



Proverbs (Part 5) – Self-Control

Steve Hardin – August 31, 2014

Welcome, Village Church. Good to see you today. If you're a guest, welcome to you as well. My name is Steve Hardin. If you're a guest, I serve as the campus pastor here. We started this campus five years ago.

In fact, we'll celebrate in two weeks, but because Matt will be back preaching on video from Flower Mound on that day, I wanted to take some time today and just close out our Proverbs series and then, also, really speak to you about five years, the five years where the Lord has brought us and the five years, my hope is, where the Lord might take us in his faithfulness and in his goodness.

If you are a guest, I hope you don't miss not just a word for our campus but also a word for you. The Lord has been really good in these last five years. In fact, it was almost this date that we opened up the doors publicly. Like Plano... Come on. Thank you. All but one or two of you. Fellowship Hall, rejoice over there. Rejoice over there too.

We opened the doors five years ago. Like Plano will do, this will be so incredible next week. It's really going to be awesome. I think about that. Good night! I'll just ask the Lord to help me today. We have babies about to be born around here, so I'm emotional over that. Two of our staff people like right now could be giving birth. They're not, because I saw them here, but they could. We just have a lot before us.

I think about sending 500 to 800 to 1,000. Many of those who were part of our launch five years ago on this day who were a part of starting a new work merging in with Northway Baptist Church who had been here for 50-plus years. I think about how five years ago the Lord brought the two churches together and married us.

That is an unusual work, to bring a group of older saints... Not all of you are super old, but some of them were (are) super old in the Lord. To bring an older generation with a younger generation and

to marry those two together, only the gospel, only Jesus Christ can pull that off. It's an unusual deal. In fact, we call it the *miracle on Walnut Hill*, because that's what the Lord did. He performed a miracle on Walnut Hill. Because we're sitting on Walnut Hill. I just thought I'd share that with you.

He brought two generations together and then everybody else in between to do a work for his name. It's beautiful. As I think about the people we started with (those who were part of that initial launch) which were about 1,200 to 1,400 on that first Sunday, we were blown away when people started walking in from everywhere. It was awesome! When they started coming in...

As I look back five years, I think about how many of you are from that Plano/Frisco/North Richardson area, and you've been with us from day one. To send you is a beautiful thing, but to send you is a hard thing, and my heart has been rejoicing, and I've just been weeping a lot because we love you, and it has been great to be with you, and it has been great to shepherd you, and it has been wonderful to press on you and wonderful to fight for your marriages and wonderful to fight with you (not against you, but with you) for your singleness.

It has just been good, man, to see you sanctified and raised up in the Lord. Now to be able to go to your backyard and serve in your city there, which is what we've been praying for, but when you love deeply and you love immensely and it's really good Jesus stuff together, it's just hard, and that's the way it's supposed to be.

I want to tell you... If I could see every one of you face to face, I want to tell you how much I love you and how much this staff loves you and the deacons love you and the elders love you and how proud we are of you and how grateful we are for your lives. We start next week there, and it's going to be awesome.

I want to say to the Dallas group, don't go up there yet to see what the Lord is doing because they need seats for Plano. I want to go next week, but I can't. I want to be a part of that, but I can't because I need to wait and give them the opportunity to really see who all is going to be there. All right? Pray for them. It's going to be awesome. Today we celebrate five years, and I think about all God has done. When we started this campus...

Brandon, it's great to see you and Amanda here today. The Barkers are here with us, so praise the Lord for that. Come on. I take it the three children are here too. Oh, just one of them. Okay. Wow. Leaving kids behind already. That's great. Brandon is the lead pastor of a church down in Houston,

which is what we've praying for quite some time. The Lord said no to Chicago and said yes to Houston, of all places, to take Brandon back home. Don't ever say, "I will not serve in that city." He never said that, but the Lord raised him up and sent him back. Brandon was a part of our first gatherings here.

I think about what our call was. It was to be a city of God within the city of Dallas. It was literally to be the people of God on display for his glory to make much of his name in the city. It has never been about The Village. It will never be about The Village. Never been about Matt. It certainly isn't about Steve. It's not about you. This is about Jesus Christ, making much of him. That's what we're about. That's what we exist to do, to make disciples who will make much of Jesus Christ.

