

Living Within Boundaries

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[0 : 00] God, we come to you this evening recognizing that you oppose the proud but give grace to the humble. Just as water flows down to the lowest valleys, the water of your grace flows down to those who have lowered themselves, those who have humbled themselves before you.

And Lord, that is exactly what we hope to do this evening as we come to this chapter in Proverbs which speaks of our need to live humbly before you.

We pray that you'd shape us in that way, that you'd speak to us and impress the truth and the goodness of your word to us deeply this evening.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Proverbs chapter 30 verses 1 to 33.

The words of Agur, son of Jacke. The oracle. The man declares, I am weary, O God.

[1 : 23] I am weary, O God, and worn out. Surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the Holy One.

Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name?

And what is his son's name? Surely you know. Every word of God proves true. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him.

Do not act to his words lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar. Two things I ask of you. Deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me falsehood and lying.

Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

[2 : 27] Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you and you be held guilty. There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers. There are those who are clean in their own eyes, but are not washed of their filth.

There are those, how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift. There are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind.

The leech has two daughters, give and give. Three things are never satisfied, four never say enough. Sheol, the barren womb, the land never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says enough.

The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures. Three things are too wonderful for me, four I do not understand, the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.

This is the way of an adulteress. She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I have done no wrong. Under three things the earth trembles, under four it cannot bear up.

[3 : 52] A slave when he becomes king, and a fool when he is filled with food. An unloved woman when she gets a husband, and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress. Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise.

The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer. The rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs. The locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank.

The lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in king's palaces. Three things are stately in their tread, four are stately in their stride. The lion which is mightiest among beasts and does not turn back before any.

The strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king whose army is with him. If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth.

For pressing milk produces curds, and pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife. This is God's holy and authoritative word.

[5 : 01] In his book, G.K. Chesterton, in his book, *Orthodoxy*, writes about the paradoxical aspect of Christianity, where he says, the more I considered Christianity, the more I found that while I had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.

Imagine that you're driving up a mountain road, and that road has no guardrails to keep you from driving off the cliff. Would that make you drive more freely, since there's nothing restricting you? Or would that make you drive more timidly, because there's nothing to protect you? Likewise, God imposes a certain order on the universe.

He imposes a certain rule on his people, but this is for our good. It's for his glory, and that's where true freedom is found for good things to roam wild.

And Proverbs 30 is all about that. It teaches us that those who follow the humble king ought to live humbly within our God-given boundaries.

[6 : 17] First, we see the God-given boundaries of Scripture in verses 1 to 9, and then we see the God-given boundaries in society in verses 10 to 33. Verse 1 tells us that we're in a new section, as I mentioned.

It says, the words of Agur, son of Jacar, and he designates this an oracle, which means divinely inspired speech. Like Solomon, who earlier in chapter 2 claimed that knowledge and understanding that he is teaching, he's imparting to us in the book of Proverbs, are from the Lord's mouth, Agur claims divine inspiration.

He is consciously writing with the sense, the awareness, that God himself is speaking through him. And notice that he doesn't defend that claim in any way. He doesn't appeal to any other external authority to say, well, you know that this is God's word because it's consistent with such and such philosophy or such and such ethical framework.

He doesn't defend the authority of the oracle. He simply asserts it. Scripture often does this. The apostles often do this.

In 1 Thessalonians 2, 13, Paul says, we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

[7 : 42] But again, Paul gives no proof. This is because Scripture is ultimately self-authenticating. It is self-attesting because it is the final and ultimate authority.

It appeals to no other authority. In Hebrews 6, 13, it says that since God had no one greater by whom he might swear, he swore by himself.

When you're a student writing a paper, you need to cite sources. You need to appeal to other authorities to prove your point because you have no authority. But if you are the leading scholar on the subject, if you are the authority on the subject, you don't cite other sources.

You just speak because you are the authority. That's what Scripture is like. It doesn't appeal to others' authority.

It is God's word and therefore needs no other verification. We don't believe Scripture because it is consistent with popular opinion. We don't believe Scripture because it is consistent with even expert opinion.

[8 : 50] Whatever the domain of that expert might be, we believe in God's word because God spoke it. And how do we know that God spoke it?

