't have to have it all perhaps as a community as a family we have to have it all but not you know we share things we don't have to have it all ourselves necessarily so that's perhaps a way to look at it and of course there will be labour maintaining any community involves work

I'd say in those days of peasant farmers and the labour was very much in the house and in the farm but there is of course still labour in the house somebody has to do the cleaning and the washing up and the cooking somebody has to earn the money that we live on somebody has to clean the children's rooms or perhaps more to the point somebody has to persuade the children to clean their own rooms so there are all sorts of values that a community would have and proverb has things to say about these values so it says for instance all the days of the oppressed are wretched but the cheerful heart has a continual feast better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fatted calf with hatred better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife sounds like one of those facebook parties isn't it where there is feasting there's plenty to eat and drink but there's strife and destruction hope deferred makes the heart sick but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life that's an interesting thing isn't it could think about that some more perhaps but not too far now but certainly there should be hope but there should also be fulfilment of hope as I've said in the family today we're told to have it all we're all expected to be entrepreneurs and perfect parents and diligent students and considerate and active lovers not surprisingly we're never satisfied with our own performance let alone anybody else's we operate under constant feelings of guilt and failure don't we whatever we do if the women go out to work and become bankers in the city they feel guilt that they're not looking after their family conversely if they stay at home and look after their family they feel guilt that they're not having it all they're not fulfilling their potential and I think men are just the same we feel that we're inadequate to the role that's been placed on us in this 21st century what are men supposed to do in the house nowadays are we supposed to become house parents maybe we should but whatever it is we feel inadequate to do it because we're asked to have it all and we shouldn't have it all we can be flexible in who does what and how we do it but we shouldn't expect to be able to do everything that's why we have families and so this provost model of the family is actually very liberating it means we don't have to be we don't have to repress people into rigid and demeaning roles and that's equally true whether it's the old fashioned idea of a woman who's chained to the kitchen sink or the idea today of a woman who has to say be super woman who has to you know be executive of a city bank and the perfect parent at the same time we don't have to do that we don't have to insist on the individual fulfillment of each member if we can put our efforts to the community of the family as I say we don't have to have rigid roles for that people can do we could organize our families in different ways but people don't you know if we have a community as a family it means that we don't have to be perfect at everything as part of that wife of noble character at the end of proverbs we read her husband is respected at the city gate where he takes his seat among the elders of the land now you can think about what that means we will think about what that means a bit more when we look at that passage at the end but at least it means that we don't have to do everything the husband doesn't have to be intimately involved in micromanaging the house because his wife is on the case and because of that he's able to get involved in the politics of his local community that's of course the city gate was where they would meet and discuss the affairs of the village or indeed the city okay so this is perhaps a different way of looking at the family to what we're used to but of course it is true that if you're going to make that work you really do have to focus on relationships because if you're actually living home after living alone for so many years then it won't have worked will it you've not actually been part of that community at all it is the relationships that make the community work so we do need to focus on relationships and Proverbs tells us most about wife husband and parent child relationships so we'll look at those in a bit more detail but it does mention other relationships as well so we will also look at one or two of those so husband wife do remember when we read these things that

Proverbs is addressed to my son in that sense it's slightly addressed to the male point of view and you need to bear that in mind while you're reading through these Proverbs because I think we need to apply them to women as well but just the way it's written sometimes it looks slightly odd because it's addressed to my son so for instance in Proverbs 18 19 to 22 it says he who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the Lord Proverbs 12 for wife of noble character is a husband's crown but a disgraceful wife is like the decay in his bones so it's written from the male

point of view but I don't think we're suggesting that this doesn't apply that the wives have to be careful in who they choose as their husbands as well and to find a good husband is a gift from the [25 : 16] Lord it's just that I say this is written to my son and so it's always written that way around and first thing I might say is that Proverbs approach to the husband wife relationship is almost quite shockingly sexual and I think one needs to say that I think often churches have been prudish and shied away from talking about the sexual nature of our relationships in the home and I think they've done a great deal of damage by that Proverbs 5 20 to 23 says the following this is in the passage that we part of the section we looked at last week of course of wisdom and the adulteress and it says drink drink water from your own cistern running water from your own well should your springs overflow in the streets your streams of water in the public squares let them be yours alone never to be shared with strangers may your fountain be blessed and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth a loving doe a graceful deer may her breast satisfy!

