

Week Twenty-Two
June 1-2
Proverbs 8
Kingdom Wisdom

Summary and Goal:

In this session, we will look at what wisdom is and how we can get it. God's people are charged with expanding His Kingdom. In order to do that we need to live wisely so that we can navigate this world well and influence it for God's purposes.

Main Passage:

Proverbs 8

Session Outline:

What is Wisdom?

1. Knowledge
2. Discretion
3. Prudence

How Do I get Wisdom?

1. Recognize Where Wisdom Comes From
2. Listen, Keep and Do Not Neglect

Session in a Sentence:

To successfully navigate the complexities of life we need to become wise people who are well-balanced in the three characteristics of wisdom - knowledge, discretion, and prudence, understanding that wisdom comes from and is sustained through our relationship with the Lord.

Kingdom Connection:

God is moving His Kingdom forward through wise living. The wisest things we can do is submit to the wisdom of God in the person of Jesus. Wisdom pushes the Kingdom agenda forward because it helps us steward our lives well and provides a platform to influence others.

Missional Application:

The hope of Proverbs is that we can access and apply God's wisdom to our lives. To do so we must seek His wisdom and submit to it.

Introduction:

While in college there was a popular show on television called *Man vs. Wild* with Bear Grylls. The plot of the show was fairly simple. Drop Bear off in the harshest environments on earth with a knife and watch him survive. The show gained a lot of popularity because he would go to extreme lengths to make sure that he would survive. He would go throughout the swamps, deserts, jungles, and tundra manipulating the elements to ensure his success. Bear Grylls doesn't just stumble his way through survival. If you watch the show it's clear that he had a lot of training before the show started. In fact, Bear was in the British Special Forces. He was a certified instructor in their survival skills training program. Because he had the proper training in survival skills, he can navigate the harshest environments.

All of us need survival skills. We all need help to navigate the environments that we are in every day. We need help to navigate relationships, finances, sex, work, discipline, and parenting, to name a few. The book of Proverbs was written to give people the guidance they need for life. Our lives are extremely complex. Not every decision is black or white, right or wrong. The goal of the book of Proverbs is to provide wisdom that gives you competency in the complexity of life.

Wisdom is: **the ability to skillfully navigate the world God created.**

Most of the book of Proverbs is written by King Solomon. Solomon was considered incredibly wise; some would argue the wisest of all time! As Solomon was installed as the King of Israel, God opened the treasury of heaven and offered him whatever he wanted. Solomon could have asked for riches, dominion over his enemies, or unparalleled fame. But Solomon did not ask for any of that.

Solomon knew he was in way over his head when it came to being the King of God's people. Instead of putting himself first and asking for riches or fame, Solomon asked for the ability to skillfully navigate his kingship... he asked for Wisdom. Solomon asked for, "...an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:10—Chronological Bible Pg. 575—May 20). And God's response to Solomon was, "see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart . . . And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all of your days" (1 Kings 3:11-13—Chronological Bible Pg. 575-576—May 20).

Solomon with his God-given wisdom wrote down the Proverbs for us to glean from to become wise. The Proverbs are principles (not promises) given to us by God that help us navigate His world successfully. Wisdom works. He tells us in Prov. 8:35-36

*Proverbs 8: 35 For whoever finds me [wisdom] finds life And obtains favor from the Lord,
36 But he who fails to find me injures himself; All who hate me love death.
(Chronological Bible Pg. 611, May 29)*

If we want to find life and obtain favor from the Lord, then we must heed God's wisdom. If we want to walk in pain, disappointment, and continuous frustration in life, then all we have to do is ignore God's wisdom.

What is Wisdom?

A few years ago, as I was preparing to propose to my wife, I started to research diamonds. I wanted to make sure that I had some understanding of what characteristics ensure a quality gem. Every website that you go to when researching diamonds will tell you that a quality diamond is comprised of quality cut, color, clarity, and carat. The goal is to have a well-balanced diamond. If you have a diamond with a lot of mass but poor cut, the diamond will not sparkle and is not considered a quality diamond. If it has great color but low clarity and size, it is not considered a quality diamond. Quality gems are well-balanced.

Similarly, wise people are well-balanced in the three characteristics of wisdom. They possess knowledge, discretion, and prudence. Solomon writes, *for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you desire cannot compare with her. I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and I find knowledge and discretion.* (Prov. 8:11-12 Chronological Bible pg. 610—May 29) If we want to make sure that we possess invaluable wisdom we need to check to see if these characteristics are present in our lives.

