

Proverbs 30 // Shut Your Mouth!

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: 02 August 2026

Preacher: Challum Finbow

[0:00] Okay, so tonight's reading is from Proverbs chapter 30 and we're reading the whole of that chapter! So verse 1 to verse 33 and you can find that on page 666. I'll give you a wee moment to find it and then we'll read.

Proverbs chapter 30 starting at verse 1. The sayings of Agar son of Jaca, an inspired utterance. This man's utterance to Ithiel.

I am weary God but I can prevail. Surely I am only a brute, not a man. I do not have human understanding. I have not learned wisdom nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One. Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Whose hands have gathered up the wind? Who has wrapped up the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is the name of his son? Surely you know. Every word of God is flawless. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

[1:12] Do not add to his words or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar. Two things I ask of you, Lord. Do not refuse me before I die.

Keep falsehood and lies far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say, Who is the Lord? Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God.

Do not slander a servant to their master or they will curse you and you will pay for it. There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. Those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth.

Those whose eyes are ever so haughty, whose glances are so disdainful. Those whose teeth are swords and whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among the human race.

The leech has two daughters. Give, give, they cry. There are three things that are never satisfied. Four that never say enough.

[2:25] The grave, the barren womb, land which is never satisfied with water, and fire which never says enough. The eye that mocks a father, that scorns an aged mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.

There are three things that are too amazing for me. Four that I do not understand. The way an eagle in the sky. The way of a snake on a rock.

The way of a ship on the high seas. And the way of a man with a young woman. This is the way of an adulterous woman. She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I've done nothing wrong.

Under three things the earth trembles. Under four it cannot bear up. A servant who becomes king. A godless fool who gets plenty to eat. A contemptible woman who gets married.

And a servant who displaces her mistress. Four things on earth are small, yet they are extremely wise. Ants are creatures of little strength, yet they store up their food in the summer.

[3:35] Hyraxes are creatures of little power, yet they make their home in the crags. Locusts have no king, yet they advance together in ranks. A lizard can be caught with a hand, yet it is found in king's palaces.

There are three things that are stately in their stride. Four that move with stately bearing. A lion mighty among beasts who retreats before nothing.

A strutting cock, a he-goat, and a king secure against revolt. If you play the fool and exalt yourself, or if you plan evil, clap your hand over your mouth.

For as churning cream produces butter, and as twisting the nose produces blood, so stirring up anger produces strife. Thank you, Joe.

That was interesting. I think. But what was that about? And who is Agur anyway? Well, truth be told, we don't actually know who Agur.

[4:48] I want to say it like that. Agur. We don't really know who he is, but we have got his words. And as Jonathan said at the start, if Proverbs is right, then fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

But fools despise wisdom and instruction. And maybe then we need to work hard tonight to concentrate. So have Proverbs 30 in front of you.

You're going to need it. It's page 666. Have that in front of you, and let's ask God to help us. Lord God, as we look at this passage, we are at first bemused.

So do, Lord, help us. Giver of wisdom, we ask for your wisdom. Speak to us. Help us. And we ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Wisdom personified on earth. Amen. I wonder if you would agree that foolishly, our society always goes for the quick option.

[5:57] You know, kind of microwave your way to success. Well, wisdom, I have to tell you, is not fast food. It's slow cooked. And wisdom gives life stability.

And listen, what our society never advertises, what they never told you at school, is that it is from stability that life flourishes.

In Proverbs 30, we are introduced to a speaker who says they are weary, stupid. They've not learned wisdom. And on a scale of 1 to 10, a guru seems to score himself poorly.

So, think now. Give yourself a rating out of 10. 1 being a stupid brute. All the way to number 10 on the line, which is pure, unadulterated wisdom.

I'll give you 10 seconds to decide where you are on this line. I won't make you stand up the front and show me. Have a think. Thank you. Well, I wonder what your score is.

[7:16] Tell you all. Tell your neighbor. Oh, go on. Don't be so scared. Go on. I can't hear.

La, la, la, la. All right. Anyone over seven? No, good. No egomaniacs then.

