

Growing in Wisdom

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[0 : 0 0] You live not the way you talk that counts. Mean-spirited ambition isn't wisdom. Boasting that you are wise isn't wisdom. Twisting the truth to make yourselves sound wise isn't wisdom.

It's the furthest thing from wisdom. It's animal cunning, devilish plotting. Whenever you're trying to look better than others or get the better of others, things fall apart and everyone ends up at the other's throats.

The story of Solomon does not end well. He served as a very wise king. But then that wisdom, he turned that in on himself.

He used that wisdom to think, actually, there are a lot of enemies around us. I can turn those enemies into friends if I get married. So I'm going to marry the daughter of that king over there.

Oh, but we don't just want one friend. So I'm also going to marry the daughter of that king over there. And that king over there. And that king over there. It says in the Bible that Solomon had hundreds of wives. He turned that wisdom in on himself.

[1 : 0 7] Yes, he was wise. Yes, he used it well for a time. But it didn't, it wasn't always godly wisdom. Godly wisdom is looking at how God sees things.

So in the passage that we read, I chose the message version because I think it words it really well. It basically says godly wisdom is being kind. Being humble.

Pulling other people before yourself. Seeing things how God sees them. So growing in wisdom. I could retitle that.

And if we can have the PowerPoint up. Growing in wisdom. Seeing how God sees. So we're going to break that down into three parts this morning.

The first part is going to be how does God see you. And then the second and third part that will come together a bit later is going to be how does God see others. And how does God see the world.

[2 : 0 4] If we can have the next slide up. How does God see you. Back in February. I think it was February. January, February time. I preached here on the Samaritan woman at the well.

That's what this image is. Jesus is in that picture. He's just in the corner. Unfortunately the format of this slide cut him out a little bit. But he is there. But I preached on the Samaritan woman at the well.

And as I was talking about that. As I was preaching about that. I brought that to a conclusion of actually what. About halfway through. I said what does Jesus say about this Samaritan woman.

Well Jesus said. The Samaritan woman says you can't talk to me. I'm a Samaritan. I'm a woman. And I'm rejected by my own people. Because I live an awful life. And Jesus says.

I know. And I'm still choosing you. So how does God see you. God knows exactly what you had for breakfast this morning.

[3 : 06] Or if you skip breakfast this morning. He knows what you had for dinner two weeks ago. He knows. He knows whether you are happy with your exam result that you got. He knows the last time you push somebody else out of the way.

In order to get ahead of them. Maybe not literally. He knows the last time you started bad mouthing your boss. Because they said something you weren't happy with. He knows the last time you were gossiping.

The last time you were looking at things online that maybe you shouldn't really have been looking at. The last time you put yourself ahead of other people. But God also knows your hopes.

Your desires. He knows that promotion that you're really desperate to get. Because it will just make things that bit easier for you and your family. Or for you and your household. He knows that long-term dream that you've got.

That maybe has always just felt a long way off. But God says I know about it. And I know it's there. And I know it's getting closer. God knows everything about you.

[4 : 14] And what does he say? I know. But I choose you anyway. To quote what I said when I preached on the Samaritan woman at the well.

Jesus says I know. But can you give me some water? Jesus spent his time with people who thought they weren't worth it.

Jesus knows everything about us. And yet he still loves us. So actually wisdom starts with how God sees you.

It's so easy. And I can say this from experience. It's so easy to look at myself through my own eyes. Through other people's eyes. It's so easy to always think the worst of myself.

Or to expect other people think the worst of me. To be critical. To be worried. To be anxious about how other people see me. And God says to me.

[5 : 16] I know. But this is how I see you. And I choose you. God loves you. But what does that really mean?

That some impersonal force. Galaxies away. May consider you from time to time. Or that you are a single drop in a vast ocean of humanity.

And God cares for all of it. There are billions of lives. There are billions of lives. Billions of stories. Can we really believe he has great destinies planned for all of them?

Surely the ruler of the universe has more important affairs than to notice the needs of one singular individual. But hear this. But hear this.

Nothing could be further from the truth. When God says, I love you. It means that he crafted every detail of your being.

[6 : 15] Your every feature is his perfect design. His mind perceives your worries and your thoughts. His heart is broken by your pain.

You are his child. Created in his image. Your value exceeds all the riches of earth. Your worth extends beyond the stars.

