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Preacher: Derek Lamont

- [ 0 : 00 ] I'd like you to turn back with me if you will to both Proverbs but also to another passage in First Corinthians.
- I'm going to mention a verse there. But I hope to use the screen this evening as well. If the guys could put the first screen up then I'll be able to use it.
- Okay, so I know that it was popular for a while to have WWJD bands around your wrist.
- It's what would Jesus do? And I'm patenting a slightly different one which would be what would Jesus' life look like?
- Okay? It's not quite so catchy but you could have a band around your wrist to remind you of what would Jesus' life look like?
- [ 1 : 05 ] And the reason I'm asking that question is because this evening I'd like to look at something that we touched on a couple of weeks ago from First Corinthians chapter 11.
- We were looking at the examples that we follow in life and we looked at Jesus and we looked at the Apostle Paul and we looked at other Christians. But you remember that the Apostle Paul said something in First Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1.
- He said, follow my example, he said, as I follow the example of Christ. So and that made me think a little bit about that.
- We often talk as Christians about our lives being Christ-like and it's important that we recognize that our lives are to be like Jesus Christ.
- And that is partly what I was motivated me to think about this because when we're living Christ-like lives, then we're living, and this links in with this morning's message, that we're living our lives to the glory of God.
- [ 2 : 17 ] And that's what we're to do as Christians. If you look back to verse 31 of that chapter before First Corinthians chapter 11 verse 1, it says, so whether we eat or drink or whatever we do, do it all to the glory of God.
- So we live for the glory of God by following the example of Jesus. And when we are Christ-like, that is when we are most likely to be glorifying God.
- And so what I want to do this evening is from Proverbs, try and put a little bit of flesh onto what would Jesus' life look like.
- Because Jesus lived a perfect human life. We don't know that much. We see a little bit about his life. We don't know that much about how he lived. But I want to take some of the things from Scripture that would remind us of some of the devices that he avoided and some of the virtues that he embraced.
- And look at that in relation to our own Christian lives, which are to imitate Jesus' life. And I'm taking them from Proverbs and I'm doing that this week and then next week. And so it's a very short, kind of almost like a mini series.

[ 3 : 34 ] This isn't working. Oh, it's not switched on. Okay. Right. So sometimes I do have a concern and I have a concern in my own life as well as in the life of the church wondering about whether preaching from the pulpit primarily, I guess, although preaching and teaching and sharing comes in all different shapes and sizes.

But does it make any difference in our lives? Does the word of God that's preached make any difference in our lives? Does our opening of Scripture, whether it be in church or at home or in private, does that make any difference in our day to day living?

I can't answer that question, but I do sometimes have a concern about that. And I wonder whether we are people who in our Christian lives are sponges or waterproofs.

In other words, do when we take God's word, do we take it in like a sponge? Does it soaked into our life and then soaked into our conscience and soaked into our thinking and soaked into then our characters?

Or do we find that we are impervious spiritually, like waterproofs, like the water runs off us? Are we spiritually impervious? So it really wouldn't matter what was being said from here or maybe what was in the Bible in your readings.

[ 5 : 06 ] It doesn't really make any difference to your life. It's not soaking in. It's rather just running off. And I wonder sometimes if that's the case. And I don't know, I recognize that the Holy Spirit is hugely important in all of that.

And I wonder sometimes if it's the themes of the preaching or whether it's just the lack of kind of deep spirituality in the day in which we live or whether it's our own issues or whether it's an unfair assumption as a preacher, because I often will kind of transpose my own weaknesses onto the congregation, which are not necessarily fair and right to do.

But we do look for the word of God to be something that comes into our lives and changes us rather than us becoming impervious to that word.

And if you ever know, you'll never notice in terms of my psychology and my involvement with you, if I ever think that nothing is getting in and that people are completely not engaged, then I become more provocative in what I say.

And I'll start saying things that are dangerous in order just to get attention. And that's not necessarily a good thing. But sometimes that's what happens. Just so you know that interaction.

[ 6 : 25 ] But what I wanted to do tonight was to try and be very, very practical. I maybe wonder if it sometimes that word doesn't sink in because it seems distant or far from our day-to-day living.

So what I want to do is try to speak about being practical in terms of being Christ-like, but do so, sorry, trying to be Christ-like, but to do so in kind of a practical way for us.

So this evening, look at five virtues or five vices tonight to avoid the kind of things that Jesus didn't do in his life because he's our model and our Savior and our Redeemer.

And we are to be Christ-like. And then the following week, I'm going to look at five virtues that were evident in Christ's life from Proverbs chapter 20, this one chapter.

