

2. Agur watches, and wonders, and thinks rather carefully

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 20 March 2011

Preacher: Edward Lobb

- [0 : 00] Well, let's open up again at Proverbs chapter 30, and as I said earlier, our passage for tonight is verses 18 to 33. And I want to give it the title, Agur, that's the author, Agur watches and wonders and thinks rather carefully.
- And you might add, encourages us to think rather carefully as well. And just a reminder about what the book of Proverbs is. It's a book of instruction in wisdom.
- Not highbrow intellectualized wisdom, but wisdom for the plain man and the plain woman and the plain young person. Down to earth wisdom. Wisdom in how to go about our everyday business.
- Wisdom, for example, in how to use our money wisely. How to plan our day wisely. How to marry wisely. How to bring up our children wisely.
- How not to turn into a sloth, a sluggard or a couch potato. That's a strong theme in Proverbs. How to be a good neighbor. How to speak wisely.
- [1 : 08] How to use our tongues. And there's a great deal else besides. But the wisdom of this book of Proverbs is godly wisdom. It's not secular wisdom.
- It's the wisdom of those who live their lives in the fear of the Lord. In fact, the motto, text, you might say, of the whole book is Proverbs chapter 1 verse 7. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.
- So the big concern of this book of Proverbs is to train us to live. Not like secular mankind. Not like agnostic mankind. But to live consciously under the authority of God.
- And therefore to live a full life. A canny life. A life marked by joy. By salty humor. You can't really dig into Proverbs without beginning to chuckle quite a lot.
- A life marked by godliness. Insight. Love of neighbor. And a growing awareness of the real world. Life as it really is. In all its ups and downs and quirks.
- [2 : 09] Do you remember how the Apostle Paul says to Timothy, his young friend, that one of the uses of scripture is to train us in righteousness. And my guess is that Paul would think of the book of Proverbs as training in righteousness.
- For Christian people, Proverbs is part of the training that we need if we're going to live a life that is worthy of the gospel. And these words of Agur in the second half of chapter 30 are part of the training in godly living that Christians need.
- There's not a great deal of strong moral instruction in this passage. Though there are certainly moments of it. particularly I think in verse 20 and in verses 32 and 33.
- But the rest of the passage is really encouraging us to open our eyes and engage our brains. Agur is saying to us, have you noticed this? And have you noticed that?
- If not, let me point it out to you. Because it's worth noticing. You'll learn something about God if you notice these things. So I want us to take the verses in four sections.

[3 : 13] And then we'll have a postscript in verses 32 and 33. First of all then, verses 18 and 19. Four things that Agur does not understand.

Now you'll have noticed this odd feature of Agur's writing. He doesn't just say, there are four things that I can't fathom. He says in verse 18, three things are too wonderful for me.

Four I do not understand. And then he gives us, not three things, but four wonderful things to think about. You'll see he uses the same trick again in verse 21, and again in verse 29.

Though in verse 24, you'll see that he drops the three things and four things formula, and he simply says four things. I don't know why he changes it there, but he does. Well, this is nothing more than a colourful stylistic trick to catch our attention.

The Bible is full of colourful language. And I think it needs to be, because our brains are so often as dull as ditch water. If you ever see me wandering along the street in Glasgow, looking lost in thought, please do stop me, and ask me if anything at all is going on between my ears.

[4 : 26] And the answer is likely to be, not very much. And I guess, knowing you as I do, that your brain is probably the same. Now, I include myself fully in this, but I know that there are not too many Einsteins in St. George's Tron.

So we need to have this kind of vivid language to spur our brains into something approaching activity. So let's thank the Lord for the colourful language that he often gives us in the Bible, and certainly we have colourful things here.

So what are these four wonderful things which are incomprehensible in verse 19? Well, Agur selects, just look at verse 19 with me, Agur selects four items, four very noticeable features of life, four elements in life that all of us are very familiar with, namely, the sky, rock, the sea, and young women.

And what is it that links these four together? Well, surely it's this, that all four of them are pretty hard to negotiate.

And yet, Agur notices with a sense of wonder that there are four other items or entities that do somehow manage to negotiate them.

[5 : 44] So he says, first of all, look at the eagle. Now, a typical eagle, I haven't picked one up, but I'm told that a typical eagle weighs about seven or eight pounds, quite a big bird.

