

Our study in Psalms and Proverbs began two weeks ago looking at God as the Creator where we recognized that we stand in awe of Him as the author and finisher of our race. We continued last week when we sought out God as the King of the Universe who has chosen us to one day rule and reign with Him. One aspect of that reality, which we did not discuss last week, is that we also must be willing to surrender to Him as the supreme ruler of our lives and indeed our will. This week, we continue our introduction into man's relationship with God by seeing Him as the author of all wisdom.

God is the most intelligent being that has ever been or ever will be. He is the supreme engineer coordinating the rotation of every planet and each's distance from the others so as to keep the entire universe order. He is the master farmer, growing a bumper harvest from the breadbasket of the world each season. He is the master physician bringing about medical miracles each day in our hospitals. He is consummate artist creating landscapes and composing music in every style in every culture of the world. He re-arranged the atoms in the Red Sea to dry it up at exactly the right time for the Israelites to pass through and then re-directed them to re-locate to close the sea in order to drown the hot-in-pursuit Egyptians. He knew how to rearrange the molecules to instantly change water into wine at Cana. He instantly multiplied the cells in five loaves of bread and two fish to feed thousands of people. He formed each of your cells in your mother's womb before you were born and knows you intimately down to the sub-atomic level, knowing even the number of hairs on your head. In addition to all that, He knows every detail of your emotional needs to provide the right kind of discipline you need at

Psalms and Proverbs: lesson 3
God, the Author of Wisdom
Laurel Ann Porro, October 1, 2009

the right time, and has provided you with a family, your spouse and kids, and a church family to teach you how to love unconditionally so that you can grow into His image. And as if that is not enough, He is building a mansion for you in heaven and has already prepared good works for you to do here on earth so that you are ready for eternity! Now who thinks they could even come close to challenging that kind of God???!!!

It's that very same God who inspired Solomon and some other wise men of their time to write and compile the Book of Proverbs. This book contains principles that can be applied to many practical situations in life as we will discover as we study all 31 chapters this year. Its main author, Solomon came to his position as the third king of Israel with rather dubious qualifications; his parents were adulterers, and most of you are familiar with the shameful events which led to the marriage of King David and Bathsheba.

What an example of amazing grace! Solomon had several older brothers, each of whom had a claim on the throne, but even at Solomon's birth, the Bible records that the Lord loved Solomon and sent word that He had a special purpose for him as David's son to build the temple that would house God's glory. Before King David died, he charged Solomon with the leadership of the nation of Israel and transferred his authority to Solomon. Soon after that, Solomon's request for a discerning heart to govern God's people correctly and to distinguish between right and wrong so pleased the Lord, that He said this to the young king,

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“I will do what you have asked, I will give you a wise and discerning heart so that there will never be anyone like you. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for-both riches and honor-so that in your lifetime, you will have no equal among kings.” (*1 Kings 3: 12-13*)

Early in his reign, Solomon had an opportunity to prove his discerning heart with the famous incident with two mothers who argued over a dead baby. When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held Solomon in awe because they saw he had wisdom from God to govern. During his 40 year reign, Solomon developed vast business enterprises causing Israel to prosper economically and politically. During this time of peace and prosperity, Solomon had adequate time to write and reflect on his many successes. He not only wrote over 3,000 proverbs, but also wrote the Book of Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon.

Later writers of the Old Testament divided Proverbs into 31 chapters, and as such, many people have incorporated reading the numbered chapter corresponding to each day of the month a regular part of their daily devotional time. Vernon McGee has said about Proverbs, “A chapter a day keeps the devil away.”

Although Proverbs is a practical book concerned with the art of living, it bases its wisdom first of all on the fear of the Lord. As such, it differs from other ancient wisdom writings available, and certainly from the so-called wisdom of the modern day. Solomon’s intentions are to give us a manual for the inexperienced to learn

how to navigate through life. And so most of his advice is pretty straightforward and easy to grasp; there are few hidden messages in Proverbs.

However, lest we older ones think we have it all together, Solomon reminds us that there is still a thing or two for the seasoned learner....fresh wisdom probes and penetrates even those who have learned from their mistakes.

If you want to open your Bibles to Proverbs, I will move through the verses in order as we review this week's lesson.

By verse 7, we have the theme of the Book declared loud and clear: that the source of wisdom is knowledge of God, or fear of the Lord. What is the fear of the Lord? People often think that fear of the Lord is some kind of terror; shaking in your boots every time an angel appears.

- Moses hid his face and he was afraid to look at God.
- Elijah pulled his cloak over his face for fear of the terrible wrath and power of God.
- Isaiah fell down and he said: 'Woe is me for I am undone!' when he saw the Lord in chapter 6.
- Ezekiel was frozen in fear because he saw an astounding revelation of God.
- The apostle Peter, when he recognized Christ said in fear, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man'.
- And in the book of Revelation, when John sees the great vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in all His glory, he fell at the feet of Jesus as if dead in fear!