It's not the kind of book that you can go through from beginning to end in a kind of exegetical way because there's a lot of similarities, a lot of the Proverbs are the same, but it's good to take themes from it.

[ 7 : 30 ] And I'm just going to take one or two themes from, particularly from this chapter that we've read today. So five vices. If we were to be Christ-like in our lives as we go from here and go into the world tomorrow, our working world or our life or whatever, what are the kind of things that we're to mould our conscience so that we're going to be Christ-like and therefore be fruitful and live for God's glory.

Well, the first thing is that one vice were to avoid, just drunkenness. Okay, very easy. That's what the chapter starts off with. Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler whoever has led us astray by them is not wise.

So okay, we recognise and we see and we know that drinking the Bible is not condemned. It's there and it's seen and in many ways there's a lot of positive things.

We mentioned this morning about the vine and about the vine dresser and the whole image of wine that's used so much in the Bible speaking about blessing and joy and celebration. And we know Sam 104 speaks about wine that's given to gladden the heart of man and that Jesus celebrated at the marriage of Cana and that he produced wine for them and there's no reason to suggest he didn't involve himself in that.

There's wine in the Lord's Supper. We recognise it as a good gift of God and do appreciate that and it is there as an intention, it's an intention to bless us and to provide for us and to do good for us and it's no good just ignoring that and it's no good just trying to prohibit things that the Bible doesn't prohibit.

[ 9 : 02 ] We know the significance of wine and even alcohol in every culture and every society. We can't deny that but we do recognise and know scripturally and a lot of the advice in scripture about drink is negatively framed.

We know it's addictive, it's destructive and costly. We know that just from the world we live in and in many others ways.

There's lots of things that are addictive in life but we recognise both chemically and another ways that drink, alcoholic drink can be destructive and we've seen and we know and maybe you know firsthand the ruin that is brought into the lives of many people, many families, the destructiveness and the cost when it becomes absolutely central to people's lives and people's thinking and we recognise that as a great danger.

We also recognise it as something that people use to escape from their lives. Ephesians 5 tells us that we're not to be filled with wine because we're filled with the Spirit of God.

The Bibles are giving us this sense of the difference that we have between being drunk and being filled with the Spirit of God and really Paul's just saying or the Holy Spirit is just saying to us there that we've got something better and we have a void that's been filled by Jesus Christ and by His Spirit in our lives and it's something, it's a blankness that so often people will use alcohol and drink to escape from.

[ 10 : 34 ] And that Friday night feeling is the great feeling for so many people because it gives them that release from the drudgery and the ordinariness of their lives and the problems and the difficulties will often be reflected as a default position by going to the drinks cabinet to get some relief from that.

But we recognise that while that is a crutch for many people that for Christians we have Jesus Christ in our lives so that the answer to our issues is not to be filled with wine but to be filled with the Spirit of God.

And that's a very basic and fundamental and simple illustration for us to consider. It's the realism of the gospel that we don't necessarily need this escapist mentality in our lives and yet it's so pervasive in the society in which we'll have everything as involves this great amount of drinking alcohol in life.

And someone last week was talking about the Freshers Week in university and the various clubs and societies that got to speak about what they plan to do during the week.

And every one of them finished with, ah, and after all we all go down to pub and get blattered because that seemed to be the be all and end all of everything that happens at university. And you know it's so monocultural, it's so dull and it's so disrespectful for the vast number of people who don't see that as the be all and end all of living.

[ 12 : 04 ] And we recognize it also as hugely damaging and the verse here makes that clear wine is a mocker and a beer is a brawler. And how wise that is in its description of those who will continue to use strength in the wrong way that it often humiliates us in our lives, it would humiliate people.

It fills us with a great sense of regret and there's that physical hangover and there's a violence that goes with it and all the different things they'd say that there's a marked increase in domestic violence in Glasgow after a rangers Celtic game depending on which side gets beaten, which side wins because of the amount of alcohol that is consumed in order either to celebrate the victory or drown the defeat.

But either way it's the homes that suffer as a result of that. And you go to the centre of Edinburgh any Friday or Saturday night at one in the morning and you'll see the damage and the misery and the kind of sadness of people who are engaged in the abuse of alcohol.

So we have that very simple reminder of what we're to avoid in a very practical way and I think that's a very practical real situation for many of us because so much of this social interaction that people are engaged in revolves around drink for us today.

But then verse 3 speaks about quarrelling. So drink is to be avoided but then quarrelling is to be avoided. It's a man's honour to avoid strife but every fool is quick to quarrel.

