



Lesson 1 June 6th, 2020

The Call of Wisdom

Study Scripture – Proverbs 1

Background Scripture – Proverbs 1

Key Verse:

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Proverbs 1:7

INTRODUCTION

When one examines the prophetic books in Scripture and we read what the Minor and Major prophets had to say about the gross behaviour of the leaders and their continual scorning of their covenant relationship as well as the incredibly poor behaviour of the ordinary people we are quite shocked. They were full of pride because they considered themselves to be the untouchable children of Abraham even though they were warned by the prophets that was way offline. We now will examine a Study Scripture that look at the fundamental reasons for that awful behaviour.

We must start by understanding that sin has altered and twisted the human psyche so that people become enemies of God. It is just like your computer which defaults to the operating system on which it is based, so similarly human nature has a default position which is to do evil, to run away from the true God as fast as one can go and to disobey Him at every turn.

It does not matter whether the elaborate and well decorated Temple or Church exists and is well attended every week. We all have to examine ourselves and decide what our default position is. The Apostle Paul realized this about himself and declared himself to be a wretched person whose only hope was that he was in Jesus Christ and therefore no one could bring a charge against him because he was among God's elect and had been justified by God.

As we therefore look at this call of wisdom the definitions of words such as **“fool”, “wisdom”, “father”, “mother”, “scorners”**, and some other words in the Text **become** extremely important.

As we read therefore we can position ourselves and make the adjustment that is required by God by first looking at the Dictionary meaning of the word **“fool”**.

One dictionary defines the word **“fool”** and illustrates the use of the noun as describing: **“A person who acts unwisely or imprudently: a silly person. “What a fool I was to do this?”**.

We are further given in another Dictionary synonyms for the word “fool”. Synonyms are of course words which carry a similar meaning. Some of these are:

- **A person who lacks good sense or judgment**
- **Jackass**
- **lunatic**
- **nitwit**
- **simpleton**
- **yo-yo**
- **ding-a-ling**
- **dipstick**

Now all of us can be rightfully accused of being a “fool”. This is an apt phrase to describe us if we are not in Christ. But unfortunately when we are in Christ some of the unflattering words above might still apply to us. In fact the wisest man who ever lived according to Scripture, his name was Solomon, broke all the rules of wisdom even though he clearly stated in the Book of Proverbs that we are studying. Clearly then, there is something about this trait of wisdom, for even though we know it intellectually, spiritually there might be something else missing. The man of God who was a brother of Jesus Christ our Lord in the very unpopular book of James 1:3-5 gave us most excellent advice:

“The testing of your faith produces patience.

But let patience have its perfect work; that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him”.

The question James asks us really is:
Do you really desire Wisdom?

Most people would probably say that they desire wisdom, but the problem is that they do not desire it to the same extent that they desire life.

Desiring “life” is not the same as desiring the things that we can get or accumulate when we are alive. The book of Proverbs therefore straightens out for us what makes sense and what does not. Remember though in all of this it might not quite be as simple as it sounds for even Solomon had great difficulty with desiring “life” even though he understood intellectually what it was all about.

But we do know that we have help in our weaknesses. Help is right at our fingertips. It is right beside us.

Just remember that Father knows best.

Scholars divide the book of Proverbs generally into 8 sections and attribute these collection of memorable wise sayings which deal with practical life as follows:



Chapters 1 to 9 (Solomon)
10:1- 22:16 (Solomon)
22:17- 24:22 (no attribution)
24: 23-34 (sayings of the wise)
Chapters 25-29 (Solomon)
Chapter 30 (Agur son of Jakeh)
31: 1- 9 (King Lemuel)
31: 10-31 (no attribution).

This is a **unique** collection of statements in its theological teaching for it is concerned with practical wisdom, how to live successfully in the sight of God, more than ideas about God and the work of salvation.