Agur says, think of the eagle. It drifts around the sky, hundreds of feet above ground, and it seems so effortless. It soars, it glides. It appears to know the second and third laws of thermodynamics.

Now, you think of the human being. Man has been spending thousands of years, literally thousands of years, dreaming about how to fly, and it took us till the 20th century before we learnt. But the eagle, says Agur, has always known how to do it.

The sky, the air, is a pretty tricky element to negotiate, but somehow, the eagle knows how to do it. Now, isn't that wonderful? And secondly, look at the snake.

Think of the cobra gliding across that rock. No legs. How does he do it? Agur thinks, if I'm going to walk across a piece of rocky ground, I've got to use my legs and my brain simultaneously, which is rather demanding.

[6 : 53] But Mr. Cobra, he's so quick, and he's so effortless, he doesn't even appear to break sweat. I cannot explain it, says Agur. It's a wonderful thing. Then thirdly, here is Agur looking out to sea.

He's on the cliff tops. And there's a fine merchant ship, solid oak structure, weighing possibly two or three hundred tons in those days. The sails are all hoisted, a steady breeze is blowing up from the southwest, and this ship is cruising through the sea at about ten or twelve knots.

Hundreds of tons of wood and metal moving through the water at the speed of a cantering horse. It seems so effortless. In fact, look at the helmsman. He's only got to put one finger on the wheel.

He's perhaps having a cup of tea and talking to his friend as he does it. It's so easy, apparently. Another thing too wonderful for me to understand, says Agur. Then there's this fourth thing, the way of a man with a virgin, as he puts it.

Now what Agur means by that, I think, is the amazing way in which a young man persuades the girl that he loves to have mercy upon him and perhaps eventually to marry him.

[8 : 11] What Agur observes is this. I'll just translate this into modern British language and culture. Think of the lad, the young man. He's been noticing a particular girl for some time, for weeks or even months.

And every time he sees her, his heart beats a little bit more quickly. Remember that, brothers? Do you know that? Okay. And then eventually, it could be months later, but eventually he plucks up the courage and he goes to her and he opens his mouth and he says, he actually speaks.

Now boys, have you got your notebook ready and your pencil? This is what you need to say. This is how to do it. Okay. So he says to her, Eustacia. I wouldn't note that down.

It could be a different name that you need to use. Anyway, he says to her, Eustacia, Starbucks make a pretty rotten cup of coffee. Everybody says it's wonderful coffee. What I had in mind was, well, do you think you might like, um, what I wanted to say was, if you happen to be really thirsty tomorrow night at seven o'clock in the evening, I thought you might quite like to come down to Starbucks.

with me and nobody else. To have a cup, to have a cup of coffee and a low sugar, fat free, calorifically advantageous jam donut. Would you like that?

[9 : 37] Now, during that elegant little speech, Eustacia's eyebrows have gone up half an inch. And while the young man is speaking, a lot of thoughts have rushed through her mind.

A lot of thought has rushed through her mind, such as, his eyes are dreamy but his fingernails are not quite clean. I wonder if he's been playing rugby this afternoon.

What would my mother think of him? Perhaps when we're both 80 years old, we'll be living together in a bungalow in Broughty Ferry. Now, she thinks all those things in a matter of a second or two, but she says none of it.

I didn't say anything of that. What she actually says is, thank you, Sebastian. I'd love to. I'd love to. Though, perhaps I ought to tell you that I prefer chocolate eclairs to jam donuts.

Now, the point is this. The point is this. Agua observes this phenomenon. And Agua, who's probably getting on in years, has seen it happen time after time after time amongst his friends.

[10 : 40] He's probably quite an old man. And it never ceases to amaze him how a tongue-tied, awkward young man manages to persuade a girl, first of all, to go out with him and then subsequently, perhaps, to marry him.

It's a wonder to him. He cannot fathom how a self-possessed, well-organized young girl should want to go out with old, gorky trousers. Young, gorky trousers.

But then, perhaps Agua, as he's writing this, he looks across the room to Mrs. Agua, who's sitting by the fireside knitting socks for their grandchildren. And he remembers how, a very long time ago, she took pity on him.

So what is the point of verses 18 and 19? Isn't it this? That Agua looks at these four amazing realities. And he says to himself, here are four things that I simply cannot understand.

