

Series: God's Wisdom for Life – week 1

CDOBC – beginning on 1/8/12

Title: “The Benefits of Wisdom”

January 8, 2012

Proverbs 1:1-7

OBJECTIVE: To help us see the benefits in Proverbs and where knowledge begins.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Church Directory
- AWANA Grand Prix – video
- Children's Min need – Ashley Le Files
- Prayer Gathering – tonight @ 6 p.m.

We live in a time that is unmatched in human history.

The amount of information and knowledge we have is so far beyond what generations before us ever knew.

Haddon Robinson says:

“Since 1955 knowledge has doubled every five years...In fact, our generation possesses more data about the universe and human personality than all previous generations put together. High school graduates today have been exposed to more information about the world than Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza or Benjamin Franklin. In terms of facts alone, neither Moses nor Paul could pass a college entrance exam today. Yet by everyone's standards, even with all our knowledge...society today is (populated) with a bumper crop of brilliant failures...Men and women educated to earn a living often don't know anything about handling life itself. Alumni from noted universities have mastered information about a narrow slice of life but couldn't make it out of the first grade when it comes to living successfully with family and friends.” (Haddon Robinson, from the forward to Robert L.

Alden's *Proverbs: A Commentary on an Ancient Book of Timeless Advice* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1983] p. 7

– quoted in the *Insight for Living Bible Study Guide, Proverbs*, by Charles R. Swindoll)

Something that illustrates Haddon Robinson's point is the popularity of advice columnists such as Dear Abby, Ann Landers, Dr. Laura and Carolyn Hax – and others. These columnists have handed out wisdom/advice to their readers who may be successful at their careers, but are often failing at life itself. To demonstrate the lack of life skills and wisdom, here are a few examples from some letters sent to Dear Abby wanting her advice and wisdom.

Dear Abby,

What can I do about all the Sex, Nudity, Fowl Language and Violence on My VCR?

Dear Abby,

I have a man I can't trust. He cheats so much, I'm not even sure the baby I'm carrying is his.

Dear Abby,

I joined the Navy to see the world. I've seen it. Now how do I get out?

DEAR ABBY:

I have always wanted to have my family history traced, but I can't afford to spend a lot of money to do it. Any suggestions?

SAM IN CA

DEAR SAM: Yes. Run for public office.

Warren Wiersbe says we are “*living in the information age, but we certainly are not living in the age of wisdom.*” (*Be Skillful*, by Warren W. Wiersbe, p.

11)

I cannot stress enough the importance of education. It is a vital foundation for your career – for your ability to make a living.

However, don't confuse education or intelligence with wisdom. The best education in the world may prepare you to make a living, but it does not prepare you to make a life. That's what wisdom does.

Do you believe that wisdom is lacking in our modern society/life?

We have many highly-educated people who are successful in their careers, but why are their lives complete disasters filled with pain and relationship failure?

The truth is that life can be very confusing. We are often faced with decisions that we are unprepared to make. The moral laxity in our modern world enables us to avoid many of these decisions, and it's been common practice to simply blame others for our failures – or for the mediocre accomplishments of our life.

In years past, the family – especially the extended family was a guiding force to help the younger generation navigate the pitfalls and detours on life's highway. But with the breakdown of the family and the transient nature of our modern lives where some people move every 5-10 years, the inter-generational support we so desperately need is no longer there in many cases.

Why was that inter-generational support so helpful?

I believe it's because of 'wisdom'. Maybe I'm glorifying the past more than it deserves, but I believe over the centuries of human history, most grandparents and great-grandparents who had been through the cycles of life were looked to and respected for their wisdom. They had a foundational understanding of Biblical wisdom, and their advice and principled living was a treasured asset in the family. But this seems to be missing in our world today – on

both ‘sides’. On the one ‘side’ there has been a slow but consistent shift in the culture’s thinking that no longer looks to the elderly in a family as the ‘keepers of wisdom’, but as those who have lived out their usefulness. And, on the other ‘side’ of the spectrum, there are more and more grandparents and great-grandparents who have survived the ‘cycles of life’ but they are not wiser for it. They have lived with selfish and sinful motives, and their so-called advice would be damaging in many cases.

So, where do we turn for the insight on how to ‘make a life’ that is fulfilling, joyful, and pleasing to God?

We turn to God’s Word – and to the wisdom literature it contains.

This series titled: **“God’s Wisdom for Life”** will take us through sections of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms. These inspired words from God will guide us not only with truth, but also with wisdom. God didn’t give us His wisdom in Scripture to fill greeting cards, but for us to apply to our daily life...to help us ‘make a life’.

