

WISDOM FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - Practical Studies From Proverbs - Part two Teaching #1829 - Sunday, September 20th, 2015 - 6:00 p.m.
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THE WAY OF THE WISE - AND HOW TO KNOW IF YOU ARE ON IT

Last week we began our subject study in the book of Proverbs. Of course, when you think of Proverbs, you think of wisdom. And that's where our study began. Primarily, we took our time last week **defining** the nature of wisdom in the book of Proverbs. We spent quite a while tasting the **sweetness** and **value** of wisdom. We noted that wisdom doesn't come into any life **passively**. It is always hard won. You must cry out for it, search for it, and dig for it as if for gold or silver.

Tonight we're going to get closer to where the rubber meets the road with wisdom. **Are you a wise person?** The book of Proverbs, after rooting wisdom in the love of, and obedience to God's law (this is what we studied last week), gets right down to very particular manifestations of wisdom in our lives.

1) **A WISE PERSON IS HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RESTRAIN HIS OWN INSTINCTS AND RECEIVE BOTH CORRECTION AND INSTRUCTION**

Several verses make this point in Proverbs:

Proverbs 14:12 - "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death."

My opinion that the path is right doesn't make the path right. If I hide the word in my heart I will have the **standard** by which to know the right path. But that, in itself, isn't a guarantee of **walking** in the right path. Every time I see the truth in God's Word I will have to determine to **allow that truth to rule my life**.

The Fall has insured that there will always be a part of me that is inclined to see God's wisdom as either too **costly** or too **impractical**. Before I can successfully admit God's way is **right**, the writer of proverbs tells me, I will probably have to admit I am **wrong**. This is always the hardest part of walking in wisdom. It requires instant and constant humility.

This is an oft repeated theme in Proverbs:

Proverbs 15:33 - "The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor."

The **"instruction for wisdom"** covers all the ways the truth finds exposure in our minds. - reading, meditation, preaching/teaching, etc. But before God can bring any **"honor"** into our hearts from His wonderful truth - before the blessing of that truth is made apparent and manifest - there must be a response of **humility** to whatever truth we hear. In other words, the Bible doesn't put all the weight on the **teacher or speaker or book** when it comes to growth in wisdom. The key factor is in the **hearer**. There must be a heart of wisdom.

Proverbs 9:8-9 - "Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. [9] Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning."

Why does the **wise** person have the advantage of gaining more wisdom faster than the scoffer? Because the wise person has already learned the secret of receiving. He knows his own limitations. He knows the way up is down. He doesn't war against his own benefit the way the unwise hearer does. He can admit when he's wrong.

Proverbs 17:10 - "A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool."

It's a mistake to think the wise person never makes mistakes. He does. It's a mistake to think of the wise person as infallible. He's not. The book of Proverbs zeros in on a much deeper, much more important difference. It has more to do with how the wise person **responds to** and **learns from** the mistakes that are made.

In essence, the wise person knows how to cut his or her losses. He knows how to **get out** and **rise above** making the same mistake over and over again.

Here's the difference wisdom makes: The **wise** person minimizes his pain. He only needs to hear the **word** of correction and truth. But the fool, even if he has a very high I.Q., isn't so easily convinced of his error. A hundred blows on the back aren't enough to make him see the light.

If you're here, and you're under twenty five, I want to tell you how to reduce the amount of trouble you're going to face in this world before you die by 70%. Be wise enough to listen to those who give you instruction and reproof. Read a chapter of Proverbs every day and do what it says. Listening humbly to Proverbs beats being jabbed a hundred times with a sharp stick any day of the week.

2) **A WISE PERSON, UPON HUMBLY RECEIVING INSTRUCTION FROM THE LORD, IMMEDIATELY TURNS FROM EVIL WITHOUT THINKING OF THE COST OF DOING SO**

Proverbs 3:7-8 - "Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil. [8] It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones."

Last week we looked at the positive feature of **loving and obeying God's Word**. These verses contain the flip side of the same truth. It's not enough to love God's law **as an addition** to the rest of your life. For the law of God to truly bring blessing and make you wise you must immediately **"turn away from all evil."**

Again, notice that while this may feel like a costly choice, actually it is nothing of the kind. This is in fact the only way to bring true health and refreshment into daily living.

There is a precious, life-preserving verse right about at the very middle of the book of Proverbs. It is an absolute life saver to those wise enough to heed it:

Proverbs 14:16 - "One who is wise is cautious and turns away from evil, but a fool is reckless and careless."

Wisdom brings a **heightened sensibility** to the danger of evil. The foolish person will remain **arrogant and confident** right up to the inevitable disaster ahead. A wise person will **sense the potential danger long before being caught in its grip**. In that way he can turn aside and avoid the pain and misery that await. The fool, on the other hand, can't bring himself to respond until his response is already **too late**.

If you hadn't noticed, our world admires and encourages people, especially young people who need direction the most, to be arrogant, bold and self-expressive when they would be wiser to be cautious, careful and turning away from evil.

