

Anger: Walking in Wisdom

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 09 July 2017

Preacher: Nick Lauer

[0 : 0 0] Good morning, church. Just making sure I'm on so you can hear me. Well, we're continuing our series in the Old Testament book of Proverbs this morning.

Proverbs is a book about what it means to be truly wise. And for the rest of the summer, we're looking at some of the key themes of this book. We said a couple weeks ago that sort of the main bulk of Proverbs, chapters 10 through 31, was put together a lot like that sort of tightly woven tapestry, giving us this integrated picture of what a whole life of wisdom looks like.

And this morning, we're going to pull another one of those threads and consider another angle on what it means to really be wise. So I want to start this morning by reading just sort of a series of Proverbs.

And we're going to start at Proverbs chapter 14, verse 29. That's page 538 in the Pew Bible, if you want to turn with me there.

Page 538, we're going to start in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 29. If you're new to a Bible, the big numbers are the chapters and the small numbers are the verses.

[1 : 2 0] And I'm going to just sort of read through a collection of Proverbs to consider an important theme together this morning. So let's start. Proverbs 14, 29.

Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. 15, 18.

A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. 16, 32.

Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city. 19, 11.

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense. 19, 19. A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.

[2 : 3 1] Chapter 22, verse 24 and 25. Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

29, 11. A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. 29, 22.

A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. Why don't we pray, and then we'll consider these verses a bit more deeply.

Father, we do thank you that we get this chance this morning on this day, what we call the Lord's day, the day when we remember, Lord Jesus, your resurrection from the dead and the beginning of our new life.

Lord, we thank you that we can now gather around your word. We thank you that you continue to speak to us and instruct us and teach us through scripture. God, we ask that by your spirit you would allow these passages to come alive in our hearts.

[3 : 4 5] Lord, that you would change us and transform us more and more into the image of your son, so that as we've sung this morning, we might bring glory to you and know true joy in our hearts.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, so you can probably tell from the verses we just read together that our topic this morning is a topic of anger. According to Proverbs, if we're going to be wise, if we're going to live life well, we need to reckon with the reality of anger in our lives and in the lives of others.

Now, I don't know whether you think anger is an issue for you or not. You know, we can hear stories of parents getting into fistfights at their kids' little league games, and we think, whoa, they've got anger issues.

I'm not that bad. You know, sometimes anger is easy to spot, right? But when it comes to ourselves, we can often think that we're pretty patient people. That was true of me before I got married.

I thought I was a pretty patient person. I actually probably would have called myself a really patient person. But in reality, now I know, that's just because I had very little responsibility, and there was nothing in my life that sort of challenged my incredibly self-centered approach to all of my decisions and what I did.

[5 : 05] So, yeah, I could do whatever I wanted to do whenever I wanted to do it, so I didn't get upset all that much. But then enter marriage, and then enter children, and suddenly I'm not the all-patient person I thought I was.

But keep in mind, too, anger comes in all sorts of forms. A couple friends of ours that Beth and I know from college who are married, whenever they get into an argument, it's like someone just turned the volume up to 11 immediately.

They're loud, they're passionate, they're vocal. The first time we sort of spent the weekend with them, I kind of got a little nervous. I talked to Beth later, and I was like, are they okay?

Like, do we need to connect them with a counselor or something? Are they doing all right? So, yeah, and some people it's easy to spot anger. But, you know, what about the couple, or what about the person who instead just gets really quiet?

Who refuses to interact? Who shuts the other person out? Who lets it all simmer underneath and never lets it go? It might not look like uncontrolled anger at first, and yet it's just as real and just as deadly.

[6 : 19] Anger can look like shouting, but it can also look like the silent treatment, right? In fact, when anger goes wrong, it takes lots of forms. Irritation, complaining, bitterness, or just sort of low-grade impatience.

So, friends, what Proverbs has to say about anger is really for all of us. And we're going to look at three things this morning related to anger from Proverbs that these verses show us.

We're going to look first at the cost of uncontrolled anger. And then second, we're going to see what can help us in our anger. And then last, we're going to see what can heal us in our anger.

