

## Rising Above The Negative Influence Pleasant Plains 2-2-2020PM *Nick Angel*

It has been my desire as a preacher to always preach and teach in such a way that disciples both young and old can understand and benefit from what has been said. I am convinced that even deep subjects can be presented in such a way that younger or less mature disciples can learn and grow. This is important because I want for every person, young...old...or somewhere in between, to be able to gain something through our studies together. However, I was recently reminded that there is nothing wrong with taking time to tailor a lesson specifically for our young people, and that there is even great benefit in doing such a thing. Therefore, I am going to step down from my lofty pedestal to be down here on the floor among the people this evening (and at least one time each month) and focus primarily on our youth, but I do hope to do so in such a way that all of us are reminded of God's truths that are found in His Word. Please grab a Bible and join me in **Proverbs 1**. We will study through this **first chapter of Proverbs** together this evening.

- **\*READ Proverbs 1:1-7\*** This morning, we focused our minds on the idea of striving to live in the light of God in a dark and blinded world. Though we might be seasoned in our faiths, it is always good to be reminded of the truth that God has high expectations for His people, and there are great benefits that come from giving every effort to walk in the light.
- This evening, I want to build upon those thoughts by focusing specifically on the youth of our congregation because this message of living in the light is all the more important to them because they are in a period of their lives where they are extremely impressionable and extra focus needs to be put on making sure that they are able to live righteous lives in the light by Rising Above The Negative Influences that are ever present all around them.
- I can think of few Biblical texts that are more applicable to this sort of study than that of the **Book of the Proverbs** and specially **Proverbs 1**. As we just read together, the Proverbs of Solomon are a treasure trove of practical knowledge, wisdom, and instruction that can help all of us, but especially the young person, grow in wisdom and godly character. In these opening verses, Solomon puts forth the choice. Will we be wise and listen so as to grow in learning? Or will we be foolish by despising the wisdom and discipline being graciously given to us by God?

### **Solomon's Wise Advice For Young People**

#### **I. Be aware of and resist the negative influences that surround you. (Proverbs 1:10-14)**

- A. Solomon begins his fatherly instruction by warning against the possible enticement of sinners, but we must recognize that there is no "if" about it! Every single young person will at some point be in a position where negative influence will be bearing down upon you. Even those of us who might be educated or working in more Christ-centered environments are susceptible to having to fend off bad influences from those who don't share the same values, convictions, or goals that we have as followers of Jesus. We must recognize that not everyone values righteousness and holiness as we do. Not everyone is convicted within their hearts that some things are good and some things are bad. Not everyone lives with the goal of first and foremost pleasing God in everything they think, say, and do. Being in this world, that is simply the reality that we can't always escape. Therefore, we must be aware of the ever present reality of negative influences!
- B. Let's be completely honest...this can even be true of others within the church! Not all Christians behave as they ought to. This was exactly the problem that was present in Corinth in **I Corinthians 5**. Paul has to rebuke this church for allowing a Christian to negatively influence others by his sin. Paul's instructions were to put out and not associate with the bad influence (leaven) before it harmed the whole group. These Christians needed to not allow for this man to influence them to follow in his steps of sin.
- C. Further, we need to recognize that those who are negative influences upon us aren't going to come up with signs that read "*Hi! I'm going to try to be a really bad influence upon you so that you will do bad things!*" No, more often than not...those negative influences are going to disguise themselves

as simply trying to have some fun. *“Let’s set an ambush and kill someone. Let’s attack some innocent person just for fun!” (Proverbs 1:11)* No big deal that innocent life is taken...it is all about having fun! If this can be true for murder then it only sounds better as the transgressions are lessened in the eyes of others. Stealing isn’t that big of a deal...its fun! Disrespect towards others is fun! Let’s have fun by lying and seeing how far we can get away with stuff! Of course, drugs, alcohol, and sex only lead to the most fun of times. This is the way negative influences often disguise their poor intentions...it is all about having fun.

D. This leads us to the conclusion that, as young people, you need to make sure that those influences you choose to allow into your life (sometimes we do have choices and those choices are most often our friends) are those that offer more than simply being able to provide you with fun times. We must make sure that we are putting effort into surrounding ourselves with those people who are going to help us to be more godly in our character and at the very least we can’t have folks closest to us who are going to drive us further away from God. Young folks, you must value spiritual quality in your friends over simply being able to have fun with them. This isn’t just me being an old fogey trying to ruin your fun, but these choices will have strong ramifications in your lives.

