

Relationships with Those Around You

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[0 : 00] Proverbs chapter number 18. How wonderful is it to be fully known and loved by him. And what a great way to be reminded of that truth. That was wonderful.

Thank you too. Thank you, Brother Steve, everybody who was involved in bringing that truth to us tonight. Proverbs chapter number 18. We're going to look at every verse, all but a couple verses.

I'm going to leave the whosoever findeth the wife a good thing, obtaineth the favor of the Lord for another day. Because there's so much to be said about that verse, all right? But the other verses fit right into the topics that we're looking at.

And I have told you my struggle with Proverbs, my struggle with a lot of things. But just how to preach through Proverbs is challenging. But something that I've really just come to know, if it doesn't sound like I'm giving you a bunch of practical advice for living, then I'm probably not preaching Proverbs.

And so that's what we have here. Just a series of things that we ought to ask ourselves in regard here to chapter number 18, in regard to our relationship one to another, interpersonal relationships, and how that they would honor God in the way that I would treat you or you would treat somebody else.

[1 : 08] And so we get so much help, so much practical help from our lives. Ask my life group this morning, how many of you knew the song, Jesus, Others, and You? What a wonderful way to spell joy. J is for Jesus.

You don't know the song. All right. All right. J is for Jesus that should have first place. O is for others. You meet face to face. And Y is for you. Whatever you do, put yourself last and spell joy.

Was that you, Katie? Just me and you? Okay. Well, okay. That's a great song. And Jesus, Others, and You, it's a wonderful way to spell joy. Good reminder that if your relationships with one another aren't, if your relationship with God isn't correct, then your relationship with one another is not going to be correct.

And then your understanding of yourself is not going to be correct. Proverbs just gives us kind of some checkpoints when we look at them, and we ask ourselves about our relationships with one another. And so I'm going to ask a question, and I'm going to show you where the question comes from, the proverb, as we look at this together.

I want to pray first. I'm so thankful for that song we just heard. Thank you for all the music. I'm like Brother Steve. He said, I don't know how he gets involved in music. I am somebody who has no musical ability, but I just love music.

[2 : 18] I really do, and I'm grateful for a church that believes in theologically rich music, something that's worth to put the energy into. It's honoring to God when you put time into it.

I love the little country church that I went to, but the way we knew who was going to sing, who wants to sing? I think I might. Okay. Why don't you come up here? And it just wasn't honoring to the Lord to put so little energy into it, right?

And it wasn't a good example to be set for any other work. You know, I didn't want the pastor to do that. I didn't want the lady making the church casseroles to cook like that, right? Well, but she put more energy into what she did than we put into that.

And so I really appreciate it when I see somebody put so much work into something to minister to us for three or four minutes, right? And it was time well spent. Heavenly Father, I ask that you be with us right now, Lord.

We know that we are fully known and we're loved by you. But Father, we don't always feel loved. And we don't always feel like those that are around us see us make us feel very loved, Lord.

[3 : 20] And so help us look past the way that we can feel by the way the world would look at us. Help us be people, Lord, that when we look upon other people, we have nothing but love in our hearts, one another, and that you would use us to be ministers of grace.

Lord, let us have relationships on a more meaningful and a deeper level than the world would ever understand. Lord, let us have friendships in the gospel. Help us teach our kids, Lord, what it means to have true friends and how to be a friend.

And, Lord, that's what I would ask that you would teach us tonight through this, is that you would teach us, first of all, how to be a friend. And as a result, Lord, we would be a church full of people that know how to be a friend in a way that is worthy of the gospel.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. Verse number one, Through desire of man having separated himself, seeketh and intermedaeth with all wisdom. So the question I would ask you out of that verse is, Why do you desire to separate from those around you?

I ask it this way, Why do I desire to separate from those that are around me? So it's saying by desire, a man has a desire to separate. He wants to be alone. He wants to be separate.

[4 : 33] That's his desire. And in doing that, he is also showing that he has no desire to be interrupted by other people's wisdom. People love to speak in terms of introvert and extrovert.