[ 13 : 58 ] You can't imagine, can you? Jesus Christ quarrelling. You can't imagine him being involved in petty discussions that were insignificant and it's all about that disruptive petty desire to be right and to quarrel with other people.

And we recognise it as something that is divisive, don't we, when people spend their lives quarrelling, starting a quarrel. Chapter 17 verse 14. It's like breaching a dam so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

And so often we find that quarrels and difficulties in our lives lead to division and separation that can take years and years to a heal.

The vast majority of family division has been caused by quarrels that the family can't remember what the start of them was. And it might have been about the chair in the sitting room that someone would sit in or drinking the last bit of milk in the fridge.

It might have been something completely insignificant but that quarrel can just become, grow arms and legs and can separate people for life and for all that they do.

[ 15 : 17 ] It's a hugely divisive thing. Why do we always sometimes feel that we need to be right, that we need to be in control, that we need to make sure that our way of thinking is what is it, etc.

And that's often the basis of quarrelling. A man's wisdom, Proverbs 19:1 says, gives him patience. It is to his glory to overlook and offence.

Can you go into this week and overlook some things that are not that important, that maybe you're tempted to quarrel about and make a big deal of?

But it's not that important and we're to be Christlike in our lives because we've been touched by grace and quarrelling is not that significant, you know, and being right is not that significant.

So let's overlook sometimes when people do us wrong and not make a big deal of it and not quarrel about it. That's the second thing in this chapter. Then there's laziness, laziness is spoken about in verses 4 and in verse 13.

[ 16 : 24 ] A slugger does not plow in the season, so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing. Do not love sleep or you will grow poor. Stay awake and you will have food to spare.

We know that Christ, the greatest human, the divine human, the Savior was not lazy.

We know that from an early age that he would have been learning his father's trade and he learned that enough to be able to do that for his grown years till he was 30 and probably had to support his family when his father died being the eldest son through his carpentry skills, the only earner in his home at that time.

And then the three years that are recorded for us are three years of intense work. We only just have the tip of the iceberg of what Jesus did and the hard work he was engaging but we do know that he had to rise really early in the morning if he was to find any time to pray with his father and to be in fellowship with his father and yet he was perfect.

He was perfect and he didn't need prayer to the same degree that we do. And I do sometimes wonder if we think with our rightful emphasis on grace and on the free gift of salvation that somehow we associate hard work with legalism as if we think, oh well if we work hard it's as if we're trying to earn our favour with God.

[ 18 : 03 ] Well put that aside because the more we understand grace and what Jesus has done for us the harder we will serve him and live our lives working and using the time that he's given us in an effective way.

We don't have long. Even the youngest of you here, we don't have long. And this is the only time we will live on this earth like this and he wants us to use it in the best possible way and not to be like the slugger that's spoken of so often in proverbs.

We're to live both spiritually and practically as people who are not lazy in our lives and that's significant. That's practical and that's something to consider in your life, how you will spend your time this week, what you will spend your time on, how you will spend your time as a Christian, what is the amount of time you're willing to spend and your relationship with Jesus Christ, significant things.

We've been looking at fruit this morning and you know the parable of the sower, where the parable of the sower talks about the different ground, the different soil that the seed goes into and the varying degrees of fruitfulness.

Well where is the ground, where is the most fruitful returns coming from? The most fruitful returns, where does it come from?

[ 19 : 34 ] It comes from the plowed ground, doesn't it? The ground that's been prepared. The ground that the farmer has spent all his energy on preparing. Now they've got the hard ground, the pad, and you've got the stony ground where you can't plow and you've got the thistle in the fields and that's all in the periphery.

You've got this plowed piece of ground where the farmer has sweated and worked hard to prepare physically for the harvest and so spiritually we can see that parallel slugger does not plow in season so harvest time you lose but fine is nothing.

But that can be seen for a spiritually. We've got to plow the ground of our hearts spiritually. We've got to work the ground, we've got to work at the hard-heartedness that we have and the sinfulness that we have and we have to prepare our hearts to be a blessing and to be fruitful and to work with and alongside Jesus Christ in our lives.

Laziness and practically too I think that is an important reminder to us. How many hours of a day are we willing to spend doing nothing?

I'm not sure that's a big issue today. I think maybe for most people working too hard may be an issue for many people having no time for Christ because they're too engaged in all the different work that they're involved in and that can often be a problem also.

[ 20 : 54 ] But how do we spend our time practically and do we make good use of our times and are we not allowing ourselves to be lazy?

