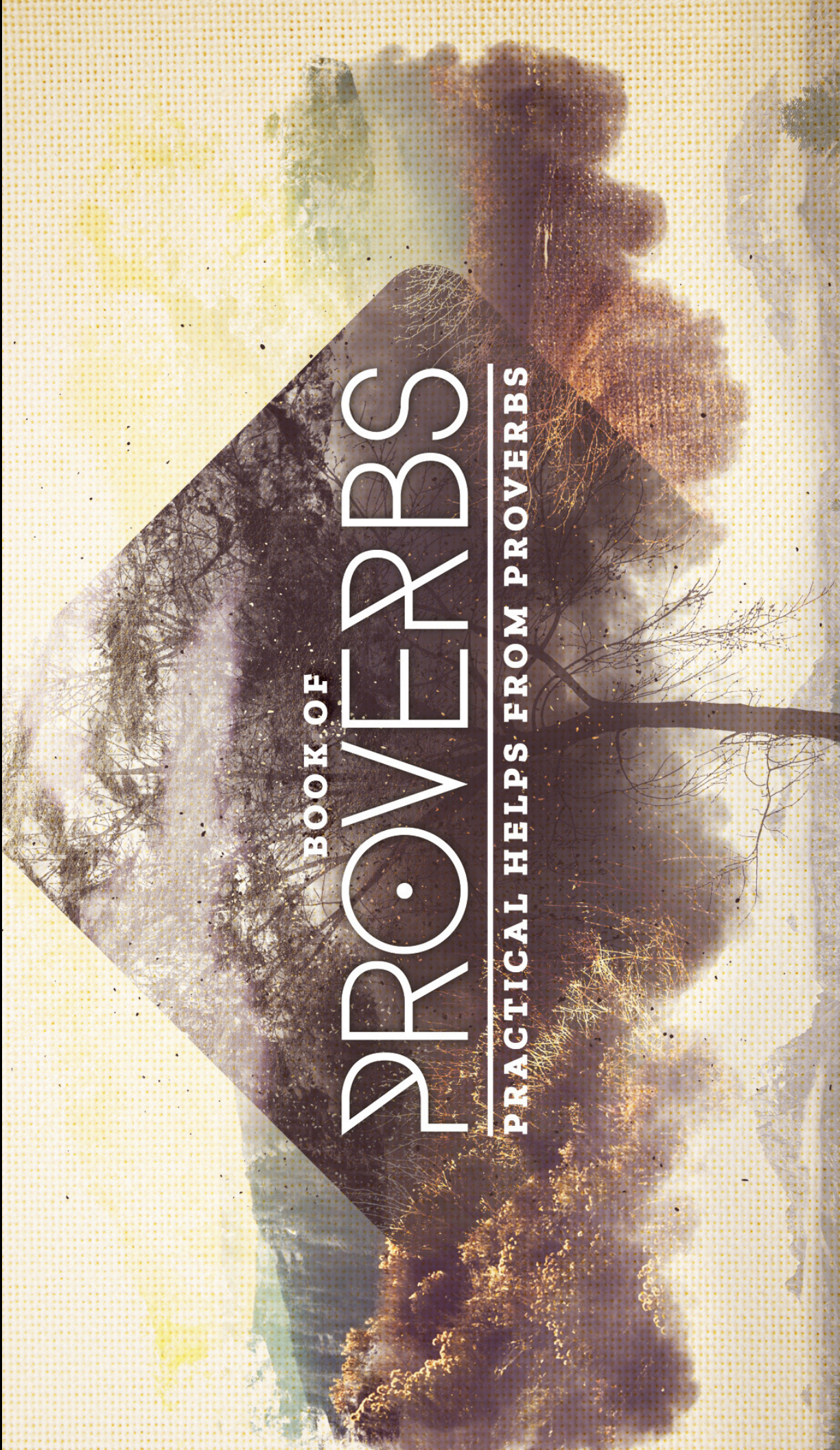




Practical Help from Proverbs

July 26 -
September 20





PRACTICAL HELP FROM PROVERBS

A STUDY

Through Proverbs

July 26 - September 20

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Written by TJ Johnson

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The book of Proverbs is one of the most read and most misunderstood books in the Old Testament. Often times people treat it as a promise book: Here are the promises of God that will come true all of the time. But Proverbs, as a part of wisdom literature, is meant to be read in conjunction with the other wisdom literature books. Proverbs is not so much a book of promises but principles. All things equal, this is how life works out. But not all things are always equal. Sin distorts the order of the world. So when you read Job or Ecclesiastes you get a more wholistic view...sometimes bad things happen to "good" (there is only one who is good) people, not as a result of their sin but as a result of their holiness.

But more than that, Proverbs is a book that teaches us the way of wisdom. Even if the immediate result isn't what you expected, it is always wise to choose the way of wisdom. Proverbs compels us to live life under God's rule and in line with God's way. It is a book that is extremely practical. Every day we are faced with decisions about finances, friendships, holiness, family, work, rest, joy, sadness, anger, sorrow, and on the list goes. Proverbs teaches us how to choose the path of wisdom in each of these areas and further teaches us how each area of life relates to the other.

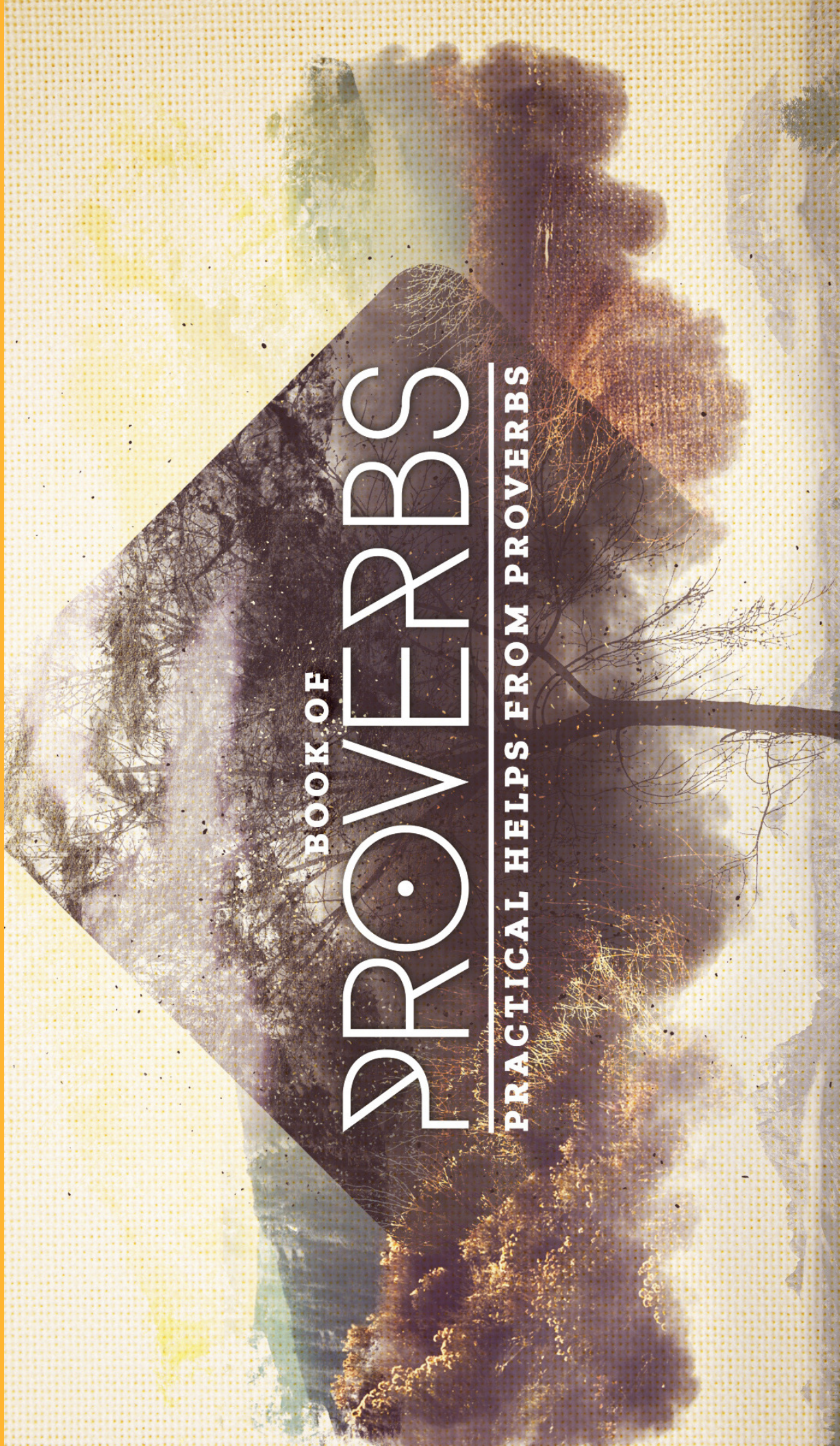
It is a book in which a father speaks to his son and points him on the path of wisdom and warns him of the path of folly. As the father speaks to his son, so our Father speaks to His sons and daughters, choose wisdom, choose my way, choose me!

