

The Beginning of Wisdom

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[0 : 00] you this morning. You can open it up to Proverbs, the book of Proverbs, chapter 1. Proverbs 1.

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Is it simply age and life experience? Is it that they're a voracious reader and devour everything that they can get their hands on? Is it that they've talked to a lot of people, listened well to many people? Is it that they pay close attention to things and think long and hard about things? Is it that they have a humble spirit, a desire to continue learning?

[1 : 54] What has made that person wise? Where does wisdom come from? It's a wonderful thing that that person that you're thinking about right now is wise and hopefully you've benefited from knowing them and from their wisdom, but what about you?

Are you wise? Do you long to be wiser than you are today? And if so, how do you go about getting wiser?

Well, there are many different answers to that question of how we get wisdom. Our world has all kinds of different answers. Some of your relatives may have some of their own answers and probably you yourself have some sense of how it happens, how we get wisdom.

But of course, not every answer out there is right or true and actually leads to wisdom. And we probably also know that there are different levels of wisdom.

A person may have financial wisdom, but how well you manage your money matters only so much, especially if when you come to the end of your life, you realize that you have worked so hard to amass this wealth for yourself and then you can't keep it or take it with you beyond the grave.

[3 : 20] I think the kind of wisdom that we all long for is much bigger than any one little aspect of our lives. The kind of wisdom that we long for is the kind that will help us not just in one area of our life, but in every area of our lives, the kind that will govern and lead the big picture of our life story on the best path, on the way that we want it to go.

But also the kind of wisdom that will trickle down into every little decision and detail of our lives. So where do we get this kind of wisdom?

As I said a moment ago, there are answers floating around all over the place. Our world has their answers. People we know have our answers. We may have some answers, but this morning we want to begin to look at some of God's answer to this question of where wisdom comes from.

So today we're going to embark on a new series for the summer from the book of Proverbs. And it's not going to necessarily build, each message won't build on one another. They're going to just kind of be standalone messages.

But we'll be looking at various pieces of wisdom in the book of Proverbs. And in a moment we're going to read these first couple verses here. But before we do, let's just consider what the book of Proverbs is.

[4 : 38] The opening line of this book goes as follows. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. And what follows is a collection mainly of the wise sayings of King Solomon.

Solomon was a legendary king, a man of great fame. And the records that we have in the Bible say this. King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

2 Chronicles 9.22 All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. So he was a great king.

He had great wisdom, but we mustn't forget the source of his wisdom. Notice that it says that it was God who put that wisdom into his heart.

The beginning of Solomon's account in the book of Chronicles of the kings goes like this. Solomon, son of David, established himself firmly over his kingdom.

[5 : 51] For the Lord his God was with him and made him exceedingly great. So he had a great kingdom, but he didn't achieve that all by himself on his own.

He wasn't a self-made man. He didn't do that all on his own. It was God who made him great. It was God who gave him wisdom in order to achieve what he did.

And so the words that we're about to read here in Proverbs come from Solomon. Yes, they are his sayings. But let's also remember where he got that wisdom from.

These words are also the words of God. And so we should listen carefully to what God has to say about wisdom through Solomon.

So let's read the first few verses of this book together. Proverbs chapter 1. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. Let the wise listen and add to their learning.

[7 : 16] 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 instruction. So it's kind of a bit of an introduction to this collection that we just read here.

And the first thing that we notice here in this passage comes in verse 2. The author tells us that these words, these proverbs, these sayings are for gaining wisdom.

And instruction for understanding words of insight. Gaining wisdom. Do you want to become wise? Do you want to gain wisdom? Grow in wisdom? Then read the proverbs. That's what they're for. Do you want valuable instruction and precious insight and understanding into things?

[8 : 24] Read proverbs. That's why they have been spoken. The second thing that we see here is what kind of wisdom. Insight and understanding into what?

What kind of wisdom? He tells us in verse 3. The proverbs for receiving instruction in prudent behavior. Doing what is right and just and fair.

So what kind of instruction are we expecting to hear about in these pages? The kind that will help us behave prudently.

