

Wisdom from Proverbs 26

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: 30 March 2025

Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] Okay, Proverbs chapter 26. We have been going through the book of Proverbs, not hitting every verse, but we've been usually taking on a single chapter. Last week was chapter 22, so we're skipping ahead four chapters. I think we'll probably have two more weeks. That's the plan right now anyway, two more weeks in Proverbs, and then we'll be finished with that and move on to the next book in the Bible.

But today, in Proverbs 26, like many of the ones that we've looked at over the last few weeks, are just little tidbits of wisdom, but a few things we'll be looking at today is the nature of a fool. The nature of a fool. We'll be looking at the topic of responding to fools. How should you or should you at all respond to a fool? We're going to be looking at this topic of making a distinction between morality, right and wrong, and wisdom, foolishness and wisdom. We've said in the past those two things are similar, but are they the same or are there differences? We'll look at that. And then we'll look at a few of these Proverbs are about the damage that can be done with the words of your mouth. Things like gossip, dishonesty, a flattering tongue, and also joking, joking around. That's something that a lot of people do, and sometimes it can be in good fun and in good taste, and other times not so much.

So let's start with verse 1. Here we go. As snow in summer and rain in harvest, so honor is not fitting for a fool. So this first part of this passage is talking about things that just do not equate. They're either unnatural, snow in summer is not a natural thing, right?

[1 : 49] Rain in harvest, that's not necessarily unnatural, but it's certainly unwelcome, right? That's not something that you're wanting a lot of rain while you're trying to harvest your crops.

And sometimes even the rain in the harvest can be destructive. And so it is when we honor a fool. It's both unnatural, many times unwelcome or should be unwelcome, and also destructive. It's not, as the Proverbs here, it's not fitting to give honor to a fool. Just trying to think of one example, I think about our celebrity culture. We have celebrities that many times get honored, whether it's with, what do they call that, the Academy Awards or all these different awards. It's amazing how many awards there are throughout the year for Hollywood. They award themselves a lot, don't they? Or the same thing with musicians, music awards and those kinds of things.

And a lot of times there's honor bestowed, whether it's by some organization like the Academy Awards or by just people giving them a place of honor, by following them on social media or whatever it might be.

[3 : 04] But do those musicians, do those actors, do they really deserve the honor that they're getting? And many times the answer is no. We should honor people that are worth that honor.

They show the integrity and the wisdom that should be deserving of that kind of honor. Verse 2, Like a flitting sparrow, like a flying swallow, so a curse without cause shall not alight.

And so here's a picture of birds. And it's these little birds that kind of, and I don't know if you use that word, flit around, fluttering, or flitting.

It's not a word I use very often. But you think about a bird that's not necessarily just soaring, you know, across the country, but it's just constantly bouncing around from branch to branch.

And I think we've all seen those little birds. And they're just constantly moving around. They can't sit still. That's just how God designed them. But it's comparing this to a curse that someone has made on somebody else.

[4 : 09] And in the same way that those birds cannot settle on a branch, so a curse will not settle on someone who does not really deserve it.

That curse is without cause. It shall not alight is the language of the King James. And I think also the New King James. Actually, many translations use that word.

It shall not settle. We were actually talking about blessings and cursings this morning in our Sunday school hour. And if somebody curses you in some kind of way, does that mean that you are cursed?

The same thing with blessings, right? If somebody blesses something who doesn't deserve it, does that mean that their life will be blessed? No, not necessarily. And so just some examples.

Well, what are we talking about here? I think about lawsuits, somebody who sues you for a baseless cause. There's not really a good reason. And so generally, hopefully, and again, these are proverbs, so these are not laws of physics or mathematics to where this will always happen.

[5 : 14] But in general, when somebody makes a false accusation to somebody who is actually an upright person, that curse is not going to settle in on them. So, you know, like certain Christians and people who are righteous certainly can be persecuted.

And sometimes, especially if you have an unjust legal system, that can happen. But in general, everything else being equal, those kinds of cursings will not stand.

Verse 3, a whip for the horse, a bridle for the donkey, and a rod for the fool's back. You know, animals are dumb, right?

I mean, some are smarter than others, but animals do not consider what's going on around them and think, you know, I have to make sure that I prepare for these things.

