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## PLOWING A COUNTER CULTURE

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### Part 1 of Proverbs

Pastor Mark Driscoll | September 30, 2001

This week we are laying a framework for Proverbs. That's where we find ourselves. Next week, we'll officially get into the book of Proverbs. But I have to back up, and I have to lay a framework. If you don't understand how the Bible is put together, and how God is working in this world, then my fear is you come to Proverbs and it ends-up being sort of self-help seminar principles; like Tony Robbins with a little bit of God over the top. We don't wanna do that. We wanna do something a little bigger than that. And so, what I'm gonna build for you today is something that the scripture calls, "The cultural mandate." And where I need to begin is the theme of Proverbs really is wisdom. It's part of the wisdom literature in the scriptures; the part of the Bible that deals most clearly with issues regarding wisdom.

And so I'll lay a lot of framework for you today, and I'll try to move quickly 'cause we've got a 6:00 p.m. over at the theater and – oh, man. We'll see if we get there. We've got services now at 9:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 5:00 p.m. here; 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. at the university district. And 5:30 p.m. tonight, in ten minutes, they start the new congregation in south Seattle. If you live down there, we'd love to have you there. Knowledge; here's knowledge. Biblically knowledge is good, but knowledge in and of itself can be a very damaging thing. Knowledge is the obtaining or the collecting of facts and true statements regarding reality and life and God, especially. And so we love knowledge. We should study. We should be a people who are known by knowledge. But, knowledge standing alone all by itself and naked is very, very dangerous. Paul tells us in Corinthians that knowledge – what? It can puff-up. It can lead you just to be very arrogant and very proud and very difficult.

Have you ever met anyone who sits in their room all the time and reads books and never comes out? They're really smart, but they're not very nice. That's what happens. Life becomes for them sort of a crossword puzzle. And so they tend to do well with propositions and not with people. Knowledge can puff-up. It can lead to a lot of arrogance. Knowledge in and of itself is perfectly good. There are two kinds of knowledge in scripture: there's good knowledge and bad knowledge. We see this in Genesis where the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – we're not supposed to have knowledge about good and evil. Knowledge about good and evil is not necessary. Some people know how to hide alcoholism from their employer; or how to hide an adulterous affair from their spouse. Those are not the kind of knowledge that we're supposed to have. We need not seek certain kinds of knowledge. We need not endeavor certain kinds of knowledge.

Knowledge, though, is a beginning place. You start to assimilate facts and information and truth. And the problem is you'll end-up really arrogant unless that transitions itself into wisdom. So, knowledge is a first step toward wisdom. Knowledge is principles, and wisdom is practice; is really what it is. Wisdom is tremendously practical. Those of you that are more practical in nature, you might love the wisdom literature in scripture James, Jesus' parables, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Job; practical things about practical life and practical questions. And the way that we go from knowledge to wisdom – James, one of the wisdom books in the New Testament tells us, "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says."

Knowledge is listening and learning, and then wisdom is doing your life in light of what you know to be true. In that way, knowledge comes very quickly; wisdom comes very slow. It doesn't take long for someone to get a lot of information, but it does take a long time for someone to gain a lot of wisdom; because wisdom is birthed through experience and life. That's why young men who first become Christians and delve into theology, they have a lot of knowledge but not a lot of wisdom. How many of you have had certain experiences in your life where you gained a lot of knowledge about something and you thought you had it all figured out, and then when you went to actually do it you found out that wisdom took a lot longer than you're anticipating? Remember driver's-ed? You read the book, watch the video – great! Give me the keys! Oh, my gosh, I almost killed us all! This is – I need wisdom now. I need to learn how to do those things that I've learned in theory, now become practice.

You see this all the time with people who are engaged to be married; at least I do. You tell them, "You know, you're gonna fight about " – "Oh, no, not us. We got it all figured out. We got our whole life figured out. We got it all figured out." Then they get married and you see. "Oh, how's it going?" "Oh, gosh. Oh, gosh. Oh, gosh. Oh, gosh." They can't even utter sentences or words; and just mumbling and muttering, just like wounded animals. It's – "Well, we read the books and – I don't know. I don't know what's going on. It's not happening." Same with young couples that are having children. Before someone has a baby they could tell you everything. "Oh, you need to do this. And breast feed. And this. We feed them a 4:00 a.m.; spank them at 5:00 a.m.; pray over them at 6:00 a.m.; they exercise at 7:00 a.m. We got a schedule. It's all laid out. It's perfect. It's great." And then the baby is born. "How's it going?" "Oh, gosh. Oh, man. It's hard, man. The kid doesn't – the kid's not doing what the book said it was supposed to do. It's weird, you know? It's like – it's not going like we thought."

So, knowledge has to become wisdom, and wisdom takes time. Wisdom is living. I'll read this to you from James. He talks about different kinds of

wisdom, and how we know that we have wisdom. And he says, “Who is” – James 3, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life; by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.” First thing that wisdom brings is a lot of humility. People that have a lot of knowledge and not a lot of wisdom, they’re very arrogant. But, really wise people are very humble; because how long does it take you to become wise? It takes you a long time. And it takes you a lot of errors, and a lot of sin, and a lot of mistakes. And so what you tend to be is very humble. You look at people and you say, “You know, it took me a long time to learn a few things. And I’m not immediately gonna drop the hammer and be real arrogant toward you. God was patient with me and gave me wisdom. God will be patient with you.” There’s a humility that comes with that wisdom. He says, “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth, for such ‘wisdom’, false wisdom, does not – rather – does not come down from heaven, but it is earthly, unspiritual and of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition there you will find disorder, and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is, first of all, pure then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.” Just like there’s two kinds of knowledge, there’s two kinds of wisdom. One wisdom is very humble, very patient, very loving, very fruitful. There is a false wisdom that the enemy gives. And this false wisdom leads to arrogance and division and pride and corruption.