Live our lives skillfully. Wisely. Well. And not only that, but the kind that will help us know the difference between what is right and what is wrong.

What is just and what is unjust. What is fair or straight and what is crooked. This is the kind of wisdom that Solomon had to offer through his proverbs.

[9 : 36] We might say in summary that the proverbs are practical. Some of them are very practical. There's stuff about finances in here. There's stuff about just relationship things and interactions in here.

But they also have to do with what's moral. What's right and what's wrong. What's good and what's evil. Next.

Who are these words for? Verse 4. Verse 4. Verse 4.

For giving prudence to those who are simple. Knowledge and discretion to the young. So he tells us two different groups of people that this collection of wisdom is for.

First one is those who are simple. And some of your Bibles may have a little footnote there beside that word. Mine does. To let us know that all throughout proverbs, those who are simple really refers to those who are gullible.

[10 : 47] Or we might say those who lack discernment. Those who are without moral direction. Perhaps even are inclined to evil. Or some combination of those things.

So if you are a person who lacks discernment. Then this collection of wisdom is for you. That you might gain discernment or discretion.

That you may learn to live skillfully and wisely. But it's not just for the simple or for those who lack discernment so that they can become wise.

It's also for the young. For giving prudence to those who are simple. Knowledge and discretion to the young. Sometimes we may think of proverbs as words that were written by a wise old sage of a king.

That are mainly for more mature people. Who are looking to become wiser. Not so.

[11 : 53] Solomon says that these words are for those who are young. So that they might learn to be wise. Put up your hand if you consider yourself to be young.

We've got one person. Two people. If you are in that category. You consider yourself to be young. This book is for you. So that you might become wise.

And learn to live skillfully in life. Verse 5 gives us another group who this is for. Let the wise listen and add to their learning.

And let the discerning get guidance. Let's not make the mistake of assuming that these words are just for those who are young and inexperienced in life. And lack common sense.

Are you wise? Then read these words. Let the wise listen and add to their learning. And you'll become more wise.

[13:02] Let those who are discerning read them. And you'll receive guidance in your life. So these words. As we kind of sum them up. Everything that Solomon has said in these pages.

Is so that we might gain wisdom. So that we might grow in understanding. Not just some.

But all. Those who are young. Those who are experienced in life. And mature. Those who are. Who lack discretion. And those who already have it.

From there. We hear the closing statement of this introduction. Which really. Is.

Foundational to the rest of what is to follow. Verse 7. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of knowledge. But fools.

[14:01] Despise. Wisdom. And instruction. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning.

Of knowledge. But fools. Despise. Wisdom. And instruction. This is one of my favorite proverbs. In the whole Bible. And. Perhaps.

One of the most. Significant. The most important. There's a whole. World of meaning. In these words.

Even in just the first statement. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of knowledge. And so. We want to spend the rest of our time. Just unpacking this a little bit. This morning. First.

Notice how there are three different words. Used. For wisdom. Knowledge. Fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of knowledge. But fools. Despise. Wisdom. And instruction.

[14:55] There's a sense in which these words. Are almost interchangeable. They're synonyms. They're related. In their meaning. And we'll see this. All throughout. The book of Proverbs. That Solomon uses these words.

All over the place. And even flips them in. One for the other. At different points. The reason. Is not because they all mean the exact same thing. But because. Together. All of these things.

Wisdom. Knowledge. Understanding. Discretion. Kind of make up this. This idea of wisdom. That Solomon is seeking. To impart. To people.

Through his Proverbs. Wisdom. And we get a clear picture of this. In Proverbs chapter 9 verse 10. It's the very same words. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. This time.

He puts in the word wisdom. Is the beginning. Of wisdom. It's the starting place. And. We could. Talk about the difference. Between wisdom. And knowledge. And discretion.

[15:48] But we're not really going to go into that. This morning. I think you kind of. You get the idea. Wisdom. You can be. A really wise person.

And yet not know a lot. But be wise. About what you do know. And in how you live. Or you can be a person. Who knows. A whole ton of stuff.

Who is read widely. Who is talked to all sorts of people. But be a complete fool. In the conclusions. That you come to. From that. Knowledge. And how you live your life. So.

