

# Genre-Sensitive Expository Preaching Session 2

## Proverbs

**Singapore Bible College Seminar by Dr. Jeffrey Arthurs in July 2014**

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## 1 Timothy 4:16

Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by doing so, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

# Proverbs are a universal literary form:

**Chinese:** Talk does not cook rice.

**Sumerian:** A donkey eats its own bedding.

**Spanish:** He who knows little soon repeats it.

**French:** All are not hunters who blow the horn.

**English:** Call a man a thief and he will steal.

**Modern American:** No pain, no gain.

**Nigerian:** A single partridge flying through the bush leaves no path.

# Overview

- Theology of Proverbs.
- Literary Form and Rhetorical Functions of Proverbs.
- Genre-sensitive Expository Preaching of Proverbs.

# Theology of Proverbs

- The hermeneutical stance of Proverbs: stable wisdom literature.



## Theology of Proverbs: A Sub-Genre of “Wisdom Literature”

Ecclesiastes, Proverbs, Job, and the  
Song of Solomon.

Wisdom Literature tends to be  
meditative as it ponders the ways of God  
and the events of the world. The purpose  
of wisdom literature is to equip and  
motivate the reader/listener to make  
godly choices.



## Theology of Proverbs: Two Types of Wisdom Literature

- Stable (or conservative)
- Subversive (or radical)

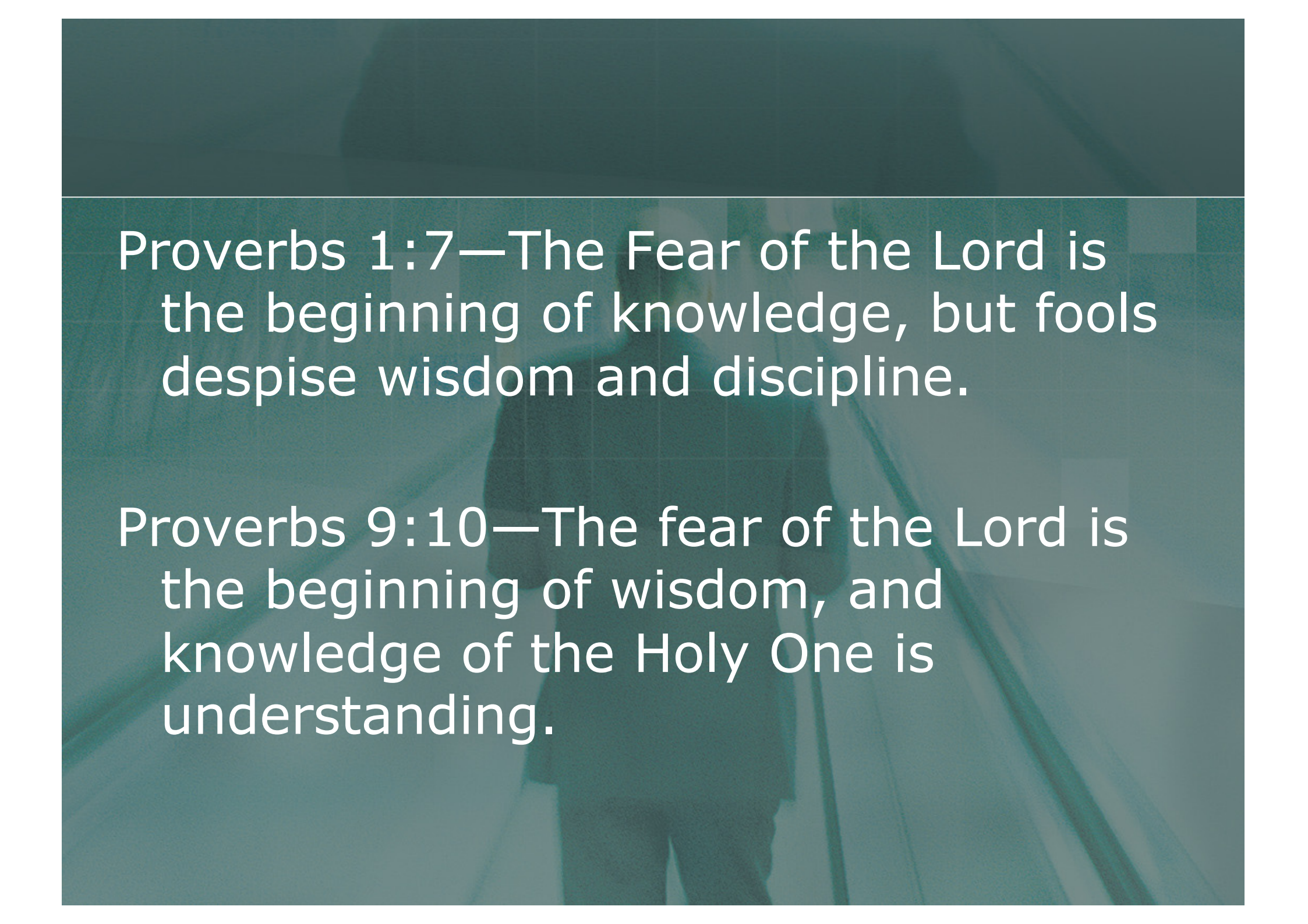
Proverbs belong to the  
stable/conservative class.