Turn to Proverbs 1:1-7

Before we begin reading, let me give you some important details about the book of Proverbs. The major theme of the book is “Wisdom”. In fact, you will find the words ‘wisdom’ or ‘wise’ no less than 125 times in the 31 chapters. Proverbs was written primarily by Solomon, but others also contributed such as the Men of Hezekiah (25:1), and chapters 30 & 31 are credited to Agur the son of Jakeh and King Lemuel (some think Lemuel is another name for Solomon).

A proverb is a pithy/succinct/short statement that summarizes practical truths that relate to daily life. The Spanish novelist

Cervantes defines a proverb as “*a short sentence based on long experience.*”

Proverbs are general truths about life – they are not promises of God for everyone in every case. “The righteous will thrive like a green leaf” (Prov. 11:28) is a general truth, but we all know a righteous person who has suffered great loss and at times an early death. “He thwarts the craving of the wicked” (10:3) and “the stomach of the wicked goes hungry” (13:25) are generally true, but we all know some instances in which the wicked have great abundance and a long life.

God’s wisdom was/is best displayed in Jesus’ life and ministry. The greatest wisdom we can have in this life is to have faith in Jesus. Without faith in Christ, the wisdom of God is out of reach – because God’s wisdom is not only an intellectual pursuit, but it’s also a spiritual blessing in our new life in Christ, the power of God’s Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The wisdom of God is not automatically given to each believer – we must pursue it – study God’s Word and obey God’s Word if we want to gain His wisdom.

Remember – like the rest of Scripture – the sayings in Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Psalms are not the words of man, but the words of God written down by certain men whom the Holy Spirit guided in the process of their writing (2 Peter 1:21).

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

Solomon is clearly identified as the author of the book.

Solomon was the son of King David, and he served as the third

king of Israel after his father's death. God blessed Solomon with great wisdom – and we read of this blessing in 1 Kings 3:12:

“I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.” *1 Kings 3:12 – God speaking to Solomon*

When the wisest man who has ever lived is also led by the Holy Spirit to write down the wisdom he has received from God, only a fool closes the book and turns on the T.V.

In fact, all throughout the book, Solomon will contrast the wise man with the fool. I pray we will all live as the wise man/woman is described – and not as the fool.

In verses 2-6, Solomon gives us seven benefits of his proverbs – seven benefits of his wisdom. We often hesitate to invest our time and effort unless we know what we will receive in return.

Illus. Karate Kid – was told that he would learn karate from Mr.

Miyagi – and then Mr Miyagi started giving him all sorts of chores around his house – painting the fence a certain way – washing the cars – waxing the cars – and pretty soon Daniel (Daniel-son) was fed-up with all these chores that seemed to only benefit Mr. Miyagi, and he was still waiting for the karate lessons! Daniel was ready to quit, but then Mr. Miyagi demonstrated how all the chores were actually strengthening the muscles he needed in karate. Only then did Daniel see the value/benefit in all his work.

Unlike Mr. Miyagi, Solomon doesn't hide anything from us. He tells us up front – in the first few verses of the book – what value there is in studying proverbs and pursuing wisdom in our daily life.

Seven things Proverbs will do...

Benefit #1 – discipline your knowledge

Vs. 2 “for attaining wisdom and discipline”

Wisdom is not the same as intelligence. Some contrast these two: Intelligence as “book sense” and wisdom as “common sense”. Some of the most intelligent people and some of the most successful people in terms of money and fame, are foolish in all other areas of life.

Wisdom is “using knowledge in the right way”. To further qualify that definition, we can say that wisdom is using knowledge in the right way – with is according to the righteousness of God.

Studying the proverbs of Solomon will help you gain wisdom. But the second half of the statement differs in the various translations. Some use ‘discipline’ while others use the word ‘instruction’.

The Hebrew word has the meaning of chastening, instruction, discipline. So the chastening from a parent – or from God – the instruction from a parent or from God – and the discipline we receive is what teaches us – instructs us in life. Discipline is a loving, valuable thing because it keeps us on the ‘straight and narrow path’ and points us toward wise living.

Our knowledge – our view of the world needs to be disciplined or guided toward the things of God – His commands – His truths – His principles for life.

Benefit #2 – develop your common sense

“for understanding words of insight”

This may be difficult to understand, but Solomon is simply saying that when you study proverbs and pursue the wisdom of God, you will become more insightful and discerning. You will learn to think and use the mental capacity God blessed you with.