Or if I'm a work animal, like a horse or like a donkey, I need to make sure I wake up at the right time in the morning to get all the work done that my master wants for me. Animals don't do that.

[6 : 20] They require, in order to work hard, in order to be diligent, they require force. They require a master to either put that bridle in their mouth to make them do what their master wants them to do, or even the whip to say, no, don't go that way, go this other way.

And so it is for the fool. You know, God created us different from the animals, and we ought to have wisdom. That's how he designed us. To be fruitful in our efforts, to be diligent, to prepare for the winter.

But a fool needs to be treated in the same way as these dumb animals, because they will not do what they should be doing. Verse 4.

Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest you also be like him. Answering a fool is responding to somebody who is saying something foolish or doing something foolish, and responding with maybe a correction, maybe some wisdom or instruction.

And here, Solomon is saying, don't answer a fool. Don't give them wisdom. You know, Jesus said something similar. He said, don't throw your pearls before swine.

[7 : 44] It's an unfruitful endeavor. And so it says, lest you also be like him. It's a foolish thing to spend time and energy on something that will not bear fruit.

And I think that is what is generally intended here, is don't waste your time on somebody who is not willing to hear correction. And over and over, that's what the proverb says about the fool, is that he will not listen to instruction.

Verse 5 says this. Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. Wait, what's going on here?

Isn't this a direct contradiction to what the previous verse just said? In verse 4, it says, do not answer a fool according to his folly.

In verse 5 here it says, well, you should answer a fool according to his folly, otherwise he'll think himself wise when he really isn't. And so why is there a contrast here?

[8 : 51] Why does it seem like there's a contradiction? I think in this case the contrast is intended purposefully. These two verses are put side by side on purpose.

And I think really the takeaway from here, the takeaway that we can take from this, is that wisdom is a complex thing. It's not always simple and straightforward.

Wisdom requires considering many variables, considering the context of our lives. It requires careful discernment.

And so answering a fool can sometimes be a wise thing to do. It can sometimes be helpful. For example, if somebody is foolish, but they have acquired the humility that is needed to listen to instruction.

Or a fool who has a willing heart for whatever reason that maybe they didn't have before. Or maybe it's somebody who you know respects your opinion.

[10:01] Maybe you have that relationship and you can speak into their lives when maybe somebody else who they didn't know, they wouldn't listen to instruction from someone else, but they'll listen to you and you can reach them.

And so sometimes it can be appropriate, if you consider all the variables, to give instruction to a fool to answer them in their folly.

Another example I can think of is sometimes answering the fool is not good necessarily for them, because they are hard-hearted or hard-headed.

But maybe there are people who are listening to the correction and they will learn from it. You know, I've watched many public debates over the years, usually on video, sometimes live.

People will have formal debates about some kind of topic, does God exist, or some other type of important topic. And some people have said, you know, debates are a waste of time, because nobody ever changes their mind.

[11:10] Have you ever seen a debate where at the end of the hour or two of debating, one of the debaters says, you've convinced me, I've completely changed my mind. That never happens, does it?

Usually, even if somebody does change their mind, they're not going to do it right then, especially in front of other people. But maybe later, right? But a lot of times, I think the biggest value in a debate, and this is whether it's in an auditorium, or maybe even in a video setting, or on the internet, which there are a lot of useless debates, by the way, on the internet, but you can have some fruitful discussions, that even if you don't change the mind of the person who is wise in their own eyes, there are other ears and eyes, listening and watching, who are paying attention, and they can be helped.

And if somebody spouts off some foolishness, and nobody addresses it, they might get sucked in. And so speaking up and addressing that foolishness, even if you know that person will not be helped, somebody who is in that sphere, who is listening in, could be helped.

Another consideration when I look at this verse about wisdom is the difference between wisdom and fundamental morality.

Wisdom is situational. It depends on many factors, many variables, like I said. And there can be a spectrum of good decisions when it comes to considering wisdom and foolishness.

[12:55] A decision might be more wise or less wise, but still be good, right? Morality, on the other hand, is something that is of an absolute nature.

Right and wrong, right or wrong, I should say, black or white, good or evil. I think about the Ten Commandments. You shall not steal.

