

Growing Wisdom...Especially Now! (4 of 5)

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[0 : 00] Welcome back to message four in this little series, and this one's entitled, Grow in Wisdom, especially now. I'm going to read from Proverbs chapter 1, verses 1 through 7.

Proverbs 1, the Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, for attaining wisdom and discipline, for understanding words of insight, for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair, for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young. Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance, for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. Amen. Great verses. So I've titled this, Grow in Wisdom, especially now. There's a story in Luke chapter 18 in the New Testament, in which Jesus has an encounter with a rich young ruler. The young man asked Jesus a question. Good teacher, he asked, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

Jesus doesn't answer directly. Instead, he engages in a conversation, one that challenged many of the young man's preconceptions and core beliefs, actually almost all of them. The end result of the interaction was that the young man rejected the chance to follow Jesus because he was unable to make the shift from his own way of seeing things to Jesus' way. Just one chapter later in Luke chapter 19, we read of another encounter, this time between Jesus and a wealthy tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus. Once again, a conversation takes place and an invitation is given. But this time, the seeker embraces what Jesus offers and his life is changed forever. The difference between these two men is not immediately obvious, but reflection on their responses provides us with crucial and invaluable clues. The first man you see was very religious. He knew all the rules and followed them diligently.

But he lacked wisdom, the wisdom of Proverbs 1.7. He did not place his hope in the Lord. He placed his confidence in himself and in his rigid rule following. As a result, when he came face to face with the greatest teacher he would ever encounter, he was unteachable. The second man, the tax collector, was a very different story. He had spent his life seeking material things and had been very successful in this.

[3 : 05] But he was evidently unsatisfied with his outcome. When he came before Jesus, he arrived with a humble, teachable spirit in hand. And oh, what an outcome. Let me encourage you at this point to reflect on the following three questions. Ready? Question one. How teachable am I? On a scale of one to ten, give yourself a rating where one is completely unteachable and ten is fantastically teachable.

Number two. What is your basis for your answer to number one? So what's your evidence? And you could be journaling this. What's your evidence for how teachable you are or are not? And question three.

Would I say I am more like Zacchaeus or more like the rich young ruler? Here's the humbling part. The higher you rated yourself on that teachable scale, the less likely you are to actually be teachable. See, the rich young ruler, he would have rated himself very highly. The lower you rated yourself, here's the irony, the lower you rated yourself, the better the chances that you are actually growing in true wisdom. One of my favorite authors who I would highly recommend is Timothy Keller.

Here's what he has to say on this topic from his book. It's actually a daily devotional and it's called God's wisdom for navigating life. Here's what he says. Biblical wisdom brings discernment to the skill of the daily living of life itself. To be wise is to recognize multiple options and possible courses of action where others can imagine only one or two. Wisdom discerns multiple dimensions to people's motives and character rather than putting everyone into the binary categories of good people and bad people. Discernment is also the ability to tell the difference, not just between right and wrong, but also among good, better, and best. Christians find that as Christ's love in our hearts grows, so does depth of insight. His love heals the self-absorbed ego and enables us to notice and be sensitive to others around us. Isn't that excellent? That's Timothy Keller. During these days when we are stuck at home, why not take some of the opportunity you've been given to grow in wisdom? Instead of simply seeking to be entertained or keeping busy, why not use some of your time to read, to read books, or to listen to pastors and speakers wiser than yourself? And for those among us who aren't sure there are those wiser than ourselves, go find yourself a good therapist. You've got bigger problems. Let's pray. Lord, grow me today in wisdom and bless me with a poverty of spirit that would allow me to walk humbly with my God. Lord, our world seems divided between people who see everything as black or white and those who see everything as gray. Deliver me from both legalism and relativism. Neither is wise. Give me instead humility and discernment that it's necessary for having a wise heart.

Amen.