Choosing wisdom with you,

Pastor TJ

July 26

Wisdom at all Cost





Wisdom at all Cost

- There are many different opinions of the definition of the word 'wisdom', but how does the bible define wisdom as mentioned in the sermon?
- According to Proverbs 1:7, how do we attain wisdom? Is it a one-time action?
- The sermon provides a number of ways in order to gain wisdom. Can you name some of the ways?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:24, 30
Proverbs personifies Wisdom as a woman. How do these verses change your understanding of the Proverbs verses?
- Read 1 Corinthians 1:25
We are so quick to be boastful about human wisdom, But Paul admonishes human wisdom comparing it to less than God's foolishness. Why do you think that is?
- We often buy and read self-help books or listen to podcasts of respected people who we think of as being wise. What is the difference between the 'wisdom' they dispense and God's wisdom?
- Each and every day we are asked to make decisions in life, decisions which not only affects us, but those around us. Does this scare you? How do you go about making a wise decision?
- Read Proverbs 2:6
The verse states that God gives wisdom. How do we hear this wisdom? Where can we find this wisdom?
- How do we learn from God which path to take, which path leads to folly and which path leads to life?



Wisdom at all Cost

- It is one thing to receive wisdom, it is quite another thing to apply wisdom. How do we go about applying wisdom from God?
- Unbelievers and believers, simple of knowledgeable, we all need God's wisdom. How do we go about helping others recognise and apply God's wisdom in their lives?
- Read Proverbs 2:1-5
Is wisdom something we hear, remember and never put into action? Give a reason for your response.
- What is the difference between knowledge and wisdom?
- What is the difference between intelligence and wisdom?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

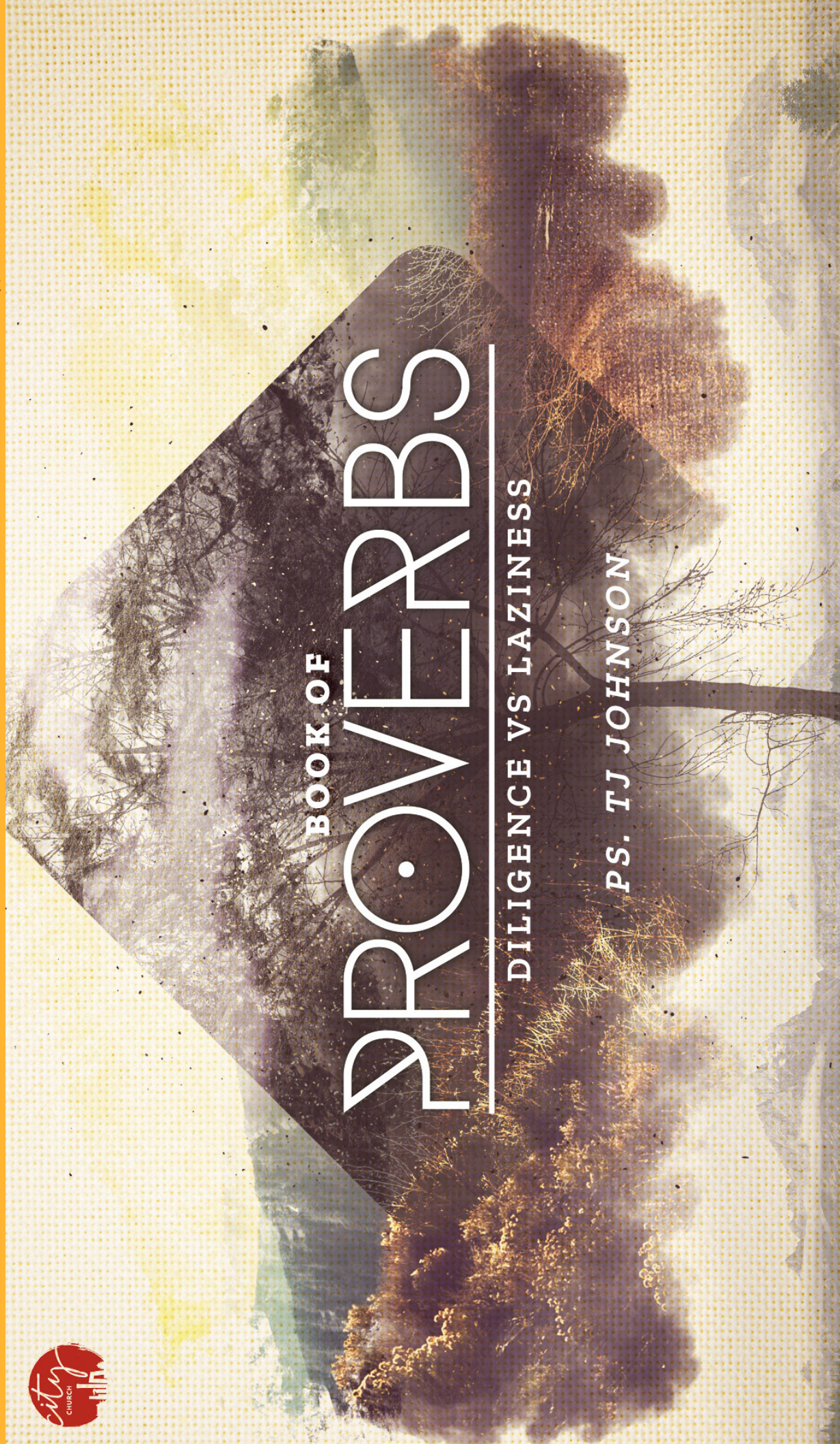
Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



Diligence vs. Laziness

August 2



BOOK OF

PROVERBS

DILIGENCE VS LAZINESS

PS. TJ JOHNSON

The book of Proverbs has much to say about laziness. It is perhaps harder on laziness than any other vice. It goes to extremes as it describes laziness in hopes that we would avoid it at all costs. It calls laziness slothfulness...sloth, the slowest of all animal, that ventures less than 40 meters per day. These animals are so slow that algae actually grow on them. Proverbs calls those who are lazy sluggards...slug, whose top speed has been recorded at a neck-breaking 0.3 kilometers per hour. One Proverb compares the lazy to a door hinge...they lay on their bed and turn back and forth all day, exerting energy that never accomplishes anything. Another Proverb paints a picture of extreme laziness, one who is too lazy to lift his spoon from his soup to his mouth.

