

THE BON AIR PULPIT

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Scripture: Proverbs 1:8-19

Sermon: *Can You Be Your Own Person?*

When Solomon was ready to become King of Israel, God appeared to him in a vision one night and said, “What would you like as you assume this great responsibility?” And Solomon said, What I would like for you to do is to give me wisdom. In the very middle of the Bible there are five books that we call the Books of Wisdom. There is Job and Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon. Three of those books of wisdom were written by Solomon. And it seems that what God did was God gave him insight into how life operates and how you and I can live the good life. And then he inspired him to write them down so that we could know what God has provided for us. And in the Book of Proverbs are some of the great wisdom truths that help us to know how to live as God wants us to live. Now I have often wondered if I were going to write a book of wisdom, if I were going to give instructions to people to help them to know how to live, where would I start and what would I put at the very beginning that would say, if nobody read even any further, at least they would have the basic principles of life. And amazingly, when you turn to the Bible the first chapter and start reading in Verse 8, you are aware that that is exactly what he did. He started by giving us four bedrock principles upon which you and I can build our lives and through them can really find the good life. And so what I would like to do this morning is read this passage for you and then to

point out for you the great principles that he gave. Listen to me as I begin reading in Verse 8. Listen my son to your Father’s instruction, and do not forsake your Mother’s teaching. There will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. The first great principle that all of us have to decide on is who are you going to listen to? And the book of Proverbs gives you two options. In the book, always Mothers and Fathers are presented in a good light. It assumes that in the family there is a Mother and a Father, that they know God, and that they are passing on to their children the eternal principles of God. And so, what he says is, everyone of us have a decision to make, whether we are going to listen to the teachings of our Mother and our Father or whether we are going to listen to the advice of the counsel of our friends. And all of us have to determine who you are going to listen to. Now, God set the pattern in life and the pattern is that Mothers and Fathers would know God, they would know his principles and that the work of the Mother and Father is that they would pass it on to their children. Now, unfortunately, as we know, this is not always the case and many times Fathers and Mothers think that if they spend time with their children that this will take the place of teaching their children. And all of us need to be aware that sometimes you can spend time with them but if you have never passed on to them the eternal principles of God then they will not understand how God wants them to live. Now, every person that’s here this morning that’s still under the authority of your Mother and Father, what I need to remind you is that even though it is hard for you to imagine, your Mother and your Father were your age at one time. And what they learned was some mistakes and what they learned was some good things that they can pass on to you. And that is the way God intended for it to be. They made some mistakes they don’t want you to make. And so what they are doing is saying, “I’ve been along this road, and I

don’t want you to make the mistakes. Let me show you how to do it.” And hopefully, they are people who have walked with God, who have learned some things about God that will enable you to be able to find a good life. One of the things that your Mother and Father have is a larger perspective than you have. A couple of weeks ago, I was talking to one of our teenagers who was getting ready to go to the twelfth grade. I said to her, “ Boy, how exciting it’s going to be to be a Senior in high school, how wonderful it’s going to be to get ready to have one more year, and she turned to me and she said, “You know, I am really looking forward to it. It is amazing what I have learned in just the last twelve months.” I said, Well, if you have learned that much in the last twelve months, think about your Mother and Father, what they have learned for the last thirty years. And your Mother and Father ought to have greater perspective of life than you have, and you ought to tap in to that wisdom.” Now, frightfully, when all of the pollsters get together and they put these two options to teenagers, Mothers and Fathers and friends, 80 percent of teenagers will say, I listen to my friends more than I listen to my Mother and Dad. Peer pressure is a lot more powerful than parent power. And so they begin to listen to others and when you do that, teenagers, what you do is you break God’s pattern. Because God never entrusted to teenagers wisdom to help other teenagers how to make it through life. So, if you begin to listen to them, then you’ve got a big problem. The big problem is, who are your friends? You see, when you started making friends, you didn’t go out and say, well, I’m going to go out and choose the best and the brightest and the smartest and the most talented. They may be somebody who sat next to you, they may be somebody who lived next to you. Most friends happen accidentally. So you didn’t go out and pick the ones that maybe God has chosen in the group to be the best. And so you are listening to them and if you are not careful what will happen is that you