Jesus, the incarnate word of God, says this in John 10, 2-3, The sheep hear the shepherd's voice and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. The sheep follow him for they know his voice.

Those who belong to God recognize his voice. This is why we say that Scripture is self-authenticating or self-attesting. And that self-authenticating authority is behind the word oracle. This is what God says to us. So let's listen to what he has to say. The man declares, I am weary, O God. I am weary, O God, and worn out. What is Agur weary from?

We see the answer in verses 2-4. He seems to be exasperated by people who claim to have wisdom and understanding apart from God's gracious revelation.

[10:03] People who claim understanding and wisdom when they actually have nothing of the sort. He says sarcastically, surely I am too stupid to be a man. I have not the understanding of a man.

I have not learned wisdom nor have I knowledge of the Holy One who has ascended to heaven and come down, who has gathered the wind in his fists, who has wrapped up the waters in the garment, who has established all the ends of the earth.

What is his name and what is his son's name? Surely you know. Many people in the world claim to be wise. They set themselves up as gurus and coaches that can guide us through life.

They act like they know everything there is to know about God and this world. But if they are right, then Agur must surely be a fool.

Someone too stupid to be a man because he doesn't have the kind of knowledge that they claim to have. He certainly doesn't share their presumption and pride. The words understanding and wisdom in verses 2 to 3 are parallel to the knowledge of the Holy One which reminds us once again of the thesis of the book of Proverbs that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.

[11:15] True wisdom begins with the personal relationship with God. Without knowing Him, we cannot attain wisdom. You might be a very skilled violinist in the orchestra, but if you are not synced to the conductor, you are not going to play music that fits with the rest of the orchestra.

Similarly, human beings who have not submitted themselves to and aligned themselves with God's vision and God's order are not going to attain wisdom, which is the skill for living in proper relationship with God and with man.

Sinful human beings who are impaired, who have impaired discernment cannot arrive at God's cohesive vision for all of creation. And when they try to, they despair, they fail, and they resign themselves to relativism.

That's why we must begin with the fear of the Lord for the knowledge of the Holy One is wisdom and understanding. And knowing this, Agur asks a series of rhetorical questions in verse 4, who has ascended to heaven and come down?

Who has gathered the wind in his fists? Who has wrapped up the waters in the garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? The interrogative pronoun who, which is repeated here, once again emphasizes the personal dimension of wisdom?

[12:47] It's not an abstract principle of what, but a who. The outer two questions mention the heaven and earth, and then the inner two questions, the rhetorical question, mention the wind and the waters, two elements that make up the stormy sea, which for the people in the ancient world represented the most uncontrollable part of creation, of nature.

And yet God holds the wind in his fists, and he wraps up the waters as in a garment. And these pairs together, the two pairs, of heaven and earth and water and wind, together allude to God's complete knowledge and control over creation, the sky, earth, and sea.

And so then, the answer that these rhetorical questions anticipate is this, the Lord, who has done this? The Lord alone ascended to heaven. The Lord alone established the earth.

The Lord alone gathered the winds and wrapped up the waters. This is reminiscent of Job 28, 12 to 20, which also speaks of God alone being the source of wisdom because he alone was there at the beginning of creation.

So people then who presumptuously claim to have knowledge and wisdom apart from God, Agur is contending, are deluded because there is only one fount of wisdom, that is God himself.

[14:15] And at the end of this forceful line of questioning, the pretenders of wisdom can't help but be reduced to silence because we were not there when God established the earth.

We have not ascended to the heavens. We were not there when God rolled back the seas and tamed the wind. The pretenders of wisdom are humiliated and reduced to silence.

And then verse 4 ends with the final two rhetorical questions. What is his name? And what is his son's name? There's a pivotal section in the Old Testament where this exact question is asked.

What is his name? And that's Exodus chapter 3 verses 13 to 15 where God reveals himself to Moses. And when Moses asks God, what should I tell your people when I go to Egypt to deliver them in your name?

And they ask me, what is his name? And God says, I am who I am. Say this to the people of Israel, I am has sent me to you. The Lord, Yehovah, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has sent me to you.

[15 : 27] And then in the following chapter, Exodus chapter 4, God instructs Moses to tell Pharaoh this, Thus says the Lord, Israel is my firstborn son.