Proverbs doesn't just say laziness is bad for your health, it reminds us that it is bad for our soul, that it is sin, and that ultimately it is destructive to one's faith. The problem with laziness is that it is self-deceptive; "The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly" (Proverbs 26:16). Therefore, we must be careful not to too quickly dismiss the possibility that WE are lazier than we realize. As Proverbs explores the areas of laziness and the deceptive masks of laziness it invites us to self-examine. And if we find that we do in fact struggle with laziness, then we are called to repentance. The good news is that the vice of laziness, like most of the topics in Proverbs, has a virtue, hard work. Even better news is that Jesus, the one who never sleeps nor slumbers nor vacations nor slacks off...for the world is constantly held together by through His hard work, is more than willing and capable of transforming us into His image.

This includes a transformation from laziness to hard work. And as Jesus transforms our work, we take joy in knowing that our work is transforming the world around us.

Striving with you,

Pastor TJ



Diligence vs. Laziness

- As the sermon states, modern society lives for leisure. Can you think of times where you wanted to do leisure activities rather than work? Did you feel that you accomplished something?
- Leisure is necessary after hard labour, but work need to happen first. Have you ever left your duties until the last minute? What happened?
- It was asked in the sermon that we read through the book of Proverbs once a week, and to do so, give up a movie or two episodes of a series. How did you feel when you heard you had to give up leisure time?
- Read Proverbs 12:24 and 15:19
In which ways does the book of Proverbs help us defeat our vices, such as laziness? Discuss in the group
- Compare to other sins, such as lust, wrath and greed, how do you see laziness? How does the Bible see laziness? (cf. Prov. 6:6-11; 13:4; 19:15; 26:13-16)
- Everyone, at some point in their lives, have complained about the work that they have to do. Why do you think we have to work? (Read Genesis 2:15 and John 5:17 for further clarity)
- What are some forms of laziness that we have in our lives today, that we can see in our own, and others' lives?
- How do you think your/our laziness affect our relationships with others?
- How do you feel about your job/career? Do you work as hard as you are able, or do you just coast along doing the bare minimum? In what ways does diligence in your career bring health to yourself, your family and, ultimately, to the world?



Diligence vs. Laziness

- What are the things that you dread doing at work, and how do these passages encourage you to do it with diligence?
- Read Colossians 3:23
How did Paul urge the church in Colossae, and ultimately us, to view our work/careers and how we do it? How should we view, and do, our jobs, even if we don't like them?
- Discuss in the group how involved you are with the church at the moment. Do you think you are doing enough? Explain
- Read 1 Corinthians 14:26 and Ephesians 4:12
As you read these verses, has God excluded anyone within the church from working towards the benefit of others? Why do you say so?
- Compared to your career, or that thing that you enjoy doing, how much effort/work do you put into your family? Do you think it is healthy? Read 1 Timothy 5:8, what does Paul say we are to do?
- In today's society it is easy to say that we have 'so many Facebook friends' or 'Twitter/Instagram followers!' But how often do you actually speak to your friends? How well are you acquainted with their needs, their fears and their joys? (Read Prov. 27:17)
- How much time do we spend in God's Word every day? How many hours do we spend watching TV, or scrolling through our social media accounts? Read Philippians 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 15:10. What can we learn from these verses regarding the amount of work we need to put into our faith?



Diligence vs. Laziness

- What does Proverbs 3:28 say about procrastination? What we can do today, we should do. How often do you put something off until tomorrow which needs to be done today? Discuss in the group things which you leave for later
- What does Jesus say about putting things off until later? What does procrastination lead to? Read Luke 9:59-62
- Do you ever only do that 'which I am paid to do'? Do you ever go the 'extra mile' and do work which is not in your job description, or do you leave it for the other person 'whose job it is'? Read Proverbs 6:6-8 and Galatians 6:10 and discuss what we are supposed to learn from these verses
- There have been times that we have started a project at home, or work, then find it is more difficult than we expected, and not carried through with the work. What does Proverbs 12:27 and 19:24 have to say about perseverance?
- Having listened to the sermon and worked through all these questions, we may feel like there is no hope for us, that we are all guilty of laziness at some point in our lives. However, how can we be assured that we do not fall into the trap of being lazy? Read Proverbs 3:5-6, John 4:34 and reflect upon the following statement: "...defeat[ing] vices is not just through avoidance, but through embracing that vice's opposite virtue." Discuss in the group how we should tackle the problem of laziness in our lives



Prayer & Praise

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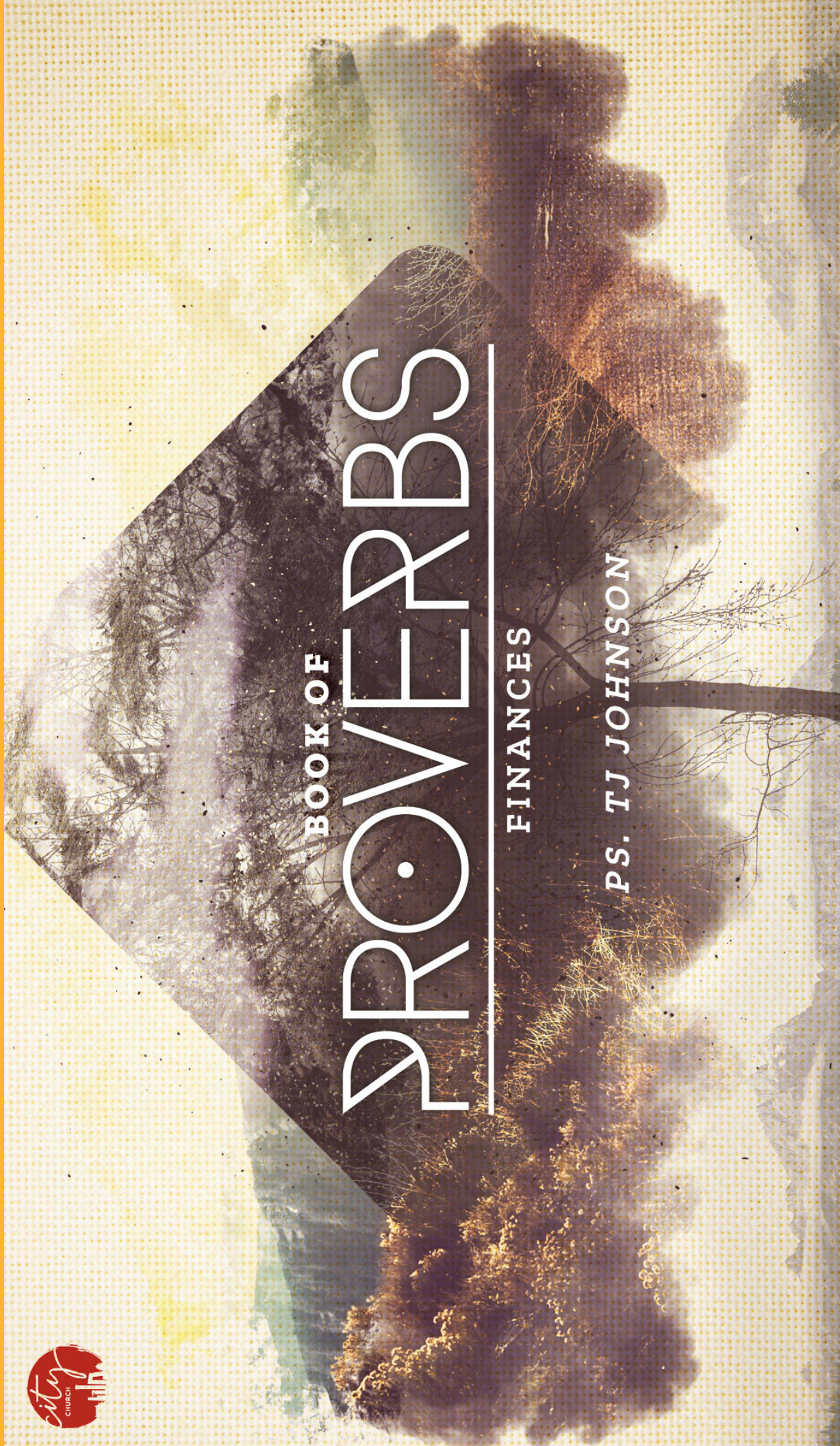
Prayer Requests