Each one feared God because of His awesome holiness! That is why we fear God, because when we get a glimpse of His holiness it automatically puts us in our place as weak and sinful creatures, so much so that none of us can behold His face without recognizing our abject poverty of spirit and fear for our very lives.

But does God really want us to cower in fear when we come into His presence? Certainly a God who created us and loves us does not want us to be terrified of Him, but He does want us to know our place and bestow on Him reverential awe that expresses itself in the way that we live, in the uprightness of our life, in a radical trust and worship of God, and a basic holiness in our lives. The fear of God is our fundamental attitude toward God, which leads us to wise choices, holy behaviour, careful words, and the avoidance of every form of evil.

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The fear of the Lord is not terror, nor is it simply reverential awe, but it is a deep-seated humility, grounded in an abiding awareness of one's absolute dependence for existence on the undeserved mercy of the Lord.

And the fundamental lesson for all of us as children of God to learn is that the door of wisdom is remains closed in the face of a proud man or proud woman. Only through such humility and dependence is the human heart prepared to perceive and receive the wisdom that God gives. Verse 7 continues by saying that a fool thumbs his nose at God's wisdom and learning. How ironic that, in our world today, there is no field of expertise where knowledge of God is considered a part of one's competency. Slide 9

On the contrary, our entire civilization is in the advanced stages of a flight *from* the knowledge of God. In one of the many great ironies of Biblical reversals, the centers of knowledge in the world, the great universities, the great medical centers, the economic marketplace, the governmental leaders, and certainly the entertainment world stand in rebellion and in stark contrast to the wisdom of God. Those who would declare God's involvement in their studies or efforts are often instead declared irrelevant, not worthy of higher degrees, and they are often denied tenure, and places of influence on the faculties of higher education. To those in academia, in the powerful places of influence in our government today, belief in and dependence on God is not the real world.

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But we know that in actuality, knowledge of God is the real world. It was Jesus Christ Himself who said, "This is eternal life, that people may know You, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." (*John 17:3*)

Everything else in the halls of academia, in the great medical fields, in high government positions, in the field of psychology, in the art world, the music world, in the financial institutions, they all operate under the illusion that man's wisdom is supreme. To all of that, we stand confidently as ambassadors of the King of the Universe and say that God-less-ness is foolishness! We've looked at the Creator of the universe in the first week and the King of Kings in the second, and now we look to the same God as the source of all wisdom and understanding. Once you have your priorities straight, practical living just falls into place.

In chapter 1, Verses 8-19, Solomon warns us to avoid the pressure of bad company; if you have been raised in a decent family in middle class America, it may be that this kind of pressure has never been a temptation for you; who could think that it should be a pleasure to one man to destroy another! But, sadly, that is not the case for many people living in poverty in our inner cities. You may have heard recently that Tony Dungy is mentoring Michael Vick as he is returning to playing pro football. Tony Dungy's compassion for Michael Vick comes from the fact that Vick the son of teen parents who left him to run the streets, and dog fighting was the thing to do in his neighborhood so he could earn money. Life on the streets for inner city kids is characterized by regular assaults, gambling, drug use, robberies, carjacking, etc. without a thought for the victims. But there is a clear warning for those who would be enticed into this lifestyle. Their greed and ignorance of the consequences leads to their destruction. There, but for the grace of God goes each one of us who have never had to face that kind of temptation.

In chapter 1 verse 20, wisdom takes on the personality of a boisterous female who makes public speeches so that everyone can see the error of their foolish ways. She makes those same speeches today in our media-saturated culture, but most prefer to have their ears tickled with falsehood. So the culture encourages perverted behaviour, reckless spending, mindless entertainment, and then everyone wonders why life is full of disappointments. Ignorance and cynicism masquerade as political correctness, choice, sexual freedom, financial security, and government entitlements.

The only way to discern God's wisdom from error is to pursue wisdom by seeking it out in Scripture, so in chapter 2 Solomon sets us on a course of pursuit of wisdom.

Wisdom is not merely acquired as one moves through life, but must be actively pursued as if panning for gold or treasure. The Lord is pleased with such diligence and in return is pleased to offer the pursuer the many benefits that follow. Young people who avoid all evil company and evil practices in turn will be preserved from corruptions within and temptations without. In verse 11, we read that "discretion will protect you". In other words, you'll know when and what to speak and when to remain silent. How many of us have wished for more discretion in our younger days? Who of you have not ever put your foot in mouth at one time or another with a poorly timed word or comment that would have been better left unsaid? We all can use discretion God promises to deliver. Those of you who have committed to this Bible study and who will be faithful about completing your lessons, even when the going gets tough, You, the true pursuers of wisdom, can rely on this principle: your diligence will be rewarded with new insights and protection from dangerous and devious ways.

Sexual temptations raise their ugly heads here in chapter 2:16. The moral failures of well known people are certainly not new under the sun, as you can recall from your discussion on question 11c. They have been recorded in Scripture precisely because they have existed since early times.