“The essence of a proverbial saying is that it is based on observations of how things are in the world. It is a flash of insight into the repeatable situations of life in the world. . . . Naturally, in the context of firm belief in God, the proverb comes to express insight into the way things are, or should be, in the world ordered by God.”

Norman Perrin, *The New Testament: An Introduction*, 296.

# Theology of Proverbs

- The hermeneutical stance of Proverbs: stable wisdom literature.
- The theological foundation of Proverbs:  
**The fear of the Lord.**

A person wearing a dark, heavy coat stands in the center of a large, light-colored tent or canopy. The person is holding a long, thin pole or staff. The background is filled with the fabric and ropes of the tent, creating a sense of depth and texture. The overall lighting is soft and diffused, typical of an indoor or sheltered outdoor setting.

Proverbs 1:7—The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 9:10—The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

# What does the “fear of the Lord” mean?

- A. Respect and awe.
- B. Anxiety and concern.
- C. Dread and terror.
- D. All of the above.
- E. None of the above.

# Do *Not* Fear:

Those who do not represent God, those who do not speak for Him:

- Fear not those who kill the body (Matt. 10:28).
- God has not given us a spirit of cowardice (1 Tim. 1:7).
- Joseph of Arimathea feared those who persecuted Jesus. He was a “secret disciple” (John 19:38).

# *Do Fear:*

## GOD

- (Deut. 10:12) What does the Lord required of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve him?
- (Ps. 96:9) O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness; fear him all the earth.
- (Is. 8:13) Let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.
- (Ps. 86:11) Unite my heart to fear your name.

