

PROVERBS 1

A JOURNEY, NOT A DESTINATION

When you consider the need for wisdom in society today, you might automatically think about people who make up the younger generations. And that is certainly true. In fact, Proverbs is written from the perspective of a parent to a child. Solomon wrote much of the book, and in Proverbs 1: 4-5 he specifically mentioned the inexperienced and young as his audience. Whether young inexperienced, in age, or both, Proverbs promises prudence, knowledge, and discretion.

But Proverbs is not only for the young and inexperienced! In verse 5, Solomon identified a third group of people when he wrote, let a wise person listen and increase learning. In other words, Proverbs also contains a promise for those who are older and experienced, in age, or both. Those who have been walking the journey called Christianity for some time can and should continue grow in wisdom and then pass that wisdom on to others.

What that means is that wisdom is not a state in which you can fully arrive this side of heaven. No matter what stage of life you're currently in, you need to grow in wisdom. Wisdom is a journey! Proverbs 1: 7 teaches us that wisdom's journey begins with an attitude. Think about it this way, we live in the information age, but the vast amount of information at our fingertips has not made us any wiser than the generations before us. That's because information apart from the fear of God only makes us more informed sinners.

Whether you are young or inexperienced or older with a lifetime of experience, the kind of knowledge we desperately need comes to those who hunger to know God. When we fear God and treasure Christ we learn wisdom. Humility before the Lord leads to teach ability which produces wisdom!

Given all of the problems that we have and how often we mess up, it tells us that we are not wise and are often foolish. The Bible says that at creation there was perfect harmony between people and God, between people and themselves and between people and the world around them (Gen 1-2). There was an order to things. Human sin - the fall - broke all of that because people sought knowledge and wisdom apart from God (Gen 3). That messed everything up. Once a man's vertical relationship with God was out of whack, so were his horizontal relationships with other people and the world around him. Are we really surprised that the first murder in history (Gen 4) followed soon after the fall of humanity? Proverbs is about restoring that harmony through Jesus. Proverbs is all about becoming wise in everyday life through a relationship with Jesus.

WHAT IS WISDOM?

Proverbs 1:1-7 is the preamble. It tells us what the book is about and its purpose. *¹ The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: ² for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; ³ for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; ⁴ for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—⁵ let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—⁶ for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.*

Solomon is the main author of Proverbs which means he is responsible for the majority of it. We should not be surprised that Solomon is the main author because after all, he is the wisest man in Israel's history because the Lord granted his request for wisdom in 1 Kings 4:29-34.

Wisdom is Royal (1:1) Wisdom is royal because it is how kings rule their people. In Proverbs 8:15-16 *By me kings reign and rulers issue decrees that are just; ¹⁶ by me princes govern, and nobles—all who rule on earth.* The king embodies the nation and represents the nation. If the king is wise, the people will be wise. If the king is unwise, the people will be foolish. So a wise king can produce a wise nation - a wise kingdom.

Wisdom is Correction and Understanding (1:2) Proverbs 2 says that the purpose of the book *for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight*. Wisdom is the kind of knowledge that helps you know what is going on around you. It will allow you to be able to read situations and the people around you correctly. First, we have to acknowledge that we do not know everything and be open to counsel from others.

Wisdom is the Knowledge of Good and Evil (1:3) *for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair*. Wisdom is ethical. And in order for the readers of proverbs to receive correction they must be wise in righteousness, justice, and integrity. Biblical wisdom is not intelligence or a high IQ. It is the knowledge of good and evil period a wise person can tell the difference between right and wrong in the situations in which they find themselves.

Adam and Eve were prohibited access to the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the garden of Eden. Why? God forbids them to eat that fruit that not because He's given them an arbitrary rule to break so that one day He can send his son to die for sinners and save us from hell. He wants to teach humanity to depend on God. However, humans decide to trust the voice of the serpent and what their own eyes said was best. Wisdom comes from the mouth of God, so submit to the Word of God and not what you think is right.

