
STAND ALONE FROM PROVERBS

WISDOM BEGINS WITH RESPECT

PROVERBS 1:1-9

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel:

To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—

Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their griddles.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck".

INTRODUCTION

The average person is unlikely to say that they do not want to be wise, but the average person is also unlikely to do anything in pursuit of real wisdom. This contradiction provides the very evidence of lacking wisdom among many people today. There are many intelligent and many experienced people around us, but we are often amazed when we encounter someone with wisdom. What is wisdom? Do some people just have it, while others don't? How can we improve our own level of wisdom? And, where does the Gospel fit into all of this? These are the questions we seek to answer in this message from the opening verses of Proverbs.

MESSAGE OUTLINE:

- (1) WISDOM IS NOT NATURAL**
- (2) ONE'S WISDOM CAN BE IMPROVED**
- (3) THE MECHANISM OR MEANS OF IMPROVING WISDOM IS PRACTICAL**
- (4) THE OLDER GENERATION IS EXPECTED TO HAND WISDOM DOWN**
- (5) WISDOM WILL PRODUCE NOTICEABLE RESULTS**
- (6) WISDOM BEGINS WITH RESPECT**

APPROACHING THE PROVERBS

R.C. Sproul helps us gain a proper perspective as we read the Proverbs:

“The overall function of this section is to teach the covenant community how to live out the ideals set forth in the Law but not experienced in the Prophets. One implication of reading the book of Proverbs in this context is to realize that while it does not contain explicit teaching on redemptive history, its position within that history is presumed. Among other things, this means that the principles taught in the book of Proverbs are to be lived out not as legalistic rules but as a response to God’s redemptive work in the past on behalf of the community. For new covenant believers, this means that we strive to live out the principles in the book of Proverbs as our response to God’s grace to us in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. James is sometimes called the New Testament version of Proverbs.”¹

WHAT IS WISDOM?

“In short, *wisdom is the skill to survive and thrive by living in accordance with the order that God has established in his world*. The fear of the Lord is living in accordance with the principles manifest in His Word and world because we stand in awe of Him and trust Him as our God.”²

(1) WISDOM IS NOT NATURAL

◆ NOT INHERENT

● **Wisdom does not naturally bubble up from within.**

- These proverbs are written to give “**knowledge and discretion to the youth**”
 - Verse 4 uses the literary tool of parallelism in order to draw a direct line of comparison between “**simple**” and “**youth**”
 - The word translated “**simple**” means *naïve* or *gullible*
 - The word translated “**youth**” means *young*

¹ Sproul, R. C. (Ed.). (2015). The Reformation Study Bible: English Standard Version (2015 Edition) (p. 1011). Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust.

² Ibid, 1010.

- We are to understand here what we already know by experience – youth is accompanied by ignorance and gullibility
 - Illustration: the child-catcher on Chitty-chitty-bang-bang
 - With a crooked face and creepy voice, the man offers children candy and sweets if they will enter his horse-drawn prison. The caged wagon is barely disguised, but the children are oblivious.
- And the author implores his “son” to “hear” and not “forsake” the *schoolings*
 - I have heard others say to me (more than once), “*this is a schooling, not a scolding...*”
 - Such a statement is meant to advise the hearer of the speaker’s intent, so that they will not feel attacked. It is as though the speaker is saying, “I don’t want to punish you for an error, but I do want to help you by correcting you.”

◆ NOT INTUITIVE

- **Wisdom does not arrive or improve by osmosis, magic, or passivity.**
 - The reader/listener is to “hear” “instruction” and not to “forsake” “teaching” (v8).
 - Here we see the two-pronged nature of growth in wisdom.
 - It includes “instruction” – discipline and training
 - And it includes “teaching” – directing and informing
 - In both cases the recipient is to “take these things to heart” and NOT “leave or throw them aside”
 - Point: the strong implication is that the instructor and the student are both very intentionally active in the process.

We should not expect (assume) that we or others will be wise, but *that does not mean we should not strive to improve our wisdom or that of others.*

(2) ONE'S WISDOM CAN BE IMPROVED

◆ THIS IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROVERBS!

- **“To know wisdom...” (v2)**
 - “to know...” “to understand...” (v2)
 - “to receive...” (v3)
 - “to give...” (v4)
 - to “increase” and “obtain” (v5)
 - “to understand...” (v6)
- **Receiving commandments is itself a wise thing to do**
 - *“The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin”* (Prov. 10:8).
 - The constant contrast throughout the Proverbs (and the Bible) is that the foolish person simply does not know when or how to listen... he/she is constantly “*babbling*” (Prov. 10:6, 8, 13, 18, 19, 31, 32).
 - James (in the NT) emphasizes this same idea.
 - He speaks of the “**meekness of wisdom**” as opposed to loud foolishness (James 3:13-14).
 - Point: Humility, revealed in an ability to listen, is not only wise; it is the way to improve one’s wisdom.

We may have hope, then... Our current lack of wisdom may be remedied!

(3) THE MECHANISM OR MEANS OF IMPROVING WISDOM IS PRACTICAL

◆ DISCIPLESHIP (INSTRUCTING AND EXEMPLIFYING) IS IN VIEW

- As already suggested, “*instructing*” & “*teaching*” = discipleship
 - Discipleship includes *Instruction*
 - There is information that MUST be received, and the one who seeks to bypass this aspect of improving wisdom will set him/herself up for many failures.
 - Discipleship includes *Exemplary Practice*
 - The information is only as good as the application of it... One must learn how to apply knowledge.
 - Illustration: high school ag teacher filling balloons with oxygen, acetylene, and a mixture of both.
 - The oxygen balloon created a flame, the acetylene balloon created a little larger flame, and the mixture exploded. Therefore, you never light a cutting torch with a mixture of gasses, but you introduce the second one slowly.