And though you may be unaware, he's carefully constructing the events of your life to build his kingdom. If you are willing, he can and will achieve wonders through your hands.

It is the deepest passion. The most meaningful promise. It is your security, your hope, and your future.

It is the truth beyond doubt. God loves you. How does God see you?

[7 : 22] He loves you. Intelligence tells us that this book, the Bible is packed full of things that God says about each and every one of us. Wisdom is understanding what that actually means.

This is called the Father's Love Letter. This brings together a lot of things that God says about you. He says, You may not know me, but I know all about you.

I know when you sit and when you get up. I know everything you do. I know when you do. I know when you do. I know how many hairs are on your head. Because I made you to be like me.

I give you power to live, move, and be who you are. For I am the one who created you. I even knew you before you were born.

I picked you from the beginning. You are not a mistake. I planned out every day of your life. I decided when you would be born and where you would live.

[8 : 27] And I am excited for how wonderful I made you. I created you in your mother's tummy and brought you out when it was time to be born.

Those who don't know me have told lies about me. I'm not distant and angry, but I'm full of love. And I would like to give my love to you. Simply because you are my child and I am your father.

I give you more than your human dad ever could. For I am the perfect dad. Everything good you get comes from me. I am the one who meets all your needs.

I have really big plans for your future. Because I love you with a love that lasts forever. I think of you more often than there is sand on a seashore. I am so excited about you that I sing.

I will never stop being good to you. You are my treasure. I will take care of you with all of my heart and my soul. And I will show you great and wonderful things.

[9 : 32] If you look for me with all of your heart, you will find me. Get excited about me and I will give you your heart's desire. For I am the one who gave you those desires. I can do more for you than you would ever imagine.

I am your biggest cheerleader. I'm also the dad who helps you with your problems. When your heart aches, I am near. As a shepherd carries a lamb, I carry you close to me.

One day I will wipe away all your tears. And I'll take away all the pain in your life. I am your father and I love you just like I love my son, Jesus. For in Jesus, you can see my love for you.

When you see him, it's like you're looking at me. He came to show that I am on your side. And to tell you I am not keeping track of your sins.

Jesus died so that you and I could be together. His death was the best way to show you my love. I gave all that I loved so you could love me back. If you receive the gift of my son, Jesus, you receive me.

[10 : 36] And nothing will ever stand in the way of my love for you. Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen. I have always been a father to my family in heaven and on earth.

My question is, will you be my child? I'm waiting for you. So godly wisdom is about seeing things how God sees them. Starting with how does God see you?

No matter who you are, no matter what you have done, God still chooses you. God still loves you. That's how God sees you.

That there is nothing that you could ever do to stop him from loving you. So the next two are how does God see others and how does God see the world?

If we can have the PowerPoint up again. So this is from Philippians chapter 2. Don't be selfish. Don't try to impress others. Be humble.

[11 : 31] Thinking of others is better than yourselves. Don't look out for your own interests. But take an interest in others too. That is Philippians chapter 2 verses 3 to 4.

I'm going to read from Philippians 2 verses 1 to 8. This is going to come from the message as well. If you've got anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care, then do me a favor.

Agree with each other. Love each other. Be deep-spirited friends. Don't push your way to the front. Don't sweet-talk your way to the top.

Put yourself aside and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God, but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what.

[12 : 45] Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave. Became human. Having become human, he stayed human.

It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death.

And the worst death at that, a crucifixion. What does Jesus say about others? He says, look at my example.

At the last supper, before he went to die, he got on his hands and knees and he washed his disciples' feet. He took the position of a slave. He put other people ahead of himself.

Even while he was dying on the cross, he cared for the people who had put him there. He said, Father, forgive them because they don't know what they're doing. He took the time to talk to the murderers who were the criminals who were either side of him because one of them wanted forgiveness and had a chance to get into heaven.

[13 : 56] Jesus put that ahead of himself. On Thursday, I was in St. Jude School for their collective worship and I was telling the story of the Good Samaritan. It was to talk about kindness.

But as I was telling them that story, it starts with, God, what's the greatest commandment? Love God.

Love everyone else as you love yourself. Or love your neighbor as you love yourself. So I've gone a bit ahead there. Then the person responds, thinks they're being clever and says, well, God, who is my neighbor?

And Jesus tells this story. We all know the story of the Good Samaritan. Man traveling along a dangerous road, gets attacked, gets mugged, gets left to die. A priest comes along and says, nope, the law says I can't get dirty.

