

Proverbs 23-05-03b2

We're ready to pick up our study in Proverbs chapter 10 and we saw this summary and there are many like it talking about what people generally want out of life and it is tragic that the reason people want these things is we have this god-shaped vacuum in our soul as it has been called. We are built to be in relationship to God, fellowship with God. We are built to accomplish his purpose and if we decide that there is some other purpose, some other reason for being, some other pursuit, some other goal, there is no way we will ever be as happy.

Our special music just divinely inspired as it always is. In trust and obey there is no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey, to receive commands, to pursue the wisdom, the understanding, the communion and cooperation if you will with God's plans and purposes. When we align with what he is doing we fulfill the very design for which the human heart and soul was put on this earth.

Nothing else will suffice. We can distract ourselves, we can go after stimulation, we can go after distraction, we can tell ourselves, we can deceive ourselves. There is no worse lie than the ones we tell ourselves that everything is okay, I am happy, I am in charge, I forgive myself, I purpose myself, I am captain of my own ship, master of my own fate and I will go into the darkness of the night at the end of my life with my head held high knowing it is all oblivion in the future.

This is just so much poppycock. Nobody is truly happy with sticking their sentient head up out of the muck, admiring the universe and then disappearing forever and turning into decaying biological matter after life is over and saying, well there is nothing else, it is just a happy accident. Everyone in their heart of hearts is aware of what may be known about God.

We have been through this many times, just fill in the blank here, my 12 minute discourse on Romans chapter 1 and what happens when we suppress that truth and are given over to the alternative. That is not the way of happiness and it is the same message that we find here in Proverbs. So just very briefly, and this is not complete, this is not comprehensive, this is just a taste.

If you go through these 10 things that people want, as I mentioned in the first session, Sheryl Crow song, all I want to do is have some fun, it goes beyond that. People want more than fun. People want fulfillment.

They think they will find it in relationships. Sometimes they think they will find it by playing God and redefining themselves. Well, I am not happy as a woman, I will try being a man.

Or I am not happy as a man, I will try being a woman. I am not happy in a domestic role,

so I will go out into the workplace. I am not happy in the workplace, I will try a domestic role.

I am not happy in the city, I will go to the country. I am not happy with this, I will try that. Changing circumstances, changing roles, changing identities, I will change my name, I will pick up some ethnicity or some cultural forte or other, and I will become a social justice warrior, I will invest myself in a cause.

All of this, as Solomon says in Ecclesiastes, is a vapor and a chasing after the wind. It is ephemeral. It does not have the substance like the manna from heaven that gets into our souls and satisfies and fulfills, energizes and equips, destines us, purposes us, and integrates us into God's eternal life and eternal plan.

Anytime we are not a part of that, we are going to be dissatisfied. I am not going to say that people are just miserable and unhappy unless they get saved and turn to God, but they will never find the peace and the fulfillment that God provides, because this is what we are built for. If you have ever been doing a job and you do not have quite the right tool, if you are having to take something apart that was built with number two Phillips screws, and you have only got a number one Phillips bit, a number one Phillips screwdriver, and it is too small, and it is rounding off the heads, and it is chipping away the bearing surfaces, and you cannot get those screws out, not having the right tool is eminently unsatisfactory.

I learned this from my best friend. When you have the right tool, the job is a joy. You reach and you get exactly the right tool.

It is the right saw. It is the right lever. It is the right wrench.

Whatever it may be, when you have it and you use it, it is a joy, because you can take things apart and you can put them back together quickly, almost effortlessly. It multiplies your wisdom and your effort with the laws of physics, and it is a wonderful thing. What does not fit, the screw is too long, and it is going to go through and it is going to protrude.

It is going to make a dent. There is going to be a sharp point sticking through. It is too short.

It will not grab. It will not hold. You do not have a lock washer, and it is going to vibrate loose.

You do not have this. You do not have that. Things are either perfectly designed and perfectly functional, or they are not.

You can make do. You can use baling wire. You can use zip ties.

You can use duct tape. You can get the wrong tool. You can make a tool that will serve for a short time, but it is always a poor, shallow, shabby, second best.

There is a lot of frustration. There is a lot of wasted time and effort. There is a lot of redoing things because it just did not work.