Praise Reports



Finances

August 9



BOOK OF PROVERBS

FINANCES

PS. TJ JOHNSON

As we study through Proverbs, we can't ignore how much it has to say about money as it places before us the path of wisdom and the path of folly. Money matters is extremely personal. Some would say it has no place in the church, leave finances to the experts and just focus on Jesus. But as we focus on Jesus, we find that He, the Wisdom of Proverbs come in the flesh, spoke often about money. Nowhere does Jesus separate faith and finances; he intentionally links them together because He knows money MATTERS. Money and possessions is directly linked to our everyday life and therefore our own heart.

How much you pay an employee reveals something about your relationship with Jesus. How much you spend on your groceries, your didi rides, your streaming accounts, your clothing, your electronics, your rent, and your vacations reveals something about your relationship with Jesus. How easy or hard it is to give to the poor or the needy reveals something about your relationship with Jesus.

Proverbs reminds us that money is neutral, that money doesn't do anything...people do things. So Proverbs reminds us to use money wisely. It reminds us of the folly of the unsatisfied, discontented heart of the over-spender. It reminds us of the folly of the untrusting, fearful heart of the hoarder. It calls us to seek gain in righteous ways, so that we can spend God's money wisely, thereby loving God, your family, neighbors, and the world.

Planning, saving, and spending, and giving with you,

Pastor TJ



Diligence vs. Laziness

Warmer

- Take a look at your recent purchases, expenditures and giving. What does it reveal about your heart?

The Way of Folly

Read Proverbs 21:17, 20

- What foolish pleasures do people spend their money on?
- Give some examples of when you, or someone you know, devoured God's gifts rather than steward it?
- With JingDong, TaoBao and Amazon, spending has never been easier. How can a person who struggles with wasteful spending their habits?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17

- Share with the group ways in which you have enjoyed God's gifts to you?
- How have/can you invite others to share in God's gifts to you?

Read Proverbs 12:9

- Have you ever struggles with hoarding money or possessions?
- What are some opportunities you currently have to 'water' those around you?
- What 'grain' do you have that the world is in need of?
- How do you balance spending and saving?

Read Proverbs 10:2 and 22:16

- What unjust gain are we in Beijing tempted with?
- What areas in your life are you tempted with to increase your wealth at the expense of oppressing the poor?



Diligence vs. Laziness

Read Proverbs 13:11 and 20:21

- The Bible presents the desire to get rich quick as foolishness. Why is that?
- How can we prepare our hearts to be ready for more, if God wills that we get more in the future?

The Way of Wisdom

Read Proverbs 21:5

- Share with the group how you budget finances
- What questions do you have about budgeting?
- What advice about budgeting would you give your younger self?
- Have you found yourself in bad debt? If applicable, how did you work yourself out of the debt?
- Take some time to pray for those in your group who are in financial difficulties

Read Proverbs 28:27

- Which opportunities do you have to give to the poor and needy this week?
- In which ways have you 'hid your eyes' from the needs of those around you?
- What rules, or principles, do you have for giving?

Read Proverbs 19:17

- Share of a time when your giving increased your fellowship with Jesus
- What are some ways God has rewarded you in your giving?
- Discuss the difference between tithes and offerings
- If all giving is to God, why should we give to the local church and not just to the needy?



Diligence vs. Laziness

Read Proverbs 11:4 and 7

- What are some of the ways riches can bring you false hope in God?
- How can we guard our hearts in trusting in the works of our money rather than the works of Jesus?
- Can you think about people who have done a lot of great things with their wealth but are far from God?
- Many people use their wealth to build legacies for themselves. How can we use our money to build a legacy for Christ and His Kingdom?
- Take some time to share with the group how one is found right before God?
- Ling Lai shared, "A Chief Faithful Officer is faithful in stewarding assets big or small, faithful in other assets (\$ and people) and faithful to build character". How are you stewarding each of these areas in your life? What are some ways you can grow in these areas?

Going Deeper

- Many of us have heard the saying: "Money can not buy happiness". Consider the following verses and discuss in the group why wealth and money should not be our focal point (Prov. 23:4-5; 13:8; 18:11; 28:11, 25; 14:20; 11:4, 7)
- Why do you think generosity is an important aspect of being a Christian? Does it mean that we should only be giving our money to the needy? Discuss in the group