We should note however that other nations had collections of wisdom literature and some of them are similar to what is found in the book of Proverbs. One writer defines for us what proverbs are in his discussion about what is in this Book and the 3000 Proverbs that Solomon spoke. He states:

- i. **“Proverbs are wonderfully successful at being what they are: *Proverbs*. They are not failed prophecies or systematic theologies. Proverbs by design lays out pointed observations, meant to be memorized and pondered, not always intended to be applied ‘across the board’ to every situation without qualification.” (Phillips).**
- ii. **“Naturally (proverbs) generalize, as a proverb must, and may therefore be charged with making life too tidy to be true. But nobody objects to this in secular sayings, for the very form demands a sweeping statement and looks for a hearer with his wits about him. We need no telling that a maxim like ‘Many hands make light work’ is not the last word on the subject, since “Too many cooks spoil the broth”.** (Kidner).
- iii. **“Proverbs itself makes this clear. A proverb is not a magical formula, bringing wisdom and blessing by incantation: ‘Like a lame man's leg, which hangs useless, is a proverb in the mouth of fools. (Proverbs 26:7)”.** (Phillips).
- iv. **“Proverbs rarely quotes other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the *torah* or Law. “An analogy to this is American folk wisdom which, although often dominated by Christian morality and presuppositions, contains few allusions to the Bible or Christian theology” (Garrett).**

The uniqueness of the Book of Proverbs and the proverbs that we will now examine is that they contrast **wisdom** and **folly** and the consequences that typically follow from each.

Wisdom isn't simply intelligence or knowledge or even understanding. We must therefore pay attention to the difference in the meaning of these words.

As we think about these words we must think about our children and our desire that they will have the path of wisdom before them in life for we want them to make life enhancing choices and develop the skill of living life profitably in the sight of God. Remember Deuteronomy 6 analyses what the home ought to be. This consideration makes us sad for we know that our



children live in a culture increasingly deteriorating and increasingly degrading. Children will face powerful temptations. This extends into school, the community, in the workplace, and in the national life which does not provide a good example for them.

We will notice that this Study is full of expectations for the business of life which is above everything else is to come to know and love the one true God and to love Him with all their heart, mind and strength. Note also as we read that the home is where all of this is to begin. Parents have the priority and responsibility for their children's upbringing above all other persons. They must accordingly prepare themselves. They have the responsibility to teach and so we will look at what the Scripture says about the child and what every parent ought to know.

So God is going to face us and position us on very practical issues where we can minister to people that don't know the Lord at all. This Book places us in the same position as non-Christians for it talks about life as all human beings will meet it, and it tells us that we will have more cognizance of the wisdom in this book. We will therefore be able to talk to young people, neighbours, and those we meet and try to get them interested in the life-giving things in which we are interested. Our responsibility therefore is about the world for we also work to have people trust in God for healing, forgiveness, and renewal.

It is very important to consider that if you are going to live a life guided by your mind you have to be careful what you exposed your mind to. You have to be careful what you fix your mind on. I hope you can fix your mind in such a way that it will enhance your life. This is what the Book of Proverbs does for you.

THE TEXT

Verses 1-2. We are told in 1 Kings 4:29-34 of the exceptional blessing that Solomon the son of David king of Israel was given when he prayed to God for wisdom to lead the people of God. These verses tell us:

“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore.

Thus Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.

For he was wiser than all men- than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations.

He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.

Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon, even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall: he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish”.

The purpose of the Proverbs written by Solomon is made quite clear. It was written to invite persons to give their time and attention and become engaged in a sustained way so that they would be instructed, not distracted.



In order to be benefited we must seek to know wisdom. Scholars tell us that the word wisdom (**chokmah** from the verb **chokmah** -to be wise) **means the ability to judge correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on knowledge and understanding. Wisdom is the ability to see something from God's viewpoint. Wisdom is God's character in the many practical affairs of life.**

It clearly therefore involves the ability to see and the inclination of the heart to choose the best. Making my choices or right choices indicates where one is at in spiritual maturity.