This is emblematic of what happens in human life and human experience when we are not fitted, when we are not where God has purposed us, doing what God has equipped us and gifted us to do. It is out of sorts. It reminds me of the gauges and warning lights that you have on various pieces of equipment that tell you when something is wrong.

You get a check engine light. You get a low oil light. You get a gauge that says you are overheated.

I have a turbocharged diesel, and there are times when you are applying all of the acceleration that you can, and turbo does not kick in for some reason. There is something wrong. It is as though the people who filled out this survey and say, I desperately desire these things, but I cannot seem to accomplish them, there are indications that things are not right.

One of the indications is, do I have peace? Do I have joy? Do I have love that I enjoy and that the people I love enjoy and benefit from? These are the things that they mentioned. Do I feel free to pursue the things that are satisfying and gratifying and useful and up-building and have lasting value that give a deep personal sense of I am in the right place at the right time doing the right thing, and it counts. It matters.

It counts on eternity. People get the dashboard light, I don't have peace. I am not content.

I don't feel like I am in the right role. I haven't discovered what I really want to do, what would fulfill me and make me happy. Well, that is an indication that there is something wrong.

But if you have a problem, you can go to YouTube videos and somebody says, well, you know that warning light on your dashboard? Here is how you can get that to go away. You go under there and just clip the wire that powers that light, and that light will go out. You can pull the bulb out, or if you go to the fuse box, just pull the fuse for that whole circuit, that light will totally go away.

And we deal with superficialities and with symptoms instead of getting at the cause. There is a driver's seatbelt warning chime in Patty's car that has been going off for years. The seatbelt is buckled, but it chimes anyway, and it says, hey, don't forget to buckle your seatbelt.

Don't forget. Every 20 to 30 seconds, you get these five dings, and it goes on for six or

seven minutes when you first start the car. We often try to leave the car running when we have a short stop somewhere, because if you stop the car and restart it, you get six more minutes of this warning ding.

I took the seat out of the car. I traced the wiring. I did everything known to man trying to find where is the problem.

What I didn't do is reach up under there and find the little chimer and just rip it out by the roots, which in my fantasies I've done many times because it's annoying. But there is a problem in the circuit, and at some point when time and opportunity permit, I would like to fix that. I don't want to take away the symptom of the problem and leave the problem unaddressed.

This is like I hear a tapping noise in my engine. Let me buy a can of motor honey, and I'll put it in there. It's a glop that will stop almost any noise, but you haven't actually found and solved the problem.

This is what happens when people say, if I only changed jobs, if I only changed locations, if I only changed partners in life, if I only changed my gender, if I only changed my this, that, or the other circumstance, the answer to fixing and properly defining, purposing, and functioning ourselves is here in the Word of God, and it is no other place. This Cathy Caprino that put this survey together, she offers solutions. I've got a book that was given to me called Atlas of the Heart by Brené Brown, I think is her name.

There are human solutions offered for these syndromes. Well, this is what you've got to do. Even in the Christian world, people go to things like the Sermon on the Mount and say, these things that Jesus says are transformative practices, and you can fix your life, and you can be productive if you will just do these things.

You've just got to do them. So when Jesus says, love your enemy, you may not feel love or understand what is going on, you just have to send them a box of cookies, you know, mow their lawn proactively, do something nice. Just do it, and in the doing, as you keep doing this over and over, it will eventually become habitual, and the outside practice will work it in until it becomes an instinct and a heart motivation.

That is not the teaching of the Word of God, and that's not what Jesus was talking about in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. He didn't say, do these things and it will work itself from the outside in. Read Romans 12, 2. Be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by transformative initiatives. How are we transformed? What does Romans 12, 2 say? Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.

It is an imperative. How? By the changing of your habits, by the altering of your practices. How? By the renewing of your mind.

Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. Why? So that you will understand what

is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Transformation of the mind gives us an understanding of how close we are to the perfect will of God.

Is it the good will of God? It's okay, but it could have been better. It's acceptable. It's a step up, but what we're really aiming for, the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, to me, is exactly like the 30-fold, 60-fold, and 100-fold field.

Why stop at the good will of God? I want to drive to the post. I want to get the home plate here. 100-fold.

I want to understand not only the good will, not only the acceptable will, but the perfect will of God. The complete, perfect means complete, mature, fulsome, lacking nothing. It's the sweet spot on the Louisville slugger and you just hit that ball out of the park and it just is so gratifying to do so.