Prayer & Praise

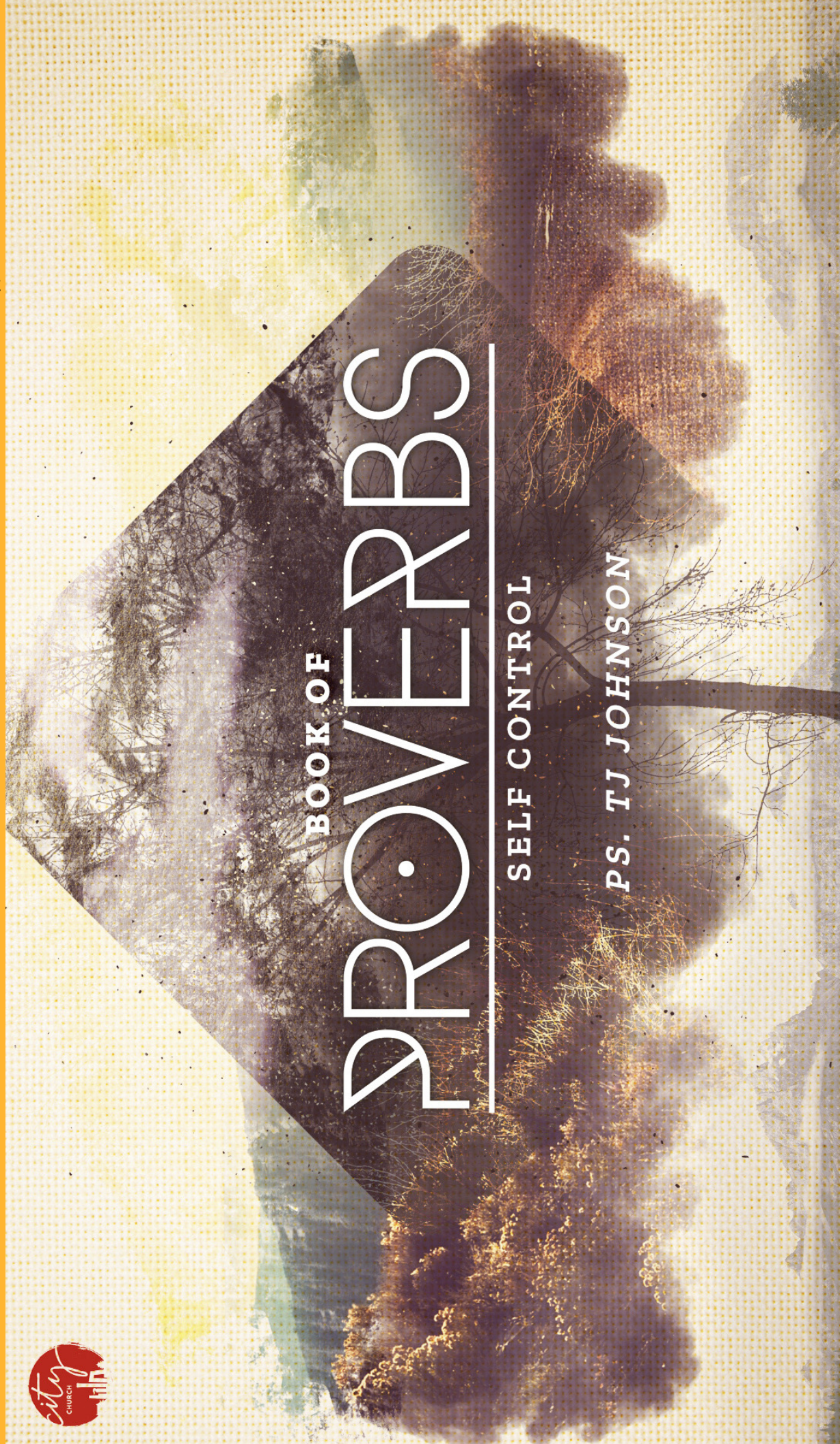
End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

August 16

Self-Control



In ancient times a city's safety was not found primarily in the might of men but the strength of its walls. Jericho seemed impenetrable as long as its walls stood tall, but once the walls came down there was nothing stopping Israel from securing the city. Beijing, Xi'An, ShangHai, and Nanjing all knew the defensive power of walls. Once the doors to the city were shut, the citizens slept safely at night knowing no enemy of theirs could enter.

As we study Proverbs, we find that we too have an enemy. Proverbs calls this enemy folly. Proverbs also reminds us that in every area of life our enemy seeks to destroy us by taking us off path. So, wouldn't it be nice if we too had ancient walls to protect us from our enemy? Well, Proverbs tells us that we do! Proverbs 25:28 calls out to us to build up the wall of self-control in order to fight off our ancient enemy, folly.

I know what you're thinking. Self-control? Really? That's the solution? Self-control is an often-misunderstood concept; something akin to willpower. Yet any addict will tell you willpower will only last so long. As such, self-control doesn't get much attention these days. I imagine it's not something you have spent much time this week pondering. Which is unfortunate. Just a casual glance at modern society and one can see it is filled with addiction and over-indulgence. From drugs, alcohol and sex to cigarettes, food and video games people from every walk of life and every race and every gender is in need of SOMETHING to protect them from their own desires and inability to say no to those desires.

The Bible says what is needed isn't a pill or a total removal of those desires, but the Spirit's fruit of self-control. Join us this week as we learn how to build taller and wider walls that will keep us on the path!

Building the wall with you,

Pastor TJ



Self-Control

Ice Breaker

Read Proverbs 25:27-28

- Share with the group what your original understanding of the concept of 'self-control' is. After reading the above verses, what is your understanding of 'self-control'?

Self-control is a Wall

- If you have ever visited the Great Wall of China, you will know how important it was for the ancient Chinese and their safety from their enemies, so it is applicable to compare self-control with a wall. Discuss in the group why you think self-control is a defence against our enemy
- Reflecting on Proverbs 25:27 and the sermon, give some examples of over-indulgence and total avoidance
- When you consider society today, your home country and your host country, in which areas are self-control most needed?
- Can you name areas in your life where self-control is lacking?

Self-control is a partnership

- Can you explain the difference between self-control and will-power? Which would you say is the more effective discipline?

Read Proverbs 18:10

- What are some practical ways in which we can take refuge (run into it) in Jesus?

Read Proverbs 16:6 and 21:31

- In the sermon it is mentioned that will-power will **not** cause you to turn away from evil, but fearing the Lord is. Discuss in the group what it means to fear the Lord or how fearing the Lord helps us with self-control



Self-Control

- In many work situations, we are required to delegate work to other employees in order to accomplish a task. In such a situation who does the work, and who does no work at all? How would you apply the above example to your spiritual life, working with God?
- Practically speaking, how does our spirit partner with the Holy Spirit?

Read Galatians 5:16

- How do we walk with the Holy Spirit? Does it happen when we are baptised, or when we accept Christ as our Saviour?

Self-control through Confession

Read Proverbs 28:13-14

- Why do you think it is important to confess your sins before God? Take some time to discuss how one confesses their sin to God.
- Which lies do we tend to tell ourselves about our sins? Are you able to name them?

Read Galatians 5:22

- Self-control is mentioned as a fruit of the Spirit. Which things in our lives will prevent self-control from growing and blooming?
- Take some time to write down at least one thing in your life which is out of control. Next to that, write out a person's name that you can, and will, confess it to (see James 5:16). Take some time to quietly confess

Delighting in Christ and His Commandments

Read Proverbs 7:1-3

- How do we go about replacing out-of-control desires in our lives? Take some time to verbally 'treasure up' Jesus and encourage one another to love Jesus and His word.



Self-Control

Read John 16:14

- Share with the group ways in which the Holy Spirit has glorified Jesus in your own life recently

Read Proverbs 27:7

- This verse proclaims that the 'one who is hungry, everything bitter tastes sweet'. How do we ensure that we do not become hungry for our worldly desires?
- Does this mean that we will never again hunger after the desires of the flesh? Why so?
- Since our worldly desires will be with us for as long as we are on earth, our goal would be to not remove these desires, but to rule over them. Read Hebrews 11:25-26 and discuss how the writer of Hebrews showed what Moses did in order to rule over his earthly desires. How can we practically do the same?

Self-control is to consider All of Life

Read Proverbs 4:26

- Reflecting upon the verse, how do we remain wise and not follow the road to Folly? How do we apply this to our own lives?

