

Wisdom's reward, role, and our response to it

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[0 : 00] We'll read the whole chapter. Proverbs 8. Does not wisdom call out?

Does not understanding raise her voice? On the heights, along the way, where the paths meet, she takes her stand. Beside the gates leading into the city, at the entrances, she cries aloud, To you, O men, I call out.

I raise my voice to all mankind. You who are simple, gain prudence. You who are foolish, gain understanding. Listen, for I have worthy things to say.

I open my lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true. For my lips detest wickedness. All the words of my mouth are just.

None of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning, all of them are right. They are faultless to those who have knowledge. Choose my instruction instead of silver.

[1 : 09] Knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is more precious than rubies. And nothing you desire can compare with her. I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence.

I possess knowledge and discretion. To fear the Lord is to hate evil. I hate pride and arrogance. Evil behavior and perverse speech.

Counsel and sound judgment are mine. I have understanding and power. By me, kings reign and rulers make laws that are just. By me, princes govern and all nobles who rule on earth.

I love those who love me. And those who seek me, find me. With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity.

My fruit is better than fine gold. What I yield surpasses choice, silver. I walk in the way of righteousness along the paths of justice, bestowing wealth on those who love me and making their treasuries full.

[2 : 17] The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works before his deeds of old. I was appointed from eternity. From the beginning, before the world began.

When there were no oceans, I was given birth. When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled in place. Before the hills, I was given birth.

Before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place. When he marked out the horizon on the face of the deep.

When he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep. When he gave the sea its boundary so that the waters would not overstep his command. And when he marked out the foundations of the earth.

Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day. Rejoicing always in his presence. Rejoicing in his whole world.

[3 : 16] And delighting in mankind. Now then my sons, listen to me. Blessed are those who keep my ways.

Listen to my instruction and be wise. Do not ignore it. Blessed is the man who listens to me. Watching daily at my doors. Waiting at my doorway.

For whoever finds me finds life. And receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself. All who hate me love death.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your word. It's the word that we love. Thank you for its life-changing power.

Father. And we ask this morning, Heavenly Father, that you'll give us good understanding. By the help of the Holy Spirit. And speak to us the message that we'll encourage and that we need.

[4 : 18] In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, have you ever been accused of having no common sense?

Not since breakfast, anyway. You say or you do something wrong. Amen. Amen. And it prompts the question from someone, where's your common sense?

Because you have at that point shown some lack of wisdom. Proverbs' central challenge to us is to pursue wisdom.

Wisdom is a communicable attribute of God. We can ask him for wisdom and he's willing to give it. The prophet Ezekiel cites Daniel as a wise man whose counsel was often sought, having a reputation for outstanding wisdom.

Daniel was wise and he was righteous, though he never described himself as such. It was the conclusion of others. A man who is wise in his own eyes isn't wise.

[5 : 37] Who was it that wrote the book Humility and how I achieved it? Daniel excelled in wisdom among his peers. The Bible mentions wise women, too, so let's keep the balance here.

Abigail in the Old Testament wisely handled a crisis involving David and her surly and boorish husband, Nabal. His mother named him a stupid fool, which is rather a strange thing to call a child, isn't it?

But Nabal she had to contend with and she persuaded David to abandon his plan of angry vengeance. So impressed was David with Abigail's wisdom, he decided to marry her.

Verse 13 says, To fear the Lord, which in other parts of Scripture says is the beginning of wisdom, to fear the Lord is to hate evil.

There's no wisdom in sin. There's no wisdom in drug addiction. There's no wisdom in gambling. There's no wisdom in drunkenness, adultery, or pornography, or deceit.

[6 : 54] Do you desire to be wise? The principle, seek and you shall find, operates. Verse 17, I love those who love me, and those who seek me will find me.

That's wisdom. If you lack knowledge, you seek out a teacher. If you lack wisdom, you get on your knees and you seek the Lord. Proverbs 2, verse 6 says, The Lord gives wisdom from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

And the wisest people in this world are the people who know God. That's beyond a doubt. It's to our prophet that we mix with the people of God, and wisdom rubs off.

In the parable, there were two kinds of virgins. There were five foolish and five wise. Likewise, in the world, there are two kinds of people.

There are foolish and there are wise. We're all born foolish. Foolishness is sin. Proverbs 22, 15 says, Folly is bound up in the heart of a child.

[8 : 07] And that is every child. It remains there, the scripture says, until it's removed by discipline and God's grace. Who else is foolish in this world?

God. Psalm 14 tells us, in verse 1, The fool has said in his heart there's no God. Now, atheists, our good friend Richard Dawkins, turns the biblical statement on its head.