It's the sweet spot of knowing God's perfect will and throwing ourselves at it with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our strength, and all of our mind. Then, because we love God in that way, we are able to love our neighbor, love our enemy, to fulfill the principles that are embodied in the Sermon on the Mount and in every other part of the New Testament and the Old. But it starts on the inside.

It is the devil's lie that you can do something to attain this wisdom. What is the first lie? The first lie in human history, what is it? Eve, if you will do something external, it will make you wise internal. Eat the fruit.

All you've got to do is this thing. If you will perform this action, it will make you wise inside. I'll do something on the outside that will make me like God on the inside.

It's the oldest lie and it has infiltrated and is now permeating the church at large and it is a danger. It is insidious. It is deceptive.

It has slipped below the radar of people that ought to know better and we don't want to be fooled. Let no man deceive you. Let no seducing spirit deceive you.

Don't let Satan himself get a hold of you and sift you like wheat. Full armor of God. Is that armor of God practices, habits, actions that we should perform so that we will eventually internalize it? We'll just be habitual while I'm used to getting up at this time.

I'll just start always getting up at that time. What is the armor of God? Taking up what? The shield of faith. Your waste is girded with truth.

These are intangibles. These are not your waste girded with praying three times a day because it's a habit. This is not your feet shod with witnessing to at least two people a day because that'll make you a witness all the time.

It's the preparation of the gospel of what? Preparation of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Not what it says. Preparation of the gospel of peace.

Peace. Number four on the list of what people want most is peace. These things are supplied by God.

They are intrinsic to wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is the principal thing. Get wisdom and with all you're getting, get understanding.

That was our first nine chapters. Lady Wisdom crying out. Don't be seduced by the crafty harlot.

Don't be deceived. Don't let somebody tell you that there is a formula. Pray the prayer of Jabez.

Experience God. Go where God is at work and join Him in His work. Go do something.

If you're going to do that, just go find a tree, grab the fruit, eat it, and get kicked out of the garden. That's the lie. It isn't what we do.

It is who we trust. It is in what we place our faith, which is God's Word, wisdom, understanding. This is internal.

It transforms us. It renews our minds. It does what we can't do.

It will motivate. It will change our goals. It will change our values.

It will change our priorities. I want to talk about something here. Happiness was number one on the list.

I don't know what I want to do. If I knew what I wanted to do, I could be happy. But I'm unfulfilled.

I want the freedom to find my true purpose so that I can enjoy my day-to-day work. If my job was just so fulfilling that I would do it without them paying me, then I would be happy. I would have joy.

I would have passion. I would have all these other things. People say, I want the freedom to find my true purpose.

What did chapter 10, verse 1 tell us? A wise son makes a glad father. What does the father-son relationship provide? The father has the plan. The father has the purpose.

Think about God the Father and God the Son. I have come to do thy will, O God. A body hast thou prepared for me.

If it's your will, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done. The humility and the submission to God's authority in whatever area it is delegated,

husband and wife, employer-employee, professor and student, whatever it is, to instead of trying to figure out what I want, I have lack of clarity about who I am and what my purpose is.

What we want to do is instead of saying, I don't have enough time or enough money to find my purpose and do what I want to do and be what I want to be, we change. Instead of a pursuit of money and a pursuit of purpose, we change. Let me just give the exact quote from the article.

There's not enough time or money to do what I want. So in order to do what I want, I've got to find, create, or steal, beg, borrow money and time. Then I can do what I want.

So the problem is not enough money and not enough time. I would argue the problem in the statement is to do what I want. Change the priority from doing what I want to being the wise son, that is the joy of his father, and does what his father desires and is fulfilled and gratified and happy when he has entered into the purpose and plan of the father.

So instead of trying to change how much money I have or how much time I have, why don't I change the priority of doing what I want to doing what God wants? If that becomes my priority and my goal and I value that above all else, I don't have to worry about money and time because now I'm on God's clock. I'm in God's economy and because I am pursuing His purpose and His plan and His goal, He is going to underwrite it. He's going to provide for it.