Read Proverbs 22:3

- How can we constantly be on the look out for spiritual dangers? Can you give an example of when you saw temptation coming and successfully hid from it?

Read Romans 8:4-5

- How does this passage show us to apply self-control to our lives? How often do you suppose we are to apply self-control? Explain your answer



Self-Control

Read Proverbs 24:10 and Isaiah 40:31

- Have you ever felt as if you were too weak to overcome temptation? Have you ever experienced the 'renewing strength' of the Holy Spirit? If so, share with the group

Read Proverbs 26:11

- How does Proverbs present a lack of self-control? Have you ever felt like this description? How does the Gospel free us from the guilt and shame of our sub-human behaviours?

Read Proverbs 16:6

- What does this verse teach us how to prevent ourselves from being dogs returning to our own vomit? Take some time to discuss the steadfast and faithful love of Jesus

Read Proverbs 31:3-5

- 2 Corinthians 6:18 tells us that God will be a father to us and we shall be sons and daughters to Him, a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), thereby, using an analogy, we are adopted kings and queens. Considering this, how, and why, does Proverbs 31 warn us not to indulge in worldly pleasures?



Prayer & Praise

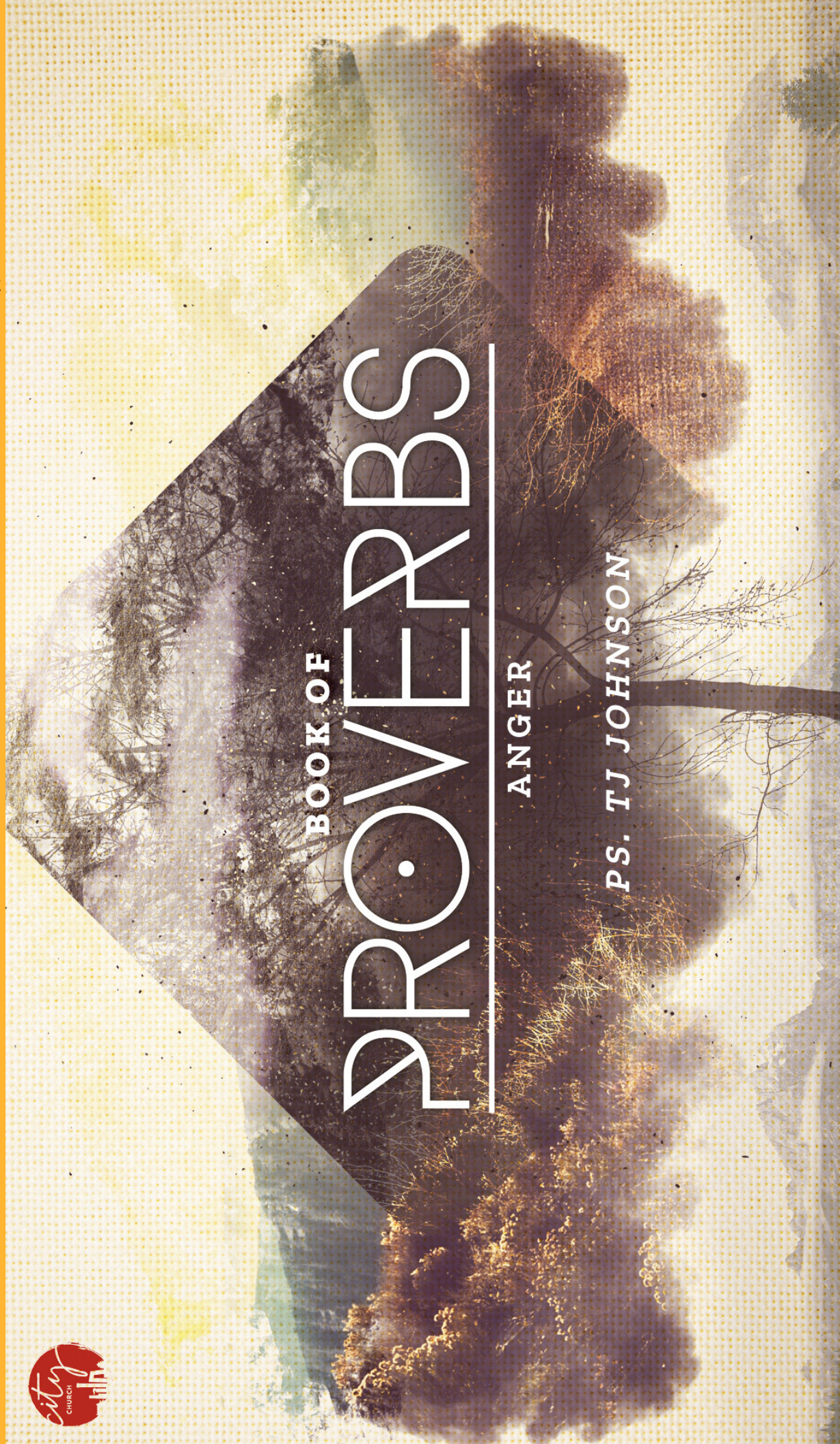
End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

August 23

Anger



BOOK OF PROVERBS

ANGER

PS. TJ JOHNSON

When God created humanity, he created us with a range of emotions. Love, hate, anger, mercy, joy, sorrow, and on the list goes. Typically we label emotions as positive or negative. Love is a good emotion created by a good God whereas hate is a bad emotion brought about by a fallen world. The problem with this assessment is that it is extremely naive in its understanding of emotions. Love is good if you love the right thing, like God. But loving wrong things, like sin, distorts the emotion and ruins its purpose, rendering that type of love as evil.

Although emotions can be used in wrong ways, all emotions are good gifts from God. This is even true of anger, that emotion that clears baseball dugouts, destroys marriages, blows up buildings, and even starts wars.

Anger was certainly evil when Saul, in his anger, picked up a spear to thrust through the flesh of David or when Sarah, in her anger, demanded that Abraham send Hagar away into the desert to die. But anger was holy and right and good and redemptive when Jesus, in His anger, turned over tables in the temple or when God the Father, in His anger, sent Israel into exile.

How is this possible? How can any display of anger, even one by God Himself, be good and holy and right? As Tim Keller notes, in its uncorrupted origin, anger is actually a form of love. So when Jesus turned over tables it was a form of love...restoring His Father's house to a house of prayer for the nations. When the Father sent Israel into exile, it was a form of love...restoring in His people a love for right things and a hatred for wrong. His anger sent them away that they might return to His love.

Just as water can fall gently on the earth giving life or come in torrents taking life, so too our anger can give or take life. The problem isn't our anger, but what we are doing, or not doing, with our anger. Too often we try to avoid anger altogether. But to ignore or avoid anger is to ignore or avoid the gift God has given us. Anger is God producing in us an emotion that is meant to raise awareness of sin in ourselves, our neighbor, or our community so that we can actively and lovingly remove that sin from ourselves, our neighbor, or our community. Yet too often we allow our anger to increase sin in our lives, our neighbor's life, and in our community.

Proverbs 16:32 tells us, Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.

This Sunday we will look at a Biblical understanding of anger. Proverbs teaches us not to avoid anger, but to rule over our anger and wield it for good, redeemable purposes. May we learn how to use even our anger for His good purposes.