will be sharing your ignorance and pooling it instead of being able to share wisdom. Now, if you begin to determine what you are going to do is listen to the gang, if you’re going to listen to the group, if you are going to listen to the TV, if you are going to listen to the culture-molders, if you are going to make up your mind by what everybody else says, then what happens to you is, you never become a real person. What you are is only what somebody else is making you. And what you are becoming is really in the mold of what other people are suggesting and not particularly in the mold of what God has suggested. In the Bible when it talks about the kind of person God wants us to be he says I want you to be like a tree. Planted by the rivers of water. So here you are, knowing who you are, tied in to the great principles of life, stable, not somebody who gets pushed around by everybody else but you know who you are. The Bible says the opposite of that is like the outer part of a piece of wheat that really is so light it will just flit away like a feather. And it says a person who is not rooted in God is so light that they just flit away. And there are some people who are a different person on Tuesday than they are on Saturday. It’s just according to who they are with. And so all of us need to ask ourselves the question, do you have a price that somebody can buy you out? Are you the kind of person who is moldable and just anything that anybody says you are going to go along with it. And so the question that you have to start off in life is who are you going to listen to? Down where I come from we have little green, we call them little green lizards. About that long. The reason most people don’t see them is because they blend in with the foliage. They can be on a leaf and you’ll not know they are there. But they have a unique ability. If you put them on something brown they’ll turn brown. Some mean little

kids down in south Louisiana put them on a polka dot and watched them have a nervous breakdown. But let me tell you, there are lots of folks I know who are like green lizards. If they are with a green group they are green, if they are with a brown group they are brown, if they are with a polka dot they just do the best they can. The question that you need to ask yourself if who are you going to be? Who are you going to listen to? Are you going to wake up every day and just be what everybody says to be? The first great lesson of life - who do you listen to? Notice the second one. He said, if sinners entice you, do not give into them. If they say come along with us, let's lie in wait for somebody's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul. Second great principle of life is do you know that there are a lot of lures in life. This past week Judie and I have had a few days in which we were with our grandchildren. We were on a lake for a few days and one of my sons came to me and said, "Dad, one of my goals during these couple of days is Matt (Matt is 5), that he would catch a fish. Matt has never caught a fish and one of my goals is that Matt would catch a fish." Now, I pray for all kinds of stuff. But I sat out on a pier one day this week and I said, Oh, Lord, help a fish to come by that is real hungry and let Matt catch it. Don't let me catch it, let Matt catch it. And the amazing thing is, Matt caught a fish. He was about that big (laughter). And when you pick up the USA Today tomorrow you are going to see Matt's picture on the front page holding up his fish that we caught. Now my job was to put the worm on. And to teach Matt that you don't fish without a worm. So after he caught it another one kind of got it and the float was moving and I said, "Well, we need to pull it in. He said, "No, I don't want to pull it in. I said, "Oh, you've got to pull it in, you've got to make sure that it still has a worm on it." Because, one of the lessons is, you never catch

a fish with a hook without a bait." Now listen to me carefully. Life has a lot of hooks with a lot of worms on them. The devil never fishes with a bare hook. He always puts something on it and what we do is come along and we see it and we say, boy, that's good. And then all of a sudden we've got a hook in our mouth and we're being carried along in somebody's fish box. Now, why did we do it? Are we dumb? No, we were lured into it. And the Bible says, there are going to be people who are going to come along who are going to entice you, who are going to say, come on, let's do it. You need to be reminded that we all live with a group. Think. As soon as we learn something we share it with somebody else. Eve decided she was going to disobey God. What'd she do? She went and found her husband. One person decides to do something, they never like to do it by themselves, they always go get somebody else. And people are going to always come to you and say, listen, I found something real good. Boy, if you sniff this you get high, if you put this in, you just feel good, if you do this you get a thrill, and you are going to spend all of your life with the lures of this world. And there are more lures today. You can get in a chat room on the internet. You can hear about somebody that sounds so wonderful and the next thing you know you have been lured to leave your family and go over here. Teenagers can get on and talk to adults and next thing you know they have made an appointment to meet them over here or somewhere else. And you are going to find that all kinds of ads and all kinds of things are going to try to get you to do something else. Now, the question you need to ask yourself, do you know that life has lures and that people are going to always be trying to get you to do something that is wrong and if you are not the kind of person that is steady and solid and built in the Lord, somebody will lure you along and that is what He is trying to teach us. After the service that we have just had, one of the parents came to me and he said, oh, I am so glad you said that because, I want to tell you, it is all wrapped up,