He is going to ensure that I have every resource necessary to accomplish the assignment He has given me. If I go off the plan, I haven't mentioned it in a while, but you remember my fascination with the Clint Eastwood, Telly Savalas movie, Kelly's Heroes, because these guys are in World War II. They've got a tank, they've got weapons, they've got helmets and packs and supplies and chow and everything, but they hear that there's a bank with a bunch of gold in it, and so instead of fulfilling their role on the battlefield, which every unit has, you have an assigned place, you're part of a line, you're either defensive or offensive, you're protecting somebody else's flank, they leave all of that and they go rolling around looking for this bank and they're going to use the tank to blow a hole in the vault door and get this Nazi gold.

Well, it's free for the taking because it belongs to bad guys. And in so doing, they establish their own goal and their own purpose and try to make their own provision. Well, it turns out when they get there, and I think poetic justice from a spiritual application point of view, when Donald Sutherland shoots the tank's gun at the bank vault door, the rounds are full of paint.

They're not explosive, they're paint rounds. And so, of course, it doesn't accomplish the purpose. They have not been provided for that mission.

They had a different mission, and for whatever reason, he needed to shoot paint rounds to mark targets or whatever for maybe aerial bombardment. And so trying to use what they've been provided for their own purpose instead of fitting into the plan and purpose for which every unit in a war is positioned and logistically supplied, it's disaster. So this is what we see detail in an Old Testament sense here.

And if we can just remember who we are and why we're here, and it isn't to figure out what I want to do or have enough time and money to do what I want or to find my true purpose so that I can enjoy my day-to-day work. I'm experiencing a lack of clarity about who I am and my purpose. I need to find the right role where I can experience joy, and I need to overcome feelings of ineptitude and negativity so that I can have passion.

And it's all about me and what would gratify me. That is never going to succeed. You're going to be just as happy as Eve was when God showed up in the afternoon and said, Adam, where are you? And you're hiding, ashamed of your fig leaf.

That's the result of this kind of analysis and effort. We're not built to please ourselves, and when we try it, it inevitably results in warning lights all over the dashboard because there is a serious systemic problem that only God can fix. And we don't fix it by reaching out and grabbing the fruit.

We fix it by allowing God to give us those imperatives, to give us the wisdom and the understanding, and we receive those commands. That's why that verse 8, the wise in heart receive commands, is at the center of that second section, as we saw in our symmetry. It is the point.

The Lord is going to deny the wicked what they crave in verse 3, but He is going to satisfy the desire of the righteous. We won't famish. We won't hunger and thirst.

We won't be dissatisfied and looking for something different and something else. So I can't emphasize too much that this wisdom is structured. It is contextually conditioned to pick it apart and shred it and take little bits and pieces and then critique that, well, this is trite and this is a truism and this is obvious and this doesn't correspond with the reality that we typically experience.

Oh ho hum, the collector of these proverbs just threw everything in the hopper uncritically. There are going to be proverbs that repeat. We're going to see one in chapter 11 that is an exact repetition of one in chapter 10.

Oh, well, he was careless. He just needed to fill out length or something and so he repeated the same proverb twice. Why would a proverb be repeated twice? Well, why do you have more than one gospel? Because in context, giving a message, the casting out of the legion of demons in one gospel is in a different context.

The two blind men outside Jericho, that story is told twice, once with one blind man and

once with another, with both, but in the context, you need the second man in this gospel where there's a slightly different point being made in this gospel. There is a reason for everything and when we find this repeated proverb in chapter 11, we will see that contextually it functions in a different way. The identical statement in a different context yields a different benefit and to disdain and look down on the text of scripture and say, well, that's just a mistake right there.

That's a sloppy editor. That's somebody that was careless with his sources and well, he probably, there was some comment in here that, well, he probably had modular, he had chunks, he had pages of wisdom from other places and he just copied them as they came to hand without thought and without purpose is tragically misguided. But this is what people generally think when they dismiss the Bible out of hand.

Oh, you know, goat herds wrote this down when they had nothing better to do. They were uneducated and we're so educated. We're so wise.

We're so scientifically advanced. We have all knowledge. I can, I can solve my problems with technology and with just as a quick aside, everyone thought the technological revolution and the information revolution was going to advance humanity to a whole new plateau.

Here we are in the year 2023. Look at the world post technological revolution, post computers, post internet. Now we've got AI coming in and is that going to solve problems? Everybody that the founders and creators of AI are saying, put on the brakes.

