

How To Hack The Equation Without Formulas

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[0 : 00] Today begins our summer study in Proverbs. Please follow along in your bulletin as we share a few of these. Like a gold ring in a pig's snout is a beautiful woman who shows no discretion.

Better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent on folly. Some people dig a fork into a pie but are too lazy to raise it to their mouth.

A foolish child is a father's ruin and a quarrelsome wife is like the constant dripping of a leaky roof. Like the one who grabs a stray dog by the ears is someone who rushes into a quarrel not their own. Just as a door turns on its hinges so a lazy bones turns back over in bed. Better to live in a tumble down shack than in a mansion with a nagging spouse.

As a dog returns to its vomit so fools repeat their folly. Like a broken tooth or lame foot is reliance on the unfaithful in a time of trouble.

[1 : 06] Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and a nagging wife. Do not answer a fool according to his folly or you yourself would be just like him.

But answer a fool according to his folly or he would be wise in his own eyes. Dreamers fantasize their self-importance. They think they are smarter than a whole college faculty.

A nagging spouse is like the drip, drip, drip of a leaky faucet. You can't stop it and you can't get away from it. Like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

Like a thorn bush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. Good morning, Watermark. How are you guys doing? My name is Mike.

I'm working with university students here at Watermark Community Church. Tobin is out this week and he'll be in Oxford for some more training. And yeah, so it's just exciting to be here again.

[2 : 12] And last time I preached here at Watermarks just a couple weeks ago was the night after the Champions League final in Europe. And I preached on idols in our lives. And I had a really hard time figuring out like do I stay up all night and would I just watch the game or would I actually do the right thing and stay in bed and get some rest before preaching.

And I can't believe it's the final of the Euro Cup. I think Tobin just plans all his traveling around all that so that he sees how I deal with the idols in my life.

Actually, between the two sermons, I've done a lot of traveling too. Right after the Champions League final, we actually took 14 students from Watermark out to the Philippines.

And we worked with the local church north of Manila and did some outreach there and worked with the Slam kids, also taught on church planting. And I just wanted to use the opportunity to say thank you to you guys for the support and your prayers and your love for the students.

It really brought the students together. Some of them are here and they're nodding. And it was really a great week. And just after the summer, we hope that we can get you an update on what's going on and the impact that this has.

[3 : 24] We just don't want this to be just one trip. But just continue to build a relationship with people there and stay in touch with them. And then after the Philippines, I actually went to Germany with my wife Katie. I was just on vacation to see family.

And one of the things you may not know about my hometown is that it's the place where the brothers Grimm spent most of their time studying and teaching. If you don't know who the Grimm's are, think of fables like Cinderella or Hensel and Gretel and Rapunzel, Snow White.

Actually, in 1812, exactly 200 years ago, they published their first book in my hometown. The book included all these fables and a lot of others. And when Katie found out that Sleeping Beauty's castle is only 30 miles away from my hometown, she really wanted to go.

We didn't make it, but next time I'll take her and I'll give her a kiss in Sleeping Beauty's castle. So why do I tell you about the Grimm's? And we are actually kicking off a new sermon series on the

Proverbs.

And today we'll also talk a little bit about the Grimm's and how they relate to that, you'll find out. So for the next five weeks, we will look at the books of Proverbs. And in preparation of the sermon series, I asked a few people what the experience is with the book of Proverbs.

[4 : 36] And a common response I got was that they haven't really looked at the book before, so in detail. Some actually didn't even know that the Proverbs was a book of the Bible. So it's something that probably is not really taught in church very much.

Some actually had skimmed through some of the Proverbs and studied a little bit, but never really in depth. And one response that I got very often was that Proverbs has a lot of good principles that we can apply to life.

Now the Proverbs are a part of what we call the wisdom literature in the Bible. So for the next five weeks, we want to see what is that kind of wisdom. What does it have to offer? Or is there something that can be applied to our lives today?