Where I need to get into this now is, we need wisdom and knowledge to live our lives. And there’s a reason that we need it. I don’t know about you. I spent years reading the Bible and doing what the scriptures said to the best of my ability, never understanding how it all fit together. I was just in a forest of trees and had no big, topographical map of what was going on large scale. So, I’d read things like, “Love your wife. And raise your children in the admonition of the Lord. And tithe to the work of God. And preach the gospel.” And I believe all those things. I seek to do all those things. But, I never understood why. Why? What are we doing? Why – why do we do all that? “You do that because you love God.” Okay, I understand that. But, what are we doing? And this is where I wanna go tonight. We need wisdom and we need knowledge so that our lives can be participating in God’s work of creating a culture. And culture, I’ll tell you, is just the outworking of the human heart.

Some people say, “Oh, we need to fix Hollywood and change the culture because it’s ruining people.” I think it’s a chicken/egg argument. I think that as much as anything we create the culture, and the culture is a reflection of us. And so, before we can fix the culture we need to be fixed. We need to be transformed before we can be agents of any sort of real, fruitful change. And so, culture is the outworking of the human heart and the outworking of the human condition. That’s really the problem. Part of us is created in the image and likeness of God, and it’s beautiful and glorious, and has tremendous potential. Another part of us is sin and cursed and fleshly and unspiritual and depraved and evil and selfish. And so all the potential that we have is used to create a culture that dishonors God. That’s what we do. We naturally create, because we’re made in God’s image and likeness. The issue is: What are we making?

And you start to think about it. Cultures, like people, have souls. And those souls either honor God or dishonor God. Right? You think about it. Do you think that Seattle is a – as a culture, honors or dishonors God? It’s pretty tremendously dishonoring. You can’t just walk up to someone and say, “Scripture says.” I mean, you can, and then you have to duck, because they don’t like that. God’s word is not held in high esteem, even in church cultures in our city. Not all, but some. We’re not a city that really likes marriage. You’re twice as likely to cohabitate and shack-up here as any other city in the U.S.; or general averages, I should say. We’re not a city that really likes children. We’re the second least child-per-adult population per capita in the nation, right behind San Francisco. We’re not a city that likes marriage. We’re not a city that likes kids. We’re not a city that really likes church. We’re not a city that really likes scripture. There’s a problem in the heart and soul of our city. And it’s a reflection of the hearts of the people that live in the city. So, what do we do? What we do, I think, is we begin to first of all recognize those things that are really depraved in what is going on.

And then, to try and build something different than that. Isaiah 3:12 gives us, I think, some hallmarks of a depraved and corrupted culture. Isaiah says this, “Youths oppress my people. Women rule over them. And, oh, my people, your guides lead you astray, and they turn you from the path.” He says there’s basically three hallmarks of a very corrupted culture. And this could be a church. This could be a city. This could be a neighborhood. This could be a nation. This could be a global issue. The first is that youth is worshiped in an idolatrous form. Do you believe that teenagers are ruling American pop-culture? Absolutely. 18-25 year olds are the target niche market for MTV, because that is the mainstream of pop American culture. And so when we think about sexuality, we don’t think of people that have been married for 40 years in a loving covenant. We think of sexuality, we think of two 16 year olds who just got their license and their parents’ car, and jumped in the back seat to break half the commandments. That’s what we think about.

You’re not beautiful if you’re old. You’re not wise if you’re old. You’re not smart if you’re old. There is no respect for any sort of wisdom in this culture. It’s weird. I mean, just sit down sometime and go to a magazine rack or watch MTV, or MTV2 if you wanna see music. They never show any music on MTV. And just see the addiction to youth culture. Even pick-up magazines that are intended for women. Who sits on the covers? 13 and 14 year old girls that have been made-up to look like 30 year old women. We live in a culture that is addicted to youthfulness. It is addictive to you. And youth run the culture. And what happens is, is if youths run a culture it is incessantly immature and foolish. The reason is, how long does it take to be wise? Well, it takes a while. If you’re 16 and you’re in a boy-band, you have not unpacked the universe just yet. The guys from ‘N Sync are not going to deploy troops to Afghanistan with great strategic skill. They can’t spell Afghanistan. Christina Aguilera and Britney Spears combined are not going to cure cancer. Between the two of them, they couldn’t read a map. It takes a little while to get wisdom.

And when you live in a culture that is addicted to youth, who don’t have any wisdom, that are learning and haven’t accumulated any experience, you have a very shallow culture. So, what happens is it’s like eating fast food. You’re never really satisfied, and so then we have to be novel; which means things have to continually change, and they have to just sort of keep you excited with ongoing change. I mean, you think about this. How many of you really believe you’re gonna hand-off your CD collection to your grandkids? You know? Well, here it is, honey. You know, the great classics of the western tradition. You know, Mozart, Beethoven, Rick Martin – who else we got here? You know, and it’s just foolish. Everything here is transitory, passing, and fleeting. It says another dimension of a culture that is totally falling apart is women ruling over men. We’re gonna get into this in Proverbs. These are all the themes of Proverbs. Some of you don’t like that. For the four of you who remain, for the totality of the sermons pertaining to that

issue, it will benefit you greatly. It'll be wonderful. What happens is that if you don't know that we're made in the image and likeness of God, and we're equal male and female because of God's image and likeness, then you create something called a "Gender War." Which means that for years chauvinists won, and now feminists are winning. And we're trying to figure out who should win and who should lose.

