

Godly Wisdom

PROVERBS 3:13-26

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Today and next week, I'd like for us to just briefly return to our long-term series of lessons from the book of Proverbs. It has been several months since we've studied from Proverbs, and I'd like for us to take two weeks to finish looking at the second half of Proverbs 3 (p. 1005). And as we look at the second half of Proverbs 3, we come back to a passage outlining some of the benefits of wisdom, the idea of making wise decisions. And no matter how wise we think we are, most of us will probably admit that there is always room for improvement. In fact, as I was wrapping up the preparation for this morning's lesson this past Friday evening, one of our members posted a meme online, and the meme says, "If you don't do anything stupid while you're young, you'll have nothing to smile about when you're old." I don't think the old guy is necessarily advocating making any unwise decisions, but he's acknowledging a truth: We don't always make the best decisions when we are young! And what is scary is: Some of our most critical decisions are made when we are young. Some of our most critical decisions are made when we are least wise. When we are young, we decide what to study in school, we decide WHETHER we should study in school, we choose our friends, we decide on a career, we decide whether to get married and who to marry, and so on. Many of these decisions are made when we are young. Hopefully, though, most of us have learned something through some of those unwise decisions. But the point is: In terms of wisdom, there is always room for improvement - not just in our youth, but also as we get older - all of us could use a reminder to make wise decisions.

So, this is the question: As we live our lives, will we make decisions based on the values we see in the world around us, or will we make decisions based on how God would want us to live? All through the Bible, we see this conflict between a worldly way of thinking and a Godly way of thinking. We see it in our scripture reading for this morning, that passage in 1 John 2, where John makes that contrast between a worldly way of thinking and a godly way of thinking. Will we be pulled away by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life? Or will we do the will of God and live forever? We don't always make the right decisions. Sometimes we do. But other times we just do the best we can without inviting God into the decision-making process. Sometimes we just act on some impulse. Sometimes we listen to some terrible advice, or maybe we are tempted, or for any number of reasons, we allow ourselves to do some terrible things. Especially as adults, all of us have lived long enough to make some really bad decisions.

And this is why King Solomon writes the book of Proverbs. As we have discussed before, Solomon writes this book to his sons as they are growing up, and he tries to encourage them to make good decisions. I've

mentioned before that Bruce Dahmen was a loved and respected principal and coach at Memorial High School for many years. He passed away a few years ago - actually, on an out of town trip to watch a former student play basketball down in Kentucky or Tennessee, I believe - that's the kind of man he was. But he was known for always saying, "Make good decisions." Over and over again, "Make good decisions." That's something that high school students need to hear, and that is basically the message of the book of Proverbs, "Make good decisions." And a good part of the book is dedicated to emphasizing the importance of godly wisdom.

And this is where we pick up this morning, with Proverbs 3:13-26. If you will, please look with me at this passage - Proverbs 3:13-26,

- ¹³ ***How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.***
- ¹⁴ ***For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.***
- ¹⁵ ***She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.***
- ¹⁶ ***Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.***
- ¹⁷ ***Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.***
- ¹⁸ ***She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.***
- ¹⁹ ***The Lord by wisdom founded the earth,
By understanding He established the heavens.***
- ²⁰ ***By His knowledge the deeps were broken up
And the skies drip with dew.***
- ²¹ ***My son, let them not vanish from your sight;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion,***
- ²² ***So they will be life to your soul
And adornment to your neck.***
- ²³ ***Then you will walk in your way securely
And your foot will not stumble.***
- ²⁴ ***When you lie down, you will not be afraid;
When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.***
- ²⁵ ***Do not be afraid of sudden fear
Nor of the onslaught of the wicked when it comes;***
- ²⁶ ***For the Lord will be your confidence
And will keep your foot from being caught.***

As we look at this message from God, I want us to notice how Solomon points out that wisdom is a blessing, I want us to notice how he emphasizes that true wisdom comes from God, and then I want us to notice that wisdom is a blessing from God that comes with some amazing promises. If you want to follow along with our outline today, I would suggest just leaving your Bibles open, because God has actually provided the structure to our lesson today.

