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This Is Our God

Proverbs 4:10-11; 9:10-11; 19:17, 21

Good morning, I'm Brandon, and I serve here at Valley as the associate director of student ministries. Each week I am blessed to be able to work with our youth and developing leaders in the church. I get to see students come in as young children and guide them to the goal of being teenagers who love God and are bold in their faith.

My desire to work with teenage students comes from when I was a teenager, and the amazing things that God did in me. As God changed my heart through some select people, I came to realize that I wanted to work to see others come to know the living God. I am telling you all this because it was while I was a teenager that I was challenged to read the Book of Proverbs. For a few months, I sat down in the morning before school and read a single chapter of Proverbs. When I heard that we were going to be looking at Proverbs this summer, I was excited to see what God was going to teach me and what He would teach us all.

Through this marvelous book we have learned about ourselves, and how we should conduct ourselves and look to God for guidance. We have learned about marriages that please God. We have learned about how we, as parents, can raise our children God's way. If you have been here with us, it should be very evident that this is a practical and application-oriented book.

Now, I have the privilege to complete our journey through the Book of Proverbs. As we complete our journey, we are going to look at God through His wisdom. The reason why we are doing this is because there is a truth behind the proverbs that guides our lives. Now this truth is not something that you can choose to follow or not, it is a reality that cannot be ignored. But even if you ignore it, this truth will still dictate your life. It's a lot like gravity; you might choose to ignore it, but you will still fall.

The truth I am speaking of is this: **It is impossible to keep our hearts, our minds and our actions right if our idea of God is insufficient.** But this on the surface seems like a problem. If we do a quick read of Proverbs, particularly if we read select proverbs out of the context of the entirety of the book, we may be tempted to think that the Book of Proverbs is devoid of theological content. Then, if we simply strive for good behavior, we will miss the most important truth about Proverbs. This truth is the foundation for all of Proverbs, and it is what we are going to discuss today. Without this truth you'll be lost in a meaningless morality. But before I tell you what that is, let me tell you a story.

Since I was in high school, I wanted to get my motorcycle license. This past spring I had the privilege to get it, and I have been enjoying the weather by riding a motorcycle around occasionally. Also, I have a daughter, her name is Zoe, and Zoe is like me and she really likes motorcycles.

So let me fill you in on some information. You see, on a motorcycle most of the areas that get the hottest when riding are the beautiful chromed areas. Also, kids really like shiny things. So when I have an opportunity to have a motorcycle at home I warn Zoe about touching the motorcycle, and how she could get burned. So if I were to make a proverb, about this it would go something like...

“My daughter, the wise child does not touch shiny things on a motorcycle, and the fool burns his hands and has to go to the emergency room.”

The reason for the proverb that I made was not because all the chrome in the world is mine and I am withholding it from everyone else. The reason is because I love my daughter, and my heart’s desire is to never see her burn her hands. My proverb reveals something about me, and this hits at the biggest and most important truth in Proverbs.

This truth is that **there is a God who reveals Himself to us as we encounter His wisdom in Proverbs.** As we read the entire Book of Proverbs, the God who is behind the wisdom is staring at us right in the face. One commentator says that, **“The book of Proverbs reveals to us the wonderful God whom we should trust, obey, love and get to know in a deeper way.”**¹ As we peel back the surface of the Proverbs, we find a God who is compassionate, sovereign and holy. And by the end of our time together, I want you to stand back in amazement as you see that this is our God.

I. God is Compassionate

The first truth that we can learn about God from the book of Proverbs is that God is compassionate. The book of Proverbs is littered with sayings that highlight His compassion and emphasize His heart. Today I want to focus on two areas in which we observe his compassion.

Proverbs 4:10-11 – “Listen, my son, accept what I say and the years of your life will be many. I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.”

The first area where we see God’s compassion hits on what Chris spoke on last week, and that is **God gives us His direction.** Those directions will bear the fruit of goodness and righteousness. He is a God that wants us all to live in such a way that will make our years be many. He wants to show us the path that is straight and leads to where He wants you to go. In His compassion He wants you to go the right way first, to listen and avoid trouble.

God wants us all to live a life that overflows with goodness. This is something I think we miss sometimes. We miss that a life committed to the leading of Jesus does not only mean our best life in eternity, but it also means our best life now. Now some of you might be thinking: “But if that is true what does it mean to carry our cross?” We have to remember that the best life does not mean the easiest or most comfortable life, but it is

¹ Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be skillful : God's guidebook to wise living : OT commentary : Proverbs.* Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009. 159.

best in terms of God's definition. Is it always fun to proverbially carry our cross? No, but it is always good.