So we will have an introduction today. We'll dive into Proverbs, kind of get a feel a little bit for what it's about. And then the next four weeks, we will look into specific areas of our lives, our work life and study life, our family life.

We'll look at how the Proverbs can be applied to the words we use in just relating to people. And one of the things that we would hope for you to do is to get plugged into community group for that as well.

[5 : 41] Our church life doesn't really so much revolve around Sunday morning. We really would love for people to engage deeper with one another, to not just hear what is said on Sunday morning, but we have a place to get into community, to discuss things, ask questions.

And that's what is happening in our community group. So if that's something you want to do, we invite you after the service to talk to the leaders and people outside and just find a group that is close to you.

We can help you with that. The book of Proverbs is basically a collection of sayings containing a lot of insight into life. The book has its origin with King Solomon.

And in 1 Kings 4.32, it says that Solomon spoke 3,000 Proverbs and his songs numbered 1,005. And in verse 34 of the same chapter, it says, from all nations, people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who heard of his wisdom.

So thousands of Proverbs and songs came from Solomon. Now, how did that really happen? Did Solomon just have one day a really creative night and started to sit down and say, I need to come up with some really smart things that people can apply to their lives.

[6 : 51] And this is, I think, where a little bit of the story of the Grimms can help us connect with what really happened there. So the Grimms published this book 200 years ago called The Children and Household Tales.

It included 86 stories, many of which nowadays have been turned into movies that you know. But the stories at that time, the way they came up with them was not just that they started to write them, but they collected them.

They studied the culture. They listened to people. They tried to see what the stories were that were passed on to the children. Then they saw different variations and they asked why these variations were there.

And then they found out that some of these stories were really good now for teaching. So they began to put these stories together and it wasn't there to entertain, but also to teach and educate the kids and to pass on some of the wisdom of the culture and to let people wrestle a little bit with the morals of the story.

The first edition that was published 200 years ago was actually not received very well. It was called Only the Children's Tales, but many of those tales were not very suitable for children.

[8 : 00] So one of the adjustments that was, for example, made by the Grimm's to the second edition was that the mother in the Snow White story and the Rapunzel story suddenly turned into a stepmother. I think the moms didn't really want to read these stories where the moms plot against their children, want to kill them, and that's better for the stepmom to do that.

And also some of these sexual references, like Rapunzel, a little shady person, they were removed over time. So there was some adjustment. And so in the next years, up to 1857, he actually began to collect 211 stories.

Things were edited and added and removed. And then we now still today use the stories for teaching, but even the movies now have adopted a little bit to our culture.

So how about the wisdom that we find in the Proverbs? And what Solomon wrote down, can the wisdom of someone that lived almost 3,000 years ago still apply and teach anything to us today? Is there any relevance for us in the 21st century in what people said at that time and what they wrote down as something that was supposed to teach people? I think what Solomon did at that time as well as he listened a lot to people.

[9 : 14] He collected the stories of the people around him and he knew about his culture. His people, the Israelites, they were the people of God. And the nation for centuries was on a journey to seek more about who God is and how he invites them to live a life honoring God.

So many of the sayings of the culture probably were passed on from generation to generation. But if one of these Proverbs or sayings of the culture, if they realized that it's not very suitable for teaching, it is not really honoring God, then these sayings probably disappeared over time.

But other teachings, they grew over time and were added to the collection of stories that were passed on by the culture. And so Solomon begins to read and learn and wrestle with that wisdom. And he looks into what is it that is suitable for people to see what it means to honor God and to find that wisdom that is in him. But the Proverbs are not formulas to better living.

They are not like a list of like the 10 things you should do to be a better dad or to be a more ethical businessman. But maybe in our modern mindset, we sometimes look at the Proverbs like that.

[10 : 31] That, oh, a proverb is a good teaching, we'll take that, and we just need to apply it to our life and everything will be fine. So the Proverbs are not blueprints to our life. But how do we then understand the Proverbs if they are not like a formula that is easily to be applied?

How do we hack the equation of Proverbs without formulas? Over the past year, I actually have learned a lot of things.