The law tells us right from wrong. Deuteronomy 4: 6 says that Israel's wisdom is found in keeping the law. Parents are instructed to teach the law to their kids so that the nation can remain in the land and not die in exile. Deuteronomy 6.

Wisdom is Discernment (1:4) Proverbs 1:4 says that wisdom is *shrewdness and discretion - ⁴for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young*. Wisdom is the ability to read a situation and make the right decision. Proverbs gives categories of people to include the inexperienced, mocking, foolish, and liars. Inexperienced people are not wise or foolish yet. Instead, they are open to instruction in wisdom.

Wisdom is Obtaining Guidance (1:5-6) *let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—⁶for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise*. Solomon says that a wise man will listen and increase in learning; A wise man will acquire direction and guidance. He says that the wise need to grow, learning and get direction. The

truly wise will have the humility to know that they still need to listen to counsel. There is no graduation for the wise. We all need to hear the wisdom of Proverbs again and again throughout our lives.

How Do You Get Wisdom? (1:7) *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.* You get wisdom through our reverence trust in the Lord. Wisdom is obtained through a relationship with the Lord. The fear of, the reverence for, God is the beginning of wisdom. It is believing that God is all knowing, all powerful, and everywhere. Proverbs is quite clear that the way to get to wisdom is to depend on God rather than yourself. There is no sacred and secular divide in your life. We often think that going to church, mission efforts and quiet times are the godly things we do in life. Other things like our work, our kid's soccer teams, or how we spend money are the secular or neutral parts of our lives. Solomon rejects that. The everyday decisions that we make are to be done in fear of the Lord, and the everyday decisions we make reveal whether or not we fear the lord.

Solomon failed to live out the wisdom of the proverbs and so does his son King Rehoboam. Rehoboam shows his foolishness by listening to his peers rather than the elders of Israel. 1 Kings 12. Isaiah 11 promises that the Messiah will be the embodiment of the book of Proverbs. Isaiah 11: 2-3 says *the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, a spirit of wisdom and understanding, a Spirit of counsel and strength, a Spirit of knowledge and a fear of the Lord. His delight will be in the fear of the Lord.*

Wisdom is a person-Jesus Christ. Through a relationship with Him you can be reconciled to God, to others, and to the world. Through our relationship with Him He will begin to produce in you the wisdom He lives out in Proverbs.

WARNING AGAINST THE INVITATION OF SINFUL MEN

⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. ⁹ They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck. ¹⁰ My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. ¹¹ If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul; ¹² let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; ¹³ we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; ¹⁴ cast lots with us; we will all share the loot"—¹⁵ my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; ¹⁶ for their feet rush into evil, they

are swift to shed blood. ¹⁷ How useless to spread a net where every bird can see it! ¹⁸ These men lie in wait for their own blood; they ambush only themselves! ¹⁹ Such are the paths of all who go after ill-gotten gain; it takes away the life of those who get it.

Tim Keller tells of a French money manager who invested the wealth of Europe's royal and leading families in the Bernard Madoff' Ponzi scheme. It led to disaster. Naked greed destroys. When you desire money at any cost you pay dearly for it.

It is not only rich people who have a problem with money. We, too, have greed but sometimes cannot see it. Solomon warns his son that greed will destroy him, and the Spirit us to heed the warning as well.

Getting Money The Wrong Way Will Destroy You (1:8-19) Parents are responsible for teaching their children the law (knowledge of good and evil). Parents must not abdicate this responsibility or farm it out to teachers, coaches, day care workers or Bible Study teachers. This is a parent's job.

When children listen to the instructions of their parents, they can experience a good life. Solomon demonstrates this principle through a parable. It is the story about resisting the temptation or a peer group, kills someone and take their money. Solomon says, do not be enticed and do not be pressured by your peers.

