

How highly do we value wisdom?

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[0 : 00] I'm going to read this morning from chapter 1 of Proverbs, and next week we'll stay in Proverbs and we'll be in chapter 8, so if you want to be ready for next Sunday, perhaps you could read through chapter 8 of Proverbs.

Now then, 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 a 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. I want to read just another few verses from 1 Kings 4 and verse 20.

Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs, and here's something more about Solomon. Verse 29, God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

[1 : 51] Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man, including Ethan the Ezraite, wiser than Heman, Chalcol, and Dada, the sons of Mahal.

And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered 1,005. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls.

He also taught about animals and birds and reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom.

Amen. The book of Proverbs is one for aspiring us to be wise. Oh, by the way, you start timing now, and all that preamble is not to be counted.

It's quarter to twelve. It's in praise of wisdom. The word wisdom occurs 37 times. And Christians, of course, read the Bible, sit under the teaching of God's word, to be made wise unto salvation, and equipped for living righteously in this world.

[3 : 29] And I ask you the question this morning, how highly do you value wisdom? Proverbs was inspired by the Holy Spirit, written by Solomon mainly.

And here are timelessly relevant and practical words that are not the wisdom of this world, but wisdom from God for living in his world wisely.

We see a close relationship between Christian truth, as Solomon develops it in Old Testament style, and daily life.

And Christian believers take their faith into every day and every aspect of life. Wisdom, of course, is an attribute of God.

God, we are to be wise if we are his. And not just for two hours on a Sunday, but as I say, into every day life.

[4 : 41] God is infinitely wise. He guides the affairs of the world. Therefore, anyone who is godly is wise. Godly wisdom has a moral dimension.

Godly wisdom teaches us the difference between right and wrong. Psalm 104, verse 24, says this. How many are your works, O Lord?

In wisdom you made them all. The earth is full of your creatures. The sea, vast and spacious, teems with creatures beyond number, living things large and small.

And we're discovering that more and more about the sea and all the visible evidence in this world of God's wisdom. And Paul exclaims with these words of Romans 11, 33, all the depth of the riches of

the wisdom and the knowledge of God.

And the wise in human society are not the intelligentsia of our universities. There are foolish, not to say openly immoral, intellectuals.

[6 : 03] And there are many wise people, not specially intellectually gifted, but who live godly lives. We vary widely in our intellectual capacity.

We are how God made us. There's a dear brother in Charlotte Chapel who I've got friendly with.

And he loves to sing God's praises. And he has the mental age of about four.

But he makes a joyful noise to the Lord. But one thing worse than a sinner is an educated sinner.

The devil is the most intelligent being that God ever created. And yet he causes great harm. The godly are wise in understanding, in patience, in diligence, in love, hard work.

They are compassionate, they are humble, and they are trustworthy. These are not intellectual qualities. The devil possesses none of the virtues I've just listed.

[7 : 19] Paul makes a valuable observation in a chapter you know very well in 1 Corinthians 13. He says this, If I could fathom all mysteries, and have all knowledge, but do not have love, I am nothing.

Parents, they're often referred to in the book of Proverbs. So if you want to be a good parent, read the book of Proverbs. Proverbs deal with the primary duty of wise parents, which is not to teach our children or their children to make money, but how to live well in the world.

Proverbs 17, 16 says this, Why should fools have money in their hands? And so many fools have money in their hands.

Why? When they are not able to understand it. Parents, teach your children to manifest good manners and Christian morality. That's the message of the Holy Spirit in the book of Proverbs.

Titus 2, verse 12, The grace of God teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present world.

[8 : 47] That is godly wisdom. It's not intellectual wisdom. Solomon shows us how the results of wisdom are seen.

That is, in nobility of character and in promoting harmonious relationships as the whole of one's life is brought under the control of God.

And also as you read through the chapters of Proverbs, you'll find that there's much emphasis on sound thinking. True wisdom involves the mind.

The gospel involves the renewing of your mind. That's interesting. Created in his image, God gave to you and me the ability to think and to reason.

And not to use our minds to their full potential dishonors our creator. His choicest servants in the Bible have been thinkers who lived holy lives.

[10 : 00] We think of Noah and Daniel and Joseph and Moses in the Old Testament. Wise, wise men. In the New Testament, examples, the apostle Paul and Stephen noted for their wisdom.