The second avenue that we see God's compassion is in...

Proverbs 19:17 – “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed.”

God has a heart for those who are poor. God goes even further in Proverbs 22:22-23, and he says that He'll rob the souls of those who rob the poor. Before expanding further, I want to give you a little background.

In the ancient Near East, one of the easiest ways to get rich was to take the money from the poor. It was very easy for a family of greater wealth to move land markers and steal from those who had far less. If they sought justice, which would have been at the city gate, most likely no justice would be served due to their lack of social status.

God was telling the people this truth, “I have their back. You might think that you got off clean, but I'll wreck you.” These are some serious words and they communicate the heart of God. He considers the poor his family. As you lend to them, even though they cannot repay, God will repay. As you oppress them, God remembers all actions.

Now, I want to show you something that God revealed to me. The main way that we oppress the poor is by ignorance and neglect. Let me tell you another story...

A few years ago, I had the opportunity to bring a group of students into Boston on a missions opportunity. We brought the kids to some rough spots in Boston to serve those in need. One of the ministries that we participated in was a ministry to the homeless. As we served, we encountered an older homeless man. As we got to know him, we began to know his story. It turns out that he served as a judge in the court system. There came a time in his life that they had a house fire, his daughter died, and he and his wife survived. Unfortunately, despite the medical help, his wife died from her injuries and he was left with the bill. The insurance company did not cover the house, so he was left with nowhere to live, large medical bills and no family.

I am telling you this story because I know that there are times in my life when I make assumptions about people, and my assumptions are wrong. This man was not an alcoholic or drug addict, he was very educated, but he was poor and homeless. How many of us, if we ran into someone in this situation, wouldn't help him or her? But how can we if we never get to know them? As you and I make assumptions and stay in ignorance, we oppress the poor and hurt those close to God's heart.

So, we see from Proverbs that this is our God; He is compassionate.

II. God is Sovereign

The second truth that we can learn from the book of Proverbs is that God is sovereign. Now, there is no way that I can unpack this truth fully in all its complexity, but I am going to try to help you understand what it is and what it means for us a little better. In...

Proverbs 19:21 – “Many are the plans in a man’s heart, but it is the LORD’s purpose that prevails”

The sovereignty of God is an idea that many have trouble comprehending or, if they comprehend it, they struggle with it. But instead about looking at dilemmas and questions regarding God’s sovereignty, I want to look at it at an individual level. I want to look at what it means for you and me. There are two things I want us to see. First, and it is probably one of the most important messages that we can learn is that...

God doesn’t need you. The sovereignty of God means that He will prevail in his purposes. What God is looking to do will get done, end of story. This says nothing about God consulting with you and, if you agree, He’ll do it. For example, one purpose of God is to communicate the Gospel, and if He wants to reach people with the message of Jesus, He is going to do it, with or without you.

Let me illustrate this for you.

Every year, I have the opportunity to lead a group of eighth to ninth grade students to West Virginia on a trip called Impact Week. Also, every year I work with our team of leaders to train the students on how to share the Gospel. One of our leaders, Bob Graumann, tells the kids every year that God wants to use them to be an answer to someone’s prayer. And I can say, without a shred of doubt in my mind, that God will use those to join him in being an answer to prayer. Well, this past year, we had a student take this very seriously, and he went and shared with some young men whom he didn’t know that God loved them. Not only that, but he invited them to a night of worship and those young men at worship dedicated their lives to Christ. God’s purpose was to draw those young men into a relationship with Him, but this young man joined God to accomplish his purpose.

My question is: What are you doing to join him? With or without you, God is going to accomplish His purpose, but you have the opportunity to say that you united with the Maker of the universe in His purpose to save the world. This joining with God moves right into my second point about God’s sovereignty...

God’s sovereignty is **a motivation for us to move.** Some people mistakenly believe that, as God is sovereign and His purposes can be accomplished without us, then why do anything? The reason why is that there is goodness and joy in joining with God. Think about it like a Patriots game. Let’s say that I have two tickets to an amazing Patriots game, and I invite you to go. You say to me, “Well, no matter what, someone is going to sit in that seat so why do you need me to go?” The reason I wanted to give it to you is because I want you to join me. God is the same way; He wants to bring you along. No,

He doesn't need you to go with him because someone else will go, but why would you say no?