Verse 32. If you play the fool and exalt yourself. If you plan evil, clap your hand over your mouth.

In other words, fools, shut it. Shut your mouth. That's the title of this sermon. Because I'm not coming back next Sunday, I can say shut your mouth and leave.

Humans have a very unhelpful capacity to hold opposing things together. I think we've probably recognized tonight that we are not wise.

[8:17] But don't you believe sometimes you know best? Better than others? Than God? Isn't it amazing how football fans know better than the managers?

Patients know better than doctors? And creatures know better than the creator? And yet we just scored ourselves low for wisdom. Well, verse 32.

If you've been foolish in exalting yourself or you've planned evil, put your hand over your mouth. Shut your mouth. Shut your mouth.

For one is wise. We're going to look at verses 1 to 10 under those head. And shut your mouth. For there is one who is wise. These words of Agur start with classic Proverbs ideas.

Stupidity is not having knowledge of the Holy One, the Creator. Wisdom comes from the knowledge of the Holy One, God. And as I hope we'll see, wisdom is found in humbly following God's word and world.

[9:31] Exalting self is foolishness and it leads to strife. Well, in the space of a generation, our instinct has been trained to look where for wisdom.

Our phones, the internet, and now to the seemingly all-knowing AI. Alarms!

Alarms! These are created things, folks. Created by humans, even. That doesn't make them bad, but it does mean they are not the fountains of wisdom.

Where should you go, therefore, for wisdom? Well, surely, verse 4, you know who has gone up to heaven and come down, whose hands have gathered up the wind, who's wrapped up the waters in a cloak and established all the ends of the earth.

What is his name? What is the name of his son? Surely, you know. Well, go on.

[10:49] Whose hands have gathered tornadoes and breezes, who gathers the Kelvin River and the Caspian Sea. What is his name of he who's established the earth?

Yahweh, Jehovah, the Lord. He is wise, go to him and his son's name.

Well, Christians can't but help say Jesus there, can we? But Agur can't know of Jesus because he lives BC. However, they can know that anointed kings were described as sons of God and

ultimately, all the kings of Israel and Judah, these sons of God, these were all leaders who were not the leaders who were needed.

In fact, the fulfillment of all these kings, these sons of God, is in fact the spirit anointed son of God. Isn't it? It's Jesus. And if you read the gospels, surely you will see he is wisdom personified.

Agur might not know but the Holy Spirit who has breathed out God's word does. And so for Christians, these words can be applied to Jesus.

[12 : 11] And so all of us, no matter how wise or how stupid we think we are, need. We need to be in step with the wisdom of the one who spoke to the wind and to the waves and said, be still and beware.

Surely foolishness is to ignore his teachings for there is one who is wise. Now our default position is to not pursue wisdom but rather to pursue choice.

What we think of as freedom, you know, because I'm free to do what I want any old time. Free to do what I choose any old time.

That type of do what I want freedom is not compatible with following the one who is wisdom.

Wisdom doesn't tell you what you want to hear or fit in with your choices.

For wisdom deals in truth. And accepting truth about yourself and truth about God, well it's central to wisdom and reliable truth is found in God's word.

[13 : 32] It's found in Jesus, the word made flesh. Look at verse 5 with me. Every word of God is flawless. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

And then we get our first do not or of this section. Do not add to his words or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.

God's word, verse 5, is a flawless place to take shelter in. Verse 6, our words are flawed, lies, unreliable and lead to rebuke from God.

I remember when I was in school, yes I know, a while ago, blah blah blah, I remember when I was in school we got this trendy new RE teacher, Miss Carilla. Our first lesson with her, she had us writing and drawing what we thought God was like.

What do you think boys and girls, God is like? Draw it. Well, better teaching would be what has God revealed about himself?

[14 : 45] Not what we imagine. True religion is not our thoughts about God adding to his words, but God revealing himself to humans.

and in his word and by his son he has revealed himself so that we don't need to add words. Do not add to his words.