So first, let's consider the cost of uncontrolled anger. And I think we can categorize what Proverbs says here in a few ways. First, Proverbs says if you're quick-tempered, one of the costs is you'll just do foolish things.

Proverbs 14.17 puts it quite bluntly. A man of quick temper acts foolishly. Also 14.29, whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.

[7 : 35] Or as one translation puts it, a quick-tempered person stockpiles stupidity. You'll do things you later regret, and it will just keep piling up.

Now, I mean, we can all relate to that, right? Don't raise your hand. But how many of us have said things or done things when we're angry, and later we think, what was I thinking?

I just decapitated all three of my children because they asked me for a cup of milk. What is going on? That was incredibly foolish. I didn't literally decapitate my kids.

That never happened. So being quick-tempered, uncontrolled anger causes us to just do foolish things. That's one cost. Second, if you're quick-tempered, you'll end up wrecking community.

Proverbs 15.18. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention. And 29.22.

[8 : 37] A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression. You see, Proverbs is pointing us there to the social cost of being quick-tempered.

Think of that image of stirring up strife. You know, when I was growing up, I lived for a time in upstate New York, and we lived near a lake, and, you know, many times we would go out to the lake, and it would be sort of crystal clear.

And if you waded out into the water calmly, you'd be able to continue to see right down to the bottom. See the fish, see the rocks. It was all quite peaceful and serene. However, if you stomped violently in the water, boom, boom, boom, splash, splash, splash, what happens?

You stir up all the dirt and all the sand, and the once peaceful water is now this swirling mess, and you can't see a thing. Uncontrolled anger, according to Proverbs, is like that in relationships.

It just stirs up strife and conflicts and fights and animosity. Turns people against one another in neighborhoods and homes and churches.

[9 : 45] In other words, uncontrolled anger wrecks havoc in community. It creates strife among people who themselves aren't even that angry of people.

But third, if you're quick-tempered, there's a deep personal cost. Listen to Proverbs 25, 28. A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

In Proverbs 19, 19 again. A man of great wrath will pay the penalty, for if you deliver him, you will only have to do it again.

In other words, uncontrolled anger, says Proverbs, leaves you desolate and holds you captive. 25, 28 uses the image of a city broken into and left without walls.

And in the ancient world, a city's walls were its primary means of defense. So a city without walls is a picture of weakness and vulnerability. You're defenseless and you're desolate.

[11 : 05] Anything, even the smallest army, could destroy you. And it's like that when anger is uncontrolled.

The smallest thing can set you off, send you on a spiral, and destroy you. But in Proverbs 19, 19, it gets even more serious if you look there.

What is this verse really describing? Proverbs 19, 19, a man of great wrath will pay the penalty. If you deliver him, you will only have to do it again, and again, and again.

Do you see what Proverbs is saying there? That wrath, that anger, it's like an addiction. It gets a hold on us, and it grips us so deeply that even if you deliver someone from the penalty or from the consequences of their angry actions, they fall back into it again and again.

They go right back in. They can't stop themselves from just falling back into it. You know, that's why Proverbs gives the opposite advice to what you sometimes hear when it comes to anger.

[12 : 21] The popular advice on anger, how to deal with it, is oftentimes, well, you just have to let it out. Just let it out. If you're angry, go punch a pillow. Scream really loudly.

Just let it out. Ventilate. Release the pressure. But friends, that advice is very short-sighted because uncontrolled anger is actually like a muscle that the more you exercise it, the stronger it gets, and the stronger it gets, the more it will hold you captive.

Proverbs 29, 11 says, A fool gives vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.

So if letting it out isn't going to help, what will? And this takes us to the second big thing that Proverbs shows us about anger. If that's the cost of uncontrolled anger, what can help us in our anger?

What will help us become less and less quick-tempered and more and more what Proverbs calls slow to anger? The first thing it points to is the company you keep.

[13 : 39] Proverbs 22, 24 through 25 again. Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Anger, you see, is something that you can learn. Or as one translation puts it, bad temper is contagious.