They're wonderful. But they're there. There's no denying them. They're part of what happens. They're part of the created order. So if the facts of the creation are so wonderful, mustn't the creator of them be even more wonderful?

[11 : 52] Now, Agua isn't pressing this lesson home. He's just saying, think about it. If the creation is so unfathomable, what does it say about the creator? But then we have a fifth unfathomable thing in verse 20.

And this one is as painful to Agua as the other four have been pleasant. Now, just look with me at verse 20. Apparently, the Hebrew of the first phrase there, those words, this is the way, apparently, the Hebrew links verse 20 back to verse 18 and shows us that this thing is yet another thing which Agua cannot understand.

And what is it? It's a woman who treats her adulterous relationship as if it's as morally neutral as having a meal. She eats her food, she wipes her mouth, which is what you do when you're pleasantly satisfied and you're feeling at peace with the world after a good meal and she says, I've done no wrong.

And Agua says to us, I cannot understand how anybody can behave like that. How can a human being be so self-delivered as to carry on with somebody, to have an adulterous relationship with somebody and to say, it's all right.

This verse is not anti-woman, it's anti-adultery. Men, of course, can behave in exactly the same way. Now again, Agua is not really pressing the lesson on us explicitly, but isn't he asking us to share his astonishment that a human being can disrupt one of the Ten Commandments, one of God's fundamental laws and yet profess to have done nothing wrong.

[13 : 33] So, there are four things that Agua does not understand and then this painful fifth that he adds in verse 20. Now secondly, let's look on to verses 21, 2 and 3.

Four things that the world cannot bear. One of the great strengths of the book of Proverbs and the book of Ecclesiastes is that the authors see that the world has some very painful aspects to it, some of them so painful as to be just unbearable and yet these things cannot be removed by human power and God himself doesn't remove them either.

The earth is agonizingly disfigured, isn't it? So many painful things happen. Earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, disease, poverty, an endless succession of very painful brute facts.

Now we know that God promises us a new world in which there is no suffering or pain after the Lord Jesus has returned and we look forward to it. But for now, as verse 21 puts it, this is a world that we live in that has unbearable elements, things that make us tremble because they're so painful, they're so inappropriate and yet they're here.

They're part of the fabric of what we have to live with, what we have to put up with. They are unbearable things and yet they have to be born. So Agor notices four things.

[15 : 01] First of all, a slave when he becomes king in verse 22. So here is a man Agor is thinking of who occupies the highest office in the land and yet he is completely unfitted for it.

Now if it weren't so horrible, that would make us chuckle because it is so common, isn't it? A man obtains power in his country, usually by force and he retains power forcefully because he rules his people by terror and torture and brutality.

The people would love to throw him out but they know that if they rise up against him, if they organise some kind of rebellion, they're almost certain to have their throats cut, perhaps literally. I imagine that all of us here have had our eyes quite a bit opened this last two or three months as we've seen the stirrings and the turmoil in North Africa and the Middle East.

I didn't realise, perhaps many of you didn't either, just how ferocious and brutal some of these dictators have been. But we're being educated these days, aren't we? And aren't we all seeing much more clearly what a blessing it is to live in a democracy?

No system of government is perfect, of course not, because we're sinful people. But the great blessing of democracy is that our leaders have to be elected by popular vote every four or five years.

[16 : 25] And that means that bad leadership can be turned out of office after a relatively short period of time and without bloodshed. It greatly modifies a leader's performance if he knows that he's accountable to the electorate in four or five years' time.

But a man like Gaddafi has been able to rule a large North African country for 42 years. 42 years! The man is so obviously unfitted for the task of wise leadership.

And yet he's been able to retain power because anybody who steps out of line is ruthlessly squashed. Apparently even his senior government ministers are terrified of him because he knows what he might, they know what he might do to them.

And this is exactly what Agar is talking about in the first line of verse 22. A man obtains power who is quite unfitted to exercise it responsibly. And look at verse 21, the earth trembles under it.

It's an unbearable situation. That's why the people of Libya at last are desperately trying to throw this man off their backs at this very moment. And secondly in verse 22, Agar notices a similar man, a fool when he's filled with food.

[17 : 44] Now you know how the Psalms define the fool. The fool is the person who says in his heart there is no God. In other words he says I'm not accountable to God, I will not submit to God, I will do as I please and I will please myself.