He will rebuke you and prove you a liar. Sermons in this church are not the ideas of the preachers. Rather, as best as we can manage, preach, they are the words of scripture about God and about humans being made known in line with the big idea of the passage.

God's word preached in the way God said it for the purpose God said it. And as much as the preacher's words are in line with the message and tone of scripture, then they are wise and true.

[15 : 57] Pray then for the leaders and teachers of the word here in this place and throughout our country that they would not add to God's word, that they would make God's wisdom known here and the nation.

Wisdom means knowing truth about ourself and about our God and this comes from his word.

And knowledge of what you are really like can be found in what you pray for. You know this old song? Oh Lord won't you buy me a Mercedes Benz?

My friends all drive Porsches I must make amends. It only kind of rhymes if you put it in an American accent. What type of heart does a prayer like that show?

Look how that heart contrasts with verse 7 and 8. Two things I ask of you Lord.

[17 : 04] Do not refuse me before I die. Keep falsehood and lies far from me. Give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread.

Why? Why not the Mercedes Bend? Bend? Bends. Otherwise I may have too much and disown you and say who is the Lord?

Or I may become poor and steal and so dishonor the name of my God. Do you see the concerns of Agur? they are that he would remember there is one who is wise, there is one who provides, that he won't exalt himself and forget the gift giver.

Remember then, people, no one makes themselves talented or gifted. there are no self made millionaires.

Equally, see, Agur is concerned that he wouldn't have so little that he's tempted to steal, become a lawbreaker and discredit the Lord's name. hallowed be your name is Agur's concern.

[18 : 31] Verse 8, keep me away from falsehood and give me my daily bread so I am kept from temptation.

Reminds me of a prayer I just said that a wise teacher taught. Give us our daily bread.

Lead us not into temptation. Truth is central to wisdom. Truth about oneself, truth about God and Jesus is wisdom personified.

And just as in verse 6 where there is a do not or about speaking truly, so there is in verse 10. Do not slander, a servant to their master, or they will curse you and you will pay for it.

Slander, misspeaking about people, especially to people in power over that person is unwise, it's cruel, and it will lead to consequences, possibly for them, but here promise also for you.

[19 : 46] You will pay for your misspeaking. so think about what you say, what you post about people.

Maybe just shut your mouth and remember one is wise. And now shut your mouth or be one of those.

For there's just one way. You ever talk about people? No answer on that, you know?

You ever talk about people and you give the impression you'd never do that. Those people? as you read with me 11 to 14, don't think this couldn't be you.

Verse 11, there are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. So number one, people who don't honor their parents.

[20 : 56] There are those who are pure in their own eyes and yet are not cleansed of their filth. So number two, those who are impure and in denial.

There are those whose eyes are ever so haughty. That's a good word, isn't it? You can even say it in a posh accent, haughty. Whose glances are so disdainful.

Number three, proud. There are those whose teeth are swords, whose jaws are set with knives to devour the poor from the earth and the needy from among mankind.

Number four, the ravenous takers. Now, contrary to how I structured things in the sermon outline, which was a Friday thought, I think that ideas in verse 11 to 14, the parent cursors, the impure deniers, the proud haughty, the takers, these ideas carry all the way to verse 31.

And then 32 to 33 tells us how to respond. So, I'll be merging point two and three, don't be one of those, with there's just one way as we go along.

[22 : 10] So, let's start with the ravenous takers of verse 14. likely, some nations will think of richer nations like ours in that way.

That we've had open mouths and leeches off them. Verse 15 and 16 helps us with what devourers are like.

The leech is poetry. The leech has two daughters, give, give, give, they cry, ravenously living off of others.

There are three things that are never satisfied, four that never say enough, the grave, sadly, the barren womb, land never satisfied with water, fire which never says enough.

There are peoples, nations, companies, even churches just like that with open mouths sucking the life blood out of others, burning up others like a rapidly spreading fire.

[23 : 23] If you know God's wisdom then shut your insatiable mouth. Don't be one of those. And don't be one of the verse 11, one of those who disrespects your first human authority, who has cared for you, your parents.

