

Sermon on Sunday 9th September 2007 Given by Ian Stackhouse.

Proverbs 1 was read.

The Sermon was based on Prov1:8-33

There is a book called 'Growing up Evangelical' by a well-known youth leader in which he suggests that the main motive for youth work is Fear: parents' fear that they will lose their children to the 'world'. (N.B. Biblical use of the word, 'The World' throughout, meaning society and people outside the church and therefore not holding Christian views or behaviour.) This may be an extreme view.

However, children brought up in very confined evangelical circles can either turn out very dull (!) or, on finding out about the Big World, may go completely wild with the freedom that they find at university.

In verse 8 of Proverbs, we find the mother and father's advice to their son on reaching adulthood. Instead of sheltering their child, the father leads the son into the world, into gangland etc. to show him what is there and to give him advice.

It is of course correct to protect children up to a certain age – so that they can have a childhood at all – but then a growing child must be prepared to face the bad things of the world. It is much better that they should learn from their parents, than that they should learn from the world itself.

Proverbs 1 moves constantly between the home and the street.

The father starts to mimic the voices of the world. V.19 'Such are the ways of all who get gain by violence: it takes away the life of its possessors.' It is about money and dishonesty. In modern speak: ripping people off.

Interesting quote: 'Saints love people and use wealth. Sinners love wealth and use people.'

However, this whole passage is not just about gangs and low street life. It is equally about 'respectable' people in offices wearing business suits.

Small children need to be told what's right and what's wrong. But an older child needs a different approach – one at the age to leave home. The father in Proverbs 1 doesn't give his son hopeful platitudes and let him go. The father appeals to the boy, as Scripture does; he shows the boy the consequences of actions. e.g. V.18 'but these men lie in wait for their own blood'. V.19 'It takes away the life of its possessor.'

Example: Ian told a story about his own failed allotment! Problem: not counting the cost of having an allotment, and not looking after it properly, produced failure, weeds and the shame of having to give up.

Everything we do has its consequences. Think before you take an unwise course of action. Heed the thought, "If I do this I will ruin everything". It may not be very spiritual, but it may be something to hang on to and keep you safe when tempted towards adultery, dishonesty, wrong actions etc.

Think of a person you know who did go astray. What is their life like now? If it's not good, heed the warning of our consciences. Fear the consequences of wrong actions. Fear the shame. Fear God.

Prov.1:20 'Wisdom cries aloud in the street'.....v.23 'Give heed to my reproof: behold I will pour out my thoughts to you: I will make my words known to you.'

Students: Make your position clear in Week 1. Tell people who you are, let them know what you stand for. Wear your 'insignia'. (e.g. A wedding ring is significant. Don't take it off.)

Alexander Pope speaking about sin. Quote: '...seen too oft, familiar that face, we first endure, then pity, then embrace.'

Human hearts love to enquire into sin. Don't do it. Don't go that way at all. It is a lure and a temptation.

Quotes from the Narnia books by C.S. Lewis: "Is Aslan safe?" "No, he is not safe. But he's the king and he's good."
(Not a direct quotation. Sorry, couldn't check it.)

God calls us to live in joy, holiness and love.

The Word in Proverbs is strong. The sermon series continues over the next few weeks.

Song: 'Purify my heart'