And I say to you, let my son go that he may serve me. If you refuse to let him go, behold, I will kill your firstborn son. The answer to the final rhetorical question, what is his name, is the Lord. And the answer to the question, what is his son's name, is Israel. God's chosen people. In other words, God is the only fount of wisdom, and only those who are chosen by God and taught by him receive his wisdom.

Divine wisdom is not something we attain through our own striving, through our own intelligence and diligence. Rather, it's something that we receive from God freely, something that God reveals to us, something that God has sole proprietary rights to, that he shares with whomever he pleases. And this reality demands humility before the word of God. That's what verses 5 to 6 are about. It's only through what God reveals to us that we come to know his wisdom.

[16 : 45] Every word of God proves true, it says. He is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

This is a quotation of a line from the victory song that David used to celebrate after God delivers him from his enemies in 2 Samuel 22, verse 31, and Psalm 18:30.

It means that those who take refuge in God, those who stake their lives on the word of God, will be delivered. They will not be disappointed.

But those who add to his words will be rebuked and found a liar. Because we are not the authors, because we are not the editors of God's word, we're only readers, only hearers, only recipients. We have no right to add or subtract from his words. So then, we have to ask ourselves the question, do you live with the God-given boundaries of Scripture?

[17 : 49] Or are you always trespassing? Pushing the envelope, fudging the lines. To those who trust in his word, God is refuge, that shields him, but those who forsake his word will be left exposed and vulnerable.

The expression, proves true, is a metaphor from metallurgy, referring to some precious metal being refined in the furnace. If what's inside the furnace is truly a precious metal, it will withstand the heat and remain till the end.

It will prove true. Similarly, every word of God proves true. Brothers and sisters, do you believe that?

That there is not a drop of dross in this word. That every word of God proves true.

As Jesus said in Matthew 5:18, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

[19 : 00] It's all gold in here. It will all stand the test of time. Do you believe that? If you bank your life on the word of God, your check will never bounce.

If you believe God's word, every word he says, not a single word of it will fall to the ground. If we only believe this with our whole heart, we would experience so much more joy. so much more of fulfillment of his promises as we believe and take hold of what he has in store for us.

If you have an unwavering trust in God's word, you have solid ground to stand upon, but if you don't, you'll be tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

And so it is we need to live humbly within our God-given boundaries. In light of this reality, Agur brings this first subsection to a close by making two requests of God.

[20 : 13] These are the only prayers in the book of Proverbs. Verses 7 and 9, Two things I ask of you. Deny them not to me before I die. Remove far from me falsehood and lying and give me neither poverty nor riches.

Feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, Who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God. First, because he knows that God is the sole proprietor of wisdom and that every word of God proves true, he asks God to remove far from him falsehood and lying.

He wants to tell the whole truth of God's word and nothing but the truth. He wants to be a pure conduit of God's word without adding or subtracting from it because he doesn't want to be rebuked and be found a liar.

And then second, he prays for moderation. Give me neither poverty nor riches. Feed me with the food that is needful for me. And he gives the reason for that prayer in verse 9, Lest I be full and deny you or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

It's possible for us to romanticize poverty out of a false humility and spiritual bravado.

[21 : 36] God, make me poor. Send me to the hardest parts of the world so I can be more sold out for you. And it's possible to idolize wealth out of a hidden worldliness saying, God, make me rich so I can do more for you.

So I can donate millions of dollars toward kingdom causes. So that I can do bigger things for you. Both of these extremes reveal a level of self-centered pride.

If poverty and suffering are the lot that God intends for us, then they will come and God will sustain us through them. But there's no need for us to seek them out because it will tempt us to steal and profane the name of God.

Similarly, if prosperity is the lot that God has for us, then wealth will come. without us desiring to be rich. In fact, we shouldn't desire to be rich lest we be full and deny God.

It's similar to the Lord's prayer, isn't it? Jesus doesn't teach us to pray lead us into the severest temptations so that we might triumph over them. Jesus teaches us to pray lead us not into temptation.

[23 : 10] Agar's prayer is a humble prayer that doesn't overestimate his own willpower, his own ability to be faithful to God.