Five years ago when we started, it was our hope and it still is our hope to be a city of God within this city, the city of Dallas, which is a wretched, jacked-up, needy, dark, oppressed, beautiful, wonderful, awesome, cool city to live in. Amen? It has the best of the best, and it has the craziest of the craziest. This is the place where God has assigned for us now in this season of our lives to live, and we are to be faithful.

It was at the very beginning that God put it on our hearts to be a church of prayer. Do you remember that? I just felt like the call of God for us was to be a people who would pray. That we're not good enough. We're not hip enough. We're not cool enough. We're not bright enough. I know you're all those things. I get it. I got it.

You are those things, but we don't have the tools enough to be able to change the hearts of wretched men and women. Only God can do that, and the vehicle by which he does that is by a people who are absolutely infused by the gospel to live out the gospel in this city, empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach and live Jesus. Amen? That's what we are to do. Yeah. Come on. Praise the Lord. Not me. Praise the Lord.

Here's the deal. Here we are five years in and I wonder what will be those things that will rob us of those original things the Lord stirred in our hearts. I wonder about that. You know, we committed to be a house of prayer, a people of prayer, a people who would pray, and I want us to keep praying. I don't think we pray enough. I don't think Steve Hardin prays enough, and I want to pray, so this isn't just a beat-down message today on, "Go do more. Go do better." This is a call to be faithful because of Christ's faithfulness in us.

I wonder about our prayerfulness, and then I think about how God has called us to be a place of worship. Pastor Cymbala at Brooklyn Tabernacle told me back in 2002, "If you will provide a place where people can come in and have freedom to cry out to the Lord, there will be people there lined up from every tongue, tribe, and nation waiting to get inside."

We haven't necessarily had everybody lined up from every tongue, tribe, and nation, but there have been multiple nations represented, and there have been multiple times where people have been lined up trying to get in. I pray it's not to get in to be entertained, to get in to hear something that might flatter them, to hear something that might just make them laugh or feel good.

I just pray it will be God raising up a people coming in here who are hungry and needy and know their need for Jesus Christ, and maybe they don't even know their need, but when they come in God will remind them and reveal their need for Christ. Then God will do this work and save them. Come on now.

We would be a place of worship. Freedom in worship. We haven't quite gotten there where I know where God wants to get us. We won't get there until we're finally and ultimately redeemed, but I pray this would be a place of great worship where people have the freedom to cry out to the Lord. Then it's a place where we would raise up leaders, make disciples, and send them out, and we've been doing that.

Every month, it has been our prayer. Who else could we send? Who could go to East Dallas to help with the church plant? Who could go to West Dallas to be involved in a new church? Who could go to Romania? Who could go to Germany? Who could go to China or South Korea? Who could go? Who might the Lord raise up and who might we send out? Amen? Let's be about that work. That has been our call to raise up leaders (men and women) to make disciples here and then to send them. That has been our hope, and it continues to be our hope.

Then it really is our hope to see this city transformed by the gospel holding hands with other like-minded ministries throughout the city and see the city of Dallas transformed. That really has been our hope. That's what we want to be about. I want to pick up a little bit on last week's word. Turn with me to Proverbs, chapter 25. I have just a handful of minutes. I want to run through this.

I know this may not sound like a super-exciting word, but I never really care about that. I thought about last week's word by Bland. By the way, if you weren't here, podcast it and listen to it. It was

awesome. It was a theology from the book of Proverbs (the heart of God through Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived) on work. A theology of work. It was a fight against diligence.

When I thought about our campus, I thought, "Man, I'm not sure if we really need a message on fighting laziness or a lack of diligence," because I know your schedules are busy. They're crampacked. You are a busy serving people. The more I thought about it, the more I thought, "But the Proverbs is rife with a call to fight against laziness." Amen?

If the Proverbs are a call for that, then it's a call you need to hear and Steve Hardin needs to hear. I found myself where I am in danger at times of maybe not giving myself to a nap all the time like we talked about in Proverbs 24:33. A little slack, a little slumber... Right? "**A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands...**" One has given himself to poverty like a robber coming in like a thief in the night and robbing from you.

I thought, "We may not be a campus necessarily or over all a people who are given to laziness in terms of taking a nap, but I wonder if our nap may be a hundred other things we run to instead of running to those things God may have necessarily called us to." In other words, I think our nap may be given to technology. It may be given to entertainment. *Uh-oh. Here he goes.*

I need a big mirror right there. Trust me. You know how it is. When I was preparing for this message, right in the middle of it I found myself going, "Oh, my goodness. I haven't checked my emails in five minutes." I'm serious. I ran to my emails. Come on, man. Then I jumped on email and it took me to a blog of a couple of guys. It said I needed to read this blog, so I read that blog.