Don't get infected. So when you're picking your friends, when you're choosing who to hang out with, ask yourself, are my friends quick-tempered?

Are they easily just set off? Are they angry, irritable, complaining, always holding a grudge, always blaming others, always cutting people down? Proverbs says choosing to spend time with people like that, whether it's in person or whether it's through the shows and the media that we consume.

Anger is very profitable, friends, isn't it? Proverbs says choosing those sorts of things is like volunteering to entangle yourself in a snare.

[14 : 51] It's like seeing the bear trap and jumping right in. Boom. If you have the choice, don't go there.

Of course, you don't always have the choice, right? It's different with family, isn't it? You can't choose your family. Sometimes family members get angry, so your strategy has to be a little different.

If your child struggles with uncontrolled anger, you can't just disown them. Ah, Proverbs 22, 24 through 25. Sorry, kiddo. You're off on your own.

No. As a parent, your job is to move toward your child in love. Listen to the cries of their hearts. Yes, correct what needs to be corrected, but also prayerfully call forth the good.

If your spouse struggles with anger, much the same applies. Pray for them. Love them. Stick with them. Listen to the cries of their hearts. Pray. Of course, if the anger turns to physical abuse, you need to be safe.

[16 : 02] Separate yourself. Get help. Don't do it alone. So in some of our relationships, we won't be able to choose, but in those where we do have a choice, Proverbs is saying, the one thing that will make you wise when it comes to anger, one thing that will help you become a person who is slow to anger, as opposed to quick-tempered, is the company you keep.

But next, it's not just the company you keep, but the words that you speak. The words that you speak.

Proverbs 15, 1. Proverbs 15, 1 says, a soft or a gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Now, of course, the primary point of this verse is how to interact with angry people, right? How do you do it? Do you rise to the occasion? Do you fight fire with fire?

Proverbs says, No, a soft answer, a gentle answer. That is a controlled and deliberate, loving response that really cares for the person in front of you and doesn't just treat them as a problem to be solved or an issue to be dealt with, much less an enemy or an opponent to be defeated.

- [17 : 14] That sort of answer, a soft, a gentle answer, Proverbs says, diffuses the bomb of anger. But on the flip side, if you want to pull the pin, well, go right ahead.

Give a harsh word. View the situation as a contest to be won. View the person as a problem to be controlled and contained. Answer that way.

Proverbs says, Guaranteed, you can watch the anger escalate. But you know, I think this verse also applies to how we speak to ourselves in moments of anger.

Listen to Proverbs 20, 22. Do not say, I will repay evil. Wait for the Lord and he will deliver you.

Do not say. Say to who? Who are we speaking to here? Well, obviously, what we have in this verse is an internal dialogue of someone who's angry, who's ready to deal out revenge.

- [18 : 21] And Proverbs is saying, don't say, I will repay evil. Rather, speak the soft word, which is really the stronger word to yourself. Wait for the Lord and he will deliver you.

So Proverbs 15, one, this proverb that many of us have heard before, a soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger, applies as much to our internal conversations with ourselves as to our external conversations with others.

So friends, what do you say to others? Or perhaps, just as importantly, what do you say to yourself when you're angry? I think in large part, this is why stepping back and taking a deep breath can be so helpful when our anger is running out of control.

I mean, the oxygen probably helps, right? But I think the deep breath really helps because it gives you a moment to pause and reframe the situation.

It gives you a moment to get some perspective and to start talking to yourself differently about what's really going on. No, your parents aren't on a mission to destroy all your fun and strip you of all of your freedom.

- [19 : 46] Teenagers, take a deep breath. Tell yourself the soft answer, which is the strong answer that, you know, my parents love me.

They're not perfect, but they want my best. And God, my heavenly father, has given me my parents for my good. No, your roommate or your co-worker doesn't always fill in the blank, right?

They always cut me off. Take a deep breath. They aren't on a mission to make your life miserable.

That's not the driving force in their life. Excuse yourself. Take a walk around the block if you need to, but tell yourself the soft answer, which is the strong answer. No, that person is not perfect, but they're not pure evil either.