You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. We don't consider the situation and all the variables at hand when we're deciding whether we should murder someone, right?

That is a black and white rule or a commandment of fundamental morality. And we should be careful not to conflate the two. And I'll give a few examples.

One is an example of treating morality as if it's situational. And so somebody might say, I know the Bible says that sex is only for marriage, but we really love each other.

[14:03] And so you might take the situation. Well, hey, in this situation, the Bible says that you should reserve sex for marriage. But we're not married yet.

You know, we still got to finish college or whatever it might be. Maybe we'll get married in the future. But, you know, we really love each other and we're committed to each other. And so we're just going to, you know, that rule's not really for us because we're different.

We're really committed to one another. Well, you know what? If you're committed to one another, you know what you do? You get married, right? Another one. I know the Bible says don't steal, but, you know, that person that I'm stealing from has so much money, he won't miss it at all.

Right? Considering these variables, the context, you know, in certain situations, maybe it's okay to steal. And having that kind of attitude can lead to a license to sinful behavior where we excuse sin. Now, on the other side, we can treat matters of wisdom, matters of judgment, as if they're matters of absolute fundamental morality. And so somebody might read the proverb, I think in the last few weeks, we read the proverb about taking loans and how when you borrow money from someone, you give them a certain amount of power over your life.

[15:26] And Solomon puts it this way. He says, the borrower is slave to the lender. And someone might take that and say, you know what? I mean, it's not good to be a slave. So that may be, what we'll do is we'll turn that into a sin and we'll say, it's always wrong to borrow money.

And that is not, that's not correct. That's not how we should, that's not how we should use judgment when it comes to matters of wisdom.

Now, you can certainly get into trouble with borrowing money, but it's not fundamentally wrong to take out a mortgage on your home. Another quick example is sleeping in occasionally.

The Bible says, hey, don't love sleep. A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands, and then your life is a total wreck, right? And so don't have a lifestyle in which you are lazy.

But if you sleep in occasionally because you're trying to catch up on life, that's totally fine, right?

And so treating matters of wisdom as if they're matters of fundamental morality really leads to a life of legalism.

[16:38] And, you know, we can be legalistic against ourselves and constantly judge ourselves.

Oh, I slept in this morning. Well, you were up for 20 hours straight, you know, taking care of this or that.

It's fine. You know, catch up on your sleep. Or we can look out at others and we can judge them based on their decisions. Oh, you know, they spent a lot of money on that Disney vacation and I don't think that's a really good idea.

And so we judge, we look, oh, I don't think they really have, you know, enough money to really be able to afford that. Well, you don't really know all the variables that's going on in their life.

And people, you know, people who are in this situation can make judgments for themselves. And so we need to be careful about judging people too harshly and really unwisely when it comes to matters of wisdom.

Morality is about fundamental laws. Wisdom is about general principles. It's about building habits over time.

[17:38] And wisdom is really more of an art form. Both of them matter, but I think we need to make sure to consider that they are both different. And also, I think we need to have discernment in discerning the difference between matters of fundamental morality.

And matters of wisdom. Even in this, we can play a fool. I think about teenagers who might say, you know, the Bible says not to commit sexual immorality or fornication, but hey, we're just going to smooch under the bleachers this one time.

And is that technically a sin? It's not technically a sin. It's not technically a sin. It's not technically a sin. Or, you know what, I've got a lot of chores piling up, but I'm tired.

I'm just going to binge watch Netflix all weekend. It's not technically a sin. Or maybe there's a former alcoholic who decides that he's going to start drinking just one glass of wine each night.

And that's certainly technically not a sin. Right? Well, that's all true. Those are technically not sins. But you are technically an idiot when you do those things.

[19:02] Right? And so we can make ourselves the fool and try to justify it by looking at the technicalities. And it's so easy to deceive ourselves, isn't it?

But I think we will do well to always look in our hearts. Why are we doing something? Is it out of love? Is it a motivation to serve others, to do what's right, to do what's best for me, to do what's best for others, and to do what's best for the Lord?

Or is it for another reason? All right. Verse 6. He who sends a message by the hand of a fool cuts off his own feet and drinks violence.