We're endangering all of humanity with this new development. Is man by man's efforts making man's life any better? Is this a rising tide that's floating all boats? It is making things worse. We have the technology to hurt a lot more people in a short amount of time.

We have the technology to disparage and criticize and pull down and destroy people through social media like has never existed before. We have medicines that are doing more harm than good. They've got one benefit and 19 side effects.

And are we really solving poverty? Are we solving world hunger? Are we solving warfare? Are we solving violence? We're making it worse. All of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. All we're doing is littering the area and making things worse.

We're destroying the environment. We're overpopulating and underthinking. There are 27 ways you could talk for an hour and a half about the downgrade in the quality of life in this country and around the world despite technology and science and information.

Information is rife. Well, it's just being misused. What is the problem? The human heart is the problem.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. And when you find new ways to connect evil hearts, you find new depths of evil being practiced, being perpetrated. And this is not a better world than 50 years ago.

Most of us can vouch from experience for that truth. This is not a better world despite all these advances because this is man by man's efforts seeking to solve man's problems, seeking to make himself happy, seeking to solve these 10 felt needs. My individuality and my connectedness, the other way that they parse what we look for.

Individuality is now expressing itself in, I will use surgery and drugs to change myself. I will connect to people in strange and bizarre ways over the internet. And I'll get an avatar and enter a virtual world and turn into a blob in my mother's basement living in a fantasy world for days, weeks, months, and years and be useless even in the traditional sense.

The world is on its way to Hades in the proverbial handbasket because man is trusting in his own strength and making flesh his arm and his heart has departed from the Lord. Not his habits, not his practices, his heart. Cursed is the man who trusts in man.

Cursed is the society. Cursed is the culture. Cursed is the country who trusts in man, makes flesh his strength, and has a heart that departs from the Lord.

What's he going to be like? You know the verse. So this is the antidote. This is the only answer.

And as steeped in the word as we are, it is something we can never take lightly, never take for granted, never forget to prioritize in our own lives. We are walking uphill on a down escalator and simply standing still we will descend. We need to advance in the power of God which is his word and his spirit or we will descend.

Standing still is not an option. It takes daily prayer, daily review, daily fellowship with believers of like mind to stay strong, to stay focused, to avail ourselves of the grace of God that has been put so near us, in our hearts, in our mouths. It's not in heaven.

It's not down below the earth. We don't have to ascend to the heights. We don't have to plumb the depths.

It is near. But how tragic is it when it is so near and we still miss it? And there are dear friends of mine who have the same tools I have and are lost casualties to this rife deception. And it's just heartbreaking.

We won't let it be us. Our fellowship is so valuable. Our access to the word of God is so essential.

And our prayer life, going to God in humility. Humility is the key, recognizing our need

for what God supplies. He is our source.

He meets all ten of these and then some. Not just in the here and now, but preparation for service and function and opportunity and blessing and glory in the ages which are to come. Our blessing package, our inheritance, so transcends anything someone could achieve by somehow trying to fill these 10 blanks in their life.

We are exponentially blessed in these areas now and in the ages to come. What a grace, what an opportunity because of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work that he accomplished for us in redemption and reconciliation and propitiation and atonement. And I just saw another tragically misguided article that Jesus wasn't talking about atonement in the upper room when he told his disciples to partake of the cup, the covenant in his blood, that it had nothing to do with atonement.

It was just fellowship because it was Passover and not the day of atonement. There is deception everywhere. We have to be on our guard, watch and pray.

Review what we study in Bible class, talk about it with each other, ask questions, go to the Lord. We are in a battle. This is a warfare.

And if you don't feel like you're under attack, you must not be on the front line. If you're on the front line, you're going to see the attack, be aware of it and know exactly where to go for beans and bullets and guidance to be in the right place at the right time, doing the right thing. That is fulfillment.

That is peace and joy and all the rest of the fruit of the spirit. Can't forget who we are and why we're here in Christ. Father, thank you for supplying us abundantly with truth, with guidance, with exhortation, with doctrine, rebuke, correction and instruction from your word.

We pray that God, the Holy Spirit will plow it deep into the soil of our souls so that it will spring up into a crop that is fully 100 fold, enable us to shine as lights in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation and that others will see Christ in us and be drawn to that light and come into relationship and fellowship with you through the Lord Jesus. We pray it in Jesus name. Amen.