you always may you ever be captivated by her love an adulteress why embrace the bosom of another man's wife even today there's an article in the telegraph about how to put the spice back into your marriage and various approaches have to this well I suggest that they might do better if they read this passage of proverbs but it is important that we do in that sense keep the spice in our marriages human sexuality is not just about reproduction it's about bonding keeping husband and wives together and we need to be aware of that and we need to be active about it and one of the things in this article that I read you know it's sort of 10 things you can do to keep the spice in your marriage you can hug 10 times a day for 10 seconds and things like that but actually what Proverbs suggests is that not things to do but a change to just watch your attitude may you rejoice in the wife of your youth and to women may you rejoice in the husband of your youth perhaps that wasn't an issue in those days it's more a case of men choosing trophy wives and getting rid of their old model trading them in for a new one but of course in that situation today it works both ways so we need to take delight in the wife of our youth the one the Lord has provided the gift of the Lord to us and there's another side to it as well of course the wife needs to make an effort to be the loving doe and the graceful deer and whatever the male equivalent of that is I'm not quite sure but I'm sure there must be one so we do need to make an effort not to say that these things don't matter anymore so the first thing indeed that proverb says about the husband wife relationship is sexual but it's not pornographic notice we're not to treat each other as objects we're to take delight in each other and that delight

I'm sure goes beyond the sexual take delight in the wife of your youth and so even that individual desire and satisfaction is to be found to benefit the community of the family so it's not torn apart by infidelity and by simply drifting from one partner to another which is what happens so much nowadays how many children nowadays live with their birth parents or at least both of their birth parents I forget the figure but it's less than 50% I think and in Brighton it's less than that I remember hearing once people talking to a child surprised that child still lived with both her birth parents of course the proverb says a lot more about the husband wife relationship than just the sexual time is moving on so I better press on but let me mention a few other things there are several proverbs of this sort better to live on the corner of the roof than to share a house with a quarrelsome wife better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill tempered wife or a quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand or the other way to put it the other way a kind hearted woman gains respect but ruthless men gain only wealth a kind man benefits himself but a cruel man brings trouble on himself or how about this one we read earlier in the sayings of

Agur under three things the earth trembles under four it cannot bear up a servant who becomes king a fool who is full of food an unloved woman who is married and a maidservant who displaces her mistress in other words what does that last thing mean it means when a husband ignores his wife and turns to a convenient and available alternative one that in those days it would have been almost socially acceptable to have sex with your maidservants or your wife's maidservants but a maidservant should not replace her mistress in the neither should any other woman in the husband's bed and of course it's not really the bed that is being talked about here it's the lack of love an unloved woman who is married what a terrible state to be in to be a woman who is married but is not loved or as I say it's to be living with a quarrelsome wife wives can be quarrelsome and husbands can be cruel and abusive and indeed

[32 : 09] Proverbs says to restrain for one to restrain the other is almost impossible remember we saw that 27 verse 16 restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand so what are we to do about that well the first thing of course is Proverbs first of verse is not get yourself in that situation in the first place be careful who you marry make sure that you're not going to land up as unloved or quarrelsome divorce of course was allowed under the Mosaic law but Proverbs never seems to recommend it and yet it says you know what are you going to do about it restraining her is like trying to restrain the wind or keep oil in your hand well the only answer then is to work on it isn't it that to try and talk to your partner and try and do something about the destructive behavior get help and counsel if you need to

I mean I guess there are occasions when the breakdown is totally unavoidable and divorce is the only way forward but certainly Jesus himself said that to do that is to encourage adultery to make the woman into an adulteress so certainly if at all possible put the relationship right that would be a very hard thing to do but what is impossible with man is possible with God and in the grace of Jesus Christ perhaps things can be put right only the wisdom of Christ can achieve that what about parents and children who read a wise son brings joy to his father but a foolish son brings grief to his mother chapter 10 verse 1 and again it's addressed to my son but clearly it refers to daughters as well for there was one verse 8 in the introduction listen my son to your father's instruction do not forsake your mother's teaching when I was a boy in my father's house still tender and an only child of my mother he taught me and said lay hold of my words with all your heart keep my commands and you will live