# Is the fear of the Lord a NT concept?

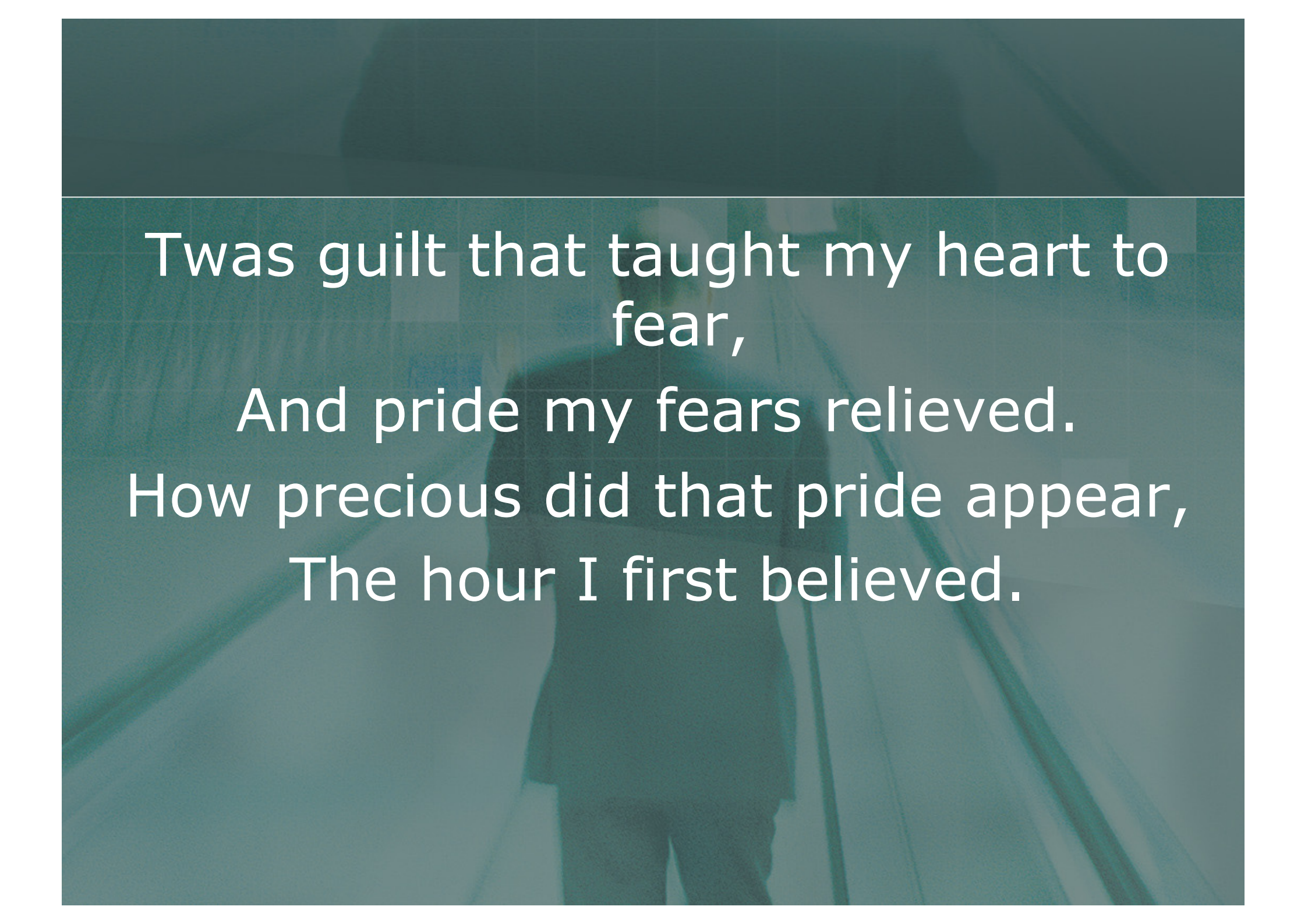
- (Rom. 11:20-22) Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either. Consider therefore the kindness and the sternness of God.
- (Matthew 10:28) Fear the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.
- (2 Cor. 5:10-11) We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; . . . therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we try to persuade men.

# Is the fear of the Lord a NT concept?

- (2 Cor. 7:1) Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates our body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of fear for God.
- (Phil. 2:12) Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.

# Is the fear of the Lord a NT concept?

- (1 Peter 1:17) Since you call on a Father who will judge each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.
- (Acts 10:2; 13:6, 26) Converts to Christianity are called "those who fear God."
- (Acts 9:31) Then the church . . . was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.



Twas guilt that taught my heart to  
fear,

And pride my fears relieved.

How precious did that pride appear,  
The hour I first believed.

# Discussion:

1. What hymn is this a paraphrase of?
2. What substitutions are made?
3. What seem to be the underlying assumptions about fear?

# The fear of the Lord leads to shalom:

- Proverbs 19:23
- Proverbs 28:14
- Proverbs 9:10-11
- Proverbs 10:27
- Proverbs 14:26-27

## Isaiah 33:6

He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the Lord is the key to this treasure.

# Theology of Proverbs

- The hermeneutical stance of Proverbs: stable wisdom literature.
- The theological foundation of Proverbs: The fear of the Lord.
- The theological perspective of Proverbs: communal life.

Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair (Prov. 1.3, NLT).

# Theology of Proverbs

- The hermeneutical stance of Proverbs: stable wisdom literature.
- The theological foundation of Proverbs: the fear of the Lord.
- The anthropological perspective of Proverbs: communal life.
- The soteriological focus (sanctification) of Proverbs:
  - God's initiative.
  - Human response: discipline and effort.