But what would we say in the life of Christ? A person that could be perfectly at peace alone with the Father. And another time he could be surrounded by 5,000 people and perfectly at peace.

I want to be made more like the Father. I enjoy all those little tests and all that. You know, introvert, extrovert, what Pyro Ranger would you be? All those Facebook things, you know. All those things, blue, that's the answer.

And those things are fascinating to me, but they're not the limit on who I'm going to be. I want to look more like Jesus. And so maybe I have tendencies as I get a little bit older to be more introverted than I once was, meaning that I want to go away and recharge.

The Bible tells me to be given the hospitality. So sometimes you have to give of yourself, you know, to be able to do that. But I want to look more like Christ than I know that you do as well. And so we speak in those terms, but we look at Christ and we would say, why do I want to be separated from people?

[5 : 40] If I don't want to have conversations where somebody might challenge me, I don't want to be around people because I don't think they have any wisdom. I don't want to be around people because I think I know all, and I'm the only one who I can stand to be around.

That's sinful, and that's the wrong kind of desire where you would not want to be intermettled with all wisdom. There is a real value in being together. I'm going to read a quote, and thanks to my wife, I'm going to read it very slowly to you because she says I have a tendency to read quickly, all right?

So I'm going to read slowly, okay? What I believe is slowly. Things move real quick when you're up here, all right? My heart moves real fast. Everything moves real fast up here. Except for the time.

All right. No. It's about time. So this is a quote by Bonhoeffer, and he says this, Let him who cannot be alone beware of community.

Let him who is not in community beware of being alone. Each by itself has profound perils and pitfalls. One who wants fellowship without solitude plunges into the void of words and feelings.

[6 : 44] And the one who seeks solitude without fellowship perishes in the abyss of vanity, self-infatuation, and despair. Just simply put, if you can't stand to be alone, you need to learn how to be alone with the Lord.

If you can't stand to be around people, you need to learn how to do that because there's just great joys found in both of those. So the first question I'd ask is, why do you desire to separate from those around you through a desire a man has separated himself, seeking and intermelteth with all wisdom?

I was blessed tonight by what I've heard. I've been blessed by the conversations. I want to be around people that will help sharpen me, that will make me more like Jesus. Another question that I see here in these Proverbs is, what does my inability to listen say about my heart?

What does my inability to listen say about my heart? Verse 2, a fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself. Have you ever found yourself waiting for somebody just to get done talking?

You weren't listening to what they were saying. You're just waiting for them to pause so you can say what you have to say. You know, you probably have been there. I've been there many times. The kids in the room right now are like that.

[7 : 57] They're waiting for me to be done talking so they can get back to what they have to say. But this have no delight in understanding, not listening, not wanting to learn, just wanting to tell everybody what I know, just wanting to discover myself and to say, you're not going to believe what I have to say about this.

Mark Twain, it's better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt. That's what a fool does. He discovers his heart. He just has to say what he knows all the time without listening to what is being said.

So do you ever consider that, do I ever consider something that I have to learn from listening to other people? When I speak, am I looking to help people or just show them that I'm very capable in what I know?

The Bible tells us, kids in here, Hamilton, you want to hear this one here, your ears. Let me see your ears, Hamilton. Show me your ears. Okay, those are nice. Okay. All right. This is what your ears are supposed to be doing, Hamilton.

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge and the ears of the wise seeketh knowledge. Your ears are supposed to be like a dog that goes around looking for something, okay?

[9 : 03] You're supposed to be going around seeking knowledge with your ears. So are our ears doing that? Are the ears of the wise seeking knowledge? Wherever you're at and wherever you're going, are you listening and saying, there's something I can learn?

There's some wisdom that I can gain here. And at every chance there is. Even when foolish people are talking, there's something for you to learn. There's always an example that can be set for you.

And so our ears should always be seeking and listening for something. I would really encourage you to not waste your ears, okay? That didn't sound very deep, did it? All right. Let's not waste it.