And God will give me the grace to overlook the offense and serve and love them regardless. Friends, you see how the words you speak are so critical when it comes to help in our anger.

- [20 : 57] But there's a third help. Not just the company you keep, not just the words you speak, but third, Proverbs shows us the benefits of being slow to anger.

It casts before us a vision of life, of what it would be like, the benefits of being slow to anger. You see, the vision that Proverbs puts out before us is not that the wise are totally emotionless.

Biblically speaking, the wise aren't complete stoics striving to be unfeeling to the world around them. No, that's not biblical wisdom. There are actually times when anger is wholly appropriate.

God is angry at evil and injustice, and it is perfectly good and right. After all, how could God be a God of love if He wasn't opposed to evil and wrong and all that destroys His good creation?

The opposite of love isn't anger, you know. The opposite of love is indifference. Because we love, because we care, because we're deeply invested in something's good, because of that, there's a right sort of anger.

[22 : 23] An anger at that which threatens what we love and what we value. Proverbs says, the wise person isn't a person who is never angry.

After all, Jesus Himself got angry, didn't He? Read the Gospels. Jesus got angry at self-righteousness, at hard-heartedness, at injustice.

Jesus got very angry at death. The wise aren't never angry, rather they are slow to anger.

And one of the things that will help us become less quick-tempered and more slow to anger is to see the benefits of being slow to anger. Listen again to Proverbs 14.29.

Whoever's slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly. Those who are slow to anger, friends, have deep understanding.

[23 : 34] You see, uncontrolled anger prevents us from seeing things as they are. It blocks our ability to really understand the world in a deep way. We're not thinking straight when we're angry.

It clouds our reason. But those who are slow to anger, the opposite is true. They can really grasp the deep logic of things.

They can really understand other people. They can really see reality as it truly is. And they can live accordingly. In the New Testament epistle of James, chapter 1, 19 through 20, James puts it this way.

He says, Know this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Let every person be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

So there's one benefit. Deep understanding. Here's another. Proverbs 15.18. A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.

[24 : 43] How do you make that stomped through muddy pond crystal clear again? How do you move a friendship, a family, a church, a city from strife and contention to peace and harmony?

How do you bring healing to communities? Only through being slow to anger. anger. Friends, think of the salt and light we would be in our city and in our schools and in our workplaces if we, the church, were slow to anger.

It's so easy to be cynical and snarky, isn't it? I know because I can be as cynical as the next guy.

What if we were slow to anger instead? Listen to Proverbs 19.11.

Good sense makes one slow to anger and it is his glory to overlook an offense. There's glory in overlooking an offense.

[25 : 55] Of course, the world doesn't always see it that way. It can seem weak to overlook an offense. It can seem unassertive. Stand up for yourself, we're told.

Or our friends kind of egg us on. You're not going to take that, are you? Overheard at every lunch period in every high school in New Haven County, right?

You're not going to take that from them, are you? But then it just gets translated into different words the older we get. But I ask you, what's more glorious?

To get sucked down into the back and forth of you offend me, I offend you, the hamster wheel of offense where no one wins. Is that full of glory?

Or is it more glorious to overlook an offense? To remain unshaken and unthwarted on the path of loving our neighbors and loving even our enemies in Christ's name.

[27 : 01] To be sure, brothers and sisters, there is glory in being slow to anger. Proverbs 16, 32 puts it this way, it says, whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty and he who rules his spirit than he who takes the city.

The NIV puts it this way, better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control and one who takes the city. Or one person paraphrased it like this, moderation is better than muscle, self-control better than political power.

You see, friends, what's going to last? What will endure? What is true strength? not the touchy, quick-tempered, irritable, the always ready for an argument, the belligerent, the boisterous, the proud.

No. But those who are slow to anger. And you know, that should not surprise us. After all, it's not that God's own character.

This is how Matt began the service. When God reveals himself to Moses in Exodus 34, that's a pinnacle moment. That's a key moment in the Old Testament. What does God say he's like?

[28 : 27] Who is this God who made us? The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.

That's who God is. Perhaps this is the greatest benefit of being slow to anger. That we, as human beings, created in God's image, when we are slow to anger, we get to display his character in the world he has made.