When scripture says, basically, they should be holding hands and participating in the same work as allies, not as adversaries. And he says the third dimension is, is that the people that are supposed to be teaching and preaching and leading these things, they're leading people astray. They're sort of blind to the whole mess, and they don't say anything, and they just sort of go with the flow. And so, that's where we find ourselves. What I don't wanna do today, I don't wanna just critique the whole world. Paul says in Corinthians, he says, "Well, what business is it of mine to judge those outside of the church?" I'm not surprised that water's wet, and rocks are hard, and dirt is distasteful. It doesn't shock me. That's what it was made for. It also doesn't surprise me if people who don't know God look like it. It doesn't surprise me. It doesn't anger me. It doesn't upset me. It doesn't shock me.

And Paul says, "Within God's people we have to make some judgments about ourselves." That, before we can talk about fixing Seattle, fixing the United States of America, and fixing the world, we need to do some real sober assessment of where we find ourselves; and what it is that we're contributing to; and what it is that we're building. There are temptations when you get into this issue of culture building. What I'm calling us to is creating a counter-culture. And a lot of what we're gonna study in Proverbs is gonna make no sense to you, because it is completely different than this world. God calls us to be holy, and that is different. And as you think about it, only dead things float downstream. If you're alive, you're gonna have to work hard and swim against the prevailing tide that is becoming increasingly, increasingly more severe. If you wanna grow weeds, you don't have to work very hard. But if you wanna tend a garden it's going to take a lot of diligence. That's what we're talking about.

And there are some temptations. I want you to start to think about us as a church, and the city of Seattle that we live in, having a counter-culture; a culture that reflected a love and respect for God and his word and his people and his ways and his will. And there are some temptations that we're sort of pulled toward presently. One of those is nostalgia. When you talk about creating a counter culture a lot of people think you're talking about nostalgia. How many of you have heard, over and over and over, that we just need to get back to the good old days? I don't even know when those were. Genesis 1 and 2 were good old days. From Genesis 3 forward it's been a succession of very bad days. That's all we have. Some people say, "Well, we need to get back to the 1950's." Well, the '50s couldn't have been that great, because in the '60s and '70s they completely rebelled against them. Had they been so great they wouldn't have rebelled. You know, the children that grew-up in the '50s were the ones smoking weed and having sex on television in the '60s. So, apparently the '50s weren't as great as we were thinking. So, where do we go back? I've heard some people say, "We just need to go back to the good old days." Back to when? "Back to, like, Leave It to Beaver." You know, the '80s were the good old days for some of us. I don't wanna go back to the '80s. I look bad in pastels, and I will not feather my hair. I've been there. I've repented, and I've moved on. You don't wanna see me in earth – you wanna see me in earth tones. You don't wanna see me in, like, pastels. It's bad. I look like the world's largest chunk of cotton candy. We don't wanna go back to the '80s.

Leg warmers, Madonna – no. I guarantee you, we don't wanna go there. We don't want nostalgia. Ecclesiastes 7:10, Solomon says, "Don't ask questions about your state; it's foolish to ask those questions." First of all, we're not going back. And second of all, it wasn't that great to begin with. Leave It to Beaver? Ward and June slept in different beds. I'm not advocating that. That's weird. We're not gonna do that. If you do you'll be up for church discipline, but we're not gonna do that. 1 Peter 1:18, Peter says that, "We have been redeemed from the hollow and empty way of life handed to us by our forefathers." What does that mean? That means they didn't have it figured out, either. That every generation must begin, and must start where ever it finds itself. Another temptation is for us to become trendy. Every conference I teach at, it's all about being on the cutting edge. And I get there, and I just wanna throw myself on that cutting edge and kill myself.

There's this – you know, let's – you know what will – let's be like yesterday. Well, yesterday kinda stuck. Well, how about tomorrow? The future? You know what the future is? The future is the past times ten. So, however bad it stunk, it stinks really bad in the future. It's just weird that we have – I get – we get this media attention as a church. Oh, you're the Gen-X church. You're the post-modern church. Your people are hip. I'm not cool. I'm not hip. I can't play a guitar. I'm heterosexual. I'm just regular. You know, I watch sports, I eat meat. I'm not trendy, hip and cool. I'm just not. And I'm embracing my inner Archie Bunker, and I've given-up any – any attempt to be trendy, hip and cool. Being hip is way over-rated, and it costs a lot of money; and you gotta continually redo your hair; and it's just so much work. I'm just gonna go with being just old and fat and grumpy, 'cause I can get there. You know? It's an achievable goal.