Don't waste your ears. I mean, when you're going somewhere, put your ears to work. Listen to the Bible. Listen to good music. Listen to something. Be productive. Your ears can really help you learn.

And they should always be seeking and you should be intentional in what you're doing. You know, we live in a time now where just listening to the radio just means you weren't, you didn't have a game plan, right?

[10:03] I mean, there's just too many options. I mean, I had the anti, the absorbed shaking CD player that I thought was pretty cool. It didn't really work right. It was always skipping. But I always had a plan when I got in my car as a teenager.

And now it's so easy. I mean, you get into your car and many times it connects to your phone, puts your ears to work for you. Verse three, when the wicked cometh, then cometh also contempt.

And with iginimine, and I even practiced that word. Iganimine is reproach. Shame and rebuke. So when the wicked come, there is contempt.

But there's also, they bring shame and reproach upon people. Remember when I told you earlier, that kind of person you are when you don't think you have anything to learn from somebody else? That means that you are seeing those people with contempt.

Meaning that you're not valuing them. That you don't show any respect to them. And so that's the wicked way of acting. And when you do that, you're looking down with shame upon other people. If people feel dumb around you, that is an insult to your creator and to their creator.

[11:06] And we shouldn't do that. That's holding people in contempt. Every person, every little kid ought to be able to talk to you. And you ought to be able to get on their level. And they ought to feel like what they say matters.

Because they matter to God. And so they should matter to us. And so it's wicked when we do that. I have done that. And it's wicked. I've been acting like a wicked person if I make people feel in contempt or shame and reproach.

Verse number four. The words of the man's mouth are as the deep waters. And the wellspring of wisdom are as a flowing brook. It doesn't mean that every person's speech is deep and meaningful.

They don't say deep things like you really need to use your ears. All right? Everybody doesn't sound like Yoda when they speak. All right? They're not a walking fortune cookie. But sometimes when people, but when they speak, the wellspring says it's going to show what is in their heart.

It reveals the depths of their heart. And so I just ask you the question that was there, which is, what does your inability to listen to other people say about your heart?

[12:08] It says more about your heart than it does their mind. It says more about your heart than it does the other people. And so ask yourself. Reflect. There may be people in your life that you're going to see tomorrow at work.

And you just say, I have not treated them with the respect that I should give them being made in the image of God. Another question coming from verse number five. It is not good to accept the person of the wicked to overthrow the righteous in judgment.

What does who I choose to listen to say about my heart? What does who I choose to listen to say about my heart? It's not good to accept the person of the wicked.

Don't set a plate for the person at the table that is wicked. It's not just enough not to be that wicked person, but we shouldn't give them a platform. We shouldn't give them an opportunity.

And so I wasn't saying that we need to listen to everybody in life, but we should treat people with dignity, that we shouldn't disrespect them. But when a person says that they're going to be against the things of God, we should not accept that person into our lives, into our conversation, except to speak truth towards them.

[13 : 15] We shouldn't give that person an audience. When Brother John became a missionary to young people many years ago, and he did some research, he asked the young people, what is this guy so mad about, right?

Listening to the music that young people would listen to. What is this guy so mad about? And so that would be setting something wicked before you. If you're listening to a person that is constantly angry, that's singing songs and speaking.

And so what are some of the reasons that we'd accept the testimony of wicked people? Maybe it's a misplaced compassion. Maybe it's a desire to please others. Maybe some kind of bribe.

Those would be three reasons we'd find in Proverbs that people would set wicked people in front of them. You would do it for your own personal gain, not because of its right. When we allow for the wicked person in our lives, then we have marginalized the righteous in our lives.

If you accept the wicked, you overthrow the righteous in judgment, which is to say you only have so many seats at the table. And if you allow the wicked people to sit at the table, then you're not going to allow the wise and the righteous people into your life, and you're going to marginalize their influence there.

[14 : 19] Proverbs 18, 6 and 7, A fool's lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes. A fool's mouth is his destruction, and his lips are the snare of his soul.