Last year, I probably learned more about life than I've ever learned in a year before because last year I got married. And one thing I learned is it wasn't new to me, but somehow still I had to experience it before I really believed it.

There is no formula to really understanding your wife. Guys think there is, and we've been looking for that formula from the foundations of the world, but there is no such formula.

But even though there is no formula there, there is a lot of wisdom. There is experiences that people have had in their marriages, things that you may pass on and read in books of people that have made certain experiences, but you still have to figure out how do I take all that and how do I apply it to my life, to my spouse, to the context that I live in.

[11 : 51] If, for example, you plan to apply any of the proverbs that were read in our drama before the sermon, you have to make sure that you use them in the right moment and in the right context.

So do not, and I just repeat that, do not end an argument with your wife or girlfriend quoting that it is better to live alone in a tumble-down shack than sharing a mention with a nagging spouse.

You may get some practical experience in applying the proverb. Bible scholar, Tremper Longman, says that one feature of a proverb is that it does not teach universal truth.

On the contrary, proverbs are true only if stated at the right time and in the right circumstance. So look at one of the other proverbs that you heard in your scripture reading. Proverbs 26, 4-5, it says, do not answer a fool according to his folly, or you yourself we will be just like him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, or he will be wise in his own eyes. So what is true? It's a contradiction. Like what are we supposed to do with that? It depends on the circumstance. We must not only know the proverb, but we also need to understand and read the people to which it applies.

[13 : 06] So proverbs otherwise are useless, or they can actually even be dangerous. And we all know what can happen when people take scriptures, move them out of context, and try to apply them to life. We learn in two other proverbs in our reading, in 26, 7, like the useless legs of one who is lame is a proverb in the mouth of a fool.

Or in 26, 9, like a thorn bush in a drunkard's hand is a proverb in the mouth of a fool. The ability to read the circumstances and the people around you is crucial for speaking wisdom.

The proverbs are not simple formulas to apply whenever we feel like it, but they require wisdom, and not wisdom from us, but wisdom from God. They require a deep understanding of people, of life, and of circumstances.

Let me tell you a story that may move us towards kind of like seeing more of what that really means to find God's wisdom and acting according to God's wisdom and not human understanding.

In 1940, my home country of Germany invaded the Netherlands. One of the families living there at the time was the family Ten Boom. The Ten Boom were Christians, and when they saw what was happening all around them, especially to the Jews, they felt convicted that they needed to help, that they couldn't stand on the sidelines, and they decided to put a shelter in their home, a hidden shelter, a hidden room, so that they could hide the Jews there from persecution and from the fear of being deported.

[14 : 37] So as they built the shelter and they invited people in there, more than 100 Jews over the period of the next two years stayed with the Ten Boom in safety. They fed them, they made sure that they could escape the country whenever possible.

But in 1944, an informant told the secret police about their shelter. And as a result, the Ten Boom family was imprisoned and then later brought to a concentration camp, which only Corrie Ten Boom, the daughter, survived.

Her father and sister both died in the concentration camp. Corrie Ten Boom said about her experience, there are no places that are safer than other places. The center of his will is our only safety.

His will is our hiding place. Let us pray that we will always know it. The world may have said to the Ten Boom's, save your life.

Just don't get involved. You just need to stay quiet and wait until it's all over. It's not your battle to fight. It's not your responsibility. But for the Ten Boom's, they followed God's wisdom.

[15 : 47] They followed a higher wisdom that of the kingdom that stands for justice and mercy and beauty and goodness and that mattered to the Ten Boom's. There's an image that Corrie Ten Boom uses.

She talks about a rug and when you look at the backside of a rug, you only see the knots and you see the threads dangling down.

It's like the picture on the right. They sometimes seem a little messy. The colors seem like they don't really fit and they are a random mix. And when the rug is made, like threads actually may still be dangling down and they're not really connected.

And that's how we see the world and that's how Corrie Ten Boom described how we may see the world. That we only see the unfinished product. We don't see the beauty of the picture. But God, on the other side, he looks at life and he looks from his perspective and in his wisdom and all is different.

