

TAKES IT PERSONALLY
PROVERBS 1:20-33

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

M.I. GOD IS A PERSON WHO EXPRESSES THE FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS. HIS DESIRE IS FOR US TO BE IN A RIGHT, INTIMATE, AND PASSIONATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. BUT SINCE HE IS HOLY, HE EXPECTS US TO PURSUE HOLINESS AS WELL.

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Last week we said that there are many voices calling out to us each day. We mentioned three sources. Parents' voices could either refer to our biological parents or Christians who have chosen to mentor us in one way or the other. Secondly there are sinners' voices. These are the worldly voices we encounter in our everyday lives. These voices speak to us through television, radio, magazines, friends, co-workers, and culture, and for the most part, the Devil is the source of these voices. Finally we talked about the voice of truth, which we as Christians hold to be our source of truth.

This morning, we are going to hear another voice. It is the voice of wisdom. Wisdom aligns itself with the voice of truth and the voice of parents, and the source of wisdom is the same, since it is from God Himself.

As we study through this morning's passage, you may come to think that this is a little rough for the first chapter of the book, and it is. But the intent of the wisdom writer is to lay out what is at stake right up front. If we act stupid and ignore wisdom, we have to suffer the consequences.

Let me give you a personal example. Now I know that you will not believe this, but I do not always act in the most Godly of ways. Wisdom says that we should settle all our arguments on a daily basis. But one day, my wife and I had been arguing and we did not speak for a week. When I realized I was going to need Luig, my wife, to wake me up to go on a golf vacation the next day, and not wanting to be the first to give in to break the silence, I wrote her a note and left it on the kitchen table, "Please wake me up a 5 AM." The next morning I woke up and discovered it was 9 o'clock, and that I missed my friends and the plane. I was furious! I was

about to yell at my wife when I noticed a piece of paper on my pillow. It read, "It's 5 o'clock. Wake up!" I hope you get the point. We will all have to suffer the consequences of our actions.

I do not know about you, but I often forget that God is a real person with real emotions. I tend more often than not to think of Him as a principle, an idea, a force or a super computer. But God is a real person and he has real feelings. The main idea of this morning's passage is: **GOD IS A PERSON WHO EXPRESSES THE FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS. HIS DESIRE IS FOR US TO BE IN A RIGHT, INTIMATE, AND PASSIONATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. BUT SINCE HE IS HOLY, HE EXPECTS US TO PURSUE HOLINESS AS WELL.**

I think this concept is extremely interesting. Not only is it interesting, it is essential that we grasp this idea or we will never be able to live Christianity the way it was designed. God is an emotional being. He loves, He hates, He gets angry and He forgives. He can be happy or He can be hurt. We must never forget that God is holy and perfect. And, because He is holy and perfect, His justice demands that nothing less than perfection come into His presence. However, because of God's passionate love for us, through the death of His Son Jesus, He has provided a way in which we can be in a relationship with Him. He desires our love, and one of the ways we can demonstrate our love for Him is through our pursuit of holiness. So we pursue holiness because we love God, not because it is the religious thing to do.

Another thing we need to know about God is that He is not afraid to express His emotions. In fact, He does so openly.

I. REVEALS HIS PASSIONATE SIDE (Vs. 20-23)

IS VERY PUBLIC AND VERY VULNERABLE IN STATING HIS LOVE FOR US.

In verses 20-23 God reveals His passionate side. **GOD IS VERY PUBLIC AND VULNERABLE IN STATING HIS LOVE FOR US.**

A. GOD'S PUBLIC LOVE SONG (Vs. 20-21)

In verses 20-21 we are instructed to listen for God's love song. Wisdom is making its appeal in the streets, in the public square, at the gates of the city, and in the busy downtowns.

King Solomon wrote this: There was a beautiful Jewish temple built in the capital city of Jerusalem. Inside the temple, the Ark of the Covenant was housed. All the religious ceremonies were performed at this temple. Yet it seems to me that we serve a God who is not interested in religion so much as He is interested in our relationship with Him and with each other. Wisdom is not hanging around the temple courts; it is out in the market place, looking for people to listen to its plea.