When you make room of the foolish in your life, you're making room for problems. The other night, I was driving through Tennessee, and I was at a small town gas station. And outside, there was a little dispute going on, and the police were there.

And so I got some popcorn, and I sat down, and I was paying attention to what was going on. And then when I went inside, I was asking the lady, the cashier, I said, how often does this happen out here?

How often are the police called, and this happened? And she says, this is the third time this week. This was Thursday night after church. She said, this is the third time this week we've had to call the police.

And I said, I am so sorry that you have to deal with this drama all the time. And she said, well, I don't want to work the midnight shift. And I was talking to her. I was believing we're going to head into a gospel conversation.

[15 : 23] But then the police officer came in, and this lady started yelling at him. And she started yelling, and she said, every time we come here, you've got to stop yelling at us. And then she went around, and what I realized was that even though the lady didn't enjoy working at the gas station at 11 o'clock at night, she did enjoy the drama.

She wasn't opposed to the drama. She invited it into her life when she allowed foolish people into her lives, and she would have that. That situation is a little bit different, but some of us invite foolishness because we just enjoy the circus.

We just enjoy watching it. It's just kind of fun for us. It's just kind of where we're at. It's just kind of been the way we grew up. You know, just a little bit of crazy. You just need a little bit of crazy in your life.

And the Bible says we shouldn't invite that kind of foolishness into our lives. A mouth can really bring destruction upon a person. Romans 3, 13 and 14. Their heart, their throat is an open supplicant.

With their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asp is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Speaking about these wicked religious people, it speaks about their mouth and their lips and their throat and the cursing.

[16 : 33] And it talks about the power of their words. And those people should be marginalized in our lives, inviting people to wisdom. Here's another question for you. Am I avoiding the sin and pain that comes from gossip?

Gossip may taste sweet, but it is not healthy. Proverbs 18, 8. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

The words of a talebearer. Other times it would tell us that the words are sweet. And then it says that it goes into the innermost part of you, which means that even if it's true or if it's not, it becomes part of you to a point that it cannot be removed.

It goes into the innermost part. I believe it was Shannon that said the other day at that wedding reception for Chase and Ashley, and it was just, I mean, what happens when you're a baker and your daughter gets married?

I mean, everything was edible, all right? And everywhere you turn, and she was worried about her kids, right? Because they had eaten so much sweets. We were just wondering which kid is going to get sick. Because even though it's good and it's fun to eat sweets, it is not going to make you healthy.

[17 : 40] And gossip goes down so smoothly, and it's so sweet, but it's so unhealthy for you. It just destroys. It hurts relationship. The excitement that we have to share information with others about things that should not be shared, it's wicked.

Proverbs 6, 18, God has called us to something different.

That desire you have when you hear something, I got to go tell so-and-so something. And if they cannot help the situation, the Bible says those feet, that's wickedness. Our feet are supposed to be carrying the gospel news and good news and not bad news.

God has called us to be peacemakers, not to divide friends. I don't know that I've ever saw this verse before. I know I have as I've read through the Bible. But Proverbs 16, 28, A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth chief friends.

A whisperer separateth chief friends. If you want to separate two close friends, if you come at them hard with a challenge, they're going to be closer, right? But if you want to separate chief friends, you're going to do it with a whisper.

[18 : 55] You're going to do it with gossip that would be there. You're going to do it trying to move their hearts away from each other. So God's called us to be a peacemaker. And so I have eight diagnostic questions that I found this week I would like to share with you that were asked.

Whether you're trying to discern if what you're doing is not the work of a gossip or as a tale bearer that was sweet but it's going to hurt. And so question number one, if you're involved in conflict with another person, are you talking to others only about that person's sin and never about your own?

If so, it's probably gossip. When we talk about sin, we should be broken people. Number two, is your conversation with friends about this other person intended to prepare you for a productive conversation with the person?

If not, it's probably gossip. Number three, if you're seeking counsel from others on how to deal wisely with this person, do you keep the person's identity secret except when necessary?