And if that means riding roughshod over other people, I will not hesitate to do it. There's a ruthlessness about such a person. Now when a man of that kind is hungry and poor, he's rather restricted.

But as soon as he becomes rich and he starts eating well and he's full of food, he puffs himself up with pride like a bullfrog, he throws his weight around and he hurts a lot of other people rather badly.

And Agar is saying to us, this is an unbearable man. And then in verse 23, Agar notices two types of unbearable woman.

Let me read that verse again. An unloved woman when she gets a husband and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress. Now I think we can be confident that Agar is not wanting to point his finger at every woman who marries rather late in life.

[18 : 54] Not at all. All of us know women who married rather late in the day and were nothing but blessing and joy to their husbands, their friends and their churches. There are many like that.

But surely Agar is talking about the kind of woman that nobody would ever expect to marry, probably because she's unbearably bossy and she barks at everybody as if she's a regimental sergeant major.

Come here, Russell, and wash those pans immediately. Don't let me see a speck of grease on them. Have you got that into your rather thick skull? And in the end, this woman gets Russell so much under her thumb that she persuades him to marry her.

And he spends the rest of his life looking and sounding rather like a sheep. Yes, dear. Of course not, darling, says poor Russell. Then the fourth unbearable person is the maidservant who displaces her mistress.

Now you'll think immediately of a Bible example of that where Hagar, Sarah's maid, displaces Sarah. At least in certain ways she does. This girl now feels she has the right to throw her weight around the household and she makes life a misery for everybody.

[20 : 07] That's what happened in Abraham's household. Now the thing that links all four of these people in verses 22 and 23 is that they find themselves in a position of power and privilege but they don't have the character or the ability to behave appropriately and therefore they treat other people very badly.

They don't know how to handle responsibility. All they can do is bark orders and boss people about. And Agur says the earth cannot bear up under that kind of strain.

Well let's move a bit more quickly through the next couple of sections. They're very interesting but I'm conscious the clock is ticking and I don't want us to miss the character shaping challenge of the final two verses.

So our next section is verses 24 to 28. And here we have four things that are small but wise. In fact look at verse 24 exceedingly wise says Agur.

And wise is a word that carries a great deal of force in the book of Proverbs because to be wise in Proverbs is to live a godly life, to live in the fear of the Lord. And in this section Agur is saying look at these four small creatures and they will teach us something about how to be a wise and godly human being.

[21 : 30] Learn wisdom for your life by means of a little bit of observant natural history. So what do we learn from these four? First of all from the ants in verse 25.

What we learn there is provision through forward planning. That is provision for their own needs. They gather in summer so they have food through the winter. Now we all know of course that the Bible teaches us to be very generous givers.

But it also teaches us that it's good to plan ahead and to provide for our own needs. It's good that we should give as much as we can in support of gospel work. Let's keep doing that.

But it's also good, and this is the point here, it's good to plan financially for your old age so that you're not homeless when you're 70. And it's good and wise and it's godly to be able to pass on something to your children and your grandchildren to help to provide for them as they grow up in life.

So provision through forward planning. Then secondly, from the rock badgers, in verse 26, we learn the wisdom of having a safe place to retreat to when danger threatens.

[22 : 41] Now I don't know whether you're familiar with the rock badger or hyrax. I think I may have seen them at the zoo. I've certainly seen pictures of them. But they're quite a small animal, about as long as that, a bit like an overgrown guinea pig, quite a nice little face.

You find them in mountainous areas in places like Ethiopia and other parts of Africa and the Middle East. And they're not strong and they know it. And that's why they have the sense to live in rocky caves and places that are safe, rocky dens, which protect them when there are prowling predators around.

And Agur is saying to us, we people are not very strong either. So we need safe places to retreat to from time to time. Therefore, he's saying, take a holiday from time to time if you can.

Do things that are going to build up your morale. Like, for example, watching rugby on a Saturday afternoon. That usually builds up your morale.

It doesn't always, but it usually does. Agur is saying, don't be too proud to take sanctuary when you need to. Stick up a sign on your door that says, gone fishing.

[23 : 51] Then thirdly, from the locusts, in verse 27, we learn the value of order and orderliness. The locusts have no king, no king to command them, says Agur, and yet somehow all of them march in rank.