He would rather not be tempted lest he fail and bring dishonor to God. He doesn't seek the glory of being a man who is faithful to God under the most difficult circumstances.

He doesn't seek the glory of riches and the respect and admiration that that brings. He simply seeks the glory of God. God, I just want to be faithful to you.

I don't need to do anything big. I just want to make sure I don't dishonor you in any aspect of my life. I just want to be faithful to you, Lord.

That's Agar's humble prayer. A life of moderation, a life of contentment, a life lived within God-given boundaries.

[24 : 20] He's not interested in being extraordinary, just a faithful, ordinary follower of God.

Christian author Michael Horton puts it this way in his book that's entitled Ordinary, Sustainable Faith in a Radical, Restless World.

Quote, Facing another day with ordinary callings to ordinary people all around us is much more difficult than chasing my own dreams that I have envisioned for the grand story of my life.

Sometimes, chasing your dreams can be easier than just being who we are, where God has placed you with the gifts he has given to you.

Though agar uses food as the main category, it stands in general for all the circumstances in our lives. We can apply this across the board.

God, give me not too much power lest I abuse it and dishonor you, nor give me so little lest I be abused by others and despise you. God, make me not so successful that I forget you, nor make me such a failure that I blame you.

[25 : 40] We are to seek contentment and moderation in our lives for the sake of God's glory, and not to satisfy our ego. love. After exhorting us to live within the God-given boundaries, scripture agar teaches us to live humbly within the God-given boundaries in society as well in verses 10 to 33.

Using various examples from nature, he warns us not to transgress God-instituted boundaries in society. First, he addresses insolent people of verses 10 to 14.

So, verse 10 has in view someone who seeks to subvert the employer-employee relation. Do not slander a servant to his master, lest he curse you and you be held guilty. The servant's livelihood depends on the pleasure of his master.

So, to spread malicious lies about the servant, particularly to his master, is a grave violation of societal order. And if the aggrieved servant then curses you because he has no other resort, then God will uphold his well-based curse and hold you accountable.

This verse that introduces 11 to 14, which are united by the initial phrase, there are those. Verse 11 has in view the family order. There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.

[27 : 10] Children ought to bless their fathers and mothers who gave birth to them. And to rear them and to curse them instead is a grave transgression of societal order.

And then verses 12 to 13 get underneath these transgressors' behavior to their hard attitude. It says, there are those who are clean in their own eyes but are not washed of their filth. There are those, how lofty are their eyes, how high their eyelids lift. They are insolent. Their eyes are full of filth, literally excrements.

And yet instead of lowering their eyes in shame, in humiliation, in repentance, their eyes are haughty. They lift high their eyelids. They have too high a view of themselves. They exalt themselves over and above the commands of God. And precisely because they think that they are better than others, they use other people for selfish gain.

[28 : 10] Verse 14 tells us that there are those whose teeth are swords, whose fangs are knives to devour the poor from off the earth, the needy from among mankind. They exploit the needy and rob them of what little they had so that they are wiped off the earth.

Instead of being compassionate toward the poor, generous toward the most needy members of society, these insolent people impoverish the poor further to enrich themselves.

And these are all examples of the insolent who transgress God-given boundaries in society. Instead, we are to live humbly within those boundaries.

Dan Agar warns us about the insatiable things, the insatiable people in verses 15 to 17. Verse 15 begins with an example from nature. The leech has two daughters, give and give.

The leech, as you know, is a parasitic worm that has two sucking organs. It uses one to attach itself securely to its host. It uses the other to suck blood.

[29 : 15] It's like the definition of a parasite. And the leech has two daughters and an identical twin, give and give. It's an apt illustration of greedy, insatiable people.

They are never satisfied. They keep saying give and give. They keep sucking other people's resources stealing from others, taking advantage of others.

They live in a parasitic lifestyle. Instead of adding value to society, they suck life and value out of it and drain others' resources.

These two are examples of people who are transgressing God-given boundaries in society. this class of people are further illustrated in verses 15 to 16.

Three things are never satisfied, four never say enough. The use of ascending numbers going from the leech who has two daughters to the three things that are never satisfied and to the four that never say enough is a poetic device.

[30 : 20] It's a rhetorical device that seeks to escalate, kind of raise the stakes in order to emphasize a point that these things really are never satisfied.