Pastor, in a beautiful box. ... It is empty. And all of us need to learn it. And you don't fall for the first worm that comes along. And if you are not steady and solid in the Lord you will be lured along. Notice the third one. This is what he is being lured to do. Let's go lie and wait for somebody's blood. Let's waylay some harmless soul. Let's swallow them alive. We'll get all sorts of valuable things and we'll fill our houses with plunder. Third great lesson you need to learn in life - What is most important to you? People or things? This young fellow said I am going to go and take what this person has and I'm going to get it for myself. And what he said simply is, it doesn't matter to me what a person is, what is important to me is to get things and if I have to steal it to get it that's okay. And here's a man who has gotten up for thirty years and worked hard all of his life and some yoho goes in the middle of the night and takes thirty years of material away from him and what's he saying? I don't care about you. All I care about are things. And every person in this room is going to have to decide really what is most important to you. Are things more important? Is that the most important thing in your life? I talked years ago with a young person who had just made a new idol. And I asked her, "Why have you made an idol?" And she had made an idol of Elvis. And I said, "What is it that attracts you to Elvis?" And she looked at me as though I had just landed from Mars. And she said, "Don't you know? Elvis has four Cadillac's." Now, are the people that you are attracted to the people who have just accumulated things? I know people who are more committed to material things than they are to God. They are committed materialists. Their whole life is to get and to have and it doesn't make any difference how they get it or who they step on. You are going to have to determine whether your life if going to be spent for people or whether it is going to be spent for things. Now, notice the last principle he gave. Verse 18 - these men lay in wait for their own blood. They waylay only themselves. Such is the end of all who

go after ill-gotten gain. It takes away the life of those who get it. Principle number four - there are consequences to broken moral laws. Here is the consequence. I go after something thinking he's going to lose it but because I broke God's moral laws I am the loser. You need to be reminded, we never break the ten commandments. All that we do is break ourselves against them. We become the losers. We get to the spot where when we break them, Solomon said, all you do is hurt yourself. If you want to find the good life, live like God has commanded us to live. If you want misery and heartache, (and I have spent a lifetime trying to help people in misery and heartache), if you want misery and heartache, think that you are going to be the winner when you break God's laws. And what you find out is that you are the loser. Someone rightly said, sin is a two-act play. In the first act you fool around with sin and in the second act sin makes a fool out of you. It is as eternal and immutable as God himself. You simply cannot break it and you will be the loser. I wanted to ask you today, have you learned those lessons? Has the wisdom of God really become a part of your life? Maybe today you need to say, you know, I've been trying to make life with my own little set of putty. And I have been trying to mold it and make it like I want to and it doesn't work. And I need to give my heart and my life to Jesus Christ. Some of you today who are in this room are Christians. I want to tell you there are so many lures out today and so many things in which people become confused on. You so much need a church family. You need to be here for your own family. You need to be here for the other families in this community. And if we don't teach this - what I've said this morning - they are not going to get it anywhere else. And you need to come to say, I want to be a part of what God is up to so that

we can teach the community the wisdom of God.. We always stand and sing a hymn of invitation as you know, and I always invite you to come. I always encourage you to take the next step with God. I always ask you to move according to his principles in your life. And I hope today that God has been working in your life, you'll say, we need to come. We need to come and make our decision for Christ today. Will you? Let's stand together and let's sing.