You will develop the ability to understand things below the surface of what is said.

Benefit #3 – teach us how to live wisely and honorably

3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;

The opposite of discipline would be undisciplined or unruly – and the opposite of prudent would be careless. So, without the proverbs of Solomon, you might live a life that was unruly and careless...but with them (Proverbs) you will acquire discipline in your life and you will be prudent or sensible in your decisions. In daily life, this means that you learn to value and practice what is right, just, and fair. These will be traits others will see in you – and traits you will learn to recognize in others.

Benefit #4 – protect the naive

4 for giving prudence to the simple,

“Prudence” not only means to be sensible and careful, but it also has the meaning of *craftiness or trickery* – in the good sense. In the Hebrew, “naïve” is a word that means to be *open, spacious, wide*. The idea is a figurative sense of being ‘roomy’ in a mental or moral sense. So, the naïve person is one who does not have any thoughts or morals in their mind...they are wide open to all sorts of ideas that will mislead or take advantage of them.

The idea is one of protecting the naïve or simple minded person from the scams of others. Trusting others – always assuming the best in others is a good trait – but it is a dangerous trait also. Without wisdom, the simple minded or naïve person who always trusts others is vulnerable to abuse or fraud.

Matt. 10:16

“Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”

The Proverbs of Solomon will protect the naïve or simple minded person.

Benefit #5 – teach truth and thoughtfulness in youth

knowledge and discretion to the young—

The Hebrew word for “knowledge” has the idea of *skill*, which relates to having skill at life. Some young people are thought to be ‘clueless’ when it comes to real life...the wisdom you will learn from proverbs will give you a clue and make you skillful at living.

They will also make you more thoughtful and more intentional about your life. Proverbs will enable you to live with purpose – direction – intentional living.

Benefit #6 – give humility to the wise

5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--

Intelligence has a way of making someone prideful. Some of the smartest people think they are beyond learning anything new. But Solomon tells us that no matter how intelligent and how wise you are, there is always more to learn. Proverbs will cause the wise person to increase in their wisdom and learning about life, and the discerning person – the one who is shrewd and perceptive about people and life will receive more guidance in these things.

Benefit #7 – to understand the deeper truths of life

6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

In Hebrew, the word for “riddles” means a dark saying – the idea is words that are hidden in darkness which makes them difficult to see/understand. It’s a very picturesque way of describing a riddle.

Proverbs will train you to understand parables and other sayings which most people gloss over due to their inability to understand. Proverbs will help you understand the deeper truths about life – and about people – so you can make a better life for you and your family.

Solomon gives us a list of seven benefits that his Proverbs will do for you when you study and learn from them.

The starting point vs. 7

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

This verse is the theme of the book!

17 references in Proverbs to the “fear of the Lord” – and these are helpful for us to understand what it means to “fear the LORD”.

1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”

1:29 “Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord”

2:5 “Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.”

3:7 “Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil.”

8:13 “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil...”

9:10 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

10:27 “The fear of the LORD adds length to life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.”

14:2 “He whose walk is upright fears the LORD, but he whose ways are devious despises Him.”

14:26-27 “He who fears the LORD has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge. **27** The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.”

15:16 “Better a little (money/wealth) with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil.”

15:33 “The fear of the LORD teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.”

16:6 “Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.”

19:23 “The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.”

22:4 “Humility and the fear of the LORD bring wealth and honor and life.”

23:17 “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but always be zealous for the fear of the LORD.”

24:21 “Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and do not join with the rebellious...”

31:30 “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.”

When the Lord appeared to the infant nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai to give them the Law, we can't forget that He appeared in thunder, lightning, and thick smoke, and all the people trembled in fear at this sight and the accompanying sounds (Ex. 19:16). So in any definition of “the fear of the LORD” we must include a basic and real fear of His power, holiness and greatness in comparison to our impotence and sin.

But as believers in Christ who have been forgiven of our sins and have the righteousness of Christ and the Holy Spirit within us, our “fear of God” means that we serve Him, worship Him, and obey Him.

This is the beginning of knowledge – and of wisdom. To “fear God” leads to obedience and Godly wisdom in life.

It is the fool who despises this – and rejects God and cares nothing for the knowledge or wisdom that God offers in Christ and His Word.

Application

Put your faith in Jesus Christ – He is the Wisdom of God!

Admit your sin

Believe in His death on the cross

Commit to obeying Him daily

Are you a fool? Are you someone who “fears God”?

Close in prayer