If not, it is probably gossip. Number four, do you enjoy sharing this information with your friends? If so, it is probably gossip. As we saw in Proverbs 18, 8, gossip is tasty.

[20 : 08] See, seeking counsel in a broken, difficult situation is good, but it is painful and it is not enjoyable. Number five, what's the tone of your voice and the tenor of your heart?

Are you meek, humble, and brokenhearted when you share this other person's sin, or do you feel anger and righteous by comparison? If so, it's probably gossip. Are you talking to God about this person as much as you're talking to your friends?

If not, it's probably gossip. Are you limiting the number of friends you speak to? If not, it's probably gossip. Gossip seeks to spread communication widely, but Jesus seeks to restrict certain delicate communication very narrowly.

And lastly, do you think of those with whom you're sharing sensitive information as passive recipients or involved participants? Jesus' goal for us in speaking to others is never merely to vent.

That's a common term that is used today, but you won't find it in the Bible. You'll never find that that is how we're made. We're not little teapots, short and stout, you know? We're humans. We're supposed to talk to God.

[21 : 14] We don't have steam that has to be let off. We're not locomotives. That's not how we move forward. Those who receive information must be prepared to go with us to the person if we need to speak to in order to serve as witnesses.

If you don't understand your hearers as having an active participatory role, it's probably gossip. Simply, if your friend can't help you with the problem, then your friend probably or your friend doesn't need to know.

A book called Peacemakers. I'll get to that in a second. Verse number 18, verse 18. I had to read this one several times. To make sure I was understanding this correctly.

And if I'm not, please let me know. Because I feel I was quite surprised by this verse. The lot causes contentions to cease and parteth between the mighty. The lot, the casting of lots causes contentions to cease.

I made a joke earlier about betting on the UGA game. And I didn't bet on the UGA game, okay? I wouldn't do that, okay? But I made a joke about that. But when I read this verse to Thatcher and we said that, he says, that's gambling.

[22 : 17] The casting of a lot. The rolling of dice. It sounds like gambling. That's how you imagine. But that's not what's happening here. What is happening is that an outside authority settles the contention.

It can keep mighty warriors from fighting and killing each other. The kids fight over who should be in the front seat. Flipping a coin may be the answer to that at times.

Saying it's not your turn to separate yourself. Take out the motive from it. It just really doesn't matter. Having a third party can settle disputes, can help with contention, causeth to cease, and the parteth between the mighty.

And so that's what it says. Having somebody, a third party that's neutral in it, like the casting of lots, can help you. So you're arguing with something, you know? If I call you up, hey, Brother Jeff, my wife really wants to go to Olive Garden, but you know no man really wants to go to Olive Garden.

How do I, you know, do I have to go to Olive Garden or do you want to go to Outback Steakhouse? Would you settle this dispute? That would be a lot better plan for me and her, right? Because we have a third party helping us make a decision.

[23 : 20] And the answer is? Definitely Outback. Thank you very much, sir, all right? And so that's why you call your friend Jeff when you have a decision like that to make, all right?

And so when an outside authority can help settle the contention that is there, and it is hard work. A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong sitting, and their contention are like the bars of a castle.

Their arguments are like the bars of a castle. Verse 13, He that answereth the matter before he heareth it is a folly and shame unto them. Peacemaker can't do that. Verse 11, The mouth of the righteous man is a will of life, but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

Book Peacemaker by Ken Sam says, When believers are bitterly embroiled in disagreements or coldly estranged from one another, few people will pay attention when we try to talk with them about the reconciling love of Jesus Christ, which is what our conversation must be about, the reconciling love of Jesus Christ.

When we need to evaluate every discussion in light of the truth, not just the appearance and sincerity of the one telling the story. Proverbs 18, 17, He that is first in his own cause seemeth just, but the neighbor cometh and searcheth him.

[24 : 30] So you show up, and the man tells you a story, and it seems believable, but then you need to wait for the neighbor to come over to tell their story as well. So my son Thatcher said that if I had to choose between having friends and being in the right, I would prefer to be in the right.