It is not therefore a matter of theoretical knowledge. Knowledge is the collection of facts and it can tell you how certain systems work. It will tell you therefore of the stock market, the banking system, the tax system, and the financial systems work.

Certainly wisdom or knowledge are related but they are not synonyms. Knowledge is really about information that we gained because of experience or what we read and what people tell us. It will tell us how to use a gun but knowing when to use it and when to keep it locked up involves wisdom.

So one can have knowledge without wisdom for wisdom tells you the right use of what we know. With wisdom therefore it is not just knowing what a budget is, but with wisdom one can manage a budget properly. It is the right use of knowledge. It is a skill that produces much value. Wisdom therefore certainly deals with making right decisions and understanding things like life and death, God and Man, righteousness and sin, heaven and hell.

To receive wisdom involves perception and for that we have to invest time and attention to get to the deeper meaning beneath the surface. Wisdom therefore does not necessarily come easy and if you are constantly distracted by television and other things it will take a little longer for you to develop wisdom.

Verse 3. To develop understanding therefore Solomon says we need to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity.

The skill for right living has to be taught so that one will be able to discern between what is true and what is not. When you hear people make statements you will meet the need to be able to analyze them because you have the ability to discern sayings of understanding. So as one writer says you have to decide on the source of wisdom; Proverbs or Snapchat?

Instruction will allow a person to show why his behaviour is in righteousness, justice, and equity. These are things that please God.

We recall that righteousness means having a covenant relationship with God and this involves the gift of salvation so that we can behave as the people of the Lord for God is holy. The righteous are servants of God and in its deeper spiritual meaning it means the quality of being right. It involves being as God is. Our behaviour therefore must be lawful, correct, in line with divine laws, upright, faultless, innocent, for all these words describe God and His servants.



This of course is the basis for justice, for justice is based on the very nature of God. It is based on the law of God that reflects the standards of God and so there should be no favouritism, no injustice, no acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent. With justice there is always honesty in even the smallest transaction. Justice always involves protecting the poor and the innocent.

Equity of course is synonymous with uprightness. It involves the spirit behind the law. It involves fairness in every respect.

Verse 4. Wisdom is an extremely important need for some people. These are called the simple ones. They are generally but not always young and uneducated and need instruction. The simple are naïve, gullible, and their minds are open to all kinds of foolishness and they will believe anything that strikes their fancy and meets the desires of their flesh.

Since they are inexperienced and naïve and their opinions are not well thought through and their ideas are not well tested ideas they are not wise in considering what they should be doing. They are tossed about with all kinds of ideas and doctrines. They will follow everything that they see on TV or what people are practicing.

Wisdom when taught to the simple therefore will lead to them learning discretion and their minds will not be so open to foolish ideas and temptations. They will become wise and prudent and careful in what they are doing.

Verses 5-6. These verses remind us that the process of gaining wisdom must continue through a long lifetime. It will increase over time and so one can never stop learning for there is always something to learn. There will always be proverbs and sayings that are enigmas and riddles: things which seem extremely difficult or impossible to understand. But of course as wisdom increases one can crack these puzzles and enigmas. So Solomon calls for a long lifetime learning.

Verses 7-8. In this situation of life there must be a foundation. Every living human being requires a GPS, for you do not have one that works and you chart your own direction you will surely end up where you do not want to end up. You will head for one town and find yourself in a completely different town where you do not want to go.

This beginning of learning wisdom comes from ***The Fear of the LORD. It is there that we find the beginning of knowledge.***

This applies both to believers and unbelievers. Believers are expected to be in agreement with what they are learning in Proverbs but they know that there will be others in disagreement.

It is important to note that you are not here told wisdom is knowledge that the law exists or that you should have gratitude to the Lord. Those are all good things but that is not what the focus of this verse is. We know that we should acknowledge that God is our focus in everything



we do and we should work enthusiastically for Him. But note the focus of the verse as one writer explains:

“But learning to live life skillfully, being able to go out into the real world and knowing how to get along with people, how to handle money, what makes a marriage work, how to raise your children, how to be a good neighbour, how to effectively enter into all of the ordinary stuff of which life is made, requires as the beginning point fear of the Lord.