Then that led me to take a survey online. Just a meaningless survey. Then it led me to look at some texts that had come in. I started reading those texts. Then it took me back to ESPN to start tracking about what was going to happen this week with Texas A&M as they play South Carolina. I wanted to see that.

I mean, I'm serious. I started reading that, and I was an hour-plus in. Me. Mr. No Technology. You know what I'm saying, right? I'm that guy. I found myself an hour in going, "I'm not out of control with technology and media and texting! I'm not even on Facebook! I don't even know how to work that."

In fact, I think Facebook is more about stalking than it is about community and fellowship. Hello? "Oh, come on now. Now he's on somebody's back." Those are all great means. Do not think I'm the guy who hates technology. I'm not. I just don't understand how to operate it. I'm really not that guy. I'm not the guy who is going to rail against all these video games.

What I'm going to rail against is the tendency, like we heard last week and like the Lord wanted me to linger a little bit this week, for these gifts that could be good gifts redeemed by the Lord for his good for the advancement of his name and for the good of the kingdom, that we could use Facebook to see what is happening to people's lives, we can get on texting and we can encourage one another...

You can get on Snapchat. I'm not really for sure. Somebody told me Snapchat is a big deal, but whatever. You can get on all of these things, and man, these are means to encourage one another, but at the pace by which the world is creating these means it is also a means to rob from us our very fruitfulness in terms of service to the King and can rob us of our devotedness to the things that really matter.

In fact, our busyness really may be kind of a scapegoat for laziness. It really may be our covering for laziness. We may be really busy but busy in 100 different things that really, at the end of the day, are inconsequential and they really don't matter. I'm preaching to myself. Proverbs 25. At the very last of chapter 25 in verse 28, I want to just nail a little bit down in our hearts this idea of fighting against laziness and walking in the Spirit full of self-control.

Proverbs 25:28 says, "**A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.**" As I thought about that, I wanted to just give you a quick understanding of what literally self-control is. Bruce Waltke offers this little translation of Proverbs 25:28. He said a breached city, which has no wall, is like a person whose spirit has no restraint.

Self-control is the ability to restrain your spirit. That is, your passions and your appetites, my appetites. It's the ability by God's grace to say no to yourself, and lest you hear what I'm not saying... I'm not saying let's pull ourselves up by our bootstraps and let's do this on our own. I'm talking about infused, as Peter says in 2 Peter, chapter 1. Because God has done this work in us for Christ, those of us who are in Christ, there is Christ in us enabling us, empowering us, in his person and in his power the ability by his strength to be able to say no.

There are times when... You just think about it. As Proverbs 17:27 says, "**...he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.**" I think about when I'm driving in Dallas on Central Expressway. Come on. The Tollway. Walden Hill going home and the lanes are down to one lane because there is work on the far right lane. I think about how fired up I get, how angry I can become, and how I want to speed around and get up on the sidewalk and fly past them in my truck. I'm serious.

I think about how the Lord has granted me the ability and the empowerment even then to be able to grant me a cool spirit. That God has given me the strength to overcome even my emotions. The Lord is calling us to that in these days, young and old church. I think about Proverbs 10:19. "**...whoever restrains his lips is...**" What? "**...prudent.**" There is wisdom in restraining your lips and exercising self-control.

One of the things one of my old mentors, Ed Yates, continues to remind me of is I have a culpability and a propensity toward extemporaneousness. Like I can talk way too much and often about things that just don't matter. One of my deacons is laughing over there. I really pray against that in my own life.

I'm serious. I just confess that to you. Probably most of you who have walked with me for a long time already know I can talk about a lot of things. I want to guard my speech, and I want you to guard your speech. I want us to exercise by God's grace in these days (five years in) self-control with our mouths.

There are pastors who are lit up all over the media right now who have not been able to restrain their lips. I don't want our pastors to fall into that category with crazy habit. I don't want you to walk in that kind of habit of not being able to restrain your lips. Saying what needs to be said when you need to say it, and then keeping our mouths shut when we need to keep them shut. Amen?

Come on now, church. Thank you. That's a time when we can open our mouths. It says, "**If you have found honey...**" God has given us great gifts. Food. *Uh-oh. Here we go.* I like food. I like Mexican food. I like Tex-Mex food. I like chicken fried steak. There are a lot of things I like. I like a good cheeseburger.

