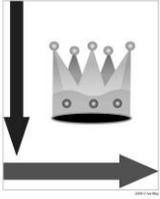


Week Twenty-two: Kingdom Wisdom - Proverbs 5-24



Overview

When Satan smooth-talked Eve into eating fruit from the forbidden tree, he baited her with the offer of wisdom, “For God knows that in the day that you eat of it your eyes will be open and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The New Testament describes this wisdom as, “earthly, sensual, and demonic” (James 3:15). Therefore, since the Fall man sees life from an earthly, sensual, and demonic perspective. In contrast, the LORD’s promise of redemption and substitutionary provision beckon Adam and Eve, and all men, to live by faith in the promises of God—the wisdom from above that “is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17-18).

When God first appeared to Solomon after he ascended to Israel’s throne, he offered him one request. Solomon wisely (perhaps his wisest request ever) chose wisdom from God. The book of Proverbs imparts a portion of Solomon’s wisdom to Israel and to anyone seeking wisdom. Today’s lesson focuses on the two categories of people identified in Proverbs, the righteous and the wicked, and their characteristics.

Lesson Objective:

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will discover that God’s wisdom given to Solomon will guide them through all areas of life, not just “spiritual” issues.

Key Truths

God’s wisdom is primarily the ability to see life from God’s point of view rather than a strictly human, earthbound perspective.

God’s wisdom generally runs counter to conventional wisdom. God’s wisdom affects all areas of our lives, not merely the “spiritual” areas.

Lesson Outline

More than eighty-five times in the book of Proverbs, Solomon demonstrates the need for wisdom by describing two contrasting ways, paths, or courses of action (the way of evil: darkness, crookedness, adultery, folly, perversion, and death, versus the way of righteousness: life, justice, blamelessness, and understanding). Most of the verses surrounding those statements illustrate the two ways. Man often takes the way of least resistance, the way that seems right, but that way ends poorly (14:12; 16:25).

1. Wisdom Is Needed to Make Right Choices

Some may wonder why we should choose this path. Solomon gives three basic reasons for choosing the path of goodness, righteousness, and life.

Choosing God's path means that you don't endure the heartaches of sin now. The person who chooses the world's path may enjoy temporary pleasures, but these pleasures are counterbalanced by the consequences that follow. When a Christian chooses what is right, he has no shame, no heartache, and no fear that the consequences will catch up and overtake him (3:13). Choosing right brings true happiness.

Choosing God's path means that you don't live with regret later. Solomon depicts the severity of this regret in chapter 5 when he outlines the consequences of involvement with the immoral woman. He lists at least nine consequences of sin, but the most telling moment is verse 11, "And you mourn at last . . . And say, 'How I have hated instruction, and my heart despised correction'" The person who chooses the path of wisdom has no regrets later in life.

Choosing God's path means that you don't experience eternal consequences. Solomon warns his son of the immoral woman, "Her house is the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death" (7:27). Ultimately, the fear of the Lord means that believers live in the realization that they shall stand before the Lord Jesus one day and give an account; those who choose the way of death will be ashamed, while those who choose life will rejoice. Some prove by their continual choosing that they are not truly God's children. Some true children of God will be forced to see their works burned up in the fire of judgment because they are built on wrong choices.

2. Wisdom Is Given for Making Right Choices

The choices that we face require God's insight; none of us is wise enough to choose rightly in every situation. Solomon's divinely-given insights guide those who will heed him in every arena of life.

As in Solomon's day, people today face **moral** choices. Contemporary morality reflects the distressing days of the Judges, "Every man did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25). Followers of Jesus can make right choices as they listen to Solomon morally. He warns of the foolish woman whose lips "drip honey" (Prov. 5:3), the seductress with the "flattering tongue" (6:24), the adulteress who hunts "for the precious life" (6:26), the woman who goes out in immoral attire to seek for men (7:10). Her "crafty heart" (7:10) is set to entice and seduce (7:21), emphasizing only

the fleeting pleasure of sin (9:17). The fool makes provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14) by going where she may be found (7:7-9), yielding to her enticing speech (7:21), and suffering the consequences of moral failure (5:9-14). These consequences include the loss of honor, years, wealth, and joy, the sufferings of regret, physical destruction, and ruin. On the other hand, the wise person learns to be satisfied only by his spouse (5:15-20); the wise spouse ensures that her husband's soul is satisfied, so that he is not seeking "every bitter thing" (Prov. 27:7).

As in Solomon's day, people today face **financial** choices. God's wisdom warns believers about co-signing for others (Prov. 6:1), about becoming diligent in planning for the future (6:6-8), and about falling into the pit of laziness (6:9-11). God also calls His followers to honesty in all financial dealings (11:1; 13:11), because "wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished." Wisdom leads to diligence in all work (not just for the future), because God promises that "the hand of the diligent makes rich" (10:4; see also 12:24; 13:4; 21:5). He reminds His children that generosity is honorable and brings His blessing, while withholding brings poverty (11:24-26). God Himself promises to fill the treasuries of those who love Him (8:21).

As in Solomon's day, people today choose **friends**. The temptation to choose friends who promise a good time opens the book (1:10-15), but such friends only lead their neighbor "in a way that is not good" (17:29). The wise person chooses friends who will give wise counsel (11:14), who "love at all times" (17:17), and who show "kindness" (19:22). Eternally true is the proverb, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed" (13:20).

As in Solomon's day, people today choose their **speech**. Words matter; "In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise" (10:19). The fool spreads slander (10:18), scoffs at God and God's people (13:1; 17:21; 21:24), gossips (11:13), and engages in "idle chatter" that leads to poverty (14:23). Wisdom disciplines the tongue so that "the lips of the wise disperse knowledge" (15:7). Wisdom fills the mouth with "pleasant words . . . like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones" (16:24). Sometimes the best wisdom for speech is to keep quiet; King Solomon admonishes, "Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles" (21:23).

3. Wisdom Found for Making Right Choices - Proverbs 8:32-36

The Bible is the source of God's wisdom. This wisdom is freely available, yet few avail themselves of it. What does God say? He calls His children to "listen" to Him (8:32), so that they will enjoy blessing. He calls them to "hear instruction and be wise" (8:33), and He promises that those who do listen will find Him: "For whoever finds Me finds life, and obtains favor from the LORD" (8:35). How do we listen to Him? He tells us in these verses: "Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors" (8:34). We have the privilege of opening God's Word: we are to open it "daily," seeking to listen to God, watching and waiting for Him to speak. Wise people set up a time every day to hear from the LORD, learning to listen from the Word as they wait on God, alone with Him.

Application - What does this lesson teach us about God? Man? Sin? Redemption?

- Ever since the fall men attempt to navigate life according to their own wisdom rather than seek God's wisdom.
- James assumes man's deficiency of wisdom and invites them to come to God, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5).

Summary

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.

Discussion Questions

How can we develop the practice of hearing from God?

As we examine areas of our lives, how are we influenced by the conventional wisdom of the world rather than by God's eternal truth?

How do churches fail to take into account God's wisdom in their decisions? Families? Men? Wives? Children? How has social media impacted how Christians interact with one another and the world?