He has a full understanding of what is happening and for him, that beautiful picture unfolds of life and then he draws us into that. Everything for him fits together.

[16 : 54] The wisdom is found in him. But we cannot see from our perspective. So we want to apply a proverb. We need to see a glimpse from God.

A glimpse from his perspective, from his kingdom to make sure that we know what God is moving us towards. We need to know about his kingdom. We need to know about his justice and mercy. We need to know about how God is restoring and putting it all together.

We need to know that we are living in a broken world but God is making it whole. And the Proverbs invite us to take part in that healing and the redemption and moves us towards the beautiful picture of that kingdom.

But when we don't have this perspective, if we have no glimpse of what he is inviting us into, then we are trying to make sense of things by our own strength.

We are trying to explain things in our own understanding. And that is the way it is in our world. We often rely on the wisdom that is found in our world and in our context all around us and it leaves us sometimes as fools.

[18 : 01] When I think of Hong Kong, we also write our own Proverbs. We have Proverbs written by human wisdom of the city and the people in the city and they are based on an incomplete picture of the messy picture that does not value what God values.

The Proverbs we have created ourselves, they may look like this. Gather as many resources as you can. Take what you can.

It's all about what you have. Or a proverb of Hong Kong may sound like study hard, it will give you a good job and that will give you money and that will give you happiness.

happiness. Or a proverb may say your self-worth is just found in how respected and loved you feel. Be successful, get status, get power and you will be respected.

That is how the Proverbs look when we don't see a glimpse of the kingdom interpreting our Proverbs. God is calling us into seeing his kingdom and moving towards that.

[19 : 09] Let's look deeper into one or two of the examples of that tension between God's wisdom and human wisdom. Between us trying to look at life from the backside rather than asking God to reveal what he has for us.

Let's take the example of relationships. I think anyone can relate to that on some level. So if you want to find the right person or you found the right person, what does your culture say or human wisdom say that you should look for?

Maybe find someone on the same social status that you are. It's important that you can provide for each other, that you can keep your living standard and maybe make sure that she looks presentable, not just for your own sake but also for what people may think about you like when you associate with the person that's with you.

Hong Kong is quite shame-based. So what happens when things don't work out the way that you thought the relationship would look like once you enter one? Divorce is not really the best option and so maybe ignoring each other is better and just live in a miserable relationship.

Maybe actually an affair is culturally even more appropriate than just getting divorced. At least it keeps the appearance to the outside and you still get the respect or love that you're longing for.

[20 : 34] And when you hear a proverb like the ones we heard before, we may only hear the Bible saying, oh, when there's a quarrelsome wife, it's better to actually just be gone, just pack your stuff and go.

But when we look through the eyes of God's wisdom, we realize that it's a very dangerous way to apply a proverb. When we separate it from the movement towards the kingdom and what the kingdom of God stands for, it is dangerous to apply it in that way.

So if we look at it in a different light, we first of all see that the kingdom of God is about reconciliation and redemption, also our relationships. So in the first place, we have to see that God in Christ is redeeming everything and he calls us for all relationships to be reconciled.

So here's the challenge, the first challenge to see a proverb like this in a different light, to realizing that we are called at first to redeem and work towards solving problem and conflict within our relationships to honor God.

If God calls us to restore our relationship, we cannot separate that from the way we should interpret proverbs from that calling. Also, we may read these proverbs and feel like, oh, that's a great quote that I should give to my wife.

[21 : 49] I should quote that every time we have some problems, not all of them but some. In a way, it's a good way to put down your woman, but the reality is that the proverbs were written not as something that you learn to memorize to quote to your wife, but they were actually written for the man to study and to gain deeper insight about life.

So if I would rewrite the proverb 1122, the first proverb in your bulletin, it may basically say, why would you men fall for the beauty of a woman if you already know that her character is a disaster? Why would you enter a relationship in the first place? If you would not be blinded by the world and the standards and the values of this world, and instead see through God's eyes, you would see it's like a golden ring in a pig snout.