I would like to remind all of us here this morning that Christianity is not about coming here on Sunday's and doing religious stuff. Christianity is living our everyday lives in relationship to God. Christianity is not about obeying religious rules it is about living out our lives in a love response to God's love for us. Wisdom went out into the streets. Jesus did not hang around heaven waiting for us to find Him, He left heaven, was incarnated, and then He came down to where we live.

This is the first time we are introduced to wisdom. Wisdom is feminine and it is written in the plural. In the book of Proverbs, wisdom serves as prophetic. She presumes to speak for God and explain His responses and actions. She also claims to be wise in the sense she can guide us in our pursuit of holiness in everyday living.

Let us talk about wisdom as a person. First of all, wisdom is personified. In other words, the poet is referring to wisdom as if she were a person. Oftentimes she anthropomorphizes. We

talk about God as if He is a bodily human being, and we talk about His attributes as if they were persons. For example the Bible talks about when justice and peace will kiss. So the author may be referring to wisdom as an attribute of God's.

Another interesting point about wisdom being in the plural is that when the word Lord is written in the singular it can refer to either an earthly master or boss. But to set it apart when it refers to God, Lord is written in the plural form. This would also tend to indicate we are talking about words that come directly from God's heart.

One last interesting thing to note is the feminine gender. There is a deep feminine side to God as well. Even though we address God in the masculine, we must remember that in His fullness He encompasses both the masculine and the feminine.

God very publicly calls us to Himself. He portrays Himself as a lover, as a husband, a loving Father, a loving Mother, and as a friend. He publicly demonstrates His love for us and asks for our hands in marriage. Very publicly, Jesus demonstrated His love for us by dying on the cross. Jesus invited everyone to come to Him so that we could enter a love relationship with Him. God is saying to all of us this morning, "I love you. Will you love me? I want you to live life to the fullest so please listen to what I have to say."

B. OUR PUBLIC REJECTION (V. 22)

But unfortunately as verse 22 illustrates, when we reject God, the rejection is just as public. Look at this company of fools here. The first type of fool is not only the naive who love the lifestyle they have made for themselves and they love being foolish. If you ever watch MTV, and see the young people partying, drinking, dancing, and acting crazy, this is the type of fool described here. They love foolishness.

The second type of fool is the mocker. The first type of fool graduates to this type of fool. This mocker scoffs at the lifestyle Christ wants us to live. They only have contempt for God's laws and make fun of them.

The last type of fool kind of includes both of the above. This type of fool has no concept of moral truth. He hates truth and he hates knowledge. The poet has already alerted us to the fact that fools will despise knowledge.

God offers us eternal life. He offers us a restored and rich relationship with Him, and He offers us the abundant life. Only a fool would choose to pass up these offers.

C. GOD'S PUBLIC DESIRE (V. 23)

Look at verse 23. God publicly declares His desire for us. His deepest desire is to pour out His heart to us and reveal His deepest thoughts to us. The word heart here is actually Spirit in Hebrew. This is what intimacy is all about. God wants to pour out His Spirit, His heart, and His knowledge to us. God wants to fully reveal Himself to us.

I think this is amazing. The God of all creation and the God of the whole universe wants to get so personal and intimate with me that He longs to pour His heart out to me. That is what true intimacy is about. If you are looking for a relationship, there is no relationship that could ever compare to that. I hope we can understand this. It is incredible, but true. **GOD IS VERY PUBLIC AND VERY VULNERABLE IN STATING HIS LOVE FOR US.**

II. REVEALS HIS HOLY SIDE (Vs. 24-27)

WILL NOT FORCE US TO LOVE HIM AND HE WILL ALLOW US TO EXPERIENCE THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR FOOLISHNESS.

In verses 24-27 God reveals His holy side to us. God's desire for us is to be holy. But **GOD WILL NOT FORCE US TO LOVE HIM AND HE WILL ALLOW US TO EXPERIENCE THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR FOOLISHNESS.** Without being

sacrilegious, when we continually reject God, there will come a time when He quits trying and He says, "You go girlfriend. You go boyfriend."

