

INTRODUCTION

Way back in 1597 Francis Bacon said, “**Knowledge is power.**” That was hundreds of years before the information age. -The age when information became a multi-faceted industry and cultural obsession.

As we became deluged with more and faster information, it became less and less of a priority to look at the bigger picture, or at least, the deeper picture. Everything was reduced to 30 second snippets of surface information.

And now in this digital age, information isn't even the power any more; it has been reduced to mere data; people reduced to statistics; who lives where; who is buying what; nano-second bytes of computer processing.

In a documentary called “The Digital Generation” they researched the effects on youth in multi-tasking all these bits of information; the *-text while you drive, surf the internet while you sit in class-* generation.

They looked at the best and brightest, like students from M.I.T. and Berkley and they found, even they are quickly losing the capacity for continuous thought. They might be brilliant, but they have difficulty putting two cogent paragraphs together! The cultural mind is a long way from looking at the big picture; that is to say, the ability to step back and see the forest for the trees.

Intelligence can be a wonderful thing; but what if it is not directed by the broader scope of ethics? **Being progressive and industrious is a great thing**; but what if we never stop to see where it is taking us?

There is a capacity that allows us to go deeper than the surface and see beyond the immediate to the longer term consequences. It is called wisdom. And there is one book of Scripture that is a treasure trove of wisdom. It is the **Book of Proverbs**.

We are going to do a little journey through Proverbs over the next few weeks, and **you can thank the kid's camp for this**. As I was researching camp material, I ended up in Proverbs. And it laid a real conviction on my heart. I had been relegating many qualities of wisdom to the bottom shelf. And I believe we all tend to do that because we live in a world where foolishness is more admired. We need a good reminder every now and then on what wisdom really is, according to God. ...Let's start with this...

DISCUSSION

1. DO YOU THINK THE AVERAGE PERSON THINKS AS DEEPLY ABOUT THINGS AS PREVIOUS GENERATIONS?

2. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE WISDOM?

1. WHAT EXACTLY IS WISDOM?

The dictionary provides some good definitions, for example it says wisdom is:

**The ability to discern or judge what is true, right, or lasting;
common sense**

Who wouldn't want the ability to know when something is true or right; or the ability to recognize when something is going to last, and what won't! But the big question is; ***how do we get that ability.***

This is where our journey through Proverbs begins. –First, by ***defining wisdom in Godly terms:***

Proverbs 2:6. For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

And...

Proverbs 1:7 says, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

This truth probably came more naturally to the ancient Hebrew than it does to us today. The Mosaic Law was infused into daily living. The **sacred** was melded into the **everyday**. For example, the Law stipulated giving the first born of the flock or the crops. So as the ancient Hebrew was out there in their daily work, farming or herding; they knew; that sheep over there was set aside to God. The first 10 percent belonged to God. Everything originated and revolved around God.

As a rule, Christianity in our day doesn't have that mindset. You just have to do the math. There's probably not a church in North America that sees 10 percent of the congregational income. ***The average church-goer gives from what's left over, not first fruits.***

In this culture we are deluged with demanding work schedules and human skills, news, and opinions from every possible angle. As a result, ***we tend to compartmentalize:*** Here is our God box, with the faith things we take out a few times a week, and here is our daily reality box with our thinking and strategies for the real world.

And since God isn't really acknowledged in the everyday, ***fear of Him is not a natural mindset.***

Another thing to note in these verses is the ***name used of God.*** Hebrew does not have a single name, but several names for God. Depending on the name used, it tells us the ***quality being emphasized.*** In this case it is: ***Yahweh***, meaning, ***the Self-existent or Eternal One.***

God sets the rules, He always has and always will. -Godly wisdom; dealing with the sacred in the everyday; wisdom that ***never changes.*** ***That is at the root of all wisdom.***

DISCUSSION

3. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO “FEAR THE LORD”?

4. IS WISDOM ABSOLUTE AND TIMELESS? *WHY OR WHY NOT?*

2. WHY WISDOM?

Is it possible that this whole idea of wisdom is over-rated? We live in an age where many don't even believe there is truth, so the concept of wisdom is obsolete to them. ***So why even desire wisdom, why not go with the crowd?***

In a summary of chapters 1 and 2, here is what wisdom will do for you:

A. WISDOM OFFERS PRESERVATION

Proverbs 2

10. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul,

11. discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you.