Solomon warns the men to be aware of a married woman who is dissatisfied with her husband and attempts to meet her selfish needs through seduction. There have always been plenty of women are willing to be someone's lover rather than to be alone in the world, and they deserve the shameful name of "adulteress". They destroy their own families and that of their lovers, and as we have seen recently in the Mark Sanford case, which has a lasting effect on many others also. Ladies, we have a responsibility to above reproach in all social interactions with all men, but especially with married men at work, here at church, on mission trips, and in business situations. You never know who is vulnerable in this regard, and the regrets that you will have to deal with are permanent.

God wants His people to walk a straight line; in Proverbs 2:21, we read, "For the upright will live in the land; and the blameless will remain in it. Slide 11 The Message version reads, "It's the men who walk straight who will settle the land and the women with integrity who will remain there." Solomon was referring to the land of Israel, which would reach its largest extent during the time of his reign. But, as Dennis reminded us last week, it is we who will rule and reign in the new earth; what a shame if you would squander that opportunity with a short lived affair!

In chapter 3, Solomon addresses the reader as son, where he assumes a paternal the role of mentor in leading the young along the path of right living. In verse 4, he notes that keeping his commands to pursue wisdom and to avoid evil will prolong your life and bring prosperity.

Carol reminded us in the opening lecture that Proverbs are principles to live by, rather than promises from the Lord. Obedience to God's commands is not assurance of a long and prosperous life, Indeed, Jesus told us that we would have trouble in the world, and James reminds us that we must consider our trials as opportunities for developing perseverance. However, as a principle for living, we know that following God's commands will win us favour in God's sight, and a good name among the living. If you like to write notes in your Bible, write near verse 4 in chapter 3, "reputation". Your reputation is important, especially when you identify yourself as a follower of Jesus Christ. (Can you recite Proverbs 3:5-6 from memory?) Verses 5-6 then remind us how to maintain a good reputation:

Slide 12: Here's the paraphrased version of chapter 3:5-6:

Trust in the Lord from the bottom of your heart;

Don't try to figure out everything on your own.

Listen for God's voice in everything you do and everywhere you go;

He's the one who will keep you on track.

This is immediately followed in verse 7 with a reminder not to 'be wise in your own eyes'. Don't assume that you know it all just because you've been around the block a few times.

In chapter 3:9, we are reminded to honor God with our wealth.

Honoring God with your wealth is one of those commands that can be fulfilled in many ways. There is often latitude within the will of God to obey His commands and to fulfill His purposes in a way that may not apply to everyone in the same fashion. It may be that He wants the first check you write after pay day to be

your check to the church. It may be another source of wealth that you've accumulated with which you can bring honor to God. It may be your time or your home that can be used to honor Him. For those times when we can make wise choices and still be obedient, God allows a certain measure of freedom, but there are other times when He must discipline us to return us to the center of His will as a reminder to obedience. (example of my tithe)

As we wrap up chapter 3, we read that God created wisdom in the garden and she is the very Tree of Life to those who embrace her. Look at one of the benefits in verse 24: 'sweet sleep when you lie down to rest'...write in your Bible, you will sleep with a "clear conscience".

Solomon continues with more advice in verse 28; do not to procrastinate when it comes to helping others and don't take advantage of our neighbors.

How do people take advantage of trusting neighbors? Where I live, people do it all the time; they miss the trash dumpster and leave their garbage for someone else to pick up. There are a few people in my neighborhood walk their dogs in the dark so that they are less noticeable when they don't pick up after them.

That's taking advantage of neighbors, the wisdom of the world that says that if I don't get caught, it's not wrong. I see people even here at church who leave trash behind in their seats, leave toilet paper on the floor of the bathrooms where they dropped it, thinking that someone else will pick it up. That's a culture that has bought the lie that looking out for myself will get me ahead in life. But God knows who is honoring Him and who is wise enough to know that pleasing Him is foremost if we are to one day rule and reign with Him in eternity. The concluding statement in chapter 3:35 is this: The wise inherit honor, but fools He will hold up

in shame. The so-called wisdom of the world will one day be shown for what it is; an empty way of life.

Proverbs are principles to live by, but they will not always give us exact answers to specific problems. God does not always tell us everything that we think we need to know in this world. Sometimes we have to pursue that knowledge by reading, asking others, research, and diligent prayer. And most likely many of your prayers have gone answered. That is when your faith kicks in. When we don't get what we want when we want it, we have enough faith to know that God has greater plans in store for us. And we must be willing to trust Him even when we cannot figure it all out on our own.

In conclusion: **slide 13**

How can you obtain wisdom?

1. Live by His commands. (1:8)
2. Study God's word (2:1).
3. Develop an "ear" for wisdom (2:2).
4. Pursue wisdom as if it were a treasure (2:4)
5. Do not forget what you have learned (3:1)

Slide 14 There are the rewards for those who seek wisdom:

1. You will understand the fear of the Lord and knowledge of God(2:5).
2. You will have victory (2:7).
3. God will guard and protect you (2:8).
4. You will understand what is right and just (2:9).
5. You will have a good reputation (3:4)
6. You will have a clear conscience (3:24)

Slide 15: sing last verse of hymn