# The need for discipline and effort

My child, if you accept my words and treasure up my commandments within you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; if you indeed cry out for insight, and raise your voice for understanding; if you seek it like silver, and search for it as for hidden treasures—then then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

(Prov. 2:1-5)

# Theology of Proverbs

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  - Human response: discipline and effort.
- The Christological hermeneutic of Proverbs: how might you preach Christ?

# Literary Form and Rhetorical Functions of Proverbs



# Wisdom Forms

- Proverb
- Admonition (command or prohibition)
- Numerical Saying
- Rhetorical Question
- Wisdom Poem
- Example Story
- Confession or Reflection
- Riddle
- Allegory

# Literary Form and Rhetorical Functions:

- Short.
  - Therefore, the rhetorical effect is . . .
- Indicative mood.
  - Therefore, the rhetorical effect is . . .
- Poetry

# Poetic Devices

- Parallelism
- Repetition
- Alliteration
- Assonance
- Simile
- Metaphor
- Compare and contrast
- Rhyme

# Proverbs 16:31

Gray hair is a crown of glory;  
it is gained by a righteous life.

**Big idea:**

A head of gray is a crown of glory,  
at the end of a righteous story.

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  - Therefore, the rhetorical effect is . . .
- Poetry
  - Therefore, the rhetorical effect is . . .
- “Case Studies.”
  - Therefore, the rhetorical effect is . . .

“Proverbs are high points of human insight. To use a literary term, a proverb is a moment of epiphany (insight, revelation).”

Ryken, Leland *How to Read the Bible as Literature* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 124.

# Genre-sensitive Expository Preaching of Proverbs

(Saying what the Author said,  
doing what the Author does)

- Do not preach humanism or materialism.
- Preach observations, not promises.
- Preaching portion: thought units, topics.
- Use case studies. Shine the “spot light.”
- Use your imagination.

# Genre-sensitive Expository Preaching of Proverbs

(Saying what the Author said,  
doing what the Author does)

- Make Your central idea “proverbial.”
- Borrow the proverb’s movement.
- Adopt the teacher’s stance.
- Use some humor.

# Case Study: Proverbs 18:20-21

- **Exegesis:**
  - Thought unit
  - Poetic form (parallelism, figurative language)
  - Grammar
  - Canon

# Proverbs 18:20-21

From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach  
is satisfied;  
he is satisfied by the harvest of his lips.

Death and life are in the power  
of the tongue,  
and those who love it will eat its fruit.

# Case Study: Proverbs 18:20-21

## Exegetical Idea:

- Subject: Why did the author of Proverbs warn the reader about the life and death power of words?
- Complement: Because the one who loves (uses) that power will experience the consequences of doing so.