We should have an abiding concern that we never do anything to displease the Lord. That's what it means to fear the Lord. There is no setting aside all for God or his purposes. He cannot be contained somewhere in the church, Bible study, or prayer meeting and excluded from our day-to-day life”.

Since we are in covenant and we know therefore that God loves us and has saved us and redeemed us the fear of the LORD is not as one writer corrects us
“a cowering, begging fear. It is the proper reverence that the creature owes to the Creator and that the redeemed owes to the Redeemer. It is the proper respect and honour of God”.

This fear of the Lord brings you knowledge that matters in the way we think, make decisions, relate and live. It gives you insight and skill. This comes from the fear of the LORD.

Different scholars describe this fear of the LORD as:

- **“A worshipping submission to the God of the Covenant.**
- **An affectionate reverence by which the child of God bends himself humbly and carefully to his Father's law.**
- **Signifies that the righteous reverence which every intelligent being owes to his Creator.**
- **What the alphabet is to reading, notes to reading music, and numerals to mathematics, the Fear of the LORD is to attaining the revealed knowledge of this book.**

Of course another scholar warns that true wisdom cannot be attained by human effort, energy, and ingenuity for if that were so **the Fear of the LORD** is not essential to obtaining wisdom. But if it comes from God's revelation, then a right relationship with Him is the key to wisdom.

The focus now is on a parent teaching a child. It is critical that one generation pass this wisdom and the words of life to another generation. The father here has a special responsibility and the Bible warns us that when there is fatherlessness of children a desperate situation will develop. Even secular societies know the danger when boys do not have father figures and have access to healthy role models and are given the opportunity to learn and experience competence from these role models. If they do not have this they will become insecure and will be open to all sorts of offers and violence will become attractive with youth gangs proliferating everywhere.

It is important to note that both mothers and fathers are involved in this teaching and responsibility. The instruction to parents will adorn the life of their children if they would receive it.



The possession of wisdom will be itself a reward. It can be a gracious and beautiful ornament around the head or chains around the neck.

So the father speaks to his son. This of course reminds us of the tragedy or irony in the life of Solomon for despite the teachings of the Law he had 700 wives and 300 concubines and he had only one son that the Bible speaks of. He was given wisdom but he became a fool.

Verse 10. Solomon therefore knew the enticement of sinners and the dangers of bad company. So he warned his son about these powerful forces and influences of the friendship that he will have. The warning is that when a son becomes an adolescent all kinds of offers will be made to him so that he will get an identity and a sense of power. It is sad that his son Rehoboam did not seem to understand or accept this advice and as a result of this the kingdom was split in two. He foolishly listened to the advice of younger violent companions.

Adolescents seem to be attracted to the plotters of violence. But older people must also be aware that there is a danger in the company of sinners. They are in danger from the company of many wives which will inevitable get them into idolatry, which is the love of material things and self-adulation. These will become a trap that Solomon himself was caught in.

It is important to note therefore that it is important that a father choose to love his son and choose to advise him. It is important for a father to develop a love relationship with his son so that his son will choose to listen to him. It is important that sons be taught to avoid this dangerous preoccupation with power and the desire that people have to hurt others that are weaker than they.

Verses 20-22. Now we are looking at the feminine side of the issue for wisdom is always represented as being a woman, Lady Wisdom. It is interesting to note that a woman is now contrasted with the gangs that have been practicing violence and encouraging this young son to be violent, to steal money, commit violence, and tried to get excitement from that.

So this Lady Wisdom makes a loud and public call to offer guidance and help. Her cries are loud for they are often ignored. But her cry is earnest as she invites these young thugs to repentance.

She does not shy away from going to the city gates, the chief areas where people come. She goes to the markets and positions herself by the noisy streets. She proclaims wisdom to everyone. She addresses the man in the streets, and to the businessmen. She appeals to the simple ones.