Proverbs sees the parent child relationship as one of a kind of life apprenticeship it includes discipline it includes encouragement and it includes the giving of responsibility so it says do not withhold discipline from a child if you punish him with a rod he will not die punish him with a rod and save his soul from death my son if your heart is wise then my heart will be glad my inmost being will rejoice when your lips speak what is right do not let your heart envy sinners but always be zealous for the fear of the Lord there is surely a hope for you and your hope will not be cut off listen my son and be wise and keep your heart on the right path do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat for drunken and gluttons become poor and drowsiness clothes them in rags listen to your father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old buy the truth and do not sell it get wisdom discipline and understanding the father of a righteous man has great joy he who has a wise son delights in him may your father and mother be glad may she who gave you birth rejoice my son give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways chapter 23 13 to 26 in chapter 3 my son do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke because the

Lord disciplines those he loves a father the son he delights on and there's much more to this effect I've put a lot more references in the appendix there now we might get a bit uptight about this business of punishing with a rod it does seem to be recommending callful punishment I don't think attitudes and ways of doing things do change I don't think that we necessarily have to say that this means that Christians must use callful punishment on the other hand personally I think that a limited use of callful punishment might not be a wrong thing but the important thing is that however you do it that there is discipline in the house and one of the things worship of self in the family today is that there isn't discipline so often within the family and discipline is not violence certainly isn't child abuse beating children or destroying them with words exactly the opposite it is encouragement to do what is right it may involve punishment but mainly it is bringing the child to see what is right and to keep listen my son be wise keep your heart on the right path and there is the encouragement when children do do what is right and exhortation the children are expected to become a productive part of the family and that's part of being an apprentice isn't it that you learn to do the job and the proverb sees the parent child relationship as one as being a sort of life apprenticeship so in proverbs 10 verse 5 he who gathers crops in summer is a wise son but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son not quite the same as

Plato's idea who thought you can't be wise if you indulged in manual labor proverbs idea is quite right when you're working when you're working in your family business or whatever it is or when you're working at your studies or whatever it is then you're a wise son if you sleep during harvest and that's disgraceful 20 11 every child is known by his actions by whether his conduct is pure and right 28 24 he who robs his father or mother and says it is not wrong he is partner to him who destroys who is him who destroys well it's the devil himself and it does even say that if the child

goes wrong some blame attaches to his parents proverbs 29 15 the rod of correction imparts wisdom but a child left to himself disgraces his mother or he who keeps the law is a discerning son but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father so if a child does go wrong then there is some blame and disgrace attached to the parents there's always grace to be found in

[39 : 48] Jesus but one sometimes has to accept that one has done things wrong and one could have done them better and accept the blame for that but if we bring up our children in the nurture and admonition and discipline of the Lord then hopefully we won't find ourselves in that situation Proverbs also said there's a little bit about siblings not very much actually but there are a couple of verses about the relationship of brothers and sisters Proverbs 17 17 a friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity so friends should be sticking together but on the other hand in 18 19 an offended brother is more unyielding than a fortified city disputes are like the barred gates of a citadel so make sure that you don't fall out with your brothers and sisters because if you do the result will be pain and strife and damage to the family but the true brother will be there for you when you need him and the true sister will be the one that you help when she needs you of course there may be also elderly people in the family grey hair here is a crown of splendor it's attained by a righteous life well

I'm not sure that mine is attained by a righteous life children's children are a crown to the aged and parents are the pride of their children are they do those of us or those who are grown up children adult children in your twenties thirties forties whose parents are still alive do you take pride in your parents do you say yes they really cared about me they really brought me up in the love of the Lord in the right way in discipline and love do you take pride in them and say therefore I'm going to treat them now and take pride in them and look after them when they are perhaps in need when they are too old to perhaps to work as they used to the aged are to be treated with respect and particularly as a source of wisdom not shut away in a home and forgotten now I'm not saying it's always wrong to put your aged relatives in care homes sometimes they may need the care that is available in such a place but they shouldn't be shut away there and forgotten if we do do that we need to make sure none of my parents are still alive but we need to take if you have elderly parents you need to take care they may need to you know they may need the care of a medical environment but particularly if they do then don't just shut them there and forget them go and be with them comfort them and if they're still of sound mind then talk to them and appreciate their wisdom and the advice that they will give if you're a young family don't shut out your mother and father

I read somewhere that one of the great human inventions was the invention of grandmothers grandmothers who can look after the children when they when they're past childbearing age themselves but can look after the children when the mother is involved in other activities let's not forget the importance of the elderly within the family and of course this community this is a community but it's not a closed community that red boundary that I've drawn on the diagram picture there is not a shell for which nothing goes in and out a sound family will be in a position to hope those who are around and there is certainly a requirement in Proverbs that we should be good neighbours again some of them are quite amusing