A. STUPID DECISIONS (Vs. 24-25)

Believe me, as verses 24-25 point out, we will make plenty of stupid decisions if we fail to listen to God. Let me take a moment to point out one of the ways the poet has laid out this passage. Look at verse 20. Wisdom calls out to us. Call is in the present tense. Look at the verse we are in now, verse 24. Wisdom called out but some rejected. Called out is in the past tense. Now jump down to verse 28. There will come a time when those who rejected wisdom will call out to wisdom. Call out is in the future tense. The poet has organized this passage around the theme of calling out. God calls out to us. Once He has called out enough times, experiencing our rejection, He will quit calling out. It will then be too late for us to call out to Him.

Now keep in mind this is poetry and oftentimes prophets and poets use exaggerated language, but this passage should cause us to be careful to listen when He speaks. Through wisdom, God speaks to all of us. He calls out with a still small voice to our souls. He reaches out to us in love, in history, and in creation. He has advised us and rebuked us through Scripture. Yet, many of us refuse to humble ourselves, submit to, and obey Scripture. We hear God and understand what He is saying, but we refuse to accept and submit to His teaching.

B. DISASTROUS RESULTS (Vs. 26-27)

I have personally seen people experience the disastrous results described in verses 26-27. I know I preached through this when we studied through the book of Romans, but I would recommend that you go home and re-read Romans 1:18-32. If we continue to do things our own way, if we reject the wisdom of God in Scripture, and if we continue to reject the guidance of

mature believers, then there will come a time when God says to us, "You go ahead and do what you want to do. I don't care any more." I do not know about you, but that frightens me. If fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, then I am squarely on the right track. That frightens me. Look what these two verses are saying. If we go ahead and do what we want, make up our own rules, ignore wisdom, and follow the world or our own lusts, then it is certain we will face disaster, calamity, and troubles. Now the fact is, we will all face trouble in life. But the difference here is that these people are suffering because of their own stupidity. It seems to me that the poet is saying that we should not expect any sympathy from God at this point. I do not want to presume to speak for God, but look at the first sentence in verse 26. Wisdom says that she will laugh at these stupid people and not only laugh, but mock them. Now here is where I have to preach. This is a side of God that makes us uncomfortable. Yet, it is part of who He is -- a person. It seems to me that if we continue to rebel against Him and insist on doing things our own way, when the bottom falls out, there will be no sympathy. In fact, there may be a voice saying, "Are you happy with your decision now?"

Keep this truth balanced with God's love. In the story of the prodigal son, The Father let the boy run away. He did not rescue him. The boy ended up in a pigpen, envying the pigs he was feeding. He had slipped to the lowest level of existence. The text says that it was at that moment that the boy came to his senses. He went home, humbled, and confessing his unworthiness. Low and behold, the loving Father was waiting for him.

If you have come to recognize that you are on the wrong path, do not waste time. Turn around and humble yourself before disaster strikes and confess your sin to God. He is waiting to restore you. The Lord calls this repentance.

If you are making your own rules for life, if you are rebelling against God, if you are isolating yourselves from good, mature, Christian mentors, then be careful God may just be in the mood to say, "You go boyfriend. You go girlfriend."

Believe me, it is not too far a journey to disaster from that fork in the road. That is a frightening thought to me. **GOD WILL NOT FORCE US TO LOVE HIM AND HE WILL ALLOW US TO EXPERIENCE THE FULL CONSEQUENCES OF OUR FOOLISHNESS.**

We have seen the passionate loving side of God and we have seen the holy side of God that does not tolerate sin and rebellion.

III. REVEALS HIS DILEMMA (Vs. 28-33)

GOD'S HOLINESS IS IN CONSTANT TENSION WITH HIS LOVE. JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT WE SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SINS, BUT HIS HEART LONGS FOR US TO COME TO HIM, REPENT, AND BE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.

