

"The Art of Skillful Living" Proverbs 1:1-7

This summer we have selected messages from "Wisdom Literature" (Job, selected Psalms, and the writings of Solomon). In Proverbs, Solomon is writing a "parenting manual" that contains God's wisdom and is intended to be intentionally passed on to the next generation of leaders. Solomon also reminds us that the foundation or beginning point of wisdom is our world view. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). The wise maxims that Solomon writes to us reveal two paths in life: 1) The world's path that leads to death (Prov. 16:25); and God's path that leads to life and blessing (Prov. 24:3-4).

Proverbs Overview

1. Solomon wrote most of Proverbs
2. Written from a father to his children

Proverbs 1:8

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction,
And do not forsake your mother's teaching."

3. Intended to be used (first in the home) to intentionally train up children to become godly leaders and influencers

"Life affords no greater responsibility,
No greater privilege,
Than the raising of the next generation."

—C. Everett Koop, M.D. [former Surgeon General]

"A farmer made his sons work in his cornfields while their peers spent the afternoon at the swimming hole. Someone scolded the father saying, 'Why do you make those boys work so hard? You don't need all that corn.' The wise father replied, 'Sir, I'm not raising corn. I'm raising boys.'"

—Marvin Hein in the *Christian Leader*

4. Very practical advice that impacts our daily lives- morally and ethically
5. Presents two, competing paths in life

Two Paths in Life...

"Every waking moment of our lives, we operate from one of two viewpoints: human or divine."

—Chuck Swindoll in *Daily Grind I*

1. DEATH- Proverbs 16:25
There is a way which seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.
2. LIFE- Proverbs 24:3-4
By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.

Proverbs: from the Latin word "proverbium"

pro- "for"

verbum- "words"

"A short, pithy saying in frequent and widespread use that expresses a well-known truth or fact." (Webster)

Couplets- two ideas placed next to each other. Three kinds...

- 1) Contrastive- linked with "but"
(Prov. 15:20) A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.
- 2) Comparative- "better...than; as...so; like...so"
(Prov. 15:17) "Better is a dish of vegetables where love is than a fatted ox served with hatred."
- 3) Completive- second statement completes first. Linked by "and" or "so."
(Prov. 14:13) "Even in laughter the heart may ache, and joy may end in grief."

Big Idea:

True Wisdom begins with a reverence for God that affects how I think and what I do.

Why Proverbs (and Wisdom Lit.)?

So we will...

1. Know TRUE wisdom (1:1-2a)

Wisdom defined:

- 1) Mental and physical skill of craftsmen, sailors, singers, mourners, counselors, etc.
- 2) Application of moral & ethical principles that result in skillful, godly living.

Wisdom (Hebrew- hoekma)- synonyms- understanding, instruction, discernment, knowledge

Wisdom is the art of skillful living!

Knowledge vs. Wisdom

“It is possible to be knowledgeable and yet to not know.”
—Dr. Elliott E. Johnson

2. Discern right from wrong (1:2b)

3. Receive instruction (1:3)

A wise person...

- Spends time with wise people
“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.” (13:2)
- Receives correction
“He who listens to a life-giving rebuke will be at home with the wise.” (15:31)
- Accepts instruction
“The wise in heart accept commands, but a chattering fool comes to ruin.” (10:10)

4. Find direction in life (1:4)

“If a child shows himself incorrigible, he should be decently and quietly beheaded at the age of twelve, lest he grow to maturity, marry, and perpetuate his kind.”

—*Whatever It Is, I'm Against It*, edited by Nat Shapiro, 1927

5. Hear God's voice (1:5a)

6. Receive wise counsel (1:5b)

“When the Duke of Windsor was asked what impressed him the most in America, he replied, ‘the way American parents obey their children.’”

Discipline...

“You can never go wrong with giving a youngster lots of love and kisses mixed with discipline. Child training is merely knowing which end of your child to pat...and when.”

—Jan Marshall in *Still Hanging in There*

“The sheriff’s office in a Texas city once distributed a list of rules titled, ‘How to Raise a Juvenile Delinquent in Your Own Family.’ The list included the following:

1. Begin within infancy to give the child everything he wants. This will ensure his believing that the world owes him a living.
2. Pick up everything he leaves lying around. This will teach him he can always throw off responsibility on others.
3. Take his part against neighbors, teachers and policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child. He is a ‘free spirit’ and never wrong.
4. Finally, prepare yourself for a life of grief. You’re going to have it.

—*Bits and Pieces*, September 1984

7. Gain Understanding (1:6)

8. Deepen our reverence for the Lord (1:7)

Category Description	Simple/ Naive	Fool	Scoffer	Wise
Mindset	Empty	Negative	Closed	Open
Essential Trait	Nothing to guide him	Knowledge but bad choices	Hard heart; Skeptical	Fear of the Lord
Introduce Change	Teach truth	Challenge	Prayer & time	Teachable
Consequence; Result	Unguided; wandering	Enslaved to choices	Demoralizing influence on others	Open to growth

Knowledge vs. Wisdom

“Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. To know is not to be wise. Many men know a great deal, and are the greater fools for it. There is no fool so great a fool as a knowing fool. But to know how to use knowledge is to have wisdom.”

—Charles H. Spurgeon

Why do People Change?

Our Worldview...

Proverbs 1:7

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

Eccles. 12:13-14

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

Our Heart/Values...

Proverbs 4:23

Watch over your heart with all diligence,
For from it flow the springs of life.

Proverbs 23:7

For as he thinks within himself, so he is.
He says to you, "Eat and drink!"
But his heart is not with you.

Our Behavior...

Proverbs 1:3

To receive instruction in wise behavior,
Righteousness, justice and equity.

Applications

1. READ- chapter of Proverbs each day. Fathers: Lead! You are the head of you home.
2. PRAY- ask God to give you wisdom in specific areas

James 1:5-7

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.

3. JOURNAL- write down what God is teaching you

4. MEMORIZE- Proverbs 1:7

Big Idea:

True Wisdom begins with a reverence for God that affects how I think and what I do.

Fear of the Lord

“Our relationship with God is no different. To understand who He is, and to fear the consequences of living outside His will, truly is the beginning of wisdom. Throughout Proverbs, wisdom is equated first and foremost with submission to God, while folly always includes a heart that is ignorant, apathetic, or rebellious.”

—Wayne House, p. 23.