**Homiletical Idea:** Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

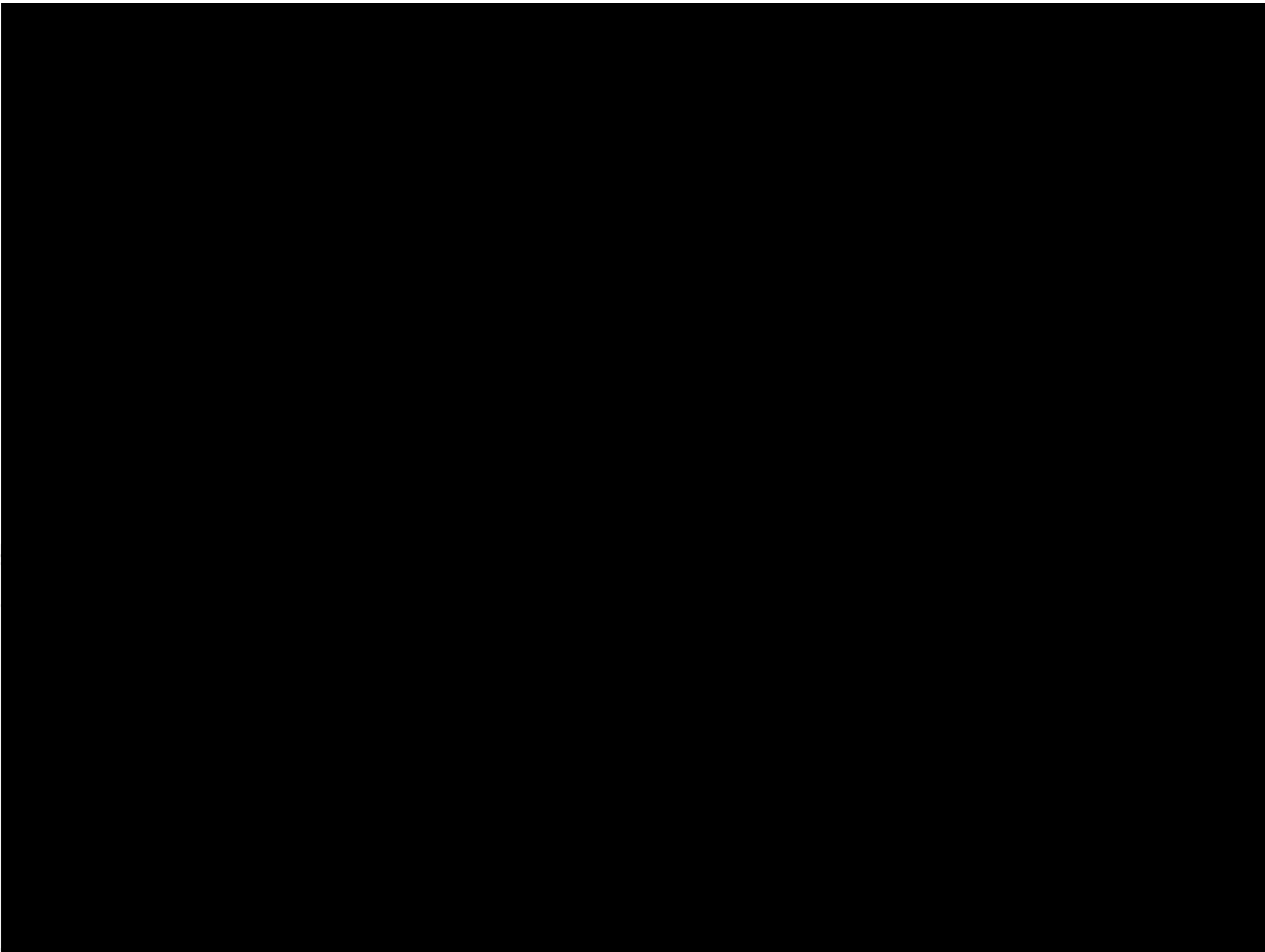
**Purpose:** to remind of the power of words, raise consciousness of our speech, and give hope that the tongue can be tamed by the power of God.

# Case Study: Proverbs 18:20-21

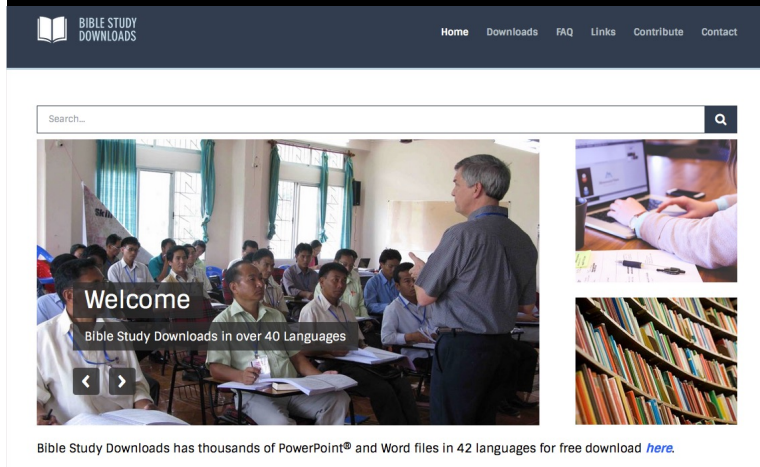
- **Homiletics:**
  - Arrangement: Big idea stated early and often, but tension maintained.
  - Teacher's stance: rhetorical questions, visuals, explanation of some exegesis.
  - Case studies and examples.
  - Christ-centered hope.

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