You know, when you trust somebody who's not trustworthy, like a fool, with an important task, you're going to get yourself into trouble. Especially in a way where somebody is representing you in some way.

And that's what a messenger is. They're meant to represent you. And this invites calamity. I think about a king or a ruler who has ambassadors. You know, in this country, I don't know how many ambassadors we have.

[20:11] It's probably close to around 200 ambassadors, right? Because there's around 200 countries in the world. We don't have ambassadors for every country, but many of them we do. And so choosing somebody who is, somebody who wakes up on time, somebody who is sober-minded, somebody who is not going to have a meeting with another ambassador, or I dare say another ruler, and he got drunk the night before.

You don't want to bring somebody on in that kind of role who is not a wise person. You don't want to bring on somebody in that role who is hot-headed, or somebody who just spouts off at the mouth and says whatever comes into their mind.

You want somebody who's careful in their speech. I also think about employers. You know, I work in the tech world, programming computers. And, you know, in that world, there's a lot of people who love computers more than they love people.

Anybody else kind of jive with that? And so that industry has a lot of those kinds of people. And there are people who have not trained themselves on how to deal with people. And so they might be a great programmer, but you do not want them interfacing with your clients because they will represent you in a negative way.

And so have wisdom on the person who is going to represent you in your business and make those people the client-facing employees. Verse 7.

[21 : 38] Like the legs of the lame that hang limp is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. So here's a picture of somebody who has no good use of their legs. Their legs do not work. And so they're useless.

They can't help you get around. You still have them. You still have the legs, but they don't work. And it's the same way with a proverb in the mouth of the fool. They might say something wise, but it doesn't have the intended effect that a proverb is supposed to have.

And so a few reasons why. Well, it might be because they're just being hypocritical. They might say something wise, and then you look at their life, and they don't follow their own wisdom or the wisdom from their own mouth.

And so the people that hear them don't really follow, don't really take them seriously, I should say, right? Because they're not doing the thing that they're saying you should do.

Also, I think about those who take Proverbs or even any verse out of context, right? One common one that I hear so often, and especially from politicians, is Matthew 7.1.

[22 : 50] Does anybody know that verse? That says, that's a little sermonette by Jesus in which he talks about judging. And he says, Judge not, lest you be judged.

And that could be a proverb, right? Judge not, lest you be judged. A lot of politicians, and not just politicians, all kinds of people, who they don't want anybody judging their bad decisions, their unrighteousness.

And so, they don't really read the Bible very often, but they know this verse. And they know how to use it. So they use it out of context. And so here's a proverb coming from the mouth of a fool.

They're not using it because they want to encourage wisdom in others, but they're using it just as a way to deflect from their own bad judgments or their lack of integrity.

Later, and by the way, you know, one of the things that can help with this is actually reading the Bible for yourself and not just listening to what other people have to say about it. Especially other people that actually hate the Bible.

[23 : 57] It's probably not a good place to get your biblical knowledge from. But if you continue to read on, here's what Jesus says in verse 5. He says, hypocrite, first remove the plank from your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Actually, this is the passage and Jesus has this sermon in which he teaches people how to judge, how to judge righteously, how to judge correctly. Don't be a hypocrite. Take that plank, that speck out of your own eye and then you will be able to see clearly.

You'll be able to make righteous judgments as you are. Another example, I was kind of searching Proverbs for ones that I've heard taken out of context.

Here's one from Proverbs 18, 21. It says this, death and life are in the power of the tongue. And so I've heard so many people say, you know, you have to be careful what you say.

Some people say, well, if you just speak positively, right, there's this whole positivity kind of idea where if you just speak positivity into your life then it'll come to pass. You have secular versions of that and even Christian versions of that.

[25 : 07] I heard somebody say once, you know, you never want to say something like, oh, you scared me to death because if you say that, death and life are in the power of the tongue. You might be inviting death into your life because you said, you know, you use the word death in a phrase.

And of course, this passage that we just read, death and life from the power of the tongue is not about those kinds of things. It's about using your words to say things that are encouraging rather than things, rather than tearing down relationships or things like that.

Verse 8, like one who binds a stone in a sling is he who gives honor to a fool. Here's a picture, you think about, I think about David, right, when it comes to slingshots. You got a sling, usually it's two pieces of string or a rope with a little pouch at the end.