They flourish because they've learned to live an ordered life. When I was very, very newly married, I think just a week or two, my wife said to me one evening at bedtime, do you always leave your trousers in a crumpled heap on the floor?

Now, I have to say, it was a question to which I had never given a moment's thought. Nowadays, however, I'm a model of good order.

I pick up my trousers every evening before they've even hit the floor. I fold them along the crease, if I can find one, and I actually put them over the back of the chair. Good order, says Agur, is a blessing to us.

And then, fourthly, from the lizard, in verse 28, we learn that it's good to be bold and adventurous. It's a slightly different point from the point about the rock badger, but this is the point here.

[25 : 00] The lizard, says Agur, is small and weak and helpless and harmless. You can pick it up with your hand. But look how bold it is. You even find it in king's palaces.

Walk into the king's library, there's the lizard. Walk into his office, even walk into the king's bedroom. As he straightens his tie and combs his hair, even there, the little lizard is sitting there looking up at him and winking at him.

Agur's point in these verses, 24 to 28, is that these little creatures are weak. Just look at the phrases he uses there. Not strong, not mighty for the rock badgers.

They have no king for the locusts. And you can take the lizard in your hand. So they're not strong. And yet, Agur is saying, they're canny. They've learned to live within their limitations and yet still prosper.

So Agur is saying to us, be like these little beasties. We're not strong either. We have all manner of limitations, both physical and mental. And yet we can learn. We can learn the need for foresight and forward planning, for sanctuary when we need it, for good order and for boldness.

[26 : 09] It's all part of God's wisdom, godly wisdom. Well, our next section is verses 29 to 31, where Agur shows us four things that are stately and wonderful.

Or to be more precise, stately in their tread, stately in their stride. Agur is noticing how they walk. The first of them is in verse 30, and that's the lion, mightiest among beasts who does not turn back before any.

In other words, if you're walking up the road, and you meet a lion that is walking down the road, you know who backs off. It's not the lion. Then there's the strutting rooster.

Some of you may know that I keep a lot of chickens at my house. I think at the moment I've got about 60 hens and about 15 cocks. It's a great noise first thing in the morning. And some of the cocks have names, they're actually named after students on the Cornhill training course.

And even tutors. We've got one very wise, scholarly, very intelligent looking old bird, who's called Bob File III. Then we've got a very smart, silver and black young cockerel.

[27 : 22] His name is Rupert Hunt Taylor. And he's penned up with four hens. Gen 1, Gen 2, Gen 3 and Gen 4. Now, what Agur notices about the cock is that he's strutting, the strutting rooster.

When a cock struts out across the farmyard in front of his hens, he is a force to be reckoned with. He will take on any cockerel. And when he crows, do you know what a cockerel means?

He's not rejoicing in the sun coming up. It's a challenge. He's saying, roll up your sleeves. I'm ready to take you on, whoever you are, even if you're three times my size. Then verse 31, there's the he-goat.

Now, I've never personally been charged down by one of those, but I imagine it wouldn't be much fun. Has anybody here ever been charged by a he-goat? Tom? No? You have? I guess it would be very difficult.

They're very, very, I think they're persistent when they're angry, a he-goat. And then lastly, he mentions a king whose army is with him. Think, for example, of King Robert, flanked by his highlanders and his lowlanders, marching into battle to tweak the ears of the old enemy.

[28 : 35] So what's going on in this little section here? Well, the lesson for us is perhaps less obvious than in the other sections of the chapter, but there's clearly a contrast with the last section.

Because verses 24 to 28 are about small and weak creatures, whereas the four creatures we have here are strong and aggressive and fearless. The adjective Agur uses in verse 29 is stately.

So might he be saying to us, enjoy the stately fearlessness of these beasts. Look at the lion as he marches down the road, growling deep in his throat.

Doesn't the sight of him make the hair stand up on the back of your neck? Look at the cock of the walk. Don't you admire his superb confidence? Look at the he-goat with his heavy horns and his baleful yellow eyes.

Don't you respect him? You'd better. And look at the king with his army marching forward. Don't you tremble just a little bit at his determination and his courage? So the weak creatures teach us wisdom, but the strong creatures somehow quicken our heartbeat and nourish our capacity for admiration.