Remember in Acts chapter 6 and verse 10, Stephen's enemies could not stand up against the wisdom or the spirit by whom Stephen spoke.

And then Peter referring to our dear brother Paul in his second letter says, Paul wrote to you with the wisdom God had given to him.

The few verses that we read from chapter 1 revealed to us the educational purpose of this particular book. And actually, I read a verse of Proverbs every morning just to set me up for the day, facing all the many possibilities of when confronting people for life's challenges based on a relationship with God.

And there's just a little desire on my part to be wise. And I think God implanted that. And if we have a right relationship with God, it leads to godly living, it leads to right decisions, and it leads to speaking words of truth.

[11 : 36] Proverbs chapter 2, the next chapter, the Lord gives wisdom. From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. To understand what is right, just, and fair, every good path for wisdom will enter your heart.

Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men whose words are perverse. Great value in wisdom.

Verses 1 to 7 set out the purpose of the wisdom movement in Israel that formed what was called the company of the wise. There were certain men noted for their wisdom.

Their instructions on how to act and react in every circumstance, confronting you. Wisdom, for example, in avoiding association with criminals and prostitutes, plus escaping exploitation by the rich and powerful, their scams and their cons.

In those days, too, there were lawless criminal gangs who searched for recruits. There were prostitutes prowling around for punters. And there were swindlers and fraudsters on the lookout for the naive and easily deceived, for the gullible.

[12:59] We need wisdom in a world that is out to take advantage of us. Matthew 10, verse 16, Jesus said to his own people, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.

Therefore, be wise as serpents as well as being harmless as doves. We're back in James Stewart. James draws a distinction, you know, between good and evil wisdom. James 3, verse 13. Who is wise and understanding among you?

Let him show by his good life deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Such wisdom, inverted commas, does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, and of the devil. For where you have selfish ambition and envy, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

[14:14] But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure, then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit.

It is impartial and sincere. This we learn from the New Testament. And this is important. The wisdom of God needed in this world was to be revealed through the life and ministry of the church. Can I say that again? The wisdom of God needed in this world was to be revealed through the life and ministry of the church.

God's purpose was this, that the church, the gatherings of believing Christians would become the repository of wisdom.

Now that's putting some responsibility on you, my brother and my sister. Do I have a proof text for what I've just said? Yes.

[15:17] Ephesians chapter 3 verse 10, God's intent was that through the church the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers, the authorities, and the heavenly realms.

And then in chapter 4 verse 23 of Ephesians, you Christians were taught to be made new in the attitude of your mind, no longer to live as the Gentiles live in the futility of their thinking, darkened in their understanding, and separated from the life of God.

You know, one of the great words in Christian vocabulary is the word repentance, but it translates a Greek word that is the word metanoia.

And invariably, it's translated as repentance and correctly so. But as you break that word down, it means to change your thinking. And that is necessary.

To change your thinking implied that we change our thinking about God. I'd love to change Richard Dawkins' thinking about God. Too late for Christopher Hitchens, but they got it wrong.

[16:39] thinking God's thoughts after him. They don't live like the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking, darkened in their understanding, and separate from the life of God.

They needed metanoia, not just to repent of sins. That's true. That could come after you've changed your thinking. The human mind was affected by the fall in the Garden of Eden.

Who can know what powers we lost? We can't know the powers that the first man had. The intelligence of the first man God made must have been immense.

He was given responsibility for managing the earth and its creatures. Psalm 8 says, God gave man dominion over the work of his hands and put all things under his feet, all flocks and herds, the animals of the wild, the birds of the sky, the fish in the sea, and all that swam in the depths of the seas.

What a monumental task was given to Adam. 1 Kings 4, I've got a reference here, verse 33.

[18:07] Yeah. Solomon described plant life from the seed of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls. He taught about animals and birds and reptiles and fish.

A veritable David Attenborough, wasn't he? He was to know about the things. Solomon was commended for the knowledge he had. Well, Adam was given that responsibility of looking after the world, a stewardship in which he rather failed.

Romans 1. Although human beings knew God, think of Adam and all the rest of us now, they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but became futile in their thinking.

And their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal, the invisible, invisible.

The immortal God exchanged his image for images, idols, resembling mortal man, birds, animals, and reptiles.