Proverbs 27 14 says if a man loudly blesses his neighbour early in the morning it will be taken as a curse don't make a noise early in the morning or late at night it's as practical as that be a good neighbour or Proverbs 26 18 and 19 like a madman shooting firebrands or deadly arrows is the man who deceives his neighbour and says I was only joking or we can spend too much time in our neighbours houses 25 17 to 18 seldom set foot in your neighbour's house too much of you and he will hate you that's certainly true isn't it like a club or a sword or sharp arrow is the man who gives full testimony against his neighbour don't outstay your welcome in your neighbour's house and don't slander him either your neighbour is his own community of the family he may help you when you need help and you may want to help him when he needs help and you should be doing that but don't try and take it over take over your neighbour's family and of course we are commanded to help a neighbour in genuine lead do not withhold good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act do not say to your neighbour come back later

I'll give it tomorrow when you now have it with you do not plot harm against your neighbour who lives trustfully near you we are to do good to our friends and neighbours and at the same time we're not to be foolhardy we're to be realistic about what we get ourselves into no don't offer to water your neighbour's plants while they're away if what they're growing is cannabis in the back garden or something 1718 says a man lacking in judgment strikes hands in pledge and puts up security for his

neighbour neighbour is not your community be prudent what you do for your neighbour but at the same time be ready to help your neighbour and a sound family will be in a position to help out the neighbours when they're in need I've put on the picture here there is a certain amount in proverbs about servants however

[46 : 52] I guess most of us probably don't actually have servants so I've just put those in the appendix you can look at what it says if you like but one thing some of you may have a nanny or a lady who comes in to clean or something like that and these are people who exist as it were on the boundary of the community and if they're living you know if you have a living nanny for instance an au pair or something like that then the teaching of Proverbs would seem to be that you should really be treating them almost as part of the family in fact it says at one point that a faithful servant will be treated as a son so if you do have a living nanny or an au pair or somebody like that remember that they are at least on a temporary basis part of your community as well so you need to take the same care for them as you would do for the children and other people in the house but I won't go into that in detail because as I say time is moving on and I don't suppose many of us have employed servants nowadays not here anyway there might be some people in

Brighton who do so to conclude proverbs presents us with a model family and I've drawn a picture I've drawn a picture which is a kind of 21st century way of thinking about things about boundaries and connections and what's in and what's out proverbs doesn't present it in those terms but that is the family that proverbs recommends and how different it is from the self centeredness of today's approach it's a community to which all contribute and all expect to share in the benefits if the family becomes prosperous then there might be a breadwinner as we say and a childminder there might be children and grandparents there might be even employees and I say proverbs is not too definite about who fills those roles sometimes but whoever does them each must expect to share in that prosperity do you have a joint bank account if not why not children's spending of course will need to be controlled that's part of the discipline but even the children should share in the prosperity if the Lord blesses the family but that house if the prosperity the Lord does bless that family with prosperity that house will be marked with generosity if there is more than enough then share it with those who are in need and we are always to do that to remember our neighbours who may be in need and if the Lord has provided us with more than we need then he's done that so we can share it with those who do need it and perhaps prosperity will elude the family it is generally true as proverbs said that hard work and good relationships will lead to a prosperous family but it may not but even if it doesn't this family will still possess something that's of even greater value than material possessions you know flat screen TVs and Xboxes and computers and fancy freezers and all the things that you might have in your house and again

I don't think there's anything wrong basically with having such things in your house but until they become idols themselves but even if you haven't got those things you've still got what's at the heart of the house the heart of the home is the fear of the Lord that's a moral sum around which all the business of the house orbits and which keeps it all in order and as Proverbs remind us better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil you can read these celeb magazines can't you about these people have got all this money does it make their relationship strong no exactly the opposite in most cases I mean there are exceptions of course but most cases it seems to do exactly the opposite they're always switching partners and suing each other and gosh it's just horrible isn't it even if you can't afford your

Sunday roast and you have to live on vegetables better that better a meal of vegetables where there is love than a fattened calf with a house which is full of hatred better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife so Proverbs presents this family as the community and of course as our next hymn says our church is also a community and a family is often described as a family and a community in that sense also so many of these things apply not only to our families at home but the church also so let's sing another hymn about the family this one is number 936 which reminds us that the Lord created the family other animals live in family groups of one source or another but nothing like the depth of a human family community