We get to emulate in our own creaturely way the creator who made us. we get to participate in God's own nature. Don't you want that sort of life?

Don't you want that sort of spirit who would participate in the glory of God in that way rather than just getting sucked down into the back and forth of offense?

Friends, don't you want to be slow to anger? So the company we keep, the words we speak, the benefits of being slow to anger, they all help. They all help us become less quick-tempered and more slow to anger.

[29 : 49] But you know, at the end of the day, that's not enough. We need more than just help for our anger. The reality is we need healing.

Because you can get with the right people and you can keep telling yourself the right things and you can even have a vision of what it would all look like and how glorious it would be, but at the end of the day, you and I need something even deeper and something more profound.

And this is our third and our last point. What can really heal our anger? What will truly make us slow to anger? Well, first you have to admit that you have an anger problem.

David Powelson, a counselor and an author, wrote a book on anger called Good and Angry and I think the second or third chapter is called Do I Really Have an Anger Problem? Question mark.

And the chapter is this long. Yes. Chapter done. And you know, now that we've been walking through these verses on anger, we see that our anger issues are bigger than we thought.

[30 : 56] Because the problem with anger isn't just that we get angry at the wrong things, it's also that we don't get angry at the right things. Yeah? We can be totally enraged when someone offends us and in the same moment completely indifferent when we hear of radical injustice and incredible suffering happening in the world.

But wisdom in anger, doing anger rightly means that we're slow to anger at the right things at the right time in the right way. But instead, we blow up when our kids don't get the playing time we think they deserve.

And in the same moment, we could functionally care less that there are kids in our own backyard who barely have enough to eat. And friends, doesn't that show us that something is deeply, deeply wrong, not just with the world, but with us.

Friends, if we want to know healing for our anger, we've got to admit that our hearts are broken, that something's gone wrong inside of us, that we've turned inward in a kind of God-ignoring selfishness that pervades all that we do, which is what the Bible calls sin.

And because of that condition, we end up loving the wrong things in the wrong way. We said that anger is opposition to that which threatens what we love.

[32 : 41] Think about it. At the most basic level, when do you get angry? When your will is blocked, right? I want something, something stands in my way or stops me from getting it and I get angry. Example, I want potato chips.

My roommate has eaten all of the potato chips. I now want to destroy my roommate. In that moment, you loved the pleasure of eating potato chips that was threatened, even stolen by your roommate and you got angry.

Of course, that's a silly example, isn't it? But it gets more subtle than that and it gets more serious, doesn't it?

You're on your way to an important lunch meeting. You're five minutes away but suddenly traffic is at a standstill and you're not moving and you keep looking at the clock, two minutes, three minutes, four minutes go by and you can just feel the anger start to boil.

Why? Because I need to be at this lunch meeting on time. Okay, but why anger? You've been late to lunch meetings before. You've been stuck in traffic before.

[33 : 54] No anger. What's different now? What is it that you love, that you value, that's being threatened in this moment and that's igniting your anger?

Is it your reputation? What will my boss, what will my new co-workers think of me if I'm late for this lunch meeting?

And then you start to spin it out, don't you? I bet I'm the only one who is dumb enough to take the highway to get to this restaurant. I'm going to show up and look like a total idiot. I'm going to miss the whole thing.

I'm not going to get the promotion until you sit in traffic and you get angry because your reputation is on the line. Or maybe it's not your reputation this time, maybe it's your relational status.

You're on your way to a date and you're sick of being the single one among all your friends and this stupid traffic is keeping you from something that might actually rescue you from the hell of your singleness and so you get angry now look, it's okay to want to make a good impression on your boss.

[35 : 10] It's okay to want to find a spouse but if those things get threatened and you find yourself boiling with anger and you're cutting people off in traffic and you're yelling obscenities at the person in front of you who won't move up the three inches that they can possibly move up, you know something has gone haywire.

What is it that's going to heal your anger? What is it that will cool our quick tempered hearts to be truly and rightly slow to anger?