Well, maybe you're afraid. Maybe, you think you might let God down. Although by human standards you might fail, if you are striving for God and to partner with Him, you cannot fail. You might slip up and make a mistake, but even mistakes can be used by God. Also, our mistakes might be the preparation that we need for what is to come. God knows what is coming, but we do not, so even when things do not go to plan, His purposes still prevail.

So we see from Proverbs that this is our God; he is sovereign and compassionate.

III. God is Holy

The third truth that we can learn about God from Proverbs is that He is holy. God's holiness means that he is utterly unlike us. But His holiness should be a comfort to us. You can see this in...

Proverbs 9:10-11 – “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.”

The concept of the fear of the Lord is a major theme throughout the book of Proverbs, but it is found throughout the Old Testament. The word for “fear” has a semantic range that runs from respect to horror. The basic premise is that to fear God is to stand in a subservient position to Him and understand one's dependence on Him. It is the opposite of being wise in one's own eyes. From this passage I have two points I want to draw out. First, **knowledge of God is what matters.**

This is seen in the passage, because it says that knowledge of the Holy One IS understanding. It doesn't say that it is a part of understanding, but it is the definition of understanding. Therefore, you can have your doctorate or you could be highly successful in business and have no understanding. Also, you can be a child or a high school dropout and have understanding above others.

As a parent, my heart's deepest desire is that my daughter would know God. Every evening that my job allows me to be home, I pray with her and pray that she would come to know the true and living God. All the other things that I might be tempted to desire for her, like grades, athletics, success, security, and safety fall short of this one desire. The reason why is that I have seen in my five years serving in student ministry that the ones that get consumed with something other than God are picking their poison. This falls in line with what Chris talked about last week, because those other things that are good make terrible gods.

The second point is that the **fear of God is the beginning and the foundation.** If you look at the word “beginning” in this passage, it can also be understood as “foundation.” A foundation is the starting point and it is that which everything else rests on. As you have

knowledge of God, the natural result of that knowledge is a fear of or respect for Him, and that is the beginning or the foundation for what God is going to do.

So now we come back from looking at Proverbs, and what does who God is have to do with you?

First, as stated in the beginning, it is a proper understanding of God that bears the fruit of heart that longs for God, a mind that thinks of Him, and actions that honor Him. And a proper understanding of God starts with a relationship with Him. And we can know God through His son, Jesus, for Jesus is God. It is from a relationship with Jesus that we can begin to understand the Holy One. So my first question is: Do you know Jesus?

Second, as we come to know God, we are adopted into his family. Not only are we His family, but also as 2 Corinthians 5:20 states “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.” This means that we are God’s plan to carry His message, and it also means that we need to be good reflections of God. How well are you reflecting Him?

In relation to God’s being compassionate, what are you doing to bless those that are poor? The passage above challenges us to give and remember that God repays those that look out for those close to His heart. Do you realize that no matter how much you give, you cannot out give God? My wife and I since we have been married have lived by a principle, and we call it, give till it hurts. It essentially means what it says, we strive to give financially until it begins to hurt. Now this is not scripture, but it demonstrates to us that God is not just calling for ten percent, he wants us to trust in him. Are you giving until it hurts?

In relation to God’s being sovereign, are you living in a bold manner realizing that God wants to use you to be an answer to someone’s prayer? You have the unique opportunity to partner with God to see people come to know Him. What have you done to partner with him? When new things come into your path, do you see them as a new avenue that God wants to use for His kingdom and glory? Realize that God doesn’t need you, and if you don’t join with His purposes He’ll find someone else. When God calls you to action, do you move?

In relation to God’s being holy, do you live in a way that demonstrates that He is what you treasure? If the knowledge of Him and a relationship with Him are what is most important does what you do reflect that? Now, I am not just talking about praying before a meal, I am talking about going out of your way to invite someone for a meal and sharing the love of Jesus with them.

In the beginning I spoke about my daughter and my heart for her to follow my commands, so that she might live life to the fullest. As we close, I want you to notice the very heart of God. He states “**For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.**” Do you realize that God has said what He did because he desires for us the best life?

This is our God! He is compassionate, He is sovereign, and He is holy. Now let's live like He is.