## **II. Recognize the detrimental results of allowing these negative influences to guide your life.**

(Proverbs 1:15-19,24-32)

- A. Solomon goes on from stating the presence and tactics of the negative influences to warn about the realities of where this type of behavior is going to get people. As they run towards evil and stay on this negative road/path...they will truly only be running towards their own destruction and demise. *“They set an ambush to kill themselves, they attack their own lives.” (Proverbs 1:18)* They might frame this type of lifestyle as being full of all sorts of profit, but the end result will only ever be suffering and pain.
- B. A few verses later we see personified Wisdom stating that she had called out for his son to listen but he refused. She had extended her hand but no one paid attention. With this neglect, Wisdom would simply sit back and laugh and mock those who had neglected Her council and refused to accept Her correction. **(Proverbs 1:24-26)** Can I again reiterate...our actions have consequences regardless of our age. This is true of those older and those younger. If, as a young person, you hate knowledge, choose to not fear the Lord, are not interested in wise counsel, and reject the correction of the wise...then you will reap the consequences of such actions. **(Proverbs 1:29-31)**
- C. Sadly, there will be some people who recognize their error far too late, and they won’t be able to change what has already happened. It will simply be too late, and they won’t be able to hear or find the wisdom they had for so long rejected. The pain and suffering could have been avoided with better decision making in the past. (Hernandez) This is why it is so important for us all to make the choice as early as possible to become the type of person who is going to reject bad influences and find those people who can help us to be the type of people that God wants for us to be.

## **III. Allow those who have more experience and wisdom to have the greatest influence in your life.**

(Proverbs 1:8,9,20-23,33)

- A. Our parents should be a tremendous resource for you if for no other reason than the fact that they have life experience that you simply don’t have that can help you in making wise decisions in your lives. The instruction and teaching of your parents can serve as blessings, guidance, and protection for you if you will simply listen to the loving advice they desire to share with you.
- B. Beyond parents, there are avenues in which wisdom is calling out to us. Other adult figures of positive influence, friends who are also striving to glorify God in their lives, and certainly not the least is God Himself as He speaks through the Bible. Young people, please hear me! There are positive influences present around you that are crying out and begging to be heard. There are people in this assembly and a God up in heaven who desires nothing more than for the young people in this place

to be filled with all sorts of wisdom and knowledge that will only help for you to be blessed and benefitted in this life! We want to help!

- C. We want for you to listen to the wisdom of those older, more experienced, and more learned in the Scriptures so that you can mature and grow in ways that will benefit not only your faith but also your future wellbeing. We want to see you happy so long as your happiness is founded in Christ and His will for you in this life. Remember, the negative influences want to make it seem as if they are looking out for what is best in the way of what is most fun...but those wicked ways will only lead to heartache and pain. Being committed to this way of living might be more difficult, but it will only ever benefit you here and now, but most especially it will benefit you in the long run as you please God in your lives. Rise above the negative influences and seek out the benefits of wisdom and the positive influence she will have upon you in this life. God desires what is best for us, and we can gain it by trusting in His wisdom that seeks to give us life and blessings.

#### **IV. PARENTS: We must take the lead in making sure our children are encouraged to pursue and are given every chance to grow in godly character and wisdom by surrounding them with by positive influences.**

- A. With this being our responsibility, let me clarify that I fully recognize that our children are not robots that can be programmed to live their lives exactly how we would desire for them to do so. My 3 & 1/2 year old already has a mind of her own and the same is just about true for the 1 year old. If they make up their minds to do something...I have very little power to stop them outside of physically stopping them from doing it. But even that type of power will one day be gone.
- B. Therefore, I can not only serve my children but I can also give myself some sense of peace of mind by knowing that I have done everything humanly possible set them on the right path that they need to take in this life. I need to make sure that I am following the instructions of **Ephesians 6:4** by not stirring up anger in my children, but bringing them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. I can do that by following the example of what Moses told the children of Israel to do in **Deuteronomy 6:4-9**. I can make sure that if nothing else my children have a positive influence upon them within my home. That is the only place I have true control over, and if I want for my kids to have the best chance to make it to adulthood as faithful disciples of Jesus then I must do my part. Sure it doesn't guarantee anything, but I would sure rather know that I did everything possible by the Book than know that I failed them by not providing positive influence in the one place where I have total control.
- C. The reality is that we do have very little control over what influences our children outside of the home. We don't get to choose who their classmates or teammates or club mates will be, but we can teach them and constantly encourage them to make good choices by avoiding those people who want to do nothing but corrupt them. Again, I can't make my kids do anything, but I can have a strong influence on whether or not they are set up to succeed. I must take advantage of every opportunity to put them among other God-fearing young people so that by the time they're out of my house, they know that's the type of people they want to surround themselves with. And let me add that we must make church functions that focus on young people a priority for our families and children. If we aren't doing that then we can't say too much in the way of complaining that our children are never around good influences such as other young people.

We can't change the negative climate that is all around us whether we are young or old, but we can choose how much of an affect we will allow for it to have upon us. It is my hope that each of us whether older or especially younger will allow for God's wisdom to have the greatest impact on who we are and what we do. May we all listen for Wisdom's call and allow it to help us to rise above the negative influences that surround us each day. Those who reject Wisdom's call will suffer because of it, but Wisdom encourages all of us to humbly accept Her teachings by saying, ***"Whoever listens to me will live securely and be undisturbed by the dread of danger."*** (**Proverbs 1:33**) May we all rise above the negative influence by listening and acting upon the wisdom of God in our lives.