And I would say amen to that. Okay? Because being in the right, you're going to make the right type of friends. And so you don't have to be right, but you want to be in the right.

And that's what should matter to you. Not always being right. Now that's a real problem, right? You won't have friends if you have to always be right. If you don't ever go to Olive Garden, you'll never have friends. Okay? But you don't have to always be right, but you want to be in the right.

And we are not just honest. And the question, are we not just honest about others, but we must be honest about ourselves when we talk. A man's gift maketh room for him and bringeth him before great men.

We should not try to open doors in our lives that our integrity would not be ready to walk through. We need to allow our own God's gifting upon our lives to open doors for us. And then lastly, do you know lazy people are also very dangerous?

[25 : 37] Lazy people are very dangerous. That contentious person, the gossiping person, the wicked person, all those people we talked about, the Bible's going to say, don't set a place at your table for the lazy person either.

Verse 9, he that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster. And so why is laziness a sin? Because James 4, 17, The lazy man is not an ignorant man or an educated man.

He is the man that says, I know what I'm supposed to be doing right now, but I don't want to do that. And what do we call that from the Bible? We call that sin. Laziness is theft when we leave the work to others.

Laziness is selfishness when we live for ourselves and our own comfort. Laziness is neglect of our duty when you don't do what you're supposed to do. And so a man should work to meet his own needs.

A man's belly shall be satisfied with the fruit of his mouth, with the increase of his lips shall be filled. Verse 18, 18, 20, and 21, Death and life on the power of the tongue, and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

[26 : 44] Many of you in here talk for a living. Many of you talk for a living. It's some form or fashion. On every level, whatever job you have, it's going to really come down to how you communicate to one another.

You have to be very good at your job to be a jerk and be kept around at that. People don't care what the athlete says, but in this job here, in the fruit of the mouth, the increase of the lips that are given.

And so love it or hate it, it is true. Death and life on the power of the tongue. How do you run from these wrong relationships when you're so desperate to be seen and known? In closing here, my father-in-law's favorite statement, but really in closing, the name of the Lord is a strong tower.

The righteous runneth into it and is safe. You need to be friends with the Lord because it will bring protection from the wrong friendships that you would have in life.

We read the other night, Psalm 90 verse 1, Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. So how bad relationships are created and friendships when we look to the world to provide for us what should be provided by God.

[27 : 51] Verse 11 says, The rich man's wealth is a strong city and has a high wall tower, is his own conceit. So just like one person may think they're going to find protection and all that they need by building something with their wealth and that would be wrong, they should find that in God.

Others may try to find acceptance and belonging in wrong relationships and do the same thing. And what would be the answer to you is to find what you would need in the Lord. Because a man that has friends must show himself friendly and there's a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

And so the question that we should, every one of us should answer the night looking at this passage here is, are we a good friend to somebody? Are we being the type of friend that God would tell us that we should be looking for?

Are we the gossiping kind? Or do we hold people in contempt? Are we people that would be lazy and not to carry our load? Sometimes we can be lazy in our friendships one to another and all these different ways.

And it isn't for us to look out here and to say, you know what? I have a bunch of friends that aren't that good. That's not what God would call us to do. The Bible would save your life down beside this passage of Proverbs 18 and say, have I been the type of friend that God would have me to be?

[29 : 04] And if we'd be honest, we'd lay that down there and many of us would recognize, no, I need to work on this area. I need to give this over to the Lord. Let's take some time and spend time in prayer.

Charlotte will play the piano and you can pray there at your seat if you'd like to pray at the altar. But would you ask if God would show you out of Proverbs 18 if you're being the type of friend that God would have you to be?

Heavenly Father, as we reflect upon your word, would you help all of us, Lord, look and see what you would have for us, Lord, that we would evaluate are we being a friend?

Lord, we all desire to have friends. Lord, I desire to be, to have friends, but so often I don't consider that I'm supposed to be a friend of myself. And so, Lord, I pray that you would help me identify the areas in which I have not been a friend to those that you have called me to be.

God bless you.ility