And binding the stone means it's stuck inside that little pouch. You need that stone to be loose, right, for it to work. You swing it around and then you let go of one end and off goes the rock.

Well, what happens if it gets bound? You swing it around and you let go and it continues to swing and smacks you right in the face, maybe, right? And so, giving honor to a fool is like that.

[26 : 19] It's either, one, useless, doesn't work, or two, can come and smack you right back in the face when you give honor to a fool. Verse nine, like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard is a proverb in the mouth of fools.

Here's another example, same as verse seven. Here, the illustration is a thorn stuck in the hand of a drunkard. Well, what's that all about? Well, you know, getting a thorn stuck in your hand is bad enough, but when that happens to a drunk, they don't even know what's going on.

A lot of times, they can't feel things like they should and maybe it just stays there, right? And it gets infected. It just makes things worse. And so, it's the same way with a proverb in the mouth of fools. Makes things worse, does not make things better. Verse 10, the great God who formed everything gives the fool his hire and the transgressor his wages.

And I don't think, I don't know that this is necessarily saying that every time a fool makes a foolish decision that God is just waiting there and he's going to rebuke them in some way.

[27 : 36] He's going to strike them in some way. But, you know, God is the one who created us and created the world and he designed how everything ought to work. And wisdom is all about abiding by the design of how God made the world.

When we try to go outside the bounds of God's design, bad things happen. And I think this is, that's what this is really getting at. When you defy his design for how things work, you get in return the consequences of that.

And it says, it's like wages. You know, there's the verse that I think many of us are familiar with in Romans. The wages of sin is death.

This is sowing and reaping. When you sow sinfulness, when you sow foolishness, you get back a wage. Destruction, death, calamity.

And so, I think that's the idea here. When you sow foolishness, you get back a wage of calamity and other bad things.

[28 : 44] Verse 11, as a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly. Aren't dogs gross? Animals are gross a lot of times, aren't they? But, and that's the whole idea here.

You know, when you're a fool and you just keep doing the same stupid thing over and over, you're just like these dumb animals that are licking up their vomit after they just spit it out. It's so gross.

And so, don't be like dumb dogs.

Or cats do it too. Cats pretend like they're nice and clean and pristine. They're not. Verse 12, do you see a man wise in his own eyes?

There is more hope for a fool than for him. Really, and we've talked about this before, so we won't go too deep into this, but the idea here is that when you are wise in your own eyes, when you think you're this great wise person, are you going to grow in wisdom?

You're not. Hey, I don't have anything to learn. I know it all. And so, we need to have humility in order to grow. We'll read the next four verses all together because they're kind of in a group here.

[29 : 56] So, verse 13, the lazy man says, there is a lion in the road. A fierce lion is in the streets. As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed.

The lazy man buries his hand in the bowl. It wearies him to bring it back to his mouth. The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.

These are four little tidbits about the lazy man. And really, I mean, this is kind of mockery, isn't it? I mean, you know, you're just turning back and forth. I don't want to get up. Just like a hinge, back and forth.

You're not really making any progress in life. the lazy man that buries his hand in the bowl. And he's so lazy that even just bringing it back to his mouth is such a chore.

And then the last one is a lazy man is wise in his own eyes. In fact, wiser than even seven men who can answer sensibly.

[30 : 56] And this is something you see with fools is they lack self-awareness. They don't really look at themselves in the proper light. All right, verse 17.

He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears. And what happens when you take a dog and you yank his ears? He gets pretty mad at you. And if he's a big dog, you're in big trouble. If he's a little dog, it's kind of annoying. He yips and yaps at you. But if he's a big dog, look out. And so here's the danger of getting involved in somebody else's business, somebody else's quarrel.

I think the general idea here, because it says he who passes by, the idea here is these are strangers, somebody you don't know, you don't know the details of why they're fighting, why they're quarreling.

Has anybody ever, does this ring true for somebody? You can think back, I got involved in something and that was a bad idea. I should not have done that. I can think of some examples in my life.

[32 : 04] I think about call-in advice shows, like these radio programs or even TV programs. People call in for advice, maybe it's marriage advice, right?