And what are those four things? Sheol, the barren womb, the land that never satisfied, there's never satisfied with water, and the fire that never says enough. The Sheol, the realm of the dead, is never satisfied even though approximately 150,000 people die in the world every single day.

The barren womb is never satisfied. It never produces offspring no matter how much seed it takes in.

The land that must continually drink more water is never satisfied. Unless it's continually given water, it will not produce crops.

And finally, fire that spreads and consumes everything in its path never says enough. These vivid illustrations all serve to warn us against greedy, insatiable people.

[31 : 34] Greedy people transgress God-given boundaries in society because their appetites are never satisfied. If you are driven by lust, don't delude yourself into thinking that looking at one more picture, watching one more video clip, visiting the brothel one more time, or having an affair one more time will satisfy.

It will never satisfy. If you are driven by a gluttonous appetite, don't delude yourself into thinking that eating one more cookie, or drinking one more pint of beer, taking one more puff of marijuana, or eating one more piece of meat will satisfy you because it will never satisfy your appetite.

if you are driven by a desire for fame and esteem, don't delude yourself into thinking that one more like, or one more retweet, or one more viral video will satisfy you.

It will never satisfy you. If you are driven by a worldly pursuit of outward beauty, don't think getting a little more jewelry, a little more clothes, losing a few more pounds will satisfy you because it will never satisfy you.

If you are driven by greed, don't think that a little more money will satisfy you. It will never satisfy you. This is the very nature of lust, very nature of greed.

[33 : 03] These things are never satisfied. Instead, we should be content and live humbly within our God-given boundaries. But there's something else that these verses are saying also.

Notice that the illustrations complement each other. Shield, the realm of the dead, contrasted with the womb, incubator of life.

Land that needs water, contrasted with fire. This adds another layer of poetic meaning. Agar seems to be suggesting that the cycle of life, the push and pull of life, life and death, rains and fires, will continue as long as we live.

It is no use trying to escape this reality. Instead, we should humbly learn to live with whatever lot God gives us. After these illustrations, verse 17, which matches verse 11, caps off the subsection and brings together the insulm and the insatiable in one proverb.

The eye that mocks a father and scorns to obey a mother will be picked out by the ravens of the valley and eaten by the vultures. The haughty eye, right, mentioned earlier in verses 12 and 13, occur again here in verse 17.

[34 : 26] Those who are insolent and transgressed societal order will be picked off by the insatiable people, represented by the ravens and vultures, which are both scavenging birds and therefore apt pictures of the greedy, parasitic people.

And then in verses 18 to 20, Agar turns his attention to the incomprehensible things. He says in verses 18 to 19, three things are too wonderful for me.

For I do not understand the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship on the high seas, and the way of a man with a virgin.

The way an eagle, the heaviest bird found in Israel, the way it defies gravity and flies with its majestic seven-foot wingspan, soaring effortlessly in the sky.

The way a serpent, the way it has no hands or feet to grab hold of anything, glides smoothly and climbs steep rocks. The way a ship, floating on the high seas, undulates with the rising tide, rising and falling with the waves, without capsizing.

[35 : 37] The way a man moves in concert with the virgin during intercourse. These four things, Agar says, are beyond his comprehension. There's something so graceful and breathtaking about these things found in nature.

The way they move in accordance with God's order in creation. But all of these wonderful examples serve to highlight this jarring contrast in verse 20.

This is the way of an adulteress. She eats and wipes her mouth and says, I have done no wrong.

The word way, which was repeated four times in verse 19, is repeated here again in verse 20.

But this way is not the beautiful, graceful way that's in accordance with God's created order. Rather, it's the forbidden, twisted way. The virgin symbol of sexual purity is contrasted with the adulteress. Instead of following the God-ordained ways of nature, instead of keeping within the God-given boundaries, the adulteress transgresses these boundaries and subverts the God-ordained way.

[36 : 51] She, along with the man who is foolish enough to sleep with her, do violence to the social order, destroying marriages, families, societies.

And yet, afterward, the adulteress eats and wipes her mouth. It's no big deal to her, just like eating food. Eats and wipes her mouth and says, I've done no wrong.