Ruling over anger with you,

Pastor TJ



Anger

Icebreaker

1. Share with the group of an incident which really made you angry
2. Name a few examples of how anger can affect not only yourself, but those around you

How anger can be displayed

1. When your anger is kindled, how do you respond physically?
2. Give some examples of how unhealthy physical responses to anger hurts the individual, their neighbour and their community

How anger can be heard

1. Can you recall if you have ever responded to someone out of anger with a scathing response? How did it affect that person and your relationship?
2. Read Proverbs 13:2-3 - What are some practical ways we can "guard our mouths"?
3. Discuss in the group the vocal responses of anger that most annoy you and why
4. When your anger is kindled, how do you respond with your words or vocal expressions?

Anger hurts ourselves

1. Read Proverbs 11:17 and 19:19 - Discuss in your group ways anger hurts our own selves
2. Name some examples in, and out, of the Bible where anger destroyed an individual
3. Read James 1:20 and reflect upon the sermon - Why does James say that anger does not reflect the *righteousness of God*? How does ungodly anger slow sanctification?



Anger

Anger hurts our neighbour

1. *Emotions are highly catching.* Have you found the previous quote to be true in your own life? Be specific
2. Who in your life are you most likely to influence with your anger?
3. Give an example (Biblical, historical or personal) of when you saw the power of the Gospel overcome anger and reconcile dysfunctional relationships.

Hope of anger

1. Can you name a couple of examples from the Bible where anger was 'justified' and instilled hope? What is the difference between godly and ungodly anger?
2. Discuss the concept of anger being "motivated and controlled by the Gospel and used in redemptive ways"?
3. Read Proverbs 26:20-21 - Give examples in our relationships where we are adding logs to the fire or removing logs from the fire
4. What are the most common things that cause you anger? What is the root cause of that anger? How can the Gospel help you, in that situation, to be ministers of mercy rather than seekers of vigilante justice?

Three questions to ask when anger rises within

1. Are you right in this judgement?
2. What is the sin you identify either in yourself, your neighbour or your community?
3. In what you are planning in doing or saying, will it stir up fire or quiet the fire? Will it help heal the sin or increase the sin?



Prayer & Praise

End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

August 30

Gossip



BOOK OF

PROVERBS

GOSSIP

PS. TJ JOHNSON

I recall the semester at university when our cultural anthropology professor launched her customary month of right speech. We all received a strip of duct tape that we would stick to a notebook, a backpack, or a computer bag and write the words 'RIGHT SPEECH' on it. The campaign was meant to bring awareness to the words we use and the topics of our conversations. It was humbling to realize the multitude of ways we use or listen to destructive language. The most blatant infractions were easy to spot, but others slipped under the radar, especially that of gossip. Too often we not only speak without thinking, but we also listen without thinking- without actively processing what we hear. And gossip can easily go undetected by disguising and presenting itself in an attractive and enticing form.

Right speech is all encompassing, and a profound indicator of wisdom in a person's life. It is not simply keeping away from gossip, lies, curses, slander, and cruel words. But rather it is straining to make every word uttered bring about God's kingdom here on earth. It means using words that assist in the process of sanctification in our congregation and small groups. And it means leading others to salvation by lovingly speaking the truth of the gospel in our city, our workplaces, our social circles and possibly even our own homes.

Join me this week in setting aside time to reflect on the power of words. Proverbs 18:21 reminds us that "Death and life are in the power of the tongue." Therefore let us not take lightly the ways in which we communicate with one another: the words we use, the tones of voice we employ, and the focal point of our conversations.



Gossip

Icebreaker

1. Discuss in the group what you would consider gossiping entails. In general, is gossip good or bad? Explain

Good vs. Bad

1. Referring to the sermon, could you provide an example of when speaking about another person is not considered gossip?
2. In general conversation, would you consider the times you have discussed another person with a third party to be gossip? Why do you say so?
3. Have you ever been involved in a conversation that started off innocently but quickly turned to gossip? What did you do?

The Folly of gossip

1. Read Proverbs 11:13. In which way does the Bible show what gossip is and how are we supposed to respond to gossip?
2. Read Proverbs 17:4. According to this verse, what does gossip lead to? How can it affect those around us, or those who are spoken about?
3. Read Proverbs 26:22. How does the Bible describe gossip? How do you identify with the Biblical description of gossip?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 10:23. Conversely, seeing that gossip *could possibly* serve a positive purpose, what should our purpose, and desire, be when we speak of others?
5. Read Romans 15:2. Edification is often a word not really understood. Basically it means to 'build up'. How does Paul advise the Roman church to speak of their neighbours?
6. Read Proverbs 16:28. What does this verse warn us about gossip? Have you ever been in a situation where you have discovered a close friend had spoken badly about you behind your back? How did you feel, and respond?



Gossip

Using Wisdom to deal with gossip

1. Read John 7:12-13 and 40-43. In the sermon, it was mentioned that Jesus knew what the crowds were saying about Him. How did He deal with all this gossip? Are you able to emulate Jesus in this matter?
2. Read Matthew 16:13-17 and 20. In which way did Jesus handle the gossip about Him that the disciples heard? How is Jesus setting an example to us in dealing with gossip?
3. In which way does the sermon challenge us to deal with, and handle gossip? In your opinion, would this be an easy and simple task? Explain your answer

The source of gossip

1. Read Acts 17:16-21. Paying close attention to v. 21, when does gossip seem to happen more often than not? How do we prevent ourselves from partaking in gossip when we have nothing else to do?
2. How did the sermon suggest we fight against listening to, and spreading, gossip? Have you attempted doing so? How successful were you?
3. The sermon mentions that when we are caused pain, we tend to lash out using slanderous gossip against the perpetrator. Discuss in the group how we should respond in such a situation.



Gossip

Dealing with gossip head-on

1. Read Proverbs 26:17. How does the writer of the proverb suggest we should deal with gossip? Could you name some practical examples of dealing with gossip head-on in your own life?
2. Read Proverbs 20:19. Which precautions should we apply to our lives in order to avoid falling into Folly's trap regarding gossip?
3. Consider the following quotation from the sermon: "Great minds discuss ideas. Average minds discuss events. Small minds discuss people." Henry Thomas Buckle, English Historian. Into which category do you currently fall into? To which category do you wish to aspire to? How would you get there?
4. Read Colossians 4:6 and Ephesians 4:29. How would you go about applying these verses to your life, in particular your social life?