And so somebody calls in and they've got all these marriage problems, and you're giving advice based on one person's perspective. And, you know, that's a bad idea, and you can get into big trouble.

But, at the same time, does that mean that we should never get involved in other people's quarrels, that we should just always stay out? Or is it sometimes appropriate and helpful where people need help, especially in marriage?

And we have marriage counseling and other types of counseling and just a friend, right? You got into a big argument with maybe your best friend, not even in a marriage situation, and you have another friend who's going to come in and help you to restore the relationship.

But, in that case, you don't just come in and make quick judgments and decisions, right? You really need to, it should be somebody that you know fairly well, and you really need to understand the nuances of what's going on in the quarrel so that you can really help out in a wise way.

[33 : 29] But even then, there are risks, right? There are always risks when you get involved in somebody else's quarrel. Verse 18, like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, I was just kidding, or I was only joking.

There, the picture here, the illustration is quite stark. It's a picture of a crazy madman who's just throwing out fire and sharp objects that are causing death even.

He says, I was only joking. You know, just because you add, I was only joking to the end of a hurtful comment or hurtful action, does not make it right, does not make it good.

I think about pranks that people play, and sometimes pranks can be innocent enough. You know what we have coming up in just a couple of days? April 1st, we call that April Fool's Day, and sometimes people will play pranks, and sometimes they can be, you know, fun and nice, but sometimes they can be downright nasty and mean.

In fact, I've seen this on the internet. You have these social media people, they have a YouTube channel, and their whole YouTube channel is about going out and trying to trick people in some kind of way, and some of them are so mean and nasty.

[34 : 58] I saw one where somebody walked into some kind of retail store, maybe it was a Walmart or something like that, and had some kind of like official badge, like they were some kind of official with a company from corporate, and walked up to this young, sweet girl, and started talking to her about how she was doing a horrible job, and they were going to fire her, and it was all done for laughs, so that all the people clicking on YouTube, they can laugh at this prank, and you could tell she was so upset, and you could tell that she was probably an amazing employee, but at the end, I'm sure, I can't remember exactly, but I'm sure he told her at the end that he was joking, and he probably thought, oh, that makes it all better, that makes it just fine, and it doesn't, you have caused harm, and it's not harm that just goes away after a few minutes, and so we need to be careful when it comes to this type of thing, and some people are more susceptible to this kind of thing than others, those who like to tell jokes, which is good and great, we need funny people, we need light hearted people in our lives, but we should be careful, and one of the things, or a few things I think about is husbands teasing their wives, now men like to kind of jab each other, right, and we like to

tease each other, but then we take that home to our wives, and it doesn't always go over as well with our wives, and they just weren't designed for that kind of thing, men I think were more designed for those kinds of teasing and jabs, but women were not designed for such abuse, and I think the reason, men tend to be overconfident, and women tend to be, to lack confidence, and to be more insecure, and so saying something like, oh you know I went to this conference, and there were all these women that were giving me a lot of attention, and you're teasing your wife about that, well that's probably not a really good idea, or maybe teasing about the meal that she burnt, or something like that, that can really cause insecurities to really flare up, sometimes teasing or joking is done intentionally as kind of a backhanded critique, we don't want to do that, so be careful when it comes to joking around, like I said teasing and joking can be healthy, and good, but we need to be careful about how we do it, don't throw around fire, arrows, and death, verse 20, where there is no wood, the fire goes out, and where there is no tailbearer, strife seizes, so when you run out of wood, when it's all burned up, the fire no longer burns, and you know what, that's because the wood is the fuel, when you take away the fuel, there is no more conflagration, it's the same way a tailbearer is somebody who gossips, and sometimes there's lots of strife in your life, or maybe the life of a church, or a business, or whatever it might be, or a family, and there is one person that is kind of the fuel, makes up the fire, and when they're gone, whether it be on a trip, or whatever, you find that all the strife is now gone, and it ended up being there's this tailbearer, this gossip, that is the one that's the fuel behind all the strife, we'll talk about that more in a second, but verse 21, as charcoal to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife, this is a similar thing, another fuel, but in this case it's not a gossip, but it's somebody who loves conflict,

I'm sure we all know people in our circles who just seem to just love to be disagreeable, and so in general we don't want those kinds of people in our lives, those who love conflict, those who love to disagree, they tend to cause strife.

verse 22, the words of a tailbearer are like tasty trifles, let me try this again, the words of a tailbearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body, again a tailbearer is a gossip, somebody who shares sometimes unsubstantiated personal information about someone else that could possibly hurt their reputation, but is tailbearing or gossip only about things that are unsubstantiated?