That is significant. And then a fourth vice to avoid, second last, penultimate vice that I've picked out from this chapter is dishonesty in verse 10, differing weights and differing measures the Lord detests them both.

14, it's no good, it's no good says the Bible, then he goes off and boasts about his purchase. You can see this kind of society that the Proverbs, Solomon's writing into is buying and selling at the market type of society.

In 2017, food gained by fraud tastes sweet to a man but ends up with a mouthful of gravel. And then the Lord detests differing weights and dishonest scales do not please him.

And that's just when in the marketplace you would use scales and weights to weigh out the amount of grain or whatever you were buying. And sometimes dishonest people who were trying to buy or sell would say their weights weighed a certain amount but actually they weighed either less or more depending on what they were trying to do.

[ 22 : 10 ] So they were selling less for the amount of weight or more, trying to get more for the amount of weight. And God could see that and it really made him angry. And now we've got to the stage where injustice maybe doesn't frustrate us as it should and we're scared of the politicization of our faith at some levels because if we walk down that road we may feel we get involved politically.

But we should hate dishonesty whether it's national, international or personal in our lives. And Christ hated when he went into the temple and found the money changers there because they were being dishonest.

They were abusing a religious right in order to make money. They were selling birds and selling animals for sacrifice but they were making inordinate amounts of money and Christ hated that and he hated injustice.

And there's a great deal in the Bible about poverty and the injustice of poverty and God standing up for the poor and God being the one who cares about the poor.

It's absolutely riddled through Scripture, riddled through Scripture about the dishonesty of greed and the imbalance between rich and poor.

[ 23 : 31 ] And Christ looks out for that as a mark of our Christian understanding and that we share that same hatred for what God hates in his life.

But at a personal level the same is true. We're to have with Christ that honest, open, trusting relationship with the Father and we're to in our personal lives be repulsed by dishonesty as much as God is.

Now we know the society in which we live that dishonesty is institutionalized. It is part of the fabric of the society in which we live and of the decision making and of the politics.

And we've maybe come to accept certain types of dishonesty as acceptable in our own lives as a result. But as Christians, we're to be honest in our tax returns and what we give and claim from the government for the hours that we work in the workplace for the money that we're getting, that we don't try and defraud our employer.

With our TV license that we buy one if we watch the television. That we pay for what we get from the internet, whether it be music or films or whatever it is.

[ 24 : 58 ] But everyone else does it. Everyone else is doing these things. It doesn't hurt anyone. Jesus Christ is saying, my standards are higher and we are to be those who imitate Jesus Christ and follow Jesus Christ.

And if we're to be scrupulously honest in these things, then God honors that in greater areas because if we loosen the grip on these things in the small areas of our lives, then it becomes easier to be dishonest in the big areas of our lives also.

And so that's hugely important is honesty. It's a really important virtue that we pay what we are due to pay, that we give what we are due to give, that we render to Caesar what is due to Caesar and to God what is due to God.

And that is honesty and an absolute integrity. The worst thing of all is Christians who are dishonest. And now I'm going to get angry because that is absolutely counter to understanding grace and goodness in our lives because God is truth.

God is absolute truth and purity and honesty and we are to reflect that in our lives, reflect in our relationships, not by being naively and brutally honest with people in stupid ways, but in matters of significance, in matters of reality that we are honest with one another, we are honest in our dealings, that we are honest in our relationship, we are honest in all that we are and all that we do.

[ 26 : 42 ] And you will have many different ways in which that will be applied in your life as I do in mine. And so the last advice to avoid in our Christian lives, and I've just tried to take some practical things that might affect us in this week in which we're entering and gossiping is the last of them in verse 19.

And again, Proverbs, God's book of common sense. And sometimes we love the high flying theology that's right up there and it really doesn't affect us day to day. But I want to take it down to our everyday just basic level of living in our Christian lives to be Christ-like and not being a gossip is a way of being Christ-like in our lives because of we recognize that the last thing Christ would ever have been was a gossip in his own life.

A gossip betrays a confidence, so avoid a man who talks too much. You just can't imagine, can you? You can't imagine Christ gossiping, tittle, tattle, loving to pass on the worst about other people, loving to pass on things we don't know are accurate or true, but they're juicy, so we want to pass them on anyway, especially if it makes them look worse and me look better.

Gossiping is such a destructive practice in our Christian communities and Christian churches and in the work you will know that in many places gossiping is absolutely fundamental to the social fabric of a workplace.