Would you be blinded by that? You need to see clearly and get your priorities right. So here we see that when we begin to look from the lens of the kingdom of God at the proverb, we see that it draws us towards something.

Let's look at another proverb in 1712, the next one. it's better to meet a bear robbed of her cubs than a fool bent by folly. I've made some pretty bad choices in my life about people that I have allowed to step deeply into my life.

[23 : 12] Especially when I was working still in banking and the investment world, I looked more for the status and the power and the money people had so that I would be associated with who they are and the power they had, than ever looking at their character.

I invested into friendships that went never very deep, would go out and have a good time, but I should have seen that when you surround yourself with people that have no accountability to other people, that have no transparency about the troubles they go through in their life with anybody in

their lives, people that are driven by their insecurities, that when you surround yourself with it, you ultimately become a part of that and your own problems come out and your own insecurities come out.

And it's true even in church, that sometimes we adopt the standards of the world and we look more for the business success and the status and the name card that people have, the influence that people have, and then we put people in leadership, but the reality is that when we look at the Proverbs, we see that they are very different standards that stand for God's wisdom.

I call it toxic people. Toxic people are people when you step into a relationship where you get burned and hurt. And I think the first question we need to ask ourselves, are we toxic people?

To the people around us and the people that we enter in relationship. Just think back of who did you spend time with last week? Who do you share your meals with?

[24 : 48] Who do you share your time with? who is there that you allow to step deeply into your life, to know you, to know you deeply and walk with you? The Proverbs warns us that we rather should face a crazy grizzly than people driven by their own wisdom, their selfishness and their destructive motives.

And if you see the underlying message of God's kingdom in this proverb, it also calls us not to be fools ourselves. So in that proverb, are we maybe the fool that people should not meet?

For the next five weeks, we will go deeper into the proverbs. We'll dive deeper into what it means to see the proverbs through the eyes of God's kingdom. We'll look into proverbs relating to our work and our study life, our family life, and different elements of our personal life, and we'll try to see how they can be applied to our lives, not through our own wisdom, but through God's wisdom.

As I want to close, I want to look at 1 Corinthians 1.27. There it says, but God chose what the world considers nonsense to put wise people to shame.

God chose what the world considers weak to put what is strong to shame. We see the wisdom of God most clearly in the foolishness of the cross.

[26 : 20] When God, who is all wisdom and who is everything, steps into human history, when he leaves everything behind and lives among us in the person of Jesus Christ, and he shows his love to us on the earth through his death on the cross, his great wisdom about redeeming the world.

When the one who has everything humbles himself to become nothing, and walks in obedience to the Father, and even in obedience to the death on the cross, we see God's full wisdom revealed.

Over the next few weeks, we want to see that more clearly. We want to dive into what it really means that Christ is the wisdom that helps us interpret Proverbs and apply them correctly to our lives.

The Proverbs point us to how God is doing his work of restoration, to restore relationships and to live by wisdom. So we invite you guys to join us for the five years.

So again, join a community group, begin to discuss that with people, because ultimately, as we go into the Proverbs, we don't just want you to think about it and it being wisdom in terms of something smart that you learned, but it's something that we all go on a journey on to apply to our lives, that it begins to impact our personal lives.

[27 : 38] that it begins to impact our families, that we take that wisdom and God's perspective on life to begin to impact our workplace and our neighborhood, our communities and our city.

So let's pray as we close and as we begin this journey on the Proverbs. Father, you are the great wisdom and we just confess that so many times we rely on our own wisdom, our own strengths and we think we have it all figured out and that we often fall prey to the idols of this city that promise us wisdom and a different way of life and they have nothing to do with your values.

So let's pray that you would begin in this journey to touch our hearts and you would stir a conversation within us as a community to see you more clearly, to see what you have for us in the fullness of your wisdom.