Sometimes we tell ourselves, well, hey, this is true, so I can just tell it to anybody, it's fine, right? But that's not always the case either, sometimes there are things that really we ought to cover, we ought to keep them to ourselves, even if they are true, but, oh, gossip, it's like candy, it's like cake, you know, I think about going through the checkout aisle at the grocery store, and it's full of candy bars, and the National Inquirer, right?

Because they're so easy, you just see it and you want it, oh, what happened to, what do they call it, Brangelina? Do they still do that? I can't remember who split up, you know, it's all kinds of just gossip, a lot of it unsubstantiated, oh, you know, somebody came up with an idea and they were just going to print it all over this magazine or newspaper or whatever, whatever it is, but it's so tempting, isn't it, to hear about other people and what's going on in their lives, especially if it's, you know, somewhat controversial.

[41 : 05] So it's easy to go down, but it says it goes down into the inmost, you know, inmost, what does it say, inmost body and it really gets down into your soul and when you consume those kinds of things, it impacts, it impacts your relationship.

When you hear something about somebody that really you probably shouldn't have heard, it will impact your relationship with them. It will influence your thoughts and your judgments. And so just a few examples here I wanted to share and just think through, is this something that should be shared?

Is it okay or should we keep this to ourselves? I heard so-and-so was diagnosed with cancer. Let's pray for them. Is that something okay to share?

I think in general that's fine, right? Somebody has something come upon them and we want to pray for them. It's almost certainly something that they wouldn't mind somebody sharing with others. how about this one? You know, I saw Bob and Mary fighting in the parking lot the other day. I think maybe their marriage is in trouble.

[42 : 15] Is that something we should share? Probably not, right? That's something we should probably keep to ourselves. You know, maybe it would be an opportunity to go to Bob and Mary and say, hey, I overheard some things.

You know, is there something that I can maybe help out with? Or maybe that's one of those things where you just don't meddle in somebody else's quarrel. But if it's somebody you know, I think it's worth maybe asking around because sometimes people, they kind of suffer in quarrels or things going on in their marriage and they don't tell anybody.

And if you see something, maybe it is appropriate to talk to them. But should we share that abroad? We don't know all the details of what's going on in their life. We shouldn't share that abroad.

Or how about I saw Suzanne at the Red Lobster with some guy? Well, maybe that was her cousin or her brother that we've never met. We can't be just sharing things like that.

And if we're concerned, hey, talk to Suzanne about it. Don't just gossip about it. Let's see, a couple more here. Oh, so-and-so couple, I found out they're going to this marriage seminar.

[43 : 30] Their marriage must be in real trouble. And some people are actually concerned about going to a marriage seminar to do a tune-up in their marriage because we could all use that, right?

Because people might judge them for it. We certainly, that shouldn't be the case. How about this one? You know, son, you've been spending time with this young lady and I've heard some things about her.

She has a really bad reputation and I don't think it's a good idea for you to be spending time with her. Is that gossip? No, I don't think it is. You know, you're trying to provide some instruction to your son and you're not trying to just denigrate somebody or share something just because it's a tasty trifle.

You're actually trying to help out somebody who might be making a bad decision. how about this one? Lisa's testimony really touched me.

She shared how God brought her through depression. You know, in those cases, I think you do need to be careful, right? Somebody might have shared something about a testimony in her life that was just meant between you and her or you and that other person.

[44 : 45] And so find out, hey, is it okay if I share your testimony with somebody else? Because that might be helpful. Somebody else is dealing with this as well and is it okay? Sometimes it's just better to ask before sharing something.

And so ask yourself that question, why am I sharing this? Am I really trying to help or is this just a tasty trifle that, wow, is just really juicy gossip for entertainment, maybe even revenge, or maybe it's to make me feel important because I know something that other people don't.