It's very difficult to stand outside of that without appearing self-righteous or disinterested in people, something that we need to pray about.

[ 28 : 36 ] I think it's Billy Graham that said, that's quite an interesting comment, not our Billy Graham, but he may have said it as well, but the other guy, it's not quite so famous, but he said the real Christian, a real Christian is a person who can give his pet parrot to the town gossip.

In other words, a real Christian is someone who is not passing on gossip to the town gossip via his parrot, if you want to use that illustration, if you can get that illustration.

So we're to be honest and open and genuine in our conversations and we should have nothing that a gossip will take and repeat when we share it with other people because we have that recognition of the importance of other people and the damage that gossip can do and we're aware, just be aware of nipping it in the bud because it's just so salaciously sweet and it can be such an enjoyable thing to do to knock someone down and pass on information about them which is negative but is unhelpful and don't pass on things as Bible specifically says here that have been told to you in confidence.

Don't be loose with your tongue in that way. Think about what you want to share, consider whether the information you're passing on is really bad news that's going to make the person that you're passing it on about is going to make them look bad and maybe make you more popular or better liked by the people you tell because isn't that a lot of what gossip is about?

Hey, did you hear that about? Unbelievable, eh? You and me understand how bad they are. You know, and it's that kind of wanting to be accepted by downing someone else and by breaking down that relationship with them, making you seen a better light.

[ 30 : 51 ] The great thing is, as a Christian, as anyone, but as a Christian, that you always have the power and we always have the power to stop the gossip at us. It needn't go any further.

We always have the power to be the last person who passes on some tit bit of information that is damaging, unhelpful, possibly untrue and certainly irrelevant and insignificant in many ways.

So may it be that we strive in our lives to imitate Jesus Christ through His Word by understanding practically what it means to live for the glory of God.

And I hope that these are just absolute one or two practical outworkings of being Christ-like and bearing that fruit which we're going to be looking at in the morning services in a different kind of way.

But Proverbs is a great book to use because it really is just God's book of common sense and it gives us a lot of advice about simple everyday ways to live.

[ 31 : 59 ] Proverbs pray about these things and live them out in your life with the help of the Holy Spirit and with God's grace and seeking His forgiveness when we fail to do that.

So let's bow our heads and pray about these things. Lord God, we thank You for the time that we're able to spend together just for a moment or two around Your Word. We thank You that it is both amazingly, otherworldly in its truth and in its revelation of God, but it is also hugely practical.

Forgive us Lord, when we have abused the gift of wine and alcohol that You've given us and we have acted in ways that we have regretted and have been dishonouring to You as Christian.

Forgive us too when we have found it easy to quarrel and argue and be obnoxious about insignificant things and I've always demanded to be right and not to be able to overlook matters.

We ask too for Your forgiveness when we have been lazy and have demanded by right things that we haven't earned or worked for in a human way and have simply been lazy and abused the time You've given us and have abused the responsibility that we have as stewards of our time and of our lives.

[ 33 : 40 ] Forgive us when we've been lazy spiritually and expected our relationship with You just to work at the snap of a finger or just merely by grace and don't mean in any way other than to talk about their abusing grace and not using it in the right way.

And Lord, pray also that You would forgive us when we are dishonest, when we have claimed as ours by right things that are not ours, when we've been involved in stealing or taking what is not ours, where we have done what is acceptable maybe to everyone else, but we know is not right and is dishonest.

Forgive us for that. And forgive us also, Lord God, if we have been as we all to a greater or lesser degree do gossip and pass on tidbits of information and damaging the characters of other people easily and sometimes rubbing our hands in glee.

Give us for doing that, for often being those who look for the worst in other people and who are quick to condemn the worst and slow to praise the good.

Forgive us for that sinful bent in our own character and help us rather to be grace-filled and full of forgiveness and full of a desire for truth and honesty to prevail in people's lives.

[ 35 : 19 ] And where there is division in our hearts or in our relationships or even in our families, may we think hard and long about them tonight. May we think what we can do to take the first step back.

We may be pray for the first time about a deep-seated division that is causing so much pain and hurt that can begin to be healed as we honour Christ and take that first step back.

And Lord help us to do these gritty and real aspects of our Christian lives and not just live in a Christian theoretical bubble.

Or we also pray against the great injustices that we see around us in the world we live in, the great imbalances of wealth and poverty and the great abuse of wealth that we have in our western world when we see so much poverty elsewhere.

It seems overwhelmingly great but help us not to be callous or indifferent to it, we pray. And help us to do what we can in Jesus' name.

[ 36 : 35 ] Amen.