So, we're not – we're not gonna be this nostalgic church. Some of you have seen a nostalgic church. You walk in they're singing songs from the '50s, the guy's wearing a suit from the '50s. He didn't get it at a vintage store, it's the same suit he bought in the '50s; it doesn't fit, but he still wears it. Somebody needs to talk to him about that. Some hip, cutting-edge, trendy churches are trying to build this hip, cutting-edge culture. I'll tell you this right now. If you come in to worship at Mars Hill, and we have, like, 18-year-old guys with headsets dancing in unison like a boy-band, you have the right to kill me. Okay? You can hold me to that. Being trendy is way over-rated. I – I go to these crazy conferences – I'll just rant for a while, then I'll go do the six – but, I went to this one conference, this guy comes up and he says, "Yeah, we have such a cutting-edge church. People come in, they don't even know it's church." "Well, congratulations." I mean, that's like saying, "Yeah, we have this – we have this big swimming pool. People go swimming, they don't even know it's a pool." I'm like, what? That's just weird, man. You know? They should know. I mean, you know? If not, there's a problem. It's weird. So, we're not trying to be trendy. Paul says, "Don't be conformed to the pattern of this world. The world and its desires are passing away. The world and it's wisdom does not know God." So, we can't be trendy. We can't look at tomorrow. We can't be nostalgic. We can't look at yesterday.

The temptation is to say, "Oh, forget about it. Let's just leave. Let's just disengage, give-up, wait for Jesus to come back." But Paul tells us – excuse me, Jesus tells us in John 17, "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one." So, we can't just leave. We can't be conformed to the world and its past or its future. We have to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. We have to think of things

differently. We have to start to become different people and build a different world that we live in. So, what do we do? If we can't imitate yesterday, and we can't imitate tomorrow, and we can't imitate what we find out the door, what do we imitate? Paul tells us in Ephesians 5. He says, "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love. Just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Don't imitate the '50s. Don't imitate MTV. Imitate God. Imitate God. Be imitators of God.

And God, in his kindness, has come to us as the wisdom of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and we now, as Hebrews said it, can fix our eyes on him; the author and perfecter of our faith. And we can see God in Christ, and then we can imitate him. We can get our head around that. And so, we are imitators of God. And as we are imitators of God, we will collectively, as a church, through the collective sort of soul that we share begin to birth a different kind of world around us. That's what I wanna talk about. What you will need for this is faith. You will need faith. Hebrews 11 tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God. Hebrews 11:1 and 2, basically tells us that faith is the ability to see things that don't exist. You need to look beyond where you find yourself, and beyond where we are as a church, and beyond where we are as a culture, and see what is possible by God's grace.

The imagination is vital. You have to close your eyes and see this other world. You have to see what it would look like if husbands loved their wives as Christ loved the church. You have to see what it would look like if children were raised to honor their mother and father, and love their God. You would have to see what it would look like for wives to respect their husbands. You would have to see what it looked like if friends spoke truthfully to one another out of reverence for Christ. You would have to see what it looks like for people not to be locust, coming in and consuming everything, but actually living in such a way that they're saving for tomorrow and for those in need. If you walk out the door, you won't see that world. You will not see this world that I'm calling you to. It begins in your imagination, by faith, reading the scriptures, and realizing that God intends for his people to be different, holy, and other.

And then beginning the work of building that world; and there's a lot of work to be done. How long do you think it will take before Seattle has lots of good gospel teaching, Bible preaching churches? Lots of wonderful covenant enduring marriages good for a 50-60 year run? Lots of children who are raised to love God? How long do you think that'll take? Our grandchildren will be plowing that same soil. They'll be putting their hand to that same task. That's why it takes an imagination, and it takes patience. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "Now these three things remain: faith and hope and love. And the greatest of these is love."

Faith is seeing a world that doesn't exist. Hope is believing that if I put my hand to the plow, even if it's a long, hard push, that by God's grace we will see it. And love is the motivation; that we do it because we love God, and we love neighbor, and we love those who aren't even born yet. There's a lot of work to be done. For me, though, it's exciting. Some of you are young; you've got 50-60 years left. You need something to do. You need something to do. And we're gonna talk about this cultural mandate from Genesis, and what God calls us to. What would this culture look like – and I'm really calling you to just enliven your imagination and begin to dream. Otherwise, what happens is we get – we get stuck in our life, and we begin to justify where we are. We begin to blame others for where we are. We begin to lose hope. Some of you are afraid to hope, because you're afraid that it won't happen.

Paul tells us in Romans, that hope does not disappoint us. Do you think it is possible to create a completely counter culture in this world, because we love this world and we want others to see the practical implications of life that God gives us? See, that's the way that the gospel is supposed to go forward. Peter tells us to always be ready to give a reason for the hope that lies within us to everyone who asks with gentleness and respect. The assumption is: People should be asking. They should walk in and say, "This is different." When a lady walks in the room, the men stand. It's different. When you tell your children to not do something, they say, "Yes," and they agree, and they obey; and they're happy. Not little legalists running around. They love their mom and dad. When the wives talk about their husbands, it's not four-letter words. Amazing. How does this happen? Well, let me tell you about God. That God redeems us from hollow and empty ways of life. That he takes away our folly. That he gives us wisdom. That he conquers our enemies of Satan, sin and death. He gives us eternal life. Let me tell you about God. That's the answer to all the questions.