(4) THE OLDER GENERATION IS EXPECTED TO HAND WISDOM DOWN

◆ THE RESPONSIBILITY IS CLEAR / UNMISTAKABLE

- “**Father**” and “**Mother**”
 - 3 times in Proverbs, nearly the exact phrase is recited:
 - “hear father’s instruction” and “forsake not mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8)
 - “keep father’s commandment” and “forsake not mother’s teaching” (Prov. 6:20)
 - “listen” to “father” and “do not despise mother” (Prov. 23:22)
 - The assumption is that “*father*” and “*mother*” will not only be instructing, commanding, teaching, and speaking... Father and Mother will be doing these things for the benefit of their children

- At least 3 things must be said here:
 - First, if you are a father or a mother, then you must... YOU MUST take up this responsibility!
 - Second, if you have a father and/or mother who spends time and effort on discipling you, then you must... YOU MUST make every effort to understand and appreciate it!
 - Third, if you are a Christian, then this familial handing down of wisdom is supremely available in the context of church family.
- **Church Family**
 - For those of you who were hear at the end of last year, you might recall what we studied in the Apostle Paul’s letter to Titus.
 - The length of all 7 verses is worth reciting here:
 - “**Older men** are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. **Older women** likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to **teach** what is good, and so train the **young women** to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, **urge** the **younger men** to be self-controlled. Show **yourself** in all respects to **be a model** of good works, and **in your teaching show** integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us” (Titus 2:2–8).
 - So much more could be said on this matter, but suffice it to say that the local church is truly meant to be a ***family of believers, discipling one another and being disciplined by one another.***

The motive for doing this is love for God and love for one another, but we may also find great satisfaction in seeing the fruit of our efforts... *fruit for both the dispenser and the receptacle.*

(5) WISDOM WILL PRODUCE NOTICEABLE RESULTS

◆ WISE LIVING WILL PAY-OFF

- “they (the instruction & teaching) are a *garland... and pendants*” (v9)
 - Jesus said, “*wisdom is justified by her deeds*” (Matt. 11:19).
 - The Proverbs explains, those who seek wisdom “*will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil...*” (Prov. 2:5–12).
 - We are warned time and again, in the Scriptures, to avoid judging success by worldly standards, but can we not clearly see the kind of character that is produced and evidenced in the lives of those who have sought wisdom?!
 - Illustration: the men I most admire among our church family are those men who are stable, patient, humble, quick to listen, thoughtful, conscientious, and God-honoring.

We are able to see, that all of these admirable characteristics contribute to an overall definition of wisdom,

and such wisdom begins with a reverent posture toward God.

(6) WISDOM BEGINS WITH RESPECT

◆ WISE MEN AND WOMEN FEAR GOD

- **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge/wisdom” (v7)**
 - Wise men and women seek to know God’s precepts
 - Wise men and women defer to God’s authority
 - Wise men and women assume that God is wiser than everyone else
- **“fools despise wisdom and instruction” (v7)**
 - Foolish men and women are indifferent toward God’s word
 - Foolish men and women will dispute and resist God’s authority
 - Foolish men and women assume they are wiser than everyone else

◆ WISDOM IS CHIEFLY FOUND IN THE GOSPEL

- **The person & work of Christ is the apex of wisdom (1 Cor. 1:23-25)**
 - In the Gospel, we learn why we are broken – sin and disobedience are universal
 - In the Gospel, we learn humility – we are guilty, foolish, rebels
 - In the Gospel, we learn dependence – Christ accomplished all for us
 - In the Gospel, we learn hope – God’s promises are sure
 - In the Gospel, we learn patience – We wait for completion and glory
 - In the Gospel, we learn wisdom – God is to be feared, admired, and trusted

MY PRAYERS

- May God forgive us for our neglect of true wisdom.
- May God invigorate our hearts toward love, respect, and desire for Him.
- May God grant us wisdom as we seek His face and delight in Him.

APPLICATION:

- (1) What is this passage asking me to believe about God and myself?
- (2) What is this passage asking me to believe about sin and salvation?
- (3) What is this passage asking me to believe about the world and the world to come?
- (4) What sin is this passage forbidding? And What duty is this passage commanding?
- (5) What grace, fruit, or gift of the Spirit is this passage calling for?
- (6) How should this passage impact my relationship with God? My family? My friends? My neighbors? My enemies?
- (7) Is this passage addressed to believers, unbelievers, hypocrites, doubters, etc?
- (8) What does this passage teach me about my responsibilities as a church member, a citizen, an employee/employer?
- (9) Is there an example here I am being urged to follow or avoid?
- (10) What is there in this passage to lead me into worship?
- (11) Does this passage admonish, rebuke, convict, or warn me? Why and how?
- (12) Does this passage encourage, comfort, console, or promise me? Why and how?
- (13) What is this passage asking me to question or examine?
- (14) Does this verse ask me to look at the past, the present, or the future?
- (15) Is this passage addressing my mind, my emotions, my will, my desires, or my conscience?
- (16) Is this passage focused on me as an individual or upon the church (local or universal)?
- (17) What is this passage intended to change in me? My family? My church? My workplace? My world?