Look, I know parents can be a complicated thing, especially now with so many broken relationships and marriages, but in essence, honour your father and mother is a command of God up there.

And it's to be followed. Well, we've not the time tonight to unpack all of that, but a question to ask yourself is, do you honour those who have cared for you, especially your parents?

And if so, how? For those who dishonour their parents, there are serious consequences laid out in poetic form.

Look at 17, the eye that mocks a father, that scorns an aged mother, will be picked out by ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures. God has made it so that the natural order of things is parents should care for children who in turn honour and care for parents.

[24 : 48] And if you scorn this wisdom, watch what will happen to you. No one will look out for you, not even a decent burial your eyes picked out. It's brutal imagery.

Don't be one of those. Instead, see that the world has been made with the wisdom of God and realise there's just one way to choose and it's the way of wisdom. It's the way of wonder. Verse 18 and 19 and not the way of verse 20. There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand.

The way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a snake on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas and the way of a man with a maiden. This is the way of an adulterous woman.

She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I've done nothing wrong. That's verse 12, isn't it? There are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth.

[25 : 56] The wrong way. As casually as you would clean your mouth after she wipes away her sin and claims she's done no wrong. It's like a blast from the year 2000 in the worlds of Shaggy she says, it wasn't me.

If she's Glaswegian she'd say, in wit, something separate, my body, my decision, in wit. sin, it's but the stain and the consequence of wayward sin cannot be wiped away casually.

It takes something far greater to restore humans to purity. Well, I wonder if you can recognize yourself at all in the arrogance of her sin.

Don't just think, well, that's not me. like us, as we sin, the adulteress knows she's exceeding the boundaries God has given of sex between man and woman within marriage.

But rather than face up to her sin, she claims it's harmless, it can be wiped away. Well, I wonder what sin we are individually or as a church tolerating, denying what repeated inaction are we guilty of?

[27 : 15] Or action do we excuse and wipe away and carry on? You know how before long your re-temper outbursts can just become nothing and normal? Or a church's lack of outreach just becomes accepted?

Well, this is the way of an adulteress. She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I've done no wrong. Well, keep your mouth closed rather than say that.

The waywardness of sin is self-deceit and it will slowly destroy you. What can stop us from such sinning?

Is it just trying harder? No, that doesn't usually work, does it? Instead, replace what is in your mind with the way of wonder.

For before this wayward verse of 20 with four servings of wonder, an eagle, a serpent, a ship, a man, a guru is in wonder at God's wisdom where each image has a right sense of mastery and movement.

[28 : 23] Verse 18, he starts by saying, this is too wonderful for me, it's amazing. How can it be that the eagle skillfully masters currents of air? How can it be that the no-legged serpent traverses rock?

The enormous boats not only float but cut through waters? How can it be that the man moves his body over the maiden and gives her pleasure?

And that this unique blend, this unique joining, binds man and woman in wonderful union. Well, for more wondering and poetic enlightenment of the Christian view of joyful sexual union, read Song of Songs 4.

But for now, Agur is wondering at the wise ways of God and his creation. He sees the hand of God behind it all. And he wonders at the world and its ways created by God's wisdom.

And don't we Christians need to do more of this wondering? Last week, I looked at the most tremendous sky, its beauty, its colors, and equally as wonderful as that sky is that God has created beings like you and me that can appreciate it.

[29 : 46] He's made us his beholders of his wisdom. And the more we behold him, the humbler we will be, the less we will sin.

There are those who choose verse 20, but don't be one of those. Choose the way of wonder. And fourthly, in this section, don't be verse 13, those whose eyes are ever so haughty, who are disdainful.

For Jesus does not say blessed are the arrogant, but blessed are the meek. These verses 21 to 31 think about right and wrong views of self and the result of this.

How the earth trembles and cannot bear up when we arrogantly rise up in rebellion. When fools are satisfied, when the wrong person is ruling.

Under three things the earth trembles. Under four, it cannot hold up. Again, we've got this three, no, four pattern, which indicates the list is not exhaustive.