[19 : 30] Do you see that? In the religions of the world, they'll bow before the image of an elephant, the image of a lion, mythical creatures with four legs.

And Paul is saying that thou is a measure of their stupidity. They've converted the glory of the invisible, immortal God into creatures that crawl along the earth.

So what did he do? Since they did not see fit to acknowledge the true God, he gave them over to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

The human soul and mind needed to be redeemed and renewed. And that's what Calvary was all about. Paul develops, the apostle Paul develops the gospel in 11 chapters in the book of Romans. And if you want to know how to preach the gospel, read the first 11 chapters of the book of Romans. But then chapter 12, verse 1, opens in this way. In the light of God's gracious gospel, the gospel of his grace, I urge you, brothers and sisters.

[21 : 01] And that word urge is one that you would use if you were kneeling down on the floor to plead for your life. I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to present your bodies as living sacrifices, holy, pleasing to God.

Do that as a spiritual act of worship. Do not be conformed any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Young people, maybe older people too, what you do with your body is a measure of your wisdom. For a Christian, his or her body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. you cannot do what you like. And Paul is saying here, offer your body as a living, moving sacrifice, and your brain, the transformation of it.

Offer your body and your brain to the Lord. Imagine the gifts and skills necessary to rule the earth well under God's guidance. Well, we thought about that. man classified and named things.

[22 : 25] He called the lion a lion. He called the duck-billed platypus a duck-billed platypus. God gave man powers of reason to do these things.

Way above them, he has mental powers way above any other creature that came from God's hands. He was not created to live by animal instinct.

The way a bird looks after its young is not like that. God made man special. He made him with mind, emotions, and will.

All that need to be redeemed. We are made uniquely in the image of God. As a result, more serious is killing one human being than millions of cattle and sheep that were slaughtered every day.

I'd like to tell our abortionist supporters of the value of a human being. God's great gift. God's great gift.

[23 : 46] God's great gift. God's great gift. God's great gift. God's great gift. God's great gift. He invites guilty sinners with these words.

Come now. Let's reason together. Let's think this thing through. Just turning the page for a minute to chapter 3 of Proverbs.

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom. Blessed is the man or the person who gains understanding. For she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold.

She is more precious than rubies. Nothing you desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand. In her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are pleasant ways.

All her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, those who lay hold on her will be blessed. God links wisdom with practical holiness.

[24 : 53] And as we read what God has to say, we become good at making friends, coping with our sex drive, handling money, enduring poverty and pain, earning a living, working through times of disappointment, facing a myriad of difficulties in life, including death.

All these human themes, timeless and universal, we are given guidance on in this wonderful book. And by your example, because you're in the church, and by your exercise of wisdom, you can help other people handle life and cope with disaster.

Just pause there for a moment to say that the book of Proverbs is a wonderful Christological book. That's a long word. It speaks of Christ. Christ, we see perfect wisdom incarnate in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That's important to say that. He is confirmed in the New Testament as the very wisdom of God, the very embodiment.

[26 : 19] And he is made unto us wisdom. wisdom. So having Christ, you have wisdom. Being without him, you have none.

To know Christ is to know the ways and the will of God with regard to behavior and living life successfully in the world. The wise person is sensitively aware of God who knows to take some words from Acts 17, who knows that God is not far from any one of us because in him we live and move and have our very existence.

So in everyday situation, he's not far from any one of us. we've just got to reach out and seek him. And we'll know God in the making of daily choices.

This book of Proverbs and our understanding of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, are brought together. What we know about Christ helps us to know, understand the book of Proverbs and what we know about the book of Proverbs helps us to understand Christ.

Christ, Christ in whom are all the treasures of wisdom to be found. In Colossians chapter 2 and verse 3, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[28 : 02] Matthew, a gospel writer, informs us that Jesus is greater than Solomon. Interesting. Solomon, who in his day was the wisest man on earth.

Colossians 2, 9, in Christ all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form. And in him, you, Christian, have been brought to fullness.

He is the head of every power and authority. Matthew again tells us that the Queen of Sheba, the Queen of the South, came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon.

And what does he tell us? But now, one greater than Solomon is here. He's here.

He's here now. So, now, Matthew 13, coming to his hometown, Jesus began teaching the people in the synagogue and they were amazed saying, where did this man get this wisdom from and these miraculous powers?

