

Please open your Bibles to the book of Proverbs (near the centre). **Proverbs 30.**

Prayer

When my wife Joanne was seven years old, she and her 3 sisters were up at their cottage with their mom waiting for their dad to arrive. He would sometimes come up later than the family because of business responsibilities.

On this particular day, when he was about 10 minutes from the cottage, he was driving on an undivided highway and a large transport truck started to pass him on the other side of the road. What he didn't know was that a woman was in a car right behind the truck and was in a hurry to get around it.

Without checking if it was clear, she veered into the lane that my father-in-law was driving in, and within half a second the two cars had a head on collision at full speed. Dad's head crashed into the steering wheel and most of his jaw was instantly shattered in pieces. Many of his teeth were knocked out of their sockets. His face was badly lacerated. It's amazing that he lived. The Police told him if he hadn't been wearing a seatbelt he would have been killed instantly.

Miraculously, the driver of the other car lived too, but was badly injured in the accident, which was later ruled to be her fault entirely.

A needless life-altering accident occurred because someone ignored a simple **boundary marker**. Yellow boundary lines on the road are not there to brighten up our roads. They are there for our protection. We ignore them at our peril.

Life is like that too. God has built many boundaries into our life, not to constrain and squeeze us, but to protect us.

Today I want to talk to you about **boundaries** from the book of Proverbs.

Let's read our passage together: **Proverbs 30:18-28**

How We Handle Boundaries Makes Us Or Breaks Us

In this section we encounter 4 numerical sayings, with 4 components in each section. Today we are only going to look at **3 of the sections**—though all 4 give us insight into how boundaries function in our lives.

It is best to view the sayings like a staircase—the first 3 sayings lead to the climatic saying of the 4th utterance in each section.

We will have two main points that we will be looking at:

1. **Boundaries We Shouldn't Break** (Prov 30:18-23)
2. **Boundaries We Should Break** (Prov 30:24-28)

So lets begin. The first two sections deal with

1. Boundaries We Shouldn't Break

Have you ever heard of **Agur son of Jakeh**? Probably not, but he is the wise sage that is teaching us at this point (see Prov 30:1). In **verses 18 to 19** he calls us to contemplate things that are awe inspiring—two from the world of animals, and two from the world of people.

(A) **Mysterious Boundaries**

What links these sayings together are the words “**the way**”. There is a way of moving in an undulating, gentle way that breaks a sense of marvel and mystery to the sage...and should affect us in the same way.

The first three examples are building a crescendo of amazement that leads us to the high point in **verse 18** about the way of a man with a virgin.

Each of the examples given demonstrates the capacity of something to move with seeming effortless-ness, leaving no trace behind after the action is over.

The first mystery is the eagle, which Bruce Waltke describes so well:

“The artless, yet so artful, soaring, seemingly endless, circling high in the sky, of one of Palestines heaviest birds” **Bruce Waltke** p.492

How does this large bird glide, high in the sky so effortlessly? In the same way a snake possesses no legs, yet it can traverse over boulders. How does a ship, weighing tons, carrying people and cargo, effortlessly glide over the surface of the great deeps of the ocean?

This leads to “the way” of a man with a virgin. Every commentator agrees that this has to do with the first sexual encounter of a man and virgin on their marriage night.

So much of the awe and wonder of sexual intimacy in marriage has been lost in our generation. Too few couples are virgins on their wedding night. So the wonder and mystery that God intended for couples is lost.

The sexual boundary that must not be crossed if we are to retain the mystery and wonder of Committed Covenantal love.

Compare this with the sexual **boundary breaker**—the adulteress in **verse 20**. All the wonder of intimacy has evaporated through multiple sexual partners. There is no sacredness in the marriage bed and sex is seen as just another appetite to be satisfied.

In the book of Proverbs a foolish person is always presented as functioning **independently and in isolation from others**. The wise walk in meaningful community with others and measure their actions for how they affect others, not just themselves:

“The adulteress ..shatters the network of family relationships which are God’s foundation stones for an ordered society” **Bruce Waltke**, Proverbs, p.20

Did you know that the way we handle the sexual boundary around marriage affects the way people think about Christ? The Scriptures tell us that the marriage bed is an illustration of how God wants to relate to us—**not sexually of course**—but with deep intimacy and union:

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. **Ephesians 5:31-32**

So many reasons to honour the boundary of sex within marriage. It's a wonder and mystery that reveals the intent of the gospel to others.

The sage then quickly goes to a second category about boundaries that should not be broken. If the first section reveals “**Mysterious Boundaries**”, the second section goes from awe to the awful...

(B) **Travesties Against Boundaries**

In **verses 21-23** we find examples of boundaries that are broken that cause confusion and agitation. That's what the word “tremble” implies. It is as if the earth itself rejects these awful arrangements. What exactly are they?

Two of the examples refer to men and two to women, but the principle is one throughout.

Each example has to do with things that are **backward and inappropriate**.

In **verse 22** it compares a slave that becomes a ruler to a **fool** (the word refers not to a person's intellectual capacity but to **willful rebellion**). So the slave referred to in line one is not just a servant, but an ambitious threat to the king and the kingdom because he is **completely unqualified** for the job.