Genesis, we've gotta go back to the beginning and the culture that God calls us to build. That's why I need you to understand this, because when we talk about Proverbs the cultural mandate is the container and Proverbs is the content. Friendship, money, sex, food, drink, truth – this whole world takes to be built, and Proverbs has all of those elements. So, before we can talk about Proverbs and put all the tools in your hands, I've first gotta lay out a blueprint for you so you know what we're building. We're building a completely different world. Aspects of a God glorifying culture, from Genesis 1; here's creation. There would be a respect for God's rule and God's word. God speaks, everything comes into existence. We live in a very weird world where even in the church there is a culture of rebellion against scripture and its authority. Some of you have seen it to where you may be in a church or a Bible study. You yourself pick-up the Bible and you read something that seems very plain and obvious, and it seems insane because you've never seen it. What is our argument? Oh, that doesn't apply to us. That was – what do we say? That was cultural. It is. It's counter cultural. It's kingdom culture. It's not the soil of this world, it's a completely different world. Love your enemies? Pray for those who persecute you? Bless people when they curse you? No. Yes. Counter cultural. There would be a respect for God's word.

In addition, there would be a respect for the image and likeness of God in all people. That we're made in his image and likeness, and we're his image bearers. Why do we love unborn children? Why do we love little kids? Why do we love elderly people who are no longer contributing to the gross national product? Why do we love people who may have handicaps, or infirmities, or sickness, or whom are bedridden? Because they're image bearers. They're made in the image and likeness of God. They're – they're not having value because of their production, they're having value because they're created. There would be naming – excuse me, there would be blessings of grace. It says that God blessed them and said to them, in Genesis 1, "God kisses his children with grace." Everything in the cultural mandate gets done by grace.

This plowing of this other world is completely a work of God's grace. There would be distinctions between male and female. We're told in Genesis,

“God created them, male and female.” We’re gonna get into this in Proverbs, and it’s just gonna be a series of landmines; because our minds have been completely conformed to the pattern of this world. If I asked the men in this church, “What is Biblical manliness?” No one could tell me. If I asked the women, “What is Biblical femininity?” They would tell me, and they would all be wrong. We have no idea what a man is, and what a woman is. We have the Calvin Klein world. The ad on the bus goes by and it’s like, “Well, there was three people, and two were wearing pants, and one was holding a bottle of cologne.” Were they boys or girls? I can’t tell. I don’t know. They were just androgyny. They were just people.

We have lost any sense of gender that God has made us male and female. And so we end-up in these foolish gender wars. Who’s gonna win? Men or women? Well, you know, women need to go off to combat and kill people and make as much money as men, and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah – to prove they’re equal. No, they don’t. If they read scripture, they say, “God made me, and I’m an image bearer. I’m equal. What do I have to prove? I’m not on trial here.” We’ve robbed women of their dignity. Some say, “Well, no we’ve just allowed women to enter into the male world.” I could go on this forever. We’re gonna do a lot of weeks on this. I tell you what. Anybody treats my little girl like one of the boys, I’ll be doing prison ministry from the outside – from the inside, rather. You know, if – if they boys are, you know, wrestling with her and smacking her around, and – no. No. We have lost any respect for women in the whole culture.

And so, feminism comes along and says, “Men are chauvinists, and they’re pigs, and they mistreat women. So, if they’re gonna punch them in the mouth, we gotta make women tough and tell them how to take a punch; and teach them how to be good boxers, and take their blows.” My issue is, “No, we should tell the men not to hit them.” Why do they have to be tough? Why do women need to take punches to the mouth? Why don’t we just tell the men that’s a sin? If you’re a child of God, just be nice to her. Don’t – don’t make her be tough. Good Lord. Peter talks about this, to treat them with respect. We’re gonna get into that. What does it mean to have a culture that understands gender distinctions and male and female responsibilities? That’s a huge them in Proverbs.

We’re also gonna talk about goodness. God made everything; said it was good. And the cultural mandate, I apologize there, I made an error in your notes. In Genesis God tells us, and I’ll read it to you briefly, starting in chapter 1 verse 6, God said, “Let us make man in our image and our likeness. Let them rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So, God created man in his own image. In the image of God he created him. Male and female he created them, and God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in numbers. Fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves along the ground.” God gives a job description to this man and woman. The whole earth is yours. Care for it. Tend to it. Build a culture that honors me, and have children. We’re gonna talk about kids.

We’re gonna talk a lot about marriage. We see this in Genesis, too, that marriage is something that God honors. Before Eve was created, God gives Adam this tremendous job description. Adam’s standing on the dust of planet earth, and he looks at God and says, “What’s my job?” God says, “The planet. Just take care of that.” Adam’s looking around going, “This seems like a bit much, especially if I’m supposed to take a day off a week and have a Sabbath. Like, six days a week I’m supposed to build the earth, rule over it, subdue it, create a culture?” God says, “I’ll give you a wife.” “Good, ‘cause we’re gonna need a lot of kids. We got a lot of work to do.” Now you know why kids are important, why children are important. Not just because of this romantic naïveté, “Oh, they make me feel good.” But because God has given us a cultural mandate to be like Abraham, a blessing to all nations of the earth; that through our family and through our lineage we would all be like Abraham and Sarah, raising up not just children but fruitful children.

What that means is, if you have 27 kids that are all basically, you know, very short demons, you have not done your job Biblically. Some people say, “Look, I’m a holy person. I got 27 kids.” Not necessarily. Because what kind of children are we supposed to have? Fruitful! That means they’re nice kids who love God and contribute. They’re not filling-up prison cells. They’re doing something different. So, we’re gonna talk about marriage and why a man needs a woman. That’s why God says everything is good. God looks at Adam and says, “It’s not good for you to be alone.” Adam says, “Yeah. I know. It’s gonna be hard to get kids without a wife, let alone rule over the universe.”