There is always a **cost** involved in listening to wisdom and turning away from evil. You usually have to step out of the crowd. You frequently lose friends. You will be mocked. But what makes it all worth it is the **end** of the journey. Nothing exposes a life to more intense danger, pain and the sheer wrath of God than arrogance in the face of danger and evil:

2 Chronicles 25:14-16 - "After Amaziah came from striking down the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir and set them up as his gods and worshiped them, making offerings to them. [15] Therefore the LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?" [16] But as he was speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel."

The worst part of this story isn't even the idolatry. The worst part is Amaziah's arrogance when God tries to warn him of the dangerous position he is now in. His arrogance cost him his life and kingdom. And Amaziah is far from the last person that has happened to.

Remember, to be bold when you should be fearful and cautious isn't courageous. It's foolish self-destruction. There are dangers in the way that you probably won't see. You and I need others who have already been where we're going. That's why **humility** is needed to listen to other's warnings when we don't **feel** the immediate danger they are describing. But by the time you **feel** it, it will likely be too late to **avoid** it. Amaziah didn't **feel** the need to listen to the prophet. He didn't **know** what the prophet knew. So Amaziah was arrogant when he should have been fearful.

Listen to the people God brings into your life.

3) **A WISE PERSON THINKS BEFORE HE SPEAKS**

Proverbs 15:23 & 28 - "To make an apt answer is a joy to a man, and a word in season, how good it is!...[28] The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things."

Wise words are **pondered** words. The fool fuels his words with his **emotions**. The wise person plans them with his **heart**. As a result of this, the words of the wise have a sense of **timing** about them. They **fit** into appropriate situations.

Notice, especially in **15:28** the emphasis is on a particular **kind** of word - perhaps the most difficult kind - **answering words** - "**the heart of the righteous ponders how to answer.**" These words measure your soul - the words that come out when you're confronted, tested, accused, blamed, attacked.

More than any other time in your life, you have the golden opportunity, if you are truly righteous and wise, to shine for God. These are the times we are most pressed **inwardly** and **outwardly** for a quick response. If you can still **take the time to ponder you will be pleasing to the Lord.**

4) **A WISE PERSON KEEPS HIS TEMPER**

Proverbs 19:11 - "Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense."

Every one of us is so created that there is a brief moment - even if only a fraction of a second - between the **sensing** of anger and the **expression** of anger. This is the point where the wise person exercises his or her discretion, according to the Proverb.

Now, no one gets angry when his rights are honored and his comfort is unchallenged. So there is no test of character there. The test comes when we are **affronted** in some apparently unjust manner. Our reputation is slighted. Our pride damaged. Our happiness threatened. This is where we have the chance to test the depths of our wisdom.

That's why the verse ends by praising the **glory of "looking over a transgression."** We are certainly most tested when we have legitimately been wronged. A real **transgression** has been committed against us. That means something has been done that has no excuse to ease its pain. The other person's guilt is unquestionable.

There is only one other Person in the Scriptures who is constantly praised for pardoning and mercifully not counting the transgressions of others against them. God. When you sing all those pretty worship choruses about how desperately much you want to be like Him, remember His greatest glory lies in His not remembering our transgressions - even though we're the guilty ones.

Temper merely shows the part of your life not yet controlled by the Holy Spirit.

5) **A WISE PERSON RESISTS PEER PRESSURE**

Proverbs 1:10 - "My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."

While there are still many more traits of wisdom we could study, I chose to close with this one because it is, without doubt, the chief cause of folly in moral, decent, even Godly people. And I think that is evidenced right in the context of this fatherly plea.

These words aren't addressed to the foolish or the wicked. They come right in the middle of the description of a rather ideal upbringing and training in righteousness:

Proverbs 1:7-10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. [8] Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and forsake not your mother's teaching, [9] for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck. [10] My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."

These are words addressed to a person with a good upbringing. There has been much good instruction. The "**fear of the Lord**" has been properly instilled. Instruction and teaching have not only been **heard**, but have actually come

to **grace and decorate** the life - **“Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck.”**

But there is still a great danger. There is still something that can **undo** all the potential bound up in that righteous heart. There is the constant pull of the **sinner’s enticement** - **“My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent.”**

Here we find described both the **process** and the **response**. The process is **gradual and persistent**. That’s what **enticement** means. No amount of schooling, knowledge or background can keep you from enticement. It comes every day. It comes to the young and the old. And it is absolutely relentless.

Because there is no avoiding enticement there must be a **planned** response to it. If the enticement is **gradual** the refusal must be **abrupt**. Anyone who is going to walk in wisdom will have to be good at saying **“no”** to those who aren’t as wise. Fools don’t like sinning alone.

The reason I’m closing with this trait of wisdom is simple. Everything else we’ve studied about wisdom is wasted without the resisting of peer pressure. No amount of study or prayer or meditation will avail the person who lives to please the crowd. When sinners entice you must refuse. Everything, including eternity, hinges on it.

Psalm 1:1-3 - **“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. [3] He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers.”**