And Father, we pray that in that journey we would see the wisdom of Christ more clearly, that we would see the foolishness of the cross, we see it as your wisdom, as the invitation of grace and forgiveness to invite the world back into a relationship with you and to enter the journey of restoration.

Father, we just pray that you just do your work in this church and through this church that we would just not take this message for ourselves as something that changes us as a community, but that we would see your longing to restore this city and that we would just be ready to take part in that and be willing to be the hands and feet in this world.

[29 : 23] We pray this in Christ's name. Amen. You may be seated. We have a few announcements. The first thing is, if you were here last week, we introduced you to Pastor Aldrin.

If you are here, can you stand up? Oh, there he is. So Pastor Aldrin is here with us for a few months to work on a vision of how and if we can plant a Filipino congregation or church with us.

And so after the service, there will be a vision meeting and you find information in the bulletin. So if you are interested in participating or just dreaming and envisioning what that would look for, Watermark, to be part of that, and you don't need to be Filipino.

Everybody is welcome, right? To dream and envision, a lunch will be provided. So please come and see Pastor Aldrin after church and read the information in the bulletin.

And the second thing is that in August, we will have a VBS. So we just want to give you a heads up that if you're planning your schedule for your kids, then you can talk to Natalie or Melanie and people involved in the children's program.

[30 : 30] Finally, if you're new to Watermark, you probably have noticed that we don't really pass an offering back around here. We believe that the offering and money is just a part of worship.

And so we would just ask you to go to the kiosk if you feel called to give back to God. And it's just a big island in our lives and we want to allow you to wrestle with that on your time and how you want to just respond to that part of your worship.

Actually, there's something that's connected to your giving. A little over a year ago, we had a special offering towards a church in Tokyo after the tsunami. And we want to invite Roger here and he's pastor there at the church, right?

The worship musician there. And he'll just come up and share a little bit about what has happened since then. So I just want to invite you up. Good morning, everybody.

It's an honor to be able to worship with you this morning. I send greetings from Grace City Church, Tokyo, your sister church in Tokyo and nation of Japan. We're only a little over two years old, so we're not very old and we're definitely not this big.

[31 : 41] We're well under 100 people, about 65 or so. But we are encouraged because God is working there and we see the gospel working in the hearts of the Japanese people.

As you can imagine, it's been quite a year. I mean, we have been a church less than a year when we found ourselves faced with one of the biggest disasters in human history.

One of our pastors, Seema Oyagi, had just moved in three days before the earthquake, so he had boxes everywhere. And for months afterwards, his family had to live out of boxes.

And yet, we were encouraged by your prayers. Thank you. And for your extreme generosity of giving, which allowed us to go up north and bring food, water, and supplies to people who really needed it.

The earthquake happened on a Friday. On Sunday, we were able to collect goods from our church and other churches. And then on Monday, we headed up in a truck. Me, Seema Oyagi, that other pastor, and another missionary.

[32 : 48] It was kind of like a scouting trip. You know, we didn't know if we were going to be able to get up there. We didn't know if the roads were passable. All of the highways had been shut down, so we had to take little mountain roads, driving all night long.

There were a lot of traffic as everybody was fleeing south. The roads, some of them had been washed out. There was big gaps between the steel structure of the bridges and the ground. And so if we weren't careful, we would break the axle of our car. There were fears of nuclear radiation. If you remember those early days, every day the news seemed to be getting worse and worse.

Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, a new fire, a new explosion, fears of meltdown. Yet, despite all this, nothing had prepared us for what we actually saw when we got to the tsunami area, there were entire towns that had been wiped away.

There were boats the size of probably the middle part of this room here, as big, sitting right in the middle of busy intersections, what used to be busy intersections, in the middle of town.

[34 : 01] I saw automobiles on top of four-story buildings. And I saw raw displays of emotion that I'll never forget. Of course, Japan is not like that now.

You know, by the end of the summer last year, most of the debris had been cleared out. And so now we're focused on trying to get people back into their homes, getting their homes fixed, trying to restore neighborhoods and communities.