We’re gonna talk about why a man needs to grow up and be a man, and put childish ways behind him like Paul says; and take a noble woman, in a noble way, for a noble end. We’re gonna talk about why men need to leave their mother and father. And if you’re 25 and your mom is doing your laundry, you’re – we’ll all chip-in and buy you ‘N Sync tickets and then we’ll beat you. That’s what we’re gonna do. Time to put childish ways behind. And we’re gonna talk about the role of women, the role of men. We’re gonna get into all these things. This is all the framework. Genesis 2 talks about some other things, and a desire of good knowledge. It’s good to have good knowledge; knowledge about God and life and truth and love and joy, with a hatred of bad knowledge.

You know, how many of you guys were told, before you got married, “You know, have you slept with her? ‘Cause if you – you don’t know if she’s any good unless you sleep with her before you marry her.” Or, “Why get married? Why don’t you live together for a while so you can just know what you’re getting into?” That’s bad knowledge. That’s bad knowledge. My buddy in college, he said it best. He said, “I’ve never kissed a woman in my whole life. And if my wife’s a bad kisser, it’ll be good to me.” Yeah, that’s true. A bad kiss is better than going to bed alone, every single time. You don’t need bad knowledge. Bad knowledge is no help at all. There would be a love of good knowledge in this kind of culture.

In addition, Genesis 2, there would be work. Work was given before the fall. We’re gonna talk a lot in Proverbs about work; how to work hard; how to work smart; how to make money; how to invest money; how to save money. In addition, there will be consequence for sin. God says, “You eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you’ll die.” In a real culture there’s consequence for sin. Dealing with one guy now, the leadership in his church all knows that the senior pastor has had an affair with a woman in the church for years. It’s still ongoing, and they won’t do anything about it. They said, “Well, it’s not our business to judge him.” I said, “Well, buy me a plane ticket. I’ll come down and judge him.” This is no problem. You know,

there has to be a consequence. You can't do this.

In addition, there will be naming and shaping. I love this. And like I said, for the four of you that are left when we're done, this is gonna be so much fun. Naming and shaping. All the animals are brought to Adam so he could name them. In naming them, he is shaping an identity. When we go through Proverbs we're gonna start naming people. Not you personally, we're gonna name categories. What names are given to certain kinds of people in Proverbs?

Response: Sluggard.

The sluggard!

Response: Liar.

The liar!

Response: The fool.

The fool! Don't you love this? Who else do we got? What's that?

Response: The harlot.

The harlot! I'm not a harlot, I love him! Most harlots do. Proverbs names people. Oh, you're the drunkard. You're the glutton. You're the class slut, and you're the class clown. "Hey, don't call me that." "I didn't call you that. I just said slut. If you feel convicted, that's you and the Holy Spirit." This is not personal. You see how this works? Some people read the Bible and they go, "That's so terrible to call people those things." Well, stop doing them and we won't call you that anymore. It's very easy.

Response: The noble wife.

The noble wife is in Proverbs. There are some good ones. There's the friend. There's lady wisdom. There's good and bad naming and shaping. We're gonna name some things. Our culture hates this. "He's a fool." "Oh, no, no, he just has low self esteem." "No, he's an idiot." We're just gonna call it like it is. And you know what happens, though? You get named and shaped, you repent, you get a new name. Doesn't that happen? Abram become Abraham. Sarai becomes Sarah. Sephus becomes Peter. Saul becomes Paul. You need to name it the way it is, repent, and then you get a new name. It's the way it works in the Bible. So, we're gonna name and shape, and it's gonna be great. And we're gonna talk about these things practically and what they mean. Can't wait for that. Should probably repent on that.

Genesis 2, other elements of a God fearing culture would be respectable, young men. The young men would leave their father and mother; that they would take a wife. That they would love her and have children, and that their relationship would be poetry and song like Adam singing to his wife in Genesis 2, "Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken from man." We're gonna talk a lot about poetry. God is a poet, and God is a creator, and God is an artist. And he wants his men to be that way as well. Not – not feminine, but masculine in their strength, and with women very tender and poetic. And we're gonna talk about love making, that the man and the woman were naked and they felt no shame. How sexuality, like Hebrews says, the marriage bed is to be kept pure. That sexuality and love and love making and intimacy between husband and wife is a beautiful thing that glorifies God. And if we allow shame into that, then that is a sin.

We're also going to talk about the problems that come up in Genesis 3. In Genesis 1 and 2, God lays out these wonderful principles; all of this knowledge for them to practice as wisdom. In Genesis 3, all hell literally breaks loose. Satan comes, plants seeds of rebellion in the garden, and he seeks to create a different kingdom based upon lies instead of truth, and pride instead of humility, and death instead of life. Elements of his culture? You know you have a bad culture when Satan is welcomed; the front door is open, and he's a friend and not a foe. When there's a confusion about God's word, or a rejection of God's word altogether. Eve is sitting there having this conversation. God spoke to Adam and said, "Eat whatever you want. Don't eat this tree. When you eat it, you'll die." Satan comes, "Did God really say?" He says, "Yeah, my husband's a good Bible teacher. He said that we're not supposed to eat it, and we're not supposed to touch it." God didn't say anything about touching. The problem is I was adding to or subtracting from God's word. Satan comes right out and says, "God's a liar. He just doesn't want you to be like him. He's jealous. He doesn't want you to have the kind of wisdom he has." There's a rejection and a rebellion against the clear teaching of God's word in a false culture. Eve sits there and has this conversation.