Let me tell you something. It does not do my cholesterol level or my arteries justice to keep cramming down things in my system that will just continue to create disarray within this temple God has... It's a little bitty temple. I get that, but God has given me this temple to house his Holy

Spirit for as long as he has numbered my days, and by his grace I want to exercise greater self-control.

It says in Proverbs 25:16, "**If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, lest you have your fill of it and vomit it.**" Listen. Guard excess. Even the good things God has given us in our lives, man, if they are taken to an extreme they are dangerous for you and, ultimately, for even your soul. Let's guard that. That's self-control.

We can talk about self-control in the area of lust. We can talk about self-control in the area of food. Yet, I think where a lot of us are it may be those areas (I'm sure of it), but it's also in this area of technology and of media and of entertainment. I just want us to guard our hearts against those things.

Here is the danger of an out-of-control self. Solomon tells us. Here it is. Catch this. In Proverbs 25:28, this is vivid and it is stark, this out of control kind of self-control. Hear me when I say this. A person without self-control is vulnerable and defenseless and unsafe, and at any moment you can be pillaged by your own desires.

I want you to catch that, and I want that to just run over your hearts and your minds. It's this picture of how in the ancient times walls were built so a city might be safe. It was not safe to go into a city where there were no walls. That was not a welcoming thing. You may think, "Wow! That's cool. That's welcoming. There is no wall there." Go in there and find yourself trapped and possibly encounter death.

If you ventured into a city where there were strong, fortified walls... That was a city where there had been watchmen on the wall watching on that wall for the protection and the safety and the good of that city. He likens this (God does) to a man or to a woman who lacks in the Christian life self-control. It's like having no walls around your soul so just anything can penetrate you. You are defenseless. In fact, you are open, and you are inviting attack.

They would build these walls to keep out intruders and robbers and thieves who would come and take all they had acquired. They would come in. In fact, these walls were made to even keep out wild animals and livestock that would come in from outside of the city. These were walls of protection.

I think about something I just read here recently about how a man was working at Goldman Sachs and he got a letter or an email from the IT department. Anybody ever receive this? The IT department said, "You've been giving yourself, on company time, to four hours a day on Facebook, and that's just not doable."

He was so frustrated he went on to Facebook and he posted, "I've been called out for being on Facebook, but the wrestle in my heart is the thought of losing Facebook and not being able to operate my Facebook account as opposed to losing my job. I was more concerned about that than losing my own job."

These addictions we find ourselves given to of these gifts God has given to us in modern technology but can serve as those little holes in our wall of what it means to walk and exercise greater self-control for the good of the kingdom. What little holes are there we just find being attacked where things are slipping in and we're giving ourselves to.

Before you know it, you are a man or a woman who has been given over in certain ways and in things and in exercises and in habits to things that really are meant to be some good little gifts to you, but you have taken them and I've taken them to excess to the point where there is no fruit being produced in my life.

I wonder about that for us. Dallas church? This city? The Hardin family? I just recently read about how there were kids who were confessing how they spend 10 and 11 and 12 hours a day on video games and how they have cried out (teenagers, junior high, elementary age) saying, "I want to escape from this, but I don't know how."

We have thousands of people like that in this city who have been captivated by their impulses and by their appetites. For us, who are followers of Christ, this is a big deal. Because of time I have to tell you, this is a big deal for us. "Why are you even preaching this, Steve?" Well, first, because it's in the Bible, and it's a big deal to God and because this is a big deal to those of us who have been literally moved from darkness into light by the beautiful gospel. It's a big deal, because time matters. Amen?

These moments we have been given... We have been delivered, rescued... Come on, church. We have been delivered from a meaningless life, from a meaningless existence. We can live like the... Is it Ecclesiastes that says, "Just eat, drink, be merry. Don't worry! Tomorrow is going to come and then it's going to all end. You're going to die."

If that's the way outside of Christ many want to live their lives... Man, they do live their lives like that, but we have been saved from that kind of existence. We've been translated out of that kind of existence. We've been transformed by the gospel! There is a lot to live for. Namely, him! There's so much more to be about than that, than these things that are good gifts. These are things (many of them) that are permissible, and they're on occasion all right, but at the end, if given to excess, it's just inconsequential.