Well Proverbs puts it this way. It says, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. In other words, the beginning, the wellspring, the source, the foundation of being able to do anger wisely, to be truly slow to anger is that the Lord has to be the thing you value and cherish and love before and above all else.

God has to be bigger and more precious to you than your reputation and God has to be bigger and more worthy to you than your relational status. God has to be the thing around which everything else orbits in your life.

That's what the fear, that's what the awe of the Lord means, that he is the blazing sun and everything else is just stars. And there's only one way you get that kind of fear of the Lord.

[36 : 45] There's only one way you get the fear of the Lord so deep in your soul that it makes you slow to anger. It's when you see that he's been slow to anger.

And he's been slow to anger not just theoretically. He's been slow to anger not just as an abstract attribute of his divine perfections, but he has been slow to anger with you personally.

Consider it, friends. the God who made you in complete freedom without any need, the God who upholds you in your existence every second of every day, who is the infinite ocean of bliss and the source of all that is good, this God who upholds you in your being every second of every day deserves your unrelenting thanks and praise.

And yet, we live 99% of our lives basically ignoring God. And then, when something goes wrong and doesn't meet our expectations for how we think our lives should go, we spend the other 1% of our lives blaming God and getting angry at him.

Proverbs 19.3 says, when a man's folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord. Is that not such an insightful view of the human condition?

[38 : 30] Our folly brings us to ruin and yet we rage against God. And friends, would not our perfectly good and holy God be perfectly just to give us exactly what we functionally ask for every second of every day?

To be separated from him forever. Would it not be utterly and perfectly good and just of God to give us what our hard-hearted rebellion against him deserves?

And yet, that is not what God does. Instead, God takes on human flesh for you and absorbs the rightful anger that our sins deserve on a wooden implement of torture.

He's mocked and beaten and torn to shreds. when God was completely just to annihilate me in his anger, he forgives me instead.

He doesn't excuse my sin. He doesn't ignore my sin. He paid for it and forgave me. Do you see how God has been infinitely patient with you, friends?

[40 : 00] Infinitely slow to anger when you didn't deserve it. And so how could this Lord, the Lord Jesus, not be the center of your life now?

How could you love or prize or value anything more than him? The one who's been so slow to anger with you and so loving and so kind.

And so kind. And you know, the more and more Christ takes up residence in our hearts by his spirit, the more and more what Christ has done for us fills our affections, you know, the more your reputation and the more your relational status, the more your whatever will start to find its rightful place in orbit around him.

And when things start to threaten those peripheral things now, you'll be slow to anger. You may still experience disappointment, you may still experience frustration, yes, but rage, the uncontrolled anger will subside because the one thing that you prize above all else, the love of God in Christ for you can never be threatened.

Nothing can touch it. Friends, do you know that love? Is that the burning center of your soul?

[41 : 29] Do you see how your heavenly father has been so incredibly slow to anger with you and how he continues to be so every moment of every day? And how this love of God in Christ is open for all who will turn from sin and entrust themselves to Christ.

Do you see that? Do you know that? If so, friends, then let it heal you of your anger. God, let it make us wise.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh, God, we do pray that you would come now by your spirit, and you would impress upon us the truths of these words that we've been considering from Proverbs, and Lord, that we would see running in and through each one of them the character and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God, I pray for those who are here this morning who, like me and like so many, just struggle with anger. God, I pray that by your spirit you would become the blazing sun in the center of our universe once again.

Oh, God, flood us with a rich sense of your glory and the way in which you've been so patient and so kind and so slow to anger with us. And God, for those who are here who maybe don't know that love, Lord, for whom it seems like a far-off thing, God, for those who are here and, Lord, would think of that kind of intimate relationship with you as something that seems strange and almost impossible and something they could never attain.

[43 : 15] Lord, I pray that you would help them to see that you have become the way and the truth and the life and that we can truly come to the Father, Lord Jesus, through you.

Oh, God, I pray that you would give them the grace to place their trust in you, to commit their lives to you and so know the peace that you give. God, help us as a church to live in these ways, we pray.

In Jesus' name, amen. and sign the gift of who