Would you want the neighbourhood butcher to perform heart surgery on you? Would you want someone who had only read a book on flying, piloting your 747 across the Atlantic ocean? Not qualified for the job.

Those in lowly positions who obtain high positions of power without adequate preparation and training often become oppressors of others themselves. A good example of this is Adolf Hitler, who was born into poverty but became the top leader in Germany. His legacy was horrific and evil.

In **verse 23** we build to the point our wise sage is making. The translation of verse 23 is somewhat unclear and can easily lead to the wrong conclusion about what its saying.

Its probably not talking about a neglected wife that is unloved, but rather (literally) “a **hated**” woman—meaning in this case a woman who is very difficult to live with—a contentious, quarrelsome woman. The point is that such a person when married makes life intolerable for their spouse. The same is true of course for a contentious man who gets married. Constant arguments and happiness never go together.

It ends with the ultimate form of upside-down boundary breaking. A maid servant displacing the Queen by **stealing** the King’s affections and **stealing** the Queen’s position. This was the threat that Sarah felt from Hagar, who once she had conceived a son for Abraham treated Sarah with contempt (Gen 16:4).

If it causes the earth to tremble when unworthy servants obtain high position by unscrupulous means, what must the reaction of the earth be when **someone of high position**, breaks the boundary, usurps the divine order, and becomes a servant and slave in his own kingdom! Who ever heard of such a thing!!

Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. **Philippians 2:6-8**

The Eternal & infinite Son descended down down down to the lowest place. The angels and the earth trembled. As Charles Wesley put it:

“Our God contracted to a span, Incomprehensibly made man.” **Charles Wesley**

Yet there are limiting boundaries that should be broken. When a Boundary is a moral one, it should never be broken. But when the Boundary is a personal weakness, the lesson of the next section is that it should be broken.

So we move from Boundaries We Shouldn't Break to...

2. Boundaries We Should Break

Each of the examples in these verses describe creatures that are small (**vs 24**) and very vulnerable. They are credited with extreme wisdom, not in the sense that they reason themselves to these actions, but because God has given them instincts that protect them & provide for them in ways that are very instructive for us.

In a sense, they suffer from limitations—a boundary around them that seems to create massive disadvantages for them. But in the end they triumph over their weaknesses. This lesson is not about animals but about us—especially those who feel small and powerless.

In **verse 25** we have **ants** who exemplify wisdom by preparing for the future in the present.

“A quickening sermon do these little insects preach to us as they prepare for the coming winter. What must be the thoughtlessness of men who make no provision for the coming eternity!” **Charles Bridges**, Proverbs, p.276

The **badger** is vulnerable but makes himself inaccessible by hiding among the rocks. How much more, should we who find ourselves to be weak and vulnerable in the face of temptation, hide ourselves in the rock & refuge of Christ to keep ourselves safe! If we spent half as much time in prayer as we do sculpting our bodies in the gym how much less vulnerable we would be!!

The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe. **Prov. 18:10**

The **locusts** are weak in that they have no obvious leader. Yet they move together like an army and destroy all the crops in their path.

Last year in Argentina they had the largest locust swarm in 60 years. It was 4 miles across and two miles high! A large swarm like that consists of about 200 million locusts per square mile, and is absolutely devastating to farmers. the Power of unified action!

No wonder unity is the number # 1 area that Satan undermines in the church through things like suspicion, gossip, bitterness, unforgiveness, grumbling, and envy of others. Even God recognized the power of unified action at the tower of Babel and confused the languages because of it (Gen 11:5-6).

When people are unified they can do unbelievable things! Imagine what your unified family could accomplish...or a unified church.

The high point in this section involves the lizard—the little Gecko—like the one seen on the Geiko commercials. Its totally defenceless and can be grabbed easily with a hand (I did so many times when I was a child growing up in India). The defenceless lizard wanders the halls of royal palaces when we couldn't get near them—The point of **verse 28** is this...the weakest creature can accomplish extraordinary achievements through wisdom.

Some of you here may have limitations like a broken family, or an alcoholic parent, or lack of education, or even something like lack of courage in relationships. The lesson of this section is that wisdom is God's special gift to help us break through the hindering boundaries of personal weakness.

Remember God's promise:

Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Colossians 2:2-3

Do you see the lesson in these verses? The **Boundaries of Personal Limitations** can & should be broken, while **The Boundaries of Moral Law** should never be broken.

Our problem is that we reverse these two. We break the boundaries that are moral (to our own ruin) and lack the wisdom to break through the boundaries of our weakness and limitations— so we never fully achieve God's best for ourselves.

We live in a culture and time that has no respect for moral boundaries. And we also live in a culture that despises being small (verse 24) & idolizes strength and **everything BIG**. The missing piece is wisdom for both categories.

Do you see a lot of wisdom at work in our culture? What about your family?
What about your life?

What we desperately need is God's wisdom—Not just knowledge..but THE
PERSON OF WISDOM:

We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but
to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the
wisdom of God. **1Corinthians 1:23-24**