Here's the serious thing I want you to hear. Second Peter, chapter 1. Please hear this. In fact, it should be on the screen. I want you to see this. This is heavy, and I get there because of time. It's so critical we hear this word about diligence. Not only is Peter saying, "Let's fight for self-control," but then there are several other things for us to continue to fight for.

Please don't get this out of order. You don't fight for these things so God may receive you; you fight for these things because God has already received you in Christ and because God is fighting in you for you (he has already done this). That's why we war for these things, these things we are to continue to add to, these things we are to apply to our lives in Christ. Hear me. The Christian's responsibility, our part of the deal, that I don't think we talk enough about.

He says this. Second Peter, chapter 1, verse 5. "**For this very reason, make every effort...**" Be diligent. Let's get to work. Let's be faithful because of Christ's faithfulness in us. Let's be moved to sweat. Let's be diligent. Let's be faithful in these things. Amen? Come on, church. Wake up, 9:00. Let's be diligent.

He says, "**...to supplement your faith...**" To keep growing in your faith. To keep applying to your faith. Let's be diligent to do these things. "**...to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with...**" What? You tell me. "**...self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness...**" That means patience. That means coming up under the weight of much persecution and suffering and struggle.

Let's just by God's grace continue to walk steadfast. Let's keep pressing in in steadfastness. Let's keep pressing in in knowledge of God. Let's keep pressing in...what? In godliness. Let's keep pressing in in self-control. Let's keep pressing in in those things that are morally virtuous. Let's keep pressing in and applying those things because of Christ in us. Then he goes on and he says let's

keep pressing in from steadfastness or patience to godliness, and then from godliness let's keep pressing in to brotherly affection.

How is our affection growing for one another in this room? I'm serious. How are you loving the man or woman in this room? How faithful are we because of the gospel pressing into great love, affection. That's *phileo*. That's where in the inner intestines in us we feel for one another. I mean, we truly love one another.

Then he says that's not where we end. Then you're to have love, which is *agape* (God's love) for the world. How are you doing with the guy who you can't stand? How are you doing with that person, man? Self-control. Village Church, I love you. I love you, and I'm grateful for the grace of God in your lives. You just don't know.

I just think about these days where Peter goes on and says what can rob us of fruitfulness (of being able to present fruit before the Lord) in our service for the King, because of the gospel, motivated by the gospel... What can rob us of that fruitfulness is a lack of these things and a loss of diligence in these things. Five years from now, unless Christ comes again, my hope is we'll be found in Christ more faithful and diligent and steadfast and self-controlled and given to the things that matter, the things that really matter.

Given to prayer. Given to the knowledge of God. Given to the study of this Book. Given to the edification of one another. Given to the discipling of one another. Given to the thousand different beautiful truths we still are yet to mine together in this Book. That we'll be given to greater joys than we've ever experienced. Amen?

That we'll be given to fight for the souls who are desperate estates right now in this city. That we'll be given to pushing back darkness in these schools God has placed us in and mentoring these students in South Dallas. That we'll be given to those things, to these works of righteousness. We'll be given to those things in greater measure. That's my prayer and my hope for us.

The epitome of all of this life is found in Jesus Christ. Him. That's why we run to him every week in Communion. Because we confess he is sufficient and enough and he is faithful. That's where we're going to run here in just a second. Run to the Lord. Where we have failed, where we have sinned, where we have come up short, he has met every demand of our Father. Amen? So run to him. Find

your place in him. I'll pray for you as you pray for me, that we can be diligent and faithful and live self-controlled lives until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen? Let me pray for us.

Father, I pray you would allow this Word to just be burned on our hearts and in our souls and we would take it and receive it as from the Lord, and that by your grace and the new mercies that are ours every day, we would be diligent in these days, faithful, living self-controlled lives. I pray to that end, O God. I pray we would spend our lives on the true advancement of your name, so help us to that end.

Thank you for the hundreds of stories and testimonies of your faithfulness through your bride, that we could sit and just expound on for an entire day and it wouldn't get old. Just bragging on about all you've done. I pray next week we can brag some more and then the next week we can come back and brag some more and next week we can fight for faith with one another and do the same until you return.

Father, I pray in these days where souls need to be made disciples, I pray to that end that you would give us the grace to do it and the desire to do it and help us to get after this city for the sake of their own souls and for the glory of your name. In Jesus' name we pray and we take Communion and sing these songs, amen.

Amen. I love you, church.