2 Corinthians 11 says she was deceived. She didn't mean to screw-up the world. Most people don't. Oops. An old Puritan proverb says that when Adam was away, Eve fell astray. That's not the way it happened. It says that Eve was arguing with Satan, and then she took the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and she ate it. And then she gave some to her husband, Adam; Genesis, I think it's 3:6, who was standing there with her. The question is: Well, what was Adam doing? The answer is: Nothing. We're gonna talk about that. How some men think, "Well, I'm a holy man. I haven't done anything bad." It's not your goal. Your goal is to do something good, not to do nothing. Congratulations. You sat on your hands and didn't say a word, just like Adam. Because of him, the whole race fell. 1 Corinthians 15, Romans 5, because of one man's sin the whole race fell. Adam's like, "What did I do?" Nothing. Didn't do anything. And that was your sin.

We're gonna talk about the responsibility that God lays upon men. Shame comes in, they hide from each other, they hide from God, they blame. These are all elements of a depraved culture. Adam blames it on God. "Well, I was here fine, naked, eating fruit, just doing like you said. And then all of the sudden, you gave me the woman – I mean, she looks nice, I appreciate that, but I think she's the beta version. She's got some problems, some kinks in

the system. We gotta figure her out, 'cause it's the woman you gave me. She has really led me into sin." Some men still try that. "I was a holy, righteous, pious man. Then I married this woman, and now she just made me wicked." No. You were driving headlong into hell. She just got in the passenger seat. That's all that happened. We're gonna talk about that. You can't blame God. You can't blame each other. You can't blame Satan. Eve does that, "The devil made me do it." Genesis 3.

What happens then is that marital strife comes and a curse is laid down. In light of this great picture of what we're supposed to build in Genesis 1 and 2, God lays a curse upon the man and the woman. He tells Adam, "Now, your work is gonna become hard. It is gonna be difficult to make a living and earn enough money to support a family." So, a lot of men look at it and they say, "This is unrealistic. I can't do this. I don't wanna get married. I don't wanna have kids. I know what this means. I take this seriously. There's no way in the world I'm gonna be able to provide." The woman's curse is that through much pain and toil she'll birth children. You ever seen a woman have a baby? Unbelievable. I can't believe there are any people on the planet. My wife went into labor and I'm sitting there with our first child, and I just sat there shaking my head. It's like, "I am so sorry. Had I known this, I'd have been a monk up in the hills. I can't – I'm so sorry." Just watching her I wanted my own epidural. I couldn't believe it. I need drugs. I can't even watch, let alone participate. You ever see women sitting around talking about their birth? It's like going to the VFW hall with all the old men who are veterans. Wanna see my scar? It's like, they're talking about going to war. Having a baby, for a lot of women, is a frightening thing. It's terrifying. So they say, "Okay, I don't wanna have kids. I don't wanna get married. I'll do Allie McBeal." You know? We're gonna get into that. Part of the curse laid upon the woman, too, is that she's gonna wanna rule over her husband; tell him what to do.

We're gonna talk about that. I'm not gonna tell you when 'cause you'd skip that day. Some people say, "Well, this is too much. This is unrealistic. Man, you gotta live in the real world." Genesis 9, Psalm 8, repeat the creation mandate. It's given again. After sin enters the world, the job description is still in effect. Now, it's just a lot harder. What would this look like? Here's what I want you guys to do. I want your imagination to awaken. I want you to see it. So, I wrote some things down. These are the themes of Proverbs that we're gonna be dealing with. How long do you think it's gonna teach – take me to teach you these things? It's gonna take us about two years to go through Proverbs. Because wisdom takes what? Time, and experience.

You can't just go up, drop \$29.95 and get a bucket of wisdom. You can do that with hot-wings, but not wisdom. Wisdom takes time. God's call upon Mars Hill church from Proverbs would be, "A redeemed people with God fearing hearts who practically live scriptural wisdom and humility with knees bent in submission to God-given authorities and the governments of home, church and state." We'll talk about that. "Masculine men of honor." We're gonna talk about that. That's not chauvinism. Chauvinism is the opposite of that. "Feminine women of dignity." We're not talking about feminism, it's the opposite of that. "Covenant marriages kissed with grace." We'll talk about what a covenant marriage is versus a regular old marriage: Proverbs 2. "Children nursed on the gospel." We're gonna talk a lot about why we love kids and how we raise them up, practically. "Worshipful feasting, drinking, singing and love making." Some of you may have been told wrongly that holiness basically means that if you're having fun you should repent.

Was it fun? "Yes." Must've been bad. No, not necessarily. We're gonna talk about that. Some of these things are my personal favorites. We're gonna talk about that one a lot. Jesus says, "I come to give you joy, and joy that is complete and full." I hope he is not talking about just Bible studies. "Friendships rained-upon with love, honesty and laughter." Real friendships. "Honorable labor conducted with vigor." "Financial hands extended to God, the poor, and future generations." Not just locust eating everything in sight. "And a cup filled with joy in all circumstances lifted to God's glorious grace." These are the themes of Proverbs. This is what we're gonna talk about for a long time. As we do, I'm gonna teach, and I'm gonna answer questions. We're gonna dialog this through, and we're all gonna put our hand to the plow. We're gonna begin with faith and imagination, and start to work toward building this new world.