I. So as we begin, we notice in verses 13-18 that **WISDOM IS A BLESSING.**

In verse 13, ***“Blessed is the one who finds wisdom....”*** This is the first “blessing” in the book of Proverbs. And when we look up what this word actually means, it means ***“happy.”*** And thankfully, in fact, some translations have gone ahead and have translated this as ***“happy,” “Happy is the one who finds wisdom.”*** So we are talking about ***“happiness”*** here! And obviously, when we start thinking about “Blessed this,” and “Blessed that,” we might think of the “beatitudes” of Jesus in Matthew 5, ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted,”*** and so on. That is also the idea of being ***“happy.” “Happy are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. Happy are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied,”*** and so on. We also have a similar statement right at the beginning of Psalms. It’s how the book of Psalms starts, ***“How blessed [or happy] is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.”*** I mention these other passages, because they have something in common, and what they have in common is: This happiness comes to those who actually do something to try to be close to God. These blessings come to those who make good decisions. These blessings are not random, but they come to those who actively work at these things. This happiness doesn’t happen to us by accident. And don’t we see that right here in these opening verses? ***“Blessed is the one who FINDS wisdom, and the one who GETS understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.”*** In other words, Solomon is trying to explain to his children that wisdom comes to those who go looking for it.

Continuing this idea of wisdom being a blessing, he goes on to explain that wisdom is like a treasure, ***“She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her,”*** he says in verse 15. So again, wisdom is something we go searching for. We go after it. We work hard to obtain it. There is some effort involved. Wisdom is more valuable than silver, and gold, and jewels. And if we are not searching for wisdom like we might search for silver or gold or our lost cell phone, then we are basically wasting our time. And as the world’s richest and most powerful man, Solomon wants his kids to know this - he wants them to know that Godly wisdom is a great blessing, it is the greatest of blessings - Godly wisdom brings true happiness. But we need to go looking for it. We need to put some effort into it. Today, we need to get serious about our study of God’s word - always pressing toward spiritual maturity, studying on our own, studying with each other, being here for our Bible classes - on purpose, not just on accident when we forget to turn our clock back each fall.

“Long life is in her right hand,” Solomon says in verse 16, ***“in her left hand are riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”*** He goes on to explain (in verse 18) that wisdom is ***“a tree of life to those who lay hold of her.”*** This takes us back to the Garden of Eden. Way back at the beginning, God put Adam and Eve in a beautiful garden, and in that garden he put two trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The tree of life gave them the ability to live forever, but God tells them not to eat of the other tree, because eating the fruit of the other tree would bring death. Well, of course, they decide to eat from the wrong tree, and they are kicked out of the garden, and death enters the world. And ever since that day, we’ve all been dealing with death. However, if we turn from the first few chapters of the Bible all the way over to the very last chapter of the Bible, we have the door into heaven cracked open just a bit, and John tells us that in heaven he sees, ***“a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations...”*** (Revelation 22:1-2).

That is an amazing picture! In heaven, we will once again have full access to the tree of life. But in the

meantime, we have just a small taste of it in godly wisdom. We might think of godly wisdom as a support that helps hold up a long span, a support like we might see under a large bridge of some kind. Wisdom is pictured by Solomon as ***“a tree of life.”*** In a sense, we can have just a piece of that life right now if we choose to pursue godly wisdom. So, first of all, godly wisdom is a great blessing. Godly wisdom brings great happiness.

What does this mean for us? It means that we need to go looking for it. We need to pursue it. We need to chase it down. We need to put some effort into it. Like Jesus said, ***“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*** (Matthew 6:21). What happens if I get a notification on my phone that a valuable package has been delivered on my front porch? What if it’s something I’ve been waiting for for several weeks? What if it’s worth hundreds if not thousands of dollars? If I know it’s sitting out there in the open, I’d be thinking about it. I’d be looking forward to going home and digging into it. The same thing goes for godly wisdom. We need to be constantly thinking about it. We need to be digging into it, because godly wisdom is a blessing, it is our access to the tree of life. And that is Solomon’s first reminder.

II. **As we go back to our text, we find a second idea here as Solomon goes on to explain that TRUE WISDOM DOES COME FROM GOD.**

And specifically, he points out that true wisdom is demonstrated by God in his creation, ***“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth,”*** Solomon says, ***“by understanding he established the heavens, by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.”*** In other words, we see evidence of God’s wisdom in the world around us. As we just talked about a few weeks ago, we see evidence of God’s design in what he made - in the heavens, in the earth, in everything around us, even in our own bodies. We think of David praising God in Psalm 139 when he sang out to God,

¹³ ***For You formed my inward parts;***

You wove me in my mother’s womb.