[29 : 45] Don't they make us say, what a wonderful, diverse world we live in. Imagine a world without lions and cocks and he-goats and kings. Wouldn't it be like a world where the only available milk is skimmed?

These fine creatures are the cream of creation. Enjoy them, says Agur. The creator has given us a colourful world, not a drab grey one. Well let's look now at Agur's final word to the world.

This is the last thing he says in the Bible to the world. Verses 32 and 33. Part of the message of chapter 30 is a message about humility.

Do you remember verses 1 to 3 which we looked at last week where Agur tells us what he thinks about himself in his most honest moments? I'm weary, oh God, and worn out, too stupid to be a man.

Well he returns to a related theme here in verses 32 and 33. If you've been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you've been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth.

[30 : 52] For pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife. Verse 32 outlines two types of godless behaviour.

First of all, there's self-promotion, exalting yourself. It is possible, isn't it, for us to say a great deal about ourselves, so that people should hear what we say and admire it.

Little Jack Horner sat in a corner, eating his Christmas pie. He put in his thumb, and pulled out a plum, and said, what a good, fine, upstanding, intelligent, cultivated, able, world-beating achiever am I.

Now Agur says, it's foolish to exalt yourself like that, it's godless to do that. And then second, he mentions devising evil, working out, planning how to get the better of somebody else, how to get more money, or more reputation, how to humiliate somebody, or to cut them out, or upstage them, how to rob other people, or how to get power over them.

We have all known how to do this ever since we were in nursery school. It's something about our nature. And Agur says to us, and here he becomes much more stern, he says, if this is what you've been doing, clap your hand over your mouth, stop talking, consider what you've been saying, listen to yourself, because your words are going to stir up trouble.

- [32 : 24] And then he illustrates this truth in verse 33, in a way that's designed to make us laugh. And it's the very comedy of the thing that brings home the sharp lesson. He says, if you press milk, it produces curds.

Apparently there was an old Middle Eastern practice of getting a tripod and hanging up a skin bottle, like a wine bottle, but filling it with milk. And then the women would stand around and press and squeeze this bottle until it produced a kind of butter.

So Agur's original readers would have recognised the practice. And then, says Agur, pressing the nose produces blood. Of course it does.

Think of the front row forwards in a rugby scrum. That's a painful image, isn't it, which prepares the reader for the final image, which contains the real point. And that is, that pressing anger, in other words, giving vent to anger, allowing anger to run free, produces strife.

Now, I'm not going to say this, but if I were to say, please put up your hand, if you ever feel a tide of anger rising up inside you, I guess almost every hand would go up, wouldn't it?

- [33 : 38] Unless you're very, very, very nice or dishonest. My hand would certainly go up. Now, Agur knows that all of us feel angry at times, but his challenge here is not to press our anger, not to squeeze it, not to press it till it bursts out and causes trouble.

This is a call for self-restraint. When we're angry, the temptation is to burst out with words, isn't it, or perhaps to send some intemperate email, or to write letters, yours disgustedly, to stir up difficulty.

Agur is saying to us, don't do it. Don't do it. Be peaceable. Be humble. Let's keep our mouths covered when we're tempted to exalt ourselves, to devise evil, or to burst out in anger.

Of course, Christians do sometimes need to express anger against injustice or cruelty or godlessness. I know that. But that's not the type of anger that Agur is talking about here.

This is the nasty, self-centered stuff that our anger usually is. Well, friends, time is up. I must stop. But let's take note of Agur.

- [34 : 46] He's one of the great minor voices of the Old Testament. Let's honour him by returning to him from time to time. There are great lessons in this 30th chapter. God has honoured Agur by including this chapter in the Bible.

Well, next week, we're into chapter 31 and we'll be looking at the words of King Lemuel, or to be more exact, the words of his godly mother. Let's pray together now.

Amen. How we thank you, our dear Father, for this humble and observant man.

We know nothing about his life and background, but we know about his brain and the way that he has taught us these things. And we pray that you'll help us to learn the lessons of this chapter and to grow in our sense of wonder and delight and self-restraint, self-discipline, and that you'll help us to become people who are more wise because we come more truly and deeply to fear you and to live our life in awe of you.

So please bless and strengthen us this week, dear Father. May our lives reflect something of the life and transforming power of the Lord Jesus.

- [36 : 18] And we pray that you will use us to bring his gospel to many. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.