And what he maintains is that anyone who says in his heart, God exists, is a fool. What do you think? Wisdom is revealed in what you believe and how you behave.

In the Garden of Eden, Satan tempted Eve in her state of innocence, inciting her to disobey God by taking of the fruit of the tree the knowledge of good and evil, which God had forbidden.

And there were three appealing elements to the tree, according to Genesis chapter 3. It was pleasant to the eye, it was good to eat, and it was desirable for gaining wisdom.

[9 : 28] We've got an echo of that in the New Testament. The temptation comes, the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. The human desire to be wise was there from the beginning.

Chapter 8 that we read together, you see wisdom personified. As a female indeed, it's her voice that we hear.

Her voice, she takes her stand, and she cries aloud. She's contrasted with the wicked, wayward woman that we haven't read about in chapters 5, 6, and 7, where the emphasis in her life is on her secrecy, and intrigue, and how adulterers work, mostly in the dark, behind closed doors, and evil furtively stalks its victims.

Lady wisdom, desirable in all her purity, is a delightful rival to the wicked woman, and she follows a different lifestyle altogether. Those who reject her and choose the other one are heading for ruin.

And the developing youth is talked about with his raging hormones, and is exhorted to allow the good lady into his life, rather than the wicked one.

[10 : 54] The good lady to take possession of his body and soul and mind, and he'll come to no harm. This good lady offers lasting pleasure.

Her ways lead to life. Therefore, embrace her. Embrace wisdom. A certain comedian noted for his crudity in foul language and rude manners showed a hint of wisdom.

After five marriages and divorces, he concluded, I want now to meet someone who will make me a better person. Wisdom can and will do that.

Chapter 8, of course, you can't escape. There are some things said that only apply to the Lord Jesus Christ. Wisdom is from eternity.

The Lord Jesus is from eternity. So when you're reading through Proverbs chapter 8, you've got to keep the Lord Jesus Christ in mind. What is said about wisdom can be said about him.

[11 : 59] It's unmistakable. The power and wisdom of God are seen in fullest measure and clearest expression in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is incarnate wisdom. In him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And the Son of God thought, spoke, and acted wisely always.

Matthew 13, 54, we had this verse last week. Jesus teaching the people in their synagogue, they were amazed, saying, where did this man get this wisdom? wisdom. So, those whom God has called, Christ to them is the power and the wisdom of God.

And he has become wisdom from God to us. He's become righteousness, holiness, redemption also. Now, there are five points I want to make from the chapter briefly.

going through the whole chapter, making a few brief comments. All the points begin with, ah, I don't often do that. Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones used to talk about the abomination of alliteration.

[13 : 18] Verses one to five is wisdom's revali. Let's put it that way. By which I mean, wisdom calls out. Her bugle wake up calls.

She proclaims herself good news, not only to the Jewish nation, but to the entire world, to all mankind. Let every human situation on earth be flooded with a surfeit of wisdom.

God would have us all to be made wise, for wisdom offers the best principles to live by, the most valuable benefits to enjoy, and the richest life to live.

Can't lose. Verse four, to you, O people, I call out and raise my voice to all mankind, male, female, high, low, young, old, the bright and the dull, the healthy and the handicapped.

On the last and greatest day of the feast, do we read in John chapter 7, Jesus stood up and he shouted. He shouted in a loud voice so that everyone could hear like wisdom.

[14 : 27] If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. His disciples were commissioned to take his message into the highways and the byways, into every land, into every nation, into every, to every language, into every people.

God has no favorites. He doesn't ask what position you hold and you're firm. He's not concerned about your nationality, your skin color, what you wear.

He's not concerned about your ancestry, your bank balance. He doesn't look for professionals, the well-connected, your parentage, which car you drive, which school you went to, which university you graduated from.

He asks for no references before imparting his favor. But, if you're hungry, if you're thirsty, come just as you are, whoever you are, whatever you've done, Christ will receive you on condition you are willing to change and be changed.

Jesus said, whoever comes to me, I will not turn away, be they poor, blind, crippled, or maimed, or ignorant. Could I just interject there?

[15 : 55] There's nothing esoteric about Christianity. Secret societies abound in this world. Christianity has nothing in its creed that it wishes to hide from anyone.

It has no elite. Exclusive groups requiring ritual initiation, special nomination, or huge membership fees are alien to the Christian ethos.

The church is not a golf club. It's not an exclusive golf club at all. Nothing wrong with golf clubs.

But poor old women have been excluded from some. The Christian ethos is against such things. In this day of grace, the church of Jesus Christ has an open door.

It's for all comers. No one receives royalties from the book we call the Bible. Imagine if someone did get royalties from the sales of Bibles.