[29 : 25] And that wisdom he had even as a small boy because Luke tells us the child Jesus grew and became strong and he was filled with wisdom. The grace of God was upon him.

He grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Earlier, we noted the link between Proverbs and the book of James.

James was the younger brother of the Lord Jesus, brought up in the same home, had the same parents. James tells us how we can become like Jesus.

He should know. Does that appeal to you? He's going to tell us how to become like Jesus. Imagine a church full of wise people, pastor, elders, deacons, church members, all wise.

Imagine what a blessing that would be in Wester Hill to make it our goal to place him and he wants us to be wise.

[30 : 34] God made Solomon a wonderful offer, you know. And he said to Solomon, ask whatever you will and I'll give it to you.

1 Kings 3 verse 5, God said, ask for whatever you want me to give you. And what did he ask for? Wealth and riches and power and no. This is what he asks of God. Give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong.

For who is able to govern this great people of yours? And what do we read? The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom.

God said to him, since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked the death of your enemies, but for discernment in ministering justice, I will do just as you have asked.

[31 : 48] I will give you a wise and discerning heart so that there will never be anyone like you in the world.

Have you asked God for wisdom? He gave the opportunity to ask for this blessing. God gives you that same opportunity.

wisdom, very great insight and breadth of understanding, as measureless as the sand on the seashore. What would you have asked God for with that same opportunity?

What are you asking God for? Solomon asked God for the right thing.

Now then, what does James say? We're making a link between Proverbs and James. James chapter 1 verse 5, if any of you lacks wisdom, and who doesn't, you should ask God who gives generously to all who ask him.

[33 : 01] Without finding fault, it will be given to you. Wisdom for good thinking, for wise speaking, and for wise doing. Well, now, 30 minutes.

Just a few more minutes and I'm finished. So, a conclusion. Some of you are teachers and you have the gift. I'm sure there'll be one or two school teachers here this morning.

You have the gift, the ability to impart knowledge. Praise God for that. you are able to pass on information. How good are you at imparting wisdom?

The world is awash with data and knowledge. The internet can tell you how to make a hydrogen bomb, if you want. What would we do without Wikipedia?

Plentiful knowledge can be had. That is not the same as wisdom. But thank God, wisdom is something for which we are encouraged to pray for.

[34 : 14] It is imparted by God's Holy Spirit. The source of knowledge is diligent study, but wisdom comes from the Lord through his Holy Spirit by diligently seeking.

If you seek me, you'll find me when you seek me with all your heart. But a closing warning, much of what Solomon wrote was written before his own heart, turned away from God.

Solomon didn't keep up his wisdom. Never imagine you've completely arrived, will you, brother, sister? Fellowship with the Lord, you can lose.

Not so you can lose your salvation, but you can use fellowship with the Lord, and in doing so you lose wisdom. In wisdom, God created the universe, and he is forever the source of wisdom.

Don't look anywhere else. He gives order and form and purpose and meaning to your life. To serve him in ministry in the world, God makes people wise and understanding.

[35 : 36] Moses counseled the people when they needed leaders. Isaiah said that you people are facing judgment and little boys shall lead you.

Children shall lead you. We lack wisdom. Oh, how we need wise leaders in Britain today. we've got a few idiots in high places. Godless idiots.

Moses said, choose wise understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you to their blessing. Wisdom grows.

It develops consciously during a life of faith and obedience to God. at least five times in the Bible, we are told the starting point, and it is this.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Start there. The fool is devoid of wisdom, we read, there is no fear of God before their eyes.

[36 : 51] You see the difference? wisdom. So if wisdom is to be born and develop and grow and manifested in your life, the starting point must be to fear him.

That's not to be afraid of him, but to reverence him and to respect him and to honor him and to thank him for he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

Your church needs wise people. Edinburgh needs wise people. Your country needs wise people. And the source, Christ has been made unto us wisdom and sanctification and redemption.

All I need is in the Lord Jesus Christ in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells. So let's pray together pray through these matters.

Lord, how gracious you are. You have not treated us as our sins deserve. You've been very patient with us, with our innate sins of foolishness, which we acknowledge.

[38 : 07] And we know that if ever we are to become wise, we're going to need your help. We thank you for the life and ministry of our all-wise Savior and God, the Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we bring you our prayers.

Amen. Amen. Well, we're going to sing a...