With a woman's sensitivity she calls out to the scorners who boastfully reject and despise the wisdom of God. She shares that they hate knowledge and so they are fools, ignorant and stubborn. She begs them to turn and stop their pride, ignorance, and violence and their rejection of God. She warns them that when they hate knowledge they are fools.



She calls out to them telling them that she can teach them how to be a man, how to be strong and capable and survive in the real world. They might have to learn hard lessons. She rebukes them. With this rebuke comes the warning that if they do not listen the time when destruction would come is certain. There will be no help from wisdom at that stage. There will be no way out. She had been calling to them and they had refused. They did not regard her counsels.

So in the day of calamity she will laugh at them when their terrors come down like a storm and their destruction like a whirlwind.

Wisdom's goal is to change the hearts and minds of those that hear her. She therefore stresses the consequences of bad behaviour and the consequences that come from those that do not want the fear of the LORD. She is so extreme that she hopes this position will frighten them into seeking Wisdom.

It is very interesting to note that Lady Wisdom is not what one would call a shrinking violet. She does not sit in comfort in her home but was going out to the people looking for them where she can find them. She condemns their foolishness and tells them that they have been on the wrong track for a **long** time. So she pointedly tells them,
How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?
How long will mockers delight themselves in mockery,
and fools hate knowledge?

It would appear that the female of the species has a most important role to play in the society. They obviously are not endeavouring to play this role. They should not be simply shrinking violets but should actively participate in stemming the tide of foolishness that men often participate in.

So wisdom is called Lady Wisdom for she rebukes the foolish and those that hate knowledge. But she seems to hold out the little hope for repentance, for the turning around and for the choosing of a better way. She is not closing the door forever for she stretches out her hand to all who are eager to listen to her wise counsel and listen to her reproof.

Verses 32-33. Lady Wisdom knows that we live in a dangerous world and she does not want her people to suffer. She knows that the fear of the Lord is the beginning, only the beginning of wisdom. Wisdom is something that has to be learned. So she cries aloud. She reminds us that those that listen to her Lady Wisdom will be secure and will not fear or dread disaster. If they do not listen to her the simple will be slain. Those that are complacent, those who do not take life seriously will end up in disaster.

CONCLUSION

There is no alternative plan, no plan B for the fool. Recognize therefore that if you reject wisdom you are a fool, a nitwit, a lunatic.



The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge and to reject God is to reject wisdom. If you sow the wind you will reap the whirlwind. If you make your bed the wrong way you will lie in it and will never be able to get up. There is a warning that if you scorn God there will come a time when you will be forced by your circumstances to call upon Him for help but He will not answer. His attitude will be that you should call on the pagans you associated with for help and call on the things to which you trusted.

Parents are called into understanding the seriousness of the present situation. They are obliged to accept the not so easy task of training and raising their children with deep sympathy and understanding. They will raise their children in the ways of God and not accept the teaching of the world that reject that folly is bound up in the heart of a child. Children are by nature part of a fallen race and they are like us warped and twisted toward evil. But they must be raised with love and much prayer. They need to know that they are loved, accepted, and appreciated. This is the job of the parents. It is not an enviable job but it is a necessary job.

So take the long view. It might not be easy. But Solomon is giving you good advice. The decisions you make will contribute to you and your children becoming a beautiful graceful person or becoming one with a chain around the neck.

There is the sad case of the people of Israel and the people of Judah. They rejected God. They did not fear the LORD, the covenant keeping God. They did not follow His laws and so we read their sad end in 2 Chronicles 36.

But be careful, for this Chapter tells us that the leaders, the priests, and people altogether transgressed more and more despite warnings by the messengers of God rising up early and sending them all the time. They too like the fools in our Study Scripture mocked the messengers of God and scoffed at His prophets and despised His words.

So what is your choice? Earthly wisdom is the wisdom of the fool. It is folly. Wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD, the covenant keeping God.

We advise you to live in security.