[17 : 11] Bill Gates would be a pauper in comparison because what God has done is the single divine author of the Bible has given his book to the world freely.

In his providence, it's the cheapest book in the world. That's almost true. But it's the most valuable book in the world. That's without dispute.

It's often available absolutely free. We strive to make this book as widely known as possible today. My son's a Wycliffe Bible translator along with his wife.

They're translating a language that's a remote tribal language of only five million people. but we strive to get the Bible into people's hands freely and there's no book given away by Christians more enthusiastically than the Bible.

As for this place, Westahales Baptist Church, where you meet, I hope no one was charged admission when you came in.

[18 : 21] Or were you asked to show you a membership card? Or when you came in were you met by bouncers who wanted to exclude the disreputable?

No, that didn't happen. The great word of the Christian gospel is whosoever will may come. And the promises to you and your children and your children's children and to everyone whom the Lord shall call.

So verses one to five, wisdom stood at the city gates as all entered and left and said, this message from me is for you. First Corinthians 1, 26 lists the kind of people who responded to the invitation to Christ's call who were now Paul's brothers in Christ.

Paul says, just think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by worldly standards, not many influential, not many of noble birth, but God chose the foolish things of this world to shame the wise, the weak things to shame the strong.

He chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, so that no one may boast before him. What was Saul of Tarsus when the Lord came into his life?

[19 : 42] He was a murderous fanatic. Well, that's the first one. I'm not going to take as long on the second one. Wisdom and righteousness verses 6 to 13.

Wisdom connected with righteousness. Well, that's an important word in the Christian vocabulary. Verse 6. What is righteousness? It's thinking, being, doing, what is right according to conscience and in the sight of God.

Wisdom includes obedience to God's law, righteousness, and extends to good relationships with God and people and creation.

Wisdom loves what God loves and hates what God hates. God loves righteousness in his wisdom and hates sin. Verse 8.

There is nothing twisted or crooked about wisdom's message. Personal conversion to Christ is in response to a call to repentance and the agent, the evangelist who did that in my life turned one individual to righteousness, to God's salvation, thereby hiding a multitude of sins.

[21 : 07] Christ becomes our righteousness and we are clothed with his righteousness by grace. It's the wise who turn many to righteousness.

He who wins souls is wise. The purpose of Christian ministry, the goal of preaching lies just there to turn people from sin to righteousness.

Thirdly, verses 18 to 21, wisdom's reward. Wisdom is more precious than silver, gold, rubies. Its reward is predominantly spiritual.

Wisdom enriches human life. Chapter 3 and verse 13 says, Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, who gains understanding.

Long life is in her right hand. In her left hand riches and honor, her ways are pleasant and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her.

[22 : 08] Those who lay hold of her will be happy. Wisdom's reward. Spiritual success, spiritual victory, spiritual joy. It teaches you not how to make a good living but how to live well, to live a good life.

Material awards do have some value but they're not enduring. Sound judgment, good understanding, they do endure.

Character endures. Whoever does the will of God abides forever. Wisdom leads us to a substantial inheritance. It fills our treasuries, verse 21, with riches that are not subject to market fluctuations which never lose their value.

You cannot be swindled out of them. Proverbs 4 says, don't forsake wisdom and she'll protect you. Love her and she will watch over you. Esteem her and she'll exalt you. Embrace her and she will honor you.

She'll be a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor. It's all game. She will never get you into trouble or harm you in any way.

[23 : 17] So that's wisdom's reward. Verses 22 to 31. Now this is a real precious section of Proverbs 8.

Wisdom's role or wisdom's function if you like. In the Bible wisdom is directly linked with creation theology.

What do I mean? Wisdom accepts and understands that the universe is the creation of God. A wise position to hold seeing the universe as a harmonious whole sovereignly ordered by the Lord so that all things have their proper period their proper place their proper purpose.

And again we think of Christ especially in these verses and his particular role in creation. his function in creation. Remember John chapter 1 says all things were made by him and for him.

It's an echo of Proverbs chapter 8. By him all things were created in heaven and earth visible and invisible whether thrones or dominions or rulers he is before all things and in him all things hold together.

[24 : 42] without his power the universe would implode. Without him was not anything made that was made. He not only created the universe he sustains it.

Verses 22 to 31 then wisdom was with and in God from eternity before anything else existed and when all things were in the making.

So Christ is the eternal immortal invisible only wise God. He was wise before creation came into being. He was wise in his acts and design of creation at the time viewing creation honestly.

Whatever your profession you will see wisdom in it all. Whether you're a cosmologist the stars the function of the mathematical universe the physicist the chemist the mathematician the astronomer the biologist and the artist they all scan the universe in one way or another and they become acquainted with wisdom as they do so.