In verses 28-33, God reveals His dilemma. **GOD'S HOLINESS IS IN CONSTANT TENSION WITH HIS LOVE. JUSTICE DEMANDS THAT WE SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR SIN, BUT GOD'S HEART LONGS FOR US TO COME TO HIM, REPENT, AND BE IN A RIGHT RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM.**

A. TOO LITTLE TOO LATE (V. 28)

Wisdom has just painted a bleak picture of the results of disobedience. Young people often think, "I have plenty of time to repent and get my life together when I get older and married. But for now, I want to enjoy myself." Verse 28 refutes this philosophy by demonstrating that it may be a case of too little, too late. It seems that people always start to look for God when they find life is out of their control. But here it seems to say that if this were the case with us, it would be wrong to expect God to answer us.

Please feel the harshness of this passage. Wisdom says, "They will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me." How frightening is that? There may come a time when we have rebelled against and refused to listen to God so much, that when the bottom falls out, He will not listen to us. In fact, He will hide from us. I know that a lot of Christians believe that Christianity is all about praying this magical prayer, being baptized, and having someone tell you that you are saved. That is religion. That is not Christianity. Christianity is a lifelong pursuit of a love relationship with God in which we pursue holiness. If we are not pursuing holiness, then how can we say we love God? If we cannot say we love God, then how can we say that we are Christians? Personally, I would not risk pushing God to the imaginary line where He tells me to go do what I want to do, and then He withdraws and gives me the silent treatment.

B. THERE IS ALWAYS A PAY DAY (Vs. 29-31)

And if all this is not freaking us out enough, verses 29-31 remind us that there is always a payday. Romans reminded us that the payday for sin was death. Because of all the work and energy we put into sin, our paycheck will be death, eternal separation from God in hell. Those who hate knowledge, those who do not fear God, those who will not accept Godly advice and those who spurn rebuke, can be sure that disaster awaits them. Look at verse 31. They will eat the fruit of their ways. That fruit is trouble, disaster, and calamity. But most of all, it will be separation from God and all His blessings.

Talk to women who have married unbelievers. Talk to unwed mothers. Talk to men who have married unbelievers, or who are divorced and having trouble seeing their children. Talk to people who have smoked all their lives and have lung cancer. All you have to do is talk to

people who have made poor choices in life and are now suffering the results. I am hoping that wisdom is giving us fair warning to follow God's ways.

C. HIS TORMENT (Vs. 32-33)

Why? Because as verses 32-33 point out, God is tormented by our foolish behavior. Justice demands that sin and unrighteousness must be paid for. Look carefully at verse 31. Rebellion against God, ignoring Him, or just being lazy or unconcerned about Him will lead to death, which is separation from God.

But please do not miss God's heart once again in verse 33. After preaching all this doom and gloom, God, through wisdom calls out one more time, "Listen to Me. Live in safety and enjoy the abundant life I have prepared for you. God's desire is that we love Him and follow Him. God loves us and strongly desires to bless us. God passionately loves us.

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This is what I want us to understand about our relationship with God. When we sin and rebel against Him, it is not that we have violated some religious rule or received some heavenly check mark. No! We have hurt someone who loves us passionately. We have hurt God. Keep this in mind. **GOD IS A PERSON WHO EXPRESSES THE FULL RANGE OF EMOTIONS. HIS DESIRE IS FOR US TO BE IN A RIGHT, INTIMATE, AND PASSIONATE RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM. BUT SINCE HE IS HOLY, HE EXPECTS US TO PURSUE HOLINESS AS WELL.**

I am wondering what is it that we are holding back from God this morning in our love relationship with Him? We are so cautious with our love.

Listen to this story of D.L. Moody.

“One day D.L. Moody returned from one of his evangelistic meetings. When he was asked to give a report he said, ‘There were 2 1/2 conversions.’ One of his hosts said, ‘two adults and one child I presume.’ Moody responded, ‘No, two children and one adult. The children gave their whole lives. The adult had only half of his to give.’

God gave all He had to give to us in love. We must truly give back to Him all our love. This morning, we are celebrating communion. Since God loves us so passionately, it is His desire that we participate. However, since He is a holy God, He expects us to participate with broken and sincere hearts. Let us celebrate the passion of our Lord in communion.