When we live without wisdom, ***it has a way of rotting us from the inside out. I remember a lady who was a neighbor*** of ours many years ago. She came out of a bitter divorce and she was raising a son alone. Everything was always someone else's fault. In all the time we knew her, I don't believe she ever took responsibility for anything that went wrong.

Since nothing was her fault, she didn't learn from any mistakes and consequently, just kept making more. Even though she was still quite young and pretty, she was one of the most bitter and lonely people I have ever met. If she hasn't become any wiser, I fear to think of where she is today.

Wisdom keeps you from rotting from the inside out.

B. WISDOM AVOIDS DEATH BY SEDUCTION

Proverbs 2

16. to deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words...

18. for her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead.

This has to do with more than physical seduction. It has to do with the infection of lust. People lust for all kinds of things; material things, power, what someone else has, or you think they have.

Here is a great quote on lust:

The lust of avarice has so totally seized upon mankind that their wealth seems rather to possess them than they possess their wealth.

~Pliny the Elder

Lust is to become a slave to what you desire, and according to wisdom, an ***unhealthy desire leads to death***. And death comes in many forms; death of *innocence*, death of *emotions*, death of *reputation*, death of your *peace*, death of your *potential*, and ultimately, death of your *soul*. ...Wisdom delivers you from all these forms of death.

C. WISDOM ORNAMENTS YOUR LIFE

Proverbs 1

9. for they will be graceful ornaments on your head, and chains about your neck.

Ornament in the Hebrew means *something attached to you that is attractive*. **Wisdom makes you attractive**. It is not only an ornament, but a *graceful* one. “Graceful” is an interesting word in the original Hebrew it literally means “*horse-like*.” (*Cuwciy*)

What makes a horse look graceful? -They move forward very quickly, with seemingly little effort. ...**Wisdom allows us to move forward** in life without the baggage that so often entangles us; things like regret, bitterness, and fear of the past. I think of my own life *and I believe we are all the same: How much baggage might we have avoided if only we had acted wisely?*

D. WISDOM MANIFESTS PROMISE

Chapter 2 ends with a claim that probably doesn't resonate much in our time, until we understand the story behind it.

Proverbs 2

21. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it.

This land was the culmination of staying faithful to God. At one time, they were battered Egyptian slaves; generation after generation. That land seemed like a far away hope.

The land was promise. The land was their ***full potential***. The land was the help of God in ways they could touch, see, and feel. Then, it happened; and as long as they stayed wise and upright, that's where ***they would remain***.

So, for us, wisdom is the vehicle to what God promises. Wisdom is the way to reach ***our full potential***. Wisdom is a chance to see God's help in the ***most tangible ways***. Wisdom offers the ***brightest possible future***. It is by wisdom you experience what it means to be a child and friend of God.

DISCUSSION

5. THESE CHAPTERS GIVE AT LEAST FOUR REWARDS OF WISDOM; GIVE THEM IN YOUR OWN WORDS.

6. CAN YOU THINK OF ANY OTHER REWARDS FOR WISDOM?

CONCLUSION

This message this morning has done its job if we realize a few things:

- ***Wisdom is a direct indicator of your spiritual condition.***

You may have an earnest faith, you may honestly trying to follow God, and you wonder why there are so many obstacles. It could be, you are putting them there yourself. There is a lack of wisdom; you trying to follow God, but not God's way. It's not surprising if you don't get the results you so badly desire. The good news is God is always willing to give wisdom to those who seek it.

- ***A lack of wisdom leads to death.***

It may not be the death of your salvation, but it is the death of a meaningful experience with God; it may be the death of what you are here to achieve. The good news is God is always willing to give wisdom to those who seek it.

- ***Wisdom is a top priority***

Above training or intelligence or skills; they'll go in the wrong direction without wisdom.

It begins right now, with a reverence for God so deep, you honestly see Him has the foundational source.

CHALLENGE

With heads bowed, I'd like to ask an important question:

Who in here would like a special anointing of God's wisdom?

I'd like to have a special prayer with you from where you are sitting.

And I'd like to challenge you with this:

Over this summer series, make wisdom your highest quest.