Behind their disciplines there's this compelling sense that this was all designed with a purpose. Things around you beneath you above you breathe and proclaim wisdom it's there to be seen.

[26 : 18] The heavens declare the glory of the Lord and the earth proclaims God's handiwork. God was pleased with his creation as the fruit of wisdom and therefore it was all very good.

God says rhetorically to Job when he had a spot of bother with Job. Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?

Tell me if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know. On what were its bases sunk? Who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy at creation?

Someone once said to me, I think it was at the Keswick Convention, I said it from the pulpit rather, the angels clapping their hands saying, well done God, when they saw creation.

Universal order is observable to all but the skeptical. It is to our mental and spiritual prophet that we believe in God's created order.

[27 : 23] Joining with the psalmist who said, how many are your works, O Lord, in wisdom you made them all. So you see how the universe and the Bible both show the way for a wise person to go.

The established order of wisdom and organization that makes life possible. I must admit, I love TV nature programs.

only wish David Attenborough was a believer, but he isn't. But the nature programs are just wonderful.

How can anyone see the wonderful photography in this amazing world, whether it's under the sea or on the land or in the air, and not believe in the wisdom of God?

Stunning views of the world we have access to now with amazing photography. To reveal the stamp of his wisdom over all creation. You see the design, you see the perfection, you see the precision, you see the purpose, you see the balance, you see the variety, you see the color, you see the order, the imagination, the dovetailing, the fine tuning, the breathtaking beauty and wonder of this universe, preaching a powerful, wordless sermon that makes us want to live wisely and tell God how wonderful he is.

[29 : 02] In wisdom you made them all. Psalm 19 more or less says, what God painted in creation, he wrote down in his word.

General revelation and special revelation. So God's wisdom is seen both in the universe and in scriptures. And I view scenes from nature's program with awe and wonder.

I can appreciate why the angels applauded God. And then Paul, overwhelmed by what God has done, oh the depths of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

Paul shows how redemption of that same created universe was a great demonstration of God's wisdom.

You see the supreme manifestation of God's wisdom in how he procured human salvation. What was marred by the fall, creation cursed, human souls judged.

[30 : 22] God had the power and the wisdom to redeem. And he did that through sending his son to Calvary. That was a wise, wise thing was Calvary.

But I must conclude, finally, verses 32 to 36 is the conclusion and it's wisdom's response. Verse 32, blessed are those who listen.

to her voice. They will share God's own joy because God still rejoices in his creation, though marred as it is by human sin, because he is able to make all things new.

And that's where we're at now. That's our hope. Behold, I make all things new. He's going to create a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness.

righteousness. He restores and he renews and he calls the happiness he made for us life eternal. Verse 35, living under his perpetual smile is life abundant.

[31 : 30] The trusting heart says with the psalmist, you have made me known the path of life, you've told me about it. You will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

We've come to the final word of this chapter on wisdom, and wisdom says, if you find me, you find life, and you obtain favor from the Lord.

I have a friend who's considering abandoning the Christian faith. Have you ever thought, folks, what the alternative is to Christ? There isn't one.

Jesus said, will you also go away? When he saw some going away, to his disciples, will you also go away? Lord, to whom can we go to?

Who else can we? You alone have the words of eternal life. You're alive truly when in a right relationship with God.

[32 : 41] This is eternal life that they might know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. So this is the response.

A promise we are given in the book of Daniels. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above, and those who turn many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.

what a promise, eh? What a promise. The wise are those who believe, who acknowledge God for who he is, they bow the knee, and they link up with the creator to join him one day in his heavenly court.

I like, if to win souls is wise, I like to win your soul today. I like to win you for God.

Paul stretched every muscle and nerve that he might save some, that he might win some. And I suppose most of you are Christians.

[33 : 54] You're already one, but maybe there's someone here who's holding between two opinions. Choose today, Christ, and he'll come into your heart and change your life.

So let's pray together. Oh, heavenly Father, the one who is wise in all your ways, we worship you, we praise you. We praise the Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, in whom your wisdom dwelt to perfection and was so wonderfully revealed in all he said and did.

Our Savior, free from all mistakes and error and indiscretion, and oh, he's holy, he's harmless, he's undefiled, and apart from sinners. Well qualified to be our Redeemer, the spotless Lamb of God who alone was able to take away the sin of the world.

He did that successfully, Father, now we can benefit from the loving wisdom and forgiveness of our God, oh, word of God incarnate, oh, wisdom from on high.

We praise you, we praise you, and we thank you. Amen. I'm going to sing your King from to