KNOWLEDGE- The first characteristic of wisdom is "knowledge". The whole book of Proverbs was written to young people who were about to set sail into the sea of life. They were establishing their independence, moving out of adolescence and into adulthood. They were at a marriable age and about to begin their careers. They needed to "know" how to navigate the world. The book of Proverbs provides that information as it is filled with general principles to guide us. Proverbs remind us of simple truths like:

- *The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in people who are trustworthy.* (Prov. 12:22)
- *A slack hand causes poverty but the hand of the diligent makes rich.* (Prov 10:4)

- *An excellent wife is the crown of her husband, but she who brings shame is like rottenness in his bones. (Prov. 12:4)*
- *A fool's lips walk into a fight, and his mouth invites a beating. (Prov 18:6)*
- *He who loves purity of heart and whose speech is gracious will have the king as his friend. (Prov. 22:11)*

None of these truths are extremely complex. They are not cheat codes to hack the game of life. They are simply the rules that God has instituted for success to occur in life. Honesty is better than deceit. Diligence prevails over laziness. Marry well. Don't speak too much. If you're kind and gracious you will befriend influential people. The goal of Proverbs is to impart knowledge. It's to inform us of how to wisely live in the world.

All of us know that knowledge alone doesn't make you wise. We all know people who are Brainiacs, but also typically incredibly arrogant and foolish. For us to possess wisdom we need knowledge to be coupled with discretion. Knowledge without discretion is foolishness.

DISCRETION- The word discretion means to be aware of the smallest distinctions. It's really to be aware of the details. Leonardo Davinci was ahead of his time when it came to just about everything. He was a master engineer, designer, scientist, anatomist, and he could paint a little as well. But one of the reasons Leonardo was so masterful was his keen eye to details. He was fascinated with flight so he would spend days observing birds, their wing motion, and the lift they produced when their wings flapped. Leonardo had over 35,000 words and 500 sketches on flight alone. One of the reasons he was such a great painter was because He was obsessed with portraying the human body accurately. In order to have a better understanding of the outward appearance, he looked beneath the skin. He examined over 30 corpses to figure out the intricacies of muscles, tendons, and bones. Kind of creepy... but you get the point. Da Vinci was a master at his disciplines because he understood the why. Proverbs isn't interested in us being a master engineer, painter, or designer as much as it's interested in us being a master at life.

Surface level knowledge without below-the-surface discretion produces a shallow life and foolish living. God's goal in the book of Proverbs is not for us to just possess the facts, but for us to grasp the reality of what lays beneath the surface of the facts. To comprehend that below the surface of reality, God created His world with the understanding that wisdom works. Wisdom is woven into the very fabric of our reality. Life operates best when we live wisely.

Solomon writes about Wisdom saying:

Proverbs 8: 22 "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. ²³I have been established from everlasting, From the beginning, before there was ever an earth. ²⁴When there were no depths I was brought forth, When there were no fountains abounding with water. ²⁵Before the mountains were settled, Before the hills, I was brought forth; ²⁶While as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, Or the primal dust of the world. ²⁷When He prepared the heavens, I was there, When He drew a circle on the face of the deep, ²⁸When He established the clouds above, When He strengthened the fountains of the deep, ²⁹When He assigned to the sea its limit, So that the waters would not transgress His command, When He marked out the foundations of the earth, ³⁰Then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; And I was daily His delight, Rejoicing always before Him, ³¹Rejoicing in His inhabited world, And my delight was with the sons of men.

- Proverbs 8:22-31 (Chronological Bible pg. 611, May 29)

Discretion helps us to push past the "what" and peer into the "why." Discretion helps the information and the informed work together for good.

PRUDENCE- Knowledge and discretion are great, but are not enough. That's where prudence comes in. Prudence is the action needed to operate within the world and the laws that God has given. Prudence is action driven by truth for good. A life without prudence is like reading the drivers manual, understanding traffic laws but never driving your car to work, church or anywhere.

God's goal in the Proverbs is not just to impart knowledge or to gain an understanding of the why. Proverbs is given to put in action the skills needed to navigate the complexities of life. God wants us to be equipped to live wisely. How can Proverbs assist us?