I'm on my way to the temple. So walks on past. The Levite walks along and says, nope, the law says I can't do this. So walks on past. A Samaritan, the enemy, the people that they did not get on with, came along, saw this man dying, took compassion, and stopped to help him.

[15 : 03] Are we done with the fruit salad? Amazing, thank you. We're going to see if we can do a couple, if we don't get to in a couple minutes, I'm going to ask if someone can take it downstairs to put in the fridge.

Because I know the banana won't last too long, unfortunately. But actually, as I was telling this story, I got the kids to help act out. But then I asked the kids, what do you think it means to be kind?

And they got it. These five to 11-year-old children got it. They understood what this story meant. They completely got, one of the children even said to me, it's easy to be kind to our friends, to look out for our family, to care for those who are going to care for us in return.

But actually, it's really hard to be kind to people that we don't like, or people that we don't talk to often, or complete strangers. If we can have that picture back up again.

Three pictures there. We've got an orphan. We've got somebody ill in hospital, and we've got a homeless person. It's easy to look out for those who are going to look out for us in return.

[16 : 18] It's a lot harder to look out for those who have nothing to give us. Or even worse, to look out for those who are likely to persecute us in response. How does God see other people?

God says, I know them as much as I know you. And I love them as much as I love you. So that's the challenge in that. Godly wisdom in how we see other people.

Are you going to look out for your friends, for your family? It's important to do that. By saying it's easy, I'm not saying we shouldn't do it. It is important to do that. But what about the homeless person who you pass on the way to the station every week, every day?

What about the neighbour a few doors down who comes home at one o'clock in the morning every night, wakes you up because they're loud, because they've been out drinking, because they've been doing drugs, and every time they come home, they bring somebody different home.

And some of those people might even be people that you will completely disagree with. I'm sure many of them will be.

[17 : 32] Are you going to look out for them? Because God says that counts too. Godly wisdom, seeing other people how God sees them. Whether we agree with them or not, God loves them.

And he tells us to love them as well. I think we can still go for a bit longer. If we can have the last picture up. Lastly, how does God see the world?

I chose this picture because ultimately, this is what the world is. Everything in the world was created by God. The earth, the world, it's not ours. It's, yes, God gave it to us.

And he did say we have dominion over it. Sounds like we can do what we want with it. Actually, God told us to look after it. God put so much care and effort and attention into his creation.

And then he said to humans, this is yours to look after. So what is godly wisdom and how God sees the world?

[18 : 41] We can look at it through science, through environmentalists. We can look at it through data and say, actually, if we don't look after this world, we're not going to have anywhere to live. And that is completely true.

And that is important. But actually, as Christians, we shouldn't need to. If we are full of wisdom, if we are growing in godly wisdom, we shouldn't need to see what the scientists, wait to see what scientists say.

We shouldn't need to wait to be told, stop throwing away rubbish can be recycled. Stop burning more fuel than you need to. Stop leaving your lights on.

We shouldn't need to wait for scientists to tell us this. Because God told us this right at the beginning. Godly wisdom, seeing the world, how God sees the world.

When God finished creation, he looked at the world and said, this is very good. To paraphrase slightly, God said, this is amazing. This is wonderful. This is beautiful.

[19 : 39] This is perfect. And then he tells us to look after it. God has given us a world where we're not all the same. We are, look at a fruit salad and it's colorful.

It's varied. It's wonderful. There are so many different things about it. And we may not like everything that goes into it, but it's there and it makes something that is good.

God's creation was good at each step of the way. But when it was all came together, it was very good. It was amazing. It was perfect.

And that's a bit like growing in wisdom as well. We could stop just putting strawberries and grapes in, but actually that's only part of what we could have. It's only when we add the rest in, when we add, we could stop with understanding how God sees ourselves.

Actually, that's going to be gone pretty quickly. You will start to become how we see ourselves. You will start to become wisdom that's internalized. But when we put it all together, when we bring all these different things together, that's what godly wisdom is really like.

[20 : 45] Understanding how God sees you, understanding how God sees others, and understanding how God sees the world. So maybe something needs to change about how we see ourselves, or how we see other people, or how we see the world.

But growing in wisdom, that's about seeing all of those things, how God sees them. Primarily seeing it through the eyes of love. illumining to the eyes of love.