Proverbs says there are 2 paths. There is the wise, righteous path that leads to life; and there is a foolish, wicked path that leads to death. A good teacher not only tells his students what to do; and why they should do it.

It May Not Bring Disaster Immediately But It Will Ultimately (1:19) We all know stories of people who cheated and got away with it. Maybe you have gotten away with cheating on your taxes or keeping money when the cashier gave you more than you should have received. We also know the stories of people who said no to bribes, refused to cheat, did things the right way, kept their integrity and suffered a loss for it. They did not get rich and missed out. Some cheat and never seem to face the consequences in this life. Proverbs are promises that generally come true now but always come true later.

We Have All Failed (1:8-19) We have all failed to heed Solomon's warning. We think, I would never join a gang to kill and rob

someone. But there is more to the text. Have you ever given into peer pressure to do something you shouldn't? Have you ever done something wrong to be accepted by the crowd? Have you ever used people or manipulated them to get what you wanted?

The problem is not money or things in and of themselves. "Profit" is a neutral term (v. 19). It can be good or bad; it depends on how you get it and how you use it. Proverbs is positive about wealth if a good work ethic is how you get it and generosity is the way you use it. Proverbs 15:27 - *The greedy bring ruin to their households, but the one who hates bribes will live.* See 1 Timothy 6:9-10

Jesus Can Save You Jesus is the son who grows in wisdom and stature and favor with God and man. Paul says that Jesus is the wisdom of God for us. (1 Corinthians 1:24,30 ²⁴ *but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ³⁰ It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.)*

WISDOM'S REBUKE

Rebuke is a sharp disapproval or criticism of someone because of their behavior or actions. ²⁰ *Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square; ²¹ on top of the wall she cries out, at the city gate she makes her speech: ²² "How long will you who are simple love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge? ²³ Repent at my rebuke! Then I will pour out my thoughts to you, I will make known to you my teachings.*

There is an urgent need to plead with those headed toward destruction to repent and believe the gospel. Wisdom is presented as a "turn or burn" street preacher who appeals to the inexperienced to turn and not perish.

You Need to Accept Jesus (1:20-23) We often say things before we think; we don't listen to advice; we tell lies; we disrespect each other; we brag on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram; we waste time playing games and we are stingy with our money. But there is an answer - Wisdom is a person in whom you can be in a relationship - Jesus of Nazareth. When your vertical relationship with God is right through Jesus Christ, your horizontal relationships with others and the world around you will be right.

In the fullness of time, God reveals to us what Solomon could not have fully known - that Jesus is God's Wisdom in the flesh. Christ is the embodiment and fulfillment of the wisdom of Proverbs in the same way that he is the embodiment of the Word itself.

Refusing To Accept Jesus (1:24-32)

²⁴ But since you refuse to listen when I call and no one pays attention when I stretch out my hand, ²⁵ since you disregard all my advice and do not accept my rebuke, ²⁶ I in turn will laugh when disaster strikes you; I will mock when calamity overtakes you—²⁷ when calamity overtakes you like a storm, when disaster sweeps over you like a whirlwind, when distress and trouble overwhelm you. ²⁸ "Then they will call to me but I will not answer; they will look for me but will not find me, ²⁹ since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the Lord. ³⁰ Since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke, ³¹ they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes. ³² For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

You have heard the expression "hell hath no fury like a woman scorned." If we scorn wisdom- reject Jesus, we will encounter God's wrath. Disaster, calamity, distress, trouble, and fear are the consequences of rejecting wisdom.

Accepting Jesus Leads To True Life *³³ but whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."* While the complacent person will have his feet knocked out from under him, those who accept Wisdom - those who listen to her and are in a personal relationship with her - will live securely and be unafraid of danger.

We have all been foolish. At times we have all failed to walk in wisdom. The good news is that wisdom is not a thing; Wisdom is a person we can trust. He will forgive your failures and enable you to be wise. But he warns you not to be complacent because today is the day of salvation.