There's differences. In the meanings. But all of these. Are kind of flowing. Toward this big idea. Idea of wisdom. Which Solomon is talking about here. That's the first thing we notice.

From this. Verse. The second thing. We notice. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of wisdom. What does that mean?

[16:42] The beginning. Of wisdom. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning. The starting place.

Of wisdom. There is a starting place. To becoming wise. There is. There is a beginning. There is a foundation. On which the house of wisdom.

Is built. What is it? It's the third thing. The fear. Of the Lord. The fear.

Of the Lord. The fear. The fear. The fear. What does that mean? Well. Very simply. The fear of the Lord. Means. Pretty much.

What it sounds like. It means. It means. The fear. Of. Yahweh. The fear. Of God. Is. The starting point. Of.

[17 : 39] Wisdom. But. But. Why is it like that? Why is that the beginning? Why is that the place to start? Perhaps the real question is.

Why should we fear. The Lord? For starters. He is great. He is powerful. He is glorious. He. Made this universe. And everything. In it. By speaking. He is a wonderful being. He is kind. He is good. He is patient.

He always keeps his promises. And we are not like him. We as a human race. Have rebelled against him. We have. Lived in ways that are corrupt. And selfish. And sinful. He is. The judge. The king. Of the universe. And the Bible tells us. That one day. He will bring justice.

[18 : 36] To earth. To all mankind. Kind. We will stand before him. And we will receive. What we deserve. For all of the wrongs. That we have. Committed against him. Unless.

We have accepted. His gracious. Offer of salvation. Through. Jesus Christ. His son. So these are some reasons. To fear God. He is big.

We are small. He is powerful. We are weak. He is holy. We are sinful. He is just. And we have broken.

His holy law. If we read the Bible carefully. We will discover that. Fearing the Lord. Is a theme. That runs from cover to cover. From that moment in the garden.

When Adam and Eve. Hid from God. Because they knew. They were in big trouble. To that moment in revelation. Where John. sees. Jesus.

[19 : 31] In all his glory. And fell at his feet. As though dead. Trembling with fear. But we will also. Find out. That the fear of the Lord.

Is often. Portrayed as a good thing. Something that is fitting. Something that is right. That is proper. For us. To have. As people.

Who are in relationship. With Yahweh. The great God of all. We see a glimpse of this. At Mount Sinai. Where. Where God appeared. To the Israelites.

Amidst a cloud. And smoke. And fire. And an earthquake. And the people of Israel. Said that day. The Lord.

Our God. Has shown us. His glory. And his majesty. And we have heard. His voice. From the fire. Today. We have seen. That a person. Can live. Even if God.

[20 : 24] Speaks with them. But now. Why should we die? This great fire. Will consume us. And we will die. If we hear the voice. Of the Lord.

Our God. Any longer. For what mortal. Has ever heard. The voice. Of the living God. Speaking out of fire. As we have.

And survived. The people. Were terrified. By how God. Chose. To reveal himself. To the people. At Mount Sinai. When he gave them. The Ten Commandments. And so. They asked Moses. You be the go-between. You talk to God. And you tell us. What he says.

We don't want to hear him. Directly. Anymore. Deuteronomy 5. 27. Go near. And listen. To all that the Lord. Our God says. Then. Tell us.

[21 : 18] Whatever the Lord. Our God. Tells you. We will listen. And obey. And so. Moses. Has a conversation. With God. About what the people. Are asking for.

And this is what God says. The Lord heard you. Said Moses. When you spoke to me. And the Lord. Said to me. I have heard. What this people. Said to you. Everything they said.

Was good. Oh. That their hearts. Would be inclined. To fear me. And keep all my commands. Always. So that it might go well.

With them. And their children. Forever. Oh. That their hearts. Would be inclined. To fear me. Said the Lord. Does God desire.

That we fear him. Yes. And one of the good. Consequences. Of having a proper. Fear of the Lord. Is that we will obey.

[22 : 17] His commands. Fear of the Lord. Is deeply linked. To obedience. We see this in Proverbs. As well. Proverbs 14.