¹⁴ ***I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;***

Wonderful are Your works,

And my soul knows it very well.

We see evidence of God’s wisdom, then, in the creation, even in our own bodies. We are amazed by what God has done for us. We are amazed at what God has done all around us, and so we understand that true wisdom comes from God.

III. **But as we get back to the text, we find a reminder that GODLY WISDOM COMES WITH SOME PROMISES.**

If we live by this wisdom, if we keep these words, Solomon says, first of all, that this wisdom will end up being ***“life for your soul and adornment for your neck”*** (in verse 22). I’m not really into “neck adornment,” I don’t do necklaces, but I did grow up in the 80’s, so I’m thinking of Mr. T! Mr. T. had some serious neck adornment, didn’t he! But the idea is: If we live by these words, we will do well. We will have something to brag about, in a sense.

Secondly, Solomon also suggests that if we live a life of godly wisdom, then we will ***“walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble.”*** We know that some bad things can happen when we stumble. Bones break, we get injured. Of course, Solomon is speaking spiritually, here. But it’s even more significant: If we live according to God’s wisdom, we won’t get tripped up spiritually.

Thirdly, Solomon also says that if we live according to God's wisdom, we will not be afraid when we lie down, and when we do lie down, our **"sleep will be sweet."** The older I get, the more I seem to appreciate a good night's sleep. When I visit people in the hospital, one thing we often pray for is that the patient will be able to rest. As many of you know, it can be very hard to sleep in a hospital. But, generally speaking, if we live a life according to God's wisdom, we don't stay awake at night terrified of what might happen in the future, but we rest well. What a huge blessing that is! Earlier, we talked about wisdom being more valuable than silver and gold. I know people who would give all the silver and gold they have just for one good night of sleep. When we live right, there are some things that we don't worry about at night. And that is what Solomon points out in verse 26, **"...for the Lord will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught."** In other words, if we live by God's wisdom, we don't need to fear what others need to fear when they have NOT been living wisely. And I would point out that Solomon seems to know this from his own experience. Solomon experimented with a lot of things - he tried wine, women, and wealth - and his conclusion here is that God's wisdom is the way to go, so he communicates this to his own children.

After this, we have a series of "do nots," a list of warnings about what NOT to do. Hopefully we can look at that a bit next week. But for now, we have these promises. If we live according to God's wisdom, there are some good things that we've been promised here.

Conclusion:

I don't know whether you notice this, but we've really just been looking at the VALUE of wisdom - we haven't really been looking at what we actually need to DO. For that, we look to Jesus. We might say that Jesus is wisdom in the flesh. Jesus is the embodiment of wisdom. And we do have a number of passages referring to Jesus in this way. Not long after he was born, the Bible says in Luke 2:40 that, **"The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."** Then, even as a 12-year old kid, we remember how the Bible says (in Luke 2:52) that, **"...Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men."** As Jesus started teaching in the synagogue, the Bible tells us in Mark 6:2 that, **"...many listeners were astonished, saying, 'Where did this man get these things, and what is this wisdom given to Him, and such miracles as these performed by His hands?'"** It was obvious to those who heard him speak that his wisdom was supernatural. Later, in Luke 21:15, Jesus promised his disciples that after he left this earth he would give them **"...words and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute."** And then, in heaven, we have the elders, and the angels, and the living creatures all praising Jesus as the Lamb, **"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing."** Jesus, then, came to this earth as wisdom in the flesh. We've been studying these words from Solomon, but there was a time when Jesus referred back to the **"wisdom of Solomon,"** but he said (referring to himself) that, **"...something greater than Solomon is here."**

As wisdom in the flesh, Jesus came to this earth to give up his life for us. We respond with obedient faith. We turn away from sin, we confess Jesus as being the Son of God, we allow ourselves to be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins, and the Christian life begins. If you would like to study further, let us know. If you have something we need to pray about, we would invite you to write your concern down and bring it to the front. But if you are ready to obey the gospel right now, you can let us know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...