Some of you, initially, are gonna be convicted of your sin. You're gonna say, "Oh, man. I am not even close. I am the fool, the drunkard, the sluggard, and the harlot. And that's just my weekend. I did that last night. For the love of God, I have work to do." So, what you do is you repent. Repent is changing and going a different course. Paul says in Philippians 3, "Forgetting what lies behind, I press forward." You gotta change. God enables us to do that by grace. Some of you are gonna say, "I can't do this. I'm the person who forgets to use my blinker. I can't build a new world. I can't even make a left turn." The good news is Paul tells the Corinthians, "God has chosen the weak to shame the strong, and the simple to confound the wise." You and I may just be dumb and incompetent enough to pull this off. It takes utter stupidity, and we – we have gotten so close that I think there's hope for us.

Lastly, some of you are gonna say, "This is overwhelming. This is too much. I mean, we're talking about constructing a whole other planet in the middle of this one." So, where do we begin? I'll close with this from Mathew 13. "He told them another parable," Jesus did. "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows it is the largest of garden plants and become a tree so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches." He told them still another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked through the whole dough." We start small. A guy looks at a little seed and says, "Well, I don't know what this is gonna do. We'll put it in the ground and wait." And eventually, your grandchildren will have a swing in that tree. And your great grandchildren will build a fort at the top. Put it in the ground and be patient.

A woman's making dough and she says, "Well, I don't know what a little yeast is gonna do." Well, put it in; just see. Put a little yeast in and be patient and wait a while. You'll see that it has a tremendous difference. You and I will not begin by taking over the government and running the public school system and taking over banking. But, where can we begin? Yeast and seeds. Where do we begin, guys? Little things. If you're married, love your spouse. Speak truthfully to one another out of reverence for Christ. James 1:5, "If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God." Start to pray. Read your Bible. Take the things that you already know and just begin to do those. For some of you, you don't need any more knowledge. You know too much. You need wisdom. And it may simply be taking those things that you know to be true and doing them practically. The reason why we like knowledge instead of wisdom is because knowledge comes quickly and wisdom takes time. So, we begin small. We begin by loving each other. We'll begin tonight with

singing songs, taking communion to remember Jesus' body and blood; God come in wisdom to reveal our folly, to forgive our sins, to conquer our enemies of Satan, sin and death.

We come to just do a few simple things. You say, "Well, the plate goes by and I put in, and I sing a song, and I pray a prayer. And I go home and I read the scriptures. And I love my wife. What difference does that make?" That's where the kingdom of God begins. It begins with faithful people doing little things. And can you think about it? I mean, this morning we had over 500 people today. This morning, we had over 500 people at church. I think total today will probably be over 800 people. Okay? When we started five years ago there was one service; now there's six. We started five years ago there was one church; now there's four. Plus our six services. What does a little seed do? What does a little yeast do? If you wait a little while it's actually kind of amazing what it can accomplish. It's amazing what it can accomplish. My wife and I started pre-marital counseling classes for couples five years ago because we had a few people that wanted to get married. Now, we're over 100. Over 100 couples.

What does a little bit of yeast do? It does a lot. You may look at yourself, you may look at your life, you may say, "I do not potentially see myself to be vital or worthwhile to this great undertaking." You are. We are one body, many parts, all necessary. Are you guys excited about this? I can totally see it in my mind when I lay in bed at night. I pray for God to give me imagination and faith. What would it look like if the men were men, the women were women, the children were children, God was honored, the scriptures were true, the gospel went forward? And if 800 of us today just decided to put our hand to the plow? We're here because 11 guys at one point decided to put their hand to the plow. I am a man filled with hope. A lot of people are saying, "Well, it's a dark day. Everything's going to hell. Why don't we just run off to the hills and wait for the end?" The Thessalonian church did that in the first century. They quit their jobs, sold their stuff, and were waiting for Jesus to come back. A few thousand years later we're like, "You know, you guys should've probably kept your jobs."

He had work for you to do. And I'll close with this. I love what Martin Luther said. They asked Luther, "If the world ended tomorrow, what would you do?" He said, "I'd plant a tree today." As long as I'm here I have work to do. I'm gonna do that work until the king takes me home. Why not? What else am I gonna do? I got 50 years. You guys with me? Read your Bible. Pray. Love each other. Put your seed in the ground. Throw your yeast in the dough. It's a good season. It's a great season. Take communion celebrating Jesus' body and blood. There will be two lines. Come down and back up. We'll make it quick. Sing. We'll take an offering. If you're not a Christian or you're a visitor, don't give. It's good to have you.

Father God, thanks for your word. Thank you God for hope. Thank you that there is faith and hope and love, and that hope is not disappointing. Lord God, we pray for this other world, this kingdom. We pray, Lord God, that by faith and grace and the imagination that you've given us we would close our eyes and see it. And that we would look around and realize that it begins with us just taking our little bit and contributing. Lord God, for some of us who are gonna grow weary and lose heart, I pray that we would just ever be kept in a place of imagination and possibility. Lord God, for marriages and friendships and employment scenarios and health issues and so many things that look bleak and dark, I pray Lord God that you would encourage us that we are part of something greater than ourselves. That we'd be patient; that we would build something that we could hand to our children and their children's children; that we would be like Jonathan Edwards, Lord God, on our knees every day praying for five generations. Lord God, please give us wisdom. We ask for that in Jesus' name, amen.