It was consensual. What's wrong with that? It's not my fault that his wife doesn't satisfy him. The adulteress has a seared conscience and does not take ownership of the grave harm that she has done.

Instead of straying it from the ways of the ordained ways of God, like this adulteress, Agar calls us to live humbly within our God-given boundaries. And then in verses 21 to 23, Agar turns to the intolerable things.

Three topsy-turvy social situations that are intolerable. Under three things the earth trembles. Under four it cannot bear up. A slave when he becomes king and a fool when he is filled with food.

[37 : 57] An unloved woman when she gets a husband and a maidservant when she displaces her mistress. So when a person who does not have the character nor the competence to rule takes the throne, he becomes intoxicated by newfound privilege and power and becomes overbearing.

He abuses his power, perverts justice. His rule becomes erratic and uncontrollable. That's what is in view here. A servant that doesn't deserve to rule becoming king.

Similarly, when a fool who should go hungry is instead satisfied, bloated with food. When an unloved or better, a hated, unlovable woman gets a husband.

When a maidservant displaces her mistress. From their places of undeserved privilege, they broadcast their folly further and magnify their harmful effect on society.

When those who transgress God-given boundaries in society are rewarded with a platform, with privilege, with power, it erodes the very foundation of society.

[39 : 10] And then next, in verses 24 to 28, Agar commends the example of ingenious creatures. Four things on earth are small, but they are exceedingly wise. The ants are a people not strong, yet they provide their food in the summer.

The rock badgers are a people not mighty, yet they make their homes in the cliffs. The locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank. The lizard you can take in your hands, yet it is in king's palaces.

Each of these animals have a significant liability, and yet they make up for it with other admirable qualities. First, the ants make up for their weakness by their industry, by their diligence.

They have foresight enough to store up food during the summer so that when there's scarcity in the winter, they have something they can eat. Second, the rock badgers, this is a reference to the rock hyraxes, rodent-like mammals that live in the Middle East.

They make their homes in the cliffs, literally, and therefore they're noted for their attention to security. Though they are weak and incapable of protecting themselves from predators, they provide for their security by essentially creating a fortress for themselves.

[40 : 25] Third, locusts model order and unity. Though they have no king to lead them, they march in rank like a well-disciplined army, and because of that, they can wreak havoc on farmlands, consume a staggering amount of crops at once.

Fourth, the lizard, though it's not particularly elusive, you can take it in your hands, it's easy to catch, yet it is in king's palaces. This is the only one that's not really explained.

The lizard in view is what's commonly known as the house gecko or the moon lizard, because it has the habit of coming out under the moonlight. And these geckos have no particular strength except that they are unobtrusive and inconspicuous.

We might call this their modesty. They're only three to six inches long, often live unseen in small crevices of the house, and they are benign to humans.

In fact, they could be very beneficial because they prey on insects that are often destructive, like moths, spiders, roaches, termites, and wasps, which can at times be destructive.

[41 : 38] And because these animals, the geckos, are unobtrusive and inconspicuous, they're benign and even beneficial, even kings are content to let them inhabit their palaces.

Though if they wanted to, they could easily catch them. This last example of the lizard seems to be tied to the rest of the chapter, which speaks of kings. Verses 29 to 31 speak of proud creatures who have indomitable spirits.

They stand for stately kings. Three things are stately in their tread. Four are stately in their stride. The lion, which is mightiest among beasts and does not turn back before any.

The strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king whose army is with him. These four invulnerable creatures are contrasted with the four vulnerable creatures of the preceding verses.

The lion, the strutting rooster, and the he-goat cower before nobody. And they represent the king who is bold because he has his army with him.

[42 : 43] There's no use trying to overthrow or scare that king because he will not cower before you. He will not back down. These proverbs seem to caution us against causing social upheaval, trying to cause rebellion, treason.

The four weak creatures of verses 24 to 28 are contrasted with these four mighty creatures. And I think the weak creatures are intended to represent the citizens of the kingdom, unlike these strong creatures who represent the kings.

I think this is confirmed by the repetition of the word people in verse 24 and 25. The ants, the rock badgers, are each personified as a people, which is the same word that's translated sometimes as nation.