What is our motivation? Is it true love and concern? And even then, even if it is true love and concern for somebody else, be careful. It's so easy to deceive ourselves, oh, I'm doing this for the right reason, when really we're not.

When in doubt, I think, just keep it to yourself. Verse 23, fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross. You know, there are certain people that what comes out of their mouth sounds good, but really it's like a clay pot that is just covered with silver.

It looks good. I think about a slick salesman. He can really make that car sound amazing, but it's really a piece of junk. Or charismatic leaders, people who know how to say the right words, to gather a crowd, and get people to come and listen to them, but really the things that they're saying aren't really worth much.

[46 : 10] The next three verses we'll do together, verse 24, he who hates disguises it with his lips and lays up deceit within himself. When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart.

Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly. And this is crafty people. They disguise their hatred and make it look like goodness or concern.

And so, with people like that, you know, discernment is required to look past the veneer of what they're saying or doing. And I think many of us can think of people who have fooled us in some way, but were later exposed.

I think of even Christian leaders who come across as wise and doing things for the right reasons and we find out that they were just doing things for all the wrong reasons and finally is exposed. And that's what it talks about in verse 26, that a wickedness will finally be revealed before the assembly. Verse 27, whoever digs a pit will fall into it and he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him.

[47 : 23] Those who prey on others many times will snare themselves in their own schemes. And then verse 28, a lying tongue hates those who are crushed by it and a flattering mouth works ruins.

A lying tongue, those who are liars have no love for their victims. They're only looking out for themselves. Some people may claim that they're telling lies for a noble purpose.

In fact, there is, I think it was Aristotle that taught this idea of the noble lie. You tell lies to the masses because it's for their own good. And we actually see that in our government.

I think about some of the things that went down with the whole coronavirus thing and people just lying through their teeth because, well, it's just good for the people to do what we say even though what we're saying is not honest.

Also, it mentions flattery, flattery of the mouth. Flattery is any kind of insincere praise. And you might think, well, hey, this is helping me by flattering somebody else, but really you are working ruin, as it says here.

[48 : 39] I think of one and I'll finish with this story. And this is related to lying and how it can crush other people. We were at a closing, I think this is for the house that we're in right now, a mortgage closing.

and we were talking to the lady who does that. I forget what her title is. But as we were talking, she was telling a story about, because it's just a lot of paperwork, right?

You're signing, it seems like hundreds of these sheets of paper to close on your mortgage and it's all just process, right? Usually, they ask all these questions and I think we asked her, are there times where people are signing these things and they just walk away because I don't want to sign this paper?

She said, well, there was this one time and she said, one of the things that you, papers you sign is you have to identify if you've had any previous names that you've been under, that you've had for whatever reason, through marriage or otherwise.

And so there was this couple that was buying a house, they were fairly newly married and they asked this question, have you had a different name before? And this woman says, well, yeah, I used to have this married name.

[49 : 56] And her husband looked over and said, what? You've been married before? And she said, uh, yeah, we'll talk about it later.

And he said, no, we're talking about it now. And they walked out and that closing did not happen that day. I bet you they did not buy that house together. But lying, dishonesty, especially in marriage, especially with something like that, is so, so important.

And it can lead, you know, you think, hey, this is going to be the best for now if she, if he just doesn't know. But eventually the truth comes out and destruction will follow it.

Well, we'll end there. We got through all the verses. Anybody feel wiser this morning? All right, let's end in a word of prayer and ask the Lord to help us with wisdom.

Father, we look to you for wisdom. We need your help. So many of us are knuckleheads. We just, we still make so many mistakes in life.

[50 : 59] And we want to grow. We want to be like you. We want to live our lives in the way that you design the world to work, to have lives that are thriving, that are glorifying to you, that don't hurt people but cause our lives to thrive and the lives of others to thrive around us, that we might have that kind of life that you want us to live.

And we ask for your help in us every single day to live a wise life. We thank you that regardless of even when we fail and do foolish things, that our life is in you, that you are our wisdom and that ultimately we can glory in you because you are our wisdom even whether we're doing well or whether we're doing poorly.

And we thank you for that in Jesus name. Amen. Alright, thanks everybody.