Prayer & Praise

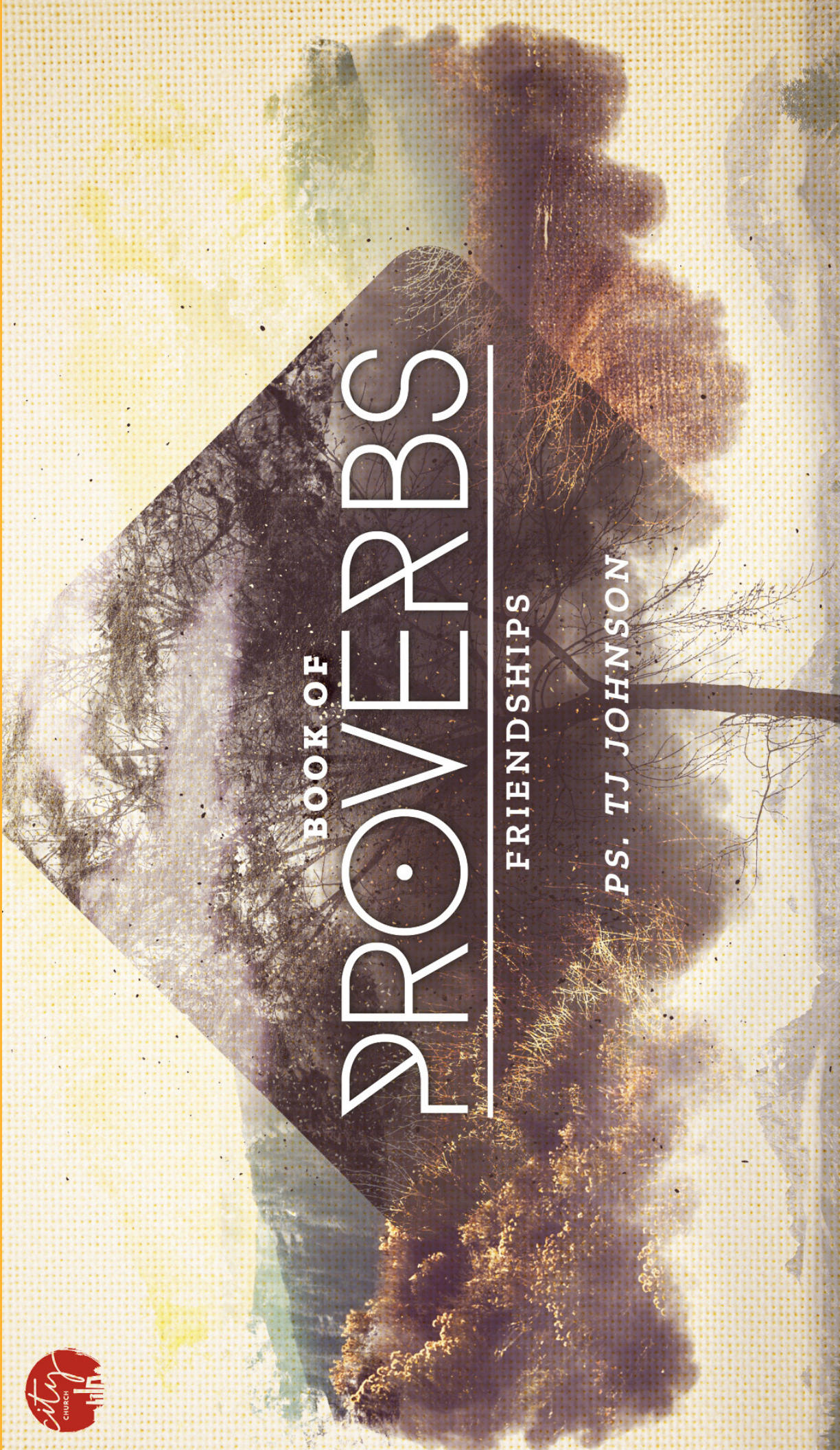
End your time together by reflecting on the goodness of God and praying for one another.

Prayer Requests

Praise Reports

Friendships

September 6



Proverbs 27:10;
Better is a neighbor who is near
than a brother who is far away.

As expats we are keenly aware of the truth of this Proverb. All of us have family who is far away. And all of us need friends who are near. We all need friends who will teach us how to navigate the banking system in Beijing or order food online. We need friends who will be there to babysit for us or help carry a fridge down six flights of stairs. We need friends who will invite us out for dinner or a movie. We need friends who will laugh with us when we mispronounce a Chinese word and end up saying something really silly. We need friends who will cry with us when we receive tragic news from home. We need friends who will challenge us in our faith and encourage us to press on to know the Lord.

And just as we need these types of friends, we need to be certain that we ARE these types of friends. God has given us friendship to keep us on the path of wisdom, therefore we must choose and cultivate good friends who will keep us in Christ as they faithfully walk with us in this life. So, are you cultivating your friendships? Are you watering the soil of your friends? Are you ensuring that THEY have "a neighbor who is near?" Remember the words written to the Galatians, "bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ." If this pandemic has taught us anything it is to treasure up our friends and be that neighbor who is near.

Choosing and Cultivating with you,

Pastor TJ



Friendship

Icebreaker

1. In Beijing, do you have a friend you can turn to in times of need and difficulty, as well as times of joy and prosperity? If so, please share about that friend
2. How have you formed friendships in Beijing? Are there good or bad ways/places to form friendships?

Choose Wisely

1. Read Proverbs 4:14-15. What are some ways your friends have formed you (for good or bad)? What are the ways you have formed your friends?
2. How do we go about deciding who would make good, dependable friends?
3. Read Proverbs 1:10-15. What are some temptations people face for forming unhealthy friendships?
4. Read Proverbs 14:7, 20:19 and 22:24. Do you have any unhealthy relationships that you need to sever? What encouragement and advice can you give to those who know they need to end a friendship but are unwilling to do so?

Christ-centered friendships

1. Read Proverbs 14:20 and 19:6. Have you ever chosen (been chosen) as a friend for the wrong reasons?
2. Can you name some diversified friendships in the Bible?
3. Consider your current, or past, friendship circles, how diverse would you say your friendship circle is/was? What is/was lacking?
4. How can we better centre our friendships around Christ and not secondary interests?



Friendship

Maintaining and growing friendships

1. In the sermon, maintaining a friendship is being compared to cultivating a plant. Discuss truthfully how much (and what kind of) work you (and your friends) put into your friendships to keep them alive and fruitful
2. Read Proverbs 10:12. Share a time when you didn't want to cover the offence of a friend and how Christ helped you to overcome (or what Christ can do to help you overcome)?
3. Take some time to remind one another of what Christ has done for us that we might be encouraged and empowered to "forgive our debtors"
4. Compare Proverbs 21:10 and Job 42:8. What did Job do when he was faced by friends who were not kind, or even understanding, toward him? How does prayer help us to forgive (see Matthew 5:44)?
5. Read Proverbs 17:17. What are the "at all times" you find most difficult to be a faithful friend?
6. Do you have current needs that this small group can be a friend that "loves at all times"?
7. Read Proverbs 11:13. What are the types of things that you should confide in a loyal friend?
8. Read Proverbs 11:14 and 20:18. Why do you think Proverbs uses the plural for counsellor and advisor?
9. Have you ever treated a grieving friend a little too harshly? What happened? What advice does Proverbs 27:9 give us?
10. Read Proverbs 27:5-6. Have you ever experienced the wounds of a faithful friend?
11. Have you ever kept quiet when you were supposed to reprimand a friend for what they have done? How does the Gospel give us courage to have the hard conversations?
12. Read Proverbs 28:13. Do you have any transgressions against friends that you need to reconcile?



Friendship

The Ultimate Friend

1. Read Proverbs 18:24. Describe to the group what you think the ultimate friend should be to us? Explain your answer
2. Read Proverbs 18:24, John 15:13 and 15. How is Jesus the ultimate friend? How are we to emulate Him in our earthly friendships?
3. CS Lewis once said: "At this feast (of friendship) it is Jesus who has spread the board and it is He who has chosen the guests. It is He, we may dare to hope, who sometimes does, and always should, preside. Let us not reckon without our Host." What are some ways you can make certain your friendships are *ALWAYS* fellowshiping, not just with one another, but with Jesus? Can you give some examples of people who do this well?



Prayer & Praise

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Prayer Requests

Praise Reports