The ants are a nation not strong. The rock badgers are a nation not mighty. The regular old citizens of the kingdom who are weak by the very virtue of their station need to adapt for survival in the kingdom by emulating these weak creatures.

They need to learn the ants' industry because they can't tax subjects like the king. They need to provide for their own future. They need to imitate the rock badgers' attention to security because

they lack the king's military prowess.

[44 : 00] They need to find other ways to secure their families and properties. If they want to thrive in this kingdom, instead of provoking the king by inciting anarchy, they should imitate the unity of the locusts that march in rank despite not having a king.

And lastly, they should emulate the modesty of the lizard who gains access to the palace not by being brash and self-exalting but by being civil and unobtrusive.

This interpretation is confirmed by Agur's conclusion in verses 32 to 33 where he warns against being a political opportunist. It says, If you have been foolish exalting yourself or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth for pressing milk produces curds, pressing the nose produces blood, and pressing anger produces strife.

Continuing to incur people's wrath by foolishly exalting yourself will surely produce strife. If you find yourself doing that, if you find yourself devising evil, plotting against others, using others as stepping stones in order to get ahead, then you need to put your hand on your mouth, stop yourself in your tracks, lest you bring disaster upon yourself.

Once again, this is Agur's recurring theme. We should live humbly within God-given boundaries instead of exalting ourselves beyond them. But the bad news is we have all foolishly exalted ourselves beyond our God-given boundaries.

[45 : 35] That's been the history of humanity from the very beginning. God created the heavens and the earth and at the climax of his creative work, he created Adam.

He then created Eve and gave her to Adam as his special helper so that together they might exercise dominion over the earth, including over all the creatures.

However, at the fall, the serpent transgresses its boundary by tempting Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden them to eat from.

And Eve, instead of exercising proper dominion over the creature, listens to it and eats it. Then she offers it to her husband Adam, and Adam, instead of exercising his headship over his wife, listens to her and eats it.

And so humanity together, which was supposed to rule as God's representatives, instead seeks to usurp God's throne. Instead of relying on God's revelation of good and evil, Adam and Eve seek moral autonomy, seeking to determine for themselves what is good and evil, without reference to God.

[46 : 54] And that's what we all have done at one point. Living for ourselves without reference to God, we have foolishly sought to exalt ourselves over and against God, our King, instead of living humbly within the boundaries He's given us.

We have had insolence toward His societal order. We have shown indulgence of insatiable greed and lust. We have tolerated intolerable social upheaval by giving folly and wickedness free reign in our lives and in our world.

We have transgressed the boundaries God's given us. But God, because He loves us, does not leave us to our own devices.

As Agur asserted in verse 4, only the Lord who has ascended to heaven and come down, and only His Son can save us from our folly and impart to us the wisdom from God.

And it is for this reason that God the Father sent His only Son, Jesus Christ. John 1.18 says, No one has ever seen God, the only God who is at the Father's side.

[48 : 00] He has made Him known. John 3.13 says, No one has ascended into heaven except He who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. Jesus is the fulfillment of Agur's prophecy.

He is the only person who can reveal God the Father and His wisdom to us because He is the only Son of God. God, Jesus is the Son that Israel failed to be.

We had trespassed into where only God should be, but instead of despising us and punishing us and kicking us back to the place where we belong, God sent His Son Jesus to cross over into our filth, into our sinful places.

Jesus did this so that He might rescue us.

In our hubris, we exalted ourselves against God, but in humility, Christ emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of man, and being found in human form, and He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.

[49 : 21] And it's because Jesus paid the price of our treason on the cross. The King, think about it, the King, the heir to the throne, dying on the cross like an exile among His own people so that we

might be reconciled to God and restored to His kingdom.

And it's only by believing in Jesus, in His life, death, and resurrection for our sake, that we can be forgiven of our transgressions, that we can be filled with His Spirit.

We can receive the wisdom of God and live humbly, following the humble King, within the boundaries that God has given us. Please take a moment to reflect on this.

How is God calling you to greater humility in your life? How is God asking you not to occupy yourself with things that are too great and wonderful for you, but instead to humble yourself and to walk trustingly beside Him like a weaned child with its mother?

After you've done some reflection, let's, we'll respond together by praying out loud as a church.

Amen.