2. For whoever fears the Lord. Walks uprightly. Why? Because they know. That God has promised. To punish the wicked. For their evil ways.

And it's no small thing. To sin. Or disobey. God. God. I often like to think. Of the fear of the Lord. In terms of. Fire.

Fire is a really good thing. It's great for. Keeping warm. It's great for cooking food. But it's also dangerous. If you put your hand. Into fire.

You will get burned. And even a small fire. Started by a match. That's thrown into the grass. Carelessly. On a hot day. Could burn an entire city. To the ground.

[23 : 13] And. Thankfully. The residents of Fort McMurray. Didn't have that happen. But they got a feeling. A little bit of what. What it could have been. Because of the forest fires.

That were raging there. Near the city. And so there's a good. Even a healthy. Fear. Of fire. And it's the same with God. There is a good.

And healthy fear. Of him. That he longs for us. To have. He is good. He is kind. But he is also. Just. The Lord is gracious.

And compassionate. Slow to anger. And abounding in love. But he will. By no means. Leave the guilty. Unpunished. And so to fear the Lord.

Is all about having a right attitude. And perspective towards him. It means that we regard him. For who he is. Especially. Compared to who we are. It means that we take him seriously.

[24 : 13] It means that when he. Tells us to do something. We say. Yes. Lord. When he tells us not to do something. Yes. Lord. When he tells us how things are.

In this. Great big. World that he has. Spoken to being. We. We trust him. And we take his word seriously. Even if there are some other people. Over here.

Who say. No. That's a bunch of rubbish. We don't agree. So this is the place that. We need. To start. The fear.

Of the Lord. Is the beginning. Of wisdom. Do you want to be wise? Do you want to know how to live skillfully.

In life. Then you first need to embrace. In your heart. The reality. Of who God is. And who you are. In relation to him. We first need to understand.

[25 : 11] Just who it is. That speaks. Through these words. Of Solomon. And not just through his words. But through all the words. Of scripture. Without this.

We can try all that we want. To become wise. Or to live well. Or to collect. The various nuggets of wisdom. That we may find. In all different people's. Thoughts and writings. But it will be like.

Building a house. With no foundation. When we fear the Lord. And when we take him seriously. It changes. The way.

We. See. These words. We see them. As more valuable. When we fear him. It changes the way we listen. Because we know.

Just who it is. That speaks. Through these pages. Solomon didn't build. The greatest kingdom. Of his day. Because he was. Just a really smart guy. It was God.

[26 : 09] Who gave him that wisdom. And amazingly. God longs. To give. Each one of us. His wisdom. As well.

Maybe not in the same proportion. Or measure. That he gave to Solomon. But he's not stingy. About giving wisdom. As James says.

In his letter. If any of you lacks wisdom. You should ask God. Who gives. Not stingily. But generously. To. Not just some.

But to all. Without finding fault. And it will be given to you. That's the promise. Of the Lord. Do you have ears.

To hear. Do you have a heart. That respects. The living God. And the words of wisdom. That he has to offer. My hope and my prayer. Is that we do.

[27 : 08] And that we all. Will continue to grow. To have a heart. That loves him deeply. And that fears him. As we should. And that from there.

We would continue to grow. In wisdom. Day by day. Week by week. By every word. That proceeds. From his mouth. Let's pray.

Father. We thank you. That you have. Decided.

That you will give wisdom. To us. People who lack it. People who lack discernment. Lord. There's all kinds of. Wisdom that we need.

We could think back. Over the last week. Of our lives. And each one of us. Give a whole list of things. In which. We wish that we could have. Done better. Or. Known just what to say.

[28 : 07] Or. Just. Had the wisdom. That would have made the difference. In that situation. But we don't want to stay. As we are. We ask that you would.

Give. Of your wisdom to us. That you would make us. Wise people. People who live in this community. With wisdom. People who manage. What you've entrusted to us. With wisdom. People who spend. Our lives. Our lives. Here. On this earth. With wisdom. We ask this.

In Jesus name. And we thank you. That you are generous. Amen.