[31:00] Here, though, under three, the earth is trembling. By four, the house has fallen down. The earth cannot hold it up. What could bring such chaos and instability to God's good, wise world but sin?

Have a wee look at the floor. Can you imagine it trembling? Can you imagine a gap opening up beneath you right now?

Maybe you've experienced an earthquake. I haven't. I can only imagine the fear at the ground giving way. Well, clearly this is metaphoric, so what's it teaching?

Well, in the same way that the ground which should give stability trembles and even gives way, so we understand the foolishness of self promotion creates instability across many areas of life.

It is the inevitable outcome of sin. It is the judgment of God. For if you look at 21 to 23, you have self-satisfied individualistic scheming characters rising beyond where they should, who've stepped out their boundaries.

[32:24] Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up. A servant who becomes king, a godless fool who gets plenty to eat, a contemptible woman who gets married, and a servant who displaces her mistress.

Now, fans of Disney don't get in an uproar. A servant when he becomes king, has the Bible just cancelled Aladdin, the street rat who becomes sultan?

A woman who is held in contempt that gets a husband? Has the Bible just cancelled Cinderella who marries Prince Charming? Well, slow down. The Bible always celebrates right reversals and servants who rule Hannah, Mary, Daniel, Joseph.

These verses are focusing on the rise of self and in Proverbs terminology, this is the rise of fools. Well, that should speak to us in the days of self promotion, self identification.

These verses highlight the instability that occurs when the godless fool rises and the damage and instability it causes. You see, the earth trembles when a fool is filled with food because he's self-satisfied.

[33:43] A self-satisfied fool. Verse 23, contemptible is an odious, hateful woman rather than a woman to be pitied. She's more evil stepsister than Cinderella.

And with the final thing under which the earth crumbles and the house comes down, think more Aladdin's Jafar or Shakespeare's Iago, more Star Wars Senator Palpatine or Rasputin.

What Agur means here is a scheming servant. How do you displace a mistress? You get rid. Either by disposing of her or taking her place with the master.

This is the result of haughtiness, selfish waywardness, and it brings the house down. I don't know if you can think of any self-satisfied fools running countries, companies, churches, people promoted beyond their capability and capacity to care for others.

Are they making the world a more stable place? Apply this to yourself. In the place where you rule and you rule somewhere, don't be one of those.

[35:04] Instead, wonder at the way God has made things. For look, those who are humble, who are not self-advancing, they're raised. Verse 25, aren't the little ants well-fed?

Aren't the little rock badgers well protected? Verse 26, aren't the locusts with no one competing to be king enormously cooperative? Aren't the little lizards sometimes found in palaces?

Aren't you who admit your sin and follow Jesus adopted heirs of God? Humility is the way to go and wonder is the way to get there.

For then in your humility you can rule rightly. There are three things that are stately in their stride.

Four that move with stately bearing. A lion, mighty among beasts, who retreats before nothing.

a strutting rooster, a he-goat, and a king secure against revolt. The lion ruling is he should. The king safe from revolt.

[36:11] What type of king is secure against revolt? Well, it's one whose army is with him because they love him, because they respect him, because he's not arrogant, and he humbly loves and serves his people.

One who is wise, who doesn't need to self-promote, who doesn't final verse need to push anger, for all that does is create strife.

Hasn't God in Jesus given us the perfect example of what ruling should look like? Serving, leading to stability, moving away from judgment, don't we need to wonder at him?

When you lead, don't be one of those who stirs up anger. Final verse, it just produces strife. That is verse 32, foolishness.

That is words of the man Agur here. That is evil. Well, how have we to respond?

[37 : 33] It's quite simple, isn't it? At verse 32, if you're self-promoting, shut your mouth. And the way to do that, to shut your mouth, is to be open-mouthed in wonder, in wonder at God, at God and his creation, at God and his word, and surely you know in his son.

Lord God, help us to shut our mouths, help us to stop self-advancing, and help us to do that by looking in awe and wonder at your son, in your creation, and in your holy word.

We ask all these things because of Jesus, and for his sake and glory. Amen. Thank you.