Proverbs can help people be wise in evaluating a potential spouse:

- *A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls. – Prov. 25:28*
- *It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife. Prov. 21:9*

Proverbs can help people be wise with their finances:

- *The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender. Prov. 22:7*
- *Do not toil to acquire wealth be discerning enough to desist. When your eyes light on it, it is gone, for suddenly it sprouts wings, flying like an eagle toward heaven. – Prov. 23: 4-5*

- *Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like a green leaf.*
Prov. 11:28

The whole point of Proverbs is to make us wise. Wisdom is evident in our lives when we exhibit knowledge (the information), discretion (the below the surface understanding) and prudence (life skills). When these three characteristics are present and well-balanced, wisdom reigns.

How Do I Get Wisdom?

1. Recognize where wisdom comes from.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge...” Prov. 1:7

All throughout Proverbs we see the repeated phrase “The fear of the LORD”.

The fear of the Lord:

- Is the beginning of wisdom and instruction. – Prov. 1:7
- Is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and perverted speech I hate. - Prov. 8:13
- Is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. - Prov. 9:10
- Prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened - Prov. 10:27
- Is a fountain of life, that one may avoid the snares of death. - Prov. 14:27
- Leads to life, so that one may sleep satisfied untouched by evil.- Prov. 19:23

The fear of the Lord is not a terrifying fear that God is going to destroy me or rain down brimstone and fire on me if I disobey. The fear of the LORD that Solomon mentions throughout the Proverbs is a recognition that when God speaks and weighs in on our lives we should reverently listen to Him.

Remember wisdom is: **the ability to skillfully navigate the world God created.**

We become wise when we recognize this is God’s world and His approach to life works best.

Throughout the Proverbs, Wisdom is sending out an invitation to all who will listen. Anybody can accept the invitation at any time, in any season, in any stage of their life.

The pathway to wisdom is always open. However, this invitation demands a response. A decision must be made on how you respond to God's wisdom and instructions.

Billy Graham famously said, "Indecision in itself is a choice." You can't haphazardly stumble into wisdom. We are not naturally wise people. Wisdom comes supernaturally through our response to God.

2. Listen, Keep, and Do Not Neglect

So how do we get wisdom? Solomon pens Prov 8:32 -33, he says, "*And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.*"

Listen – Solomon wants us to be aware that wisdom will only come through active investigation and participation. We must investigate what God says about living a wise life. One of the reasons Proverbs is such an incredible book is because it is 31 chapters long. It's almost as if God is telling us that we have a need for everyday wisdom and an opportunity to receive everyday wisdom. We can "listen" to the voice of wisdom every day of every month.

Keep- Wise living only occurs when we keep His ways. The word "keep" in its true essence means to obey. Foolish living occurs when we recognize God's wisdom but reject it. But those who are truly wise will keep the principles of a wise life laid out in the book of Proverbs.

Do not neglect – Wisdom is a lot like physical fitness. A lot of us start the fitness journey in the same way, we realize our current health isn't what it used to be. We are more winded going up the stairs, our pants don't fit as well as they used to, and the scale keeps climbing up and up. So, what we do is we begin to research. We look up plans to improve our fitness. We look at all the benefits of Whole 30 and Keto. We talk to people who are in better shape than us, possibly a trainer. We get an app to track our fitness progress and goals. We even buy a new pair of shoes. But that doesn't necessarily mean that we are on the path to fitness. We have done all the research and set ourselves up for success, but we have **neglected** to participate in the most important part of the process. Applying what we have learned. Doing the hard work. At any point in time in our physical fitness journey, we can become unfit. We can neglect the gym. We can neglect stretching. We can neglect vegetables and fruits. A life of fitness can start and stop at any time. If you're like me, you have started, broken and restarted your diet in the same day multiple times.

A life of wisdom is a life of persistence. It takes continual discipline and hard work to build a wise life. If we want to possess the skills, we need for navigating the complexities of life, then we can't afford to neglect wisdom.

It comes down to our choice to put into practice that which is revealed.

God Speaks by giving His people practical wisdom to guide them in every area of life.

God Acts by meeting with Solomon and giving Him the privilege of asking for Wisdom.

God Reveals His way by contrasting eternal truth with man's conventional wisdom through His Word.

Resources:

The Proverbs: An Introduction and Commentary – **Derek Kidner**

Thomas Constable's Notes on Proverbs - <https://planobiblechapel.org/constable-notes/>

Be Skillful: God's Guidebook to Wise Living – **Warren W. Wiersbe**

How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth – **Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart**