



CHAPTER 20: WALKING IN WISDOM

Proverbs

If you have a Bible, and I hope you do, I want to invite you to open with me to Proverbs 1. If you're not sure where Proverbs is, just kind of open up to the middle. You'll be around Psalms and take a right one book. Proverbs 1. Wisdom book in Scripture. Probably the most prominent wisdom book in the Scripture, and yet, amidst all the wisdom that is contained in the book of Proverbs, there's also a good bit of confusion; confusion about how to understand individual Proverbs, and then confusion about how this book, as a whole, is to be understood.

The Question We Anxiously Ask ...

We live in a day where the most common question that we not only constantly ask...almost anxiously ask... "What is God's will for my life?" This is prevalent across the church today. That is a constant question. "How do I know God's will for my life? What is God's will for my life?" Talking here about things that are not spelled out directly in Scripture. The Scripture says specific things about specific circumstances, but there are so many circumstances to be faced...some of them small, some of them big...on a daily basis, that the Word doesn't speak directly to whether it's what we eat or what we wear today. Small decisions like that; big decisions like who to marry, what career path to choose, where to live.

How do we know God's will in these areas of our lives? Obviously, Scripture speaks to those...all those things in some way. The Scripture talks about taking care of our body. That's going to inform the way we eat or honoring God with the way we dress, or Scripture's going to speak into who we marry, and it tells us not to marry a non-believer. So, there's immoral career paths that you should not choose according to Scripture.

However, when it comes down to the details of what this looks like, we want to know what God's will is. Our hearts desire God's will, but we have a hard time transitioning from our hearts to our minds and making decisions. We're afraid...almost constantly afraid that we're going to do the wrong thing, that we're going to make the wrong decision with different situations we face, and we just wish we could have it spelled out right in front of us. It would make it a lot easier.

If that were the case, it would miss the whole point, and so what I want to show us today in Proverbs...this book as a whole...is a picture of incredible comfort and incredible confidence that you can have when you're walking through decision-making processes, when you're walking through decisions that you make on a daily basis. Incredible comfort and confidence that you can have that you are living out and following the will of God based on the picture we see in Proverbs.

So, what I want us to do is I want us to read the first seven verses here of Proverbs. They're kind of an introduction to the rest of the book. They tell us the purpose of the book. Proverbs is divided into two major sections on a whole. The first nine chapters are kind of a preface to the book, talking about wisdom, giving us reason why we need to read the rest of the book because wisdom is valuable. We need to get wisdom, treasure wisdom. We see that over and over and over again in the first nine chapters.

Then, you get to Proverbs 10 and from Proverbs 10 to 31, what you see is different Proverbs, different wise sayings. A lot of them two liners, three liners, maybe four liners that are written to be memorable... lodge away in your mind and in your heart that take the Word and apply it to practical things that we face in our lives.

Most of this is written by Solomon, not all of it. Other parts written by different folks or at least compiled by different folks, but most is written by Solomon. What I want us to do is I want us to look at these first seven verses. They give us a purpose statement, basically, for the entire book and then focus on one particular verse that's going to guide us through our time in Proverbs today. So, we'll start in Verse 1. Proverbs 1:1.

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth - Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Now, I want you to underline that last verse...verse 7. Key verse. All throughout these first seven verses, we see these words used almost interchangeably. "Wisdom", "instruction", "insight", "prudence", "knowledge", "discretion". When you get to verse 7, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.*"

In fact, you turn over to Proverbs 9:10, which is getting near the end of this first major section, and you see this verse repeated again. It's kind of bookended. Look at Proverbs 9:10. "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" You might underline it there. That's...this is the memory verse we've had this week as we've started reading through Proverbs. This is the verse I want you to etch in your mind this morning. "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" I want us to think about the relationship between the fear of the Lord, between worship of the Lord and wisdom. I want you to write something down: "Wisdom is the fruit of a right relationship with God." It's, basically, Proverbs 1:7 reworded a bit.

Wisdom is the fruit of a right relationship with God. Wisdom springs from, results out of right relationship with God. When we walk in fear of the Lord in works for the Lord, we will walk in wisdom. Our wisdom in daily decisions is dependent on our relationship with God and having a right relationship with God, and this makes total sense when you think about it. Think about it in light of what we have been doing over this last year.

Creation...

We've been reading through the story of Scripture. Go back to creation with me. Think about Genesis 1 and 2. We saw man in complete harmony with the Creator. Genesis 1 and 2, before sin entered into the world, Adam and Eve in complete harmony with God, perfectly relating to God, and as a result of that, we saw man in complete harmony with the creation, in complete harmony with each other...Adam and Eve.

We talked about that last week in Song of Solomon, which I'm glad that sermon is behind us. I got the kindest note from a sister in our faith family who wrote me a note and thanked me for that message. She and her husband, last week, this couple in our faith family, was celebrating their 62nd wedding anniversary. 62 years of Song of Solomon. That's good.

So, that's the picture we had Song in Solomon, Genesis 1 and 2. Man and woman in complete harmony with each other...not with just each other, but the world around them as a result of their harmony with God. That was the picture. They weren't wandering around saying, "What is your will for our lives?" God made it clear. "Don't eat from this tree. Enjoy one another. Enjoy me. Be fruitful and multiply."

Fall...

So, okay. They were living in harmony with God and with each other. So, it wasn't a worry, "Am I going to make the wrong decision?" It was clear. You know what happened. They take the command of God, and they disregard it, and this results in the Fall. The result of the Fall, twofold: man's relationship with the Creator is destroyed. Were it not for the grace of God, they would have been dead on the spot, and man's relationship with God, since that day, has never been the same. Never.

However, not just man's relationship with the Creator destroyed, but man's relationship with the creation distorted. Their relationship with each other was immediately affected, and the relationship with the world and creation around them was immediately affected, and it makes sense. Once they were disconnected in their relationship with God, it had a huge affect on everything around them.

What I want you to notice here is there's a vertical component and a horizontal component here. There's a vertical component. Our relationship to God, with God...that has a direct effect on the horizontal component...our lives in this world, our relationship with other people in this world, our decisions that we make on a daily basis living in this world. All of that flows from what's going on in our relationship with God. There's a vertical component that affects the horizontal component. We see that. So, the picture is, in order to have a right relationship with the world around us and to walk with wisdom in the world around us making wise decisions, we need a right relationship with God. Wisdom is the fruit of a right relationship with God.

So, now we come to Solomon, and this is what I love about how we are reading the Bible this year because we have a tendency to take a book like Proverbs and just picture it like it's just kind of floating out there as its own book with all these random sayings. What we're doing is we are seeing where Proverbs fits into the story of redemption, fits into this picture of redemptive history that we're walking through.

So, a couple of weeks ago, we got to 1 Kings 4, and we stopped in redemptive history. Over the last two weeks, we've been reading Song of Solomon and Proverbs. So, what I want to do is I want us to take us back to where we stopped in redemptive history. Turn back with me to 1 Kings 3. I want us to look at 1 Kings 3 and 4 to remind ourselves of what's going on when we come to the book of Proverbs. What's the background? What's the history behind this? This book didn't just appear out of nowhere. I want us to hear where it came from.

Look at 1 Kings 3:5. We read the parallel version of this in 2 Chronicles 1 a couple of weeks ago, but you might remember what happened. 1 Kings 3:5, *"At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in dream by night, and God said, 'Ask what I shall give you.'"* So, "Ask whatever you want me to give you." Solomon begins to pray. Just go down to verse 7. *"And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in the place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many of be numbered or counted for multitude."*

So, here's what he asks for. Verse 9, *"Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, that I may discern between good and evil, for who is able to govern this your great people?"* So, he asks for an understanding mind, for wisdom.

It pleased the Lord that Solomon has asked this. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself a long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall rise after you."

In other words, He says, "I'm going to make you wiser than anybody before you and anybody to come after you," in this Scripture of the Old Testament. "You are going to be the wisest," and that's exactly what we see. Go over to 1 Kings 4:29. This is the last paragraph we read before we paused to go into Proverbs and Song of Solomon. Remember what it said?

1 Kings 4:29,

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure, and breadth of mind like the sand on the seashore, so that Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the people of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all other men, wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol, and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the wall. He spoke also of beasts, and of birds, and of reptiles, and of fish. And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom.

So, that's where we stopped. Now, it makes sense why we stopped to read Proverbs at this point. Verse 32 says, "He spoke 3,000 proverbs." That begs the question, "What did they say?" So, that's why we're stopping to read Proverbs now, but what I want us to see is I want us to, basically, take this book of Proverbs and put it right here in this context of redemptive history because what's happened is Solomon has become king. He has asked for wisdom. God has given him wisdom beyond that of anyone else, and right after this, what

we're going to read in the week to come...starting in verse 5...what Solomon does is he starts to build a temple.

He makes preparations to build the temple. In 1 Kings 6, he builds the temple. In 1 Kings 8, he dedicates the temple, which is what we're going to talk about next week, but here's why I want you to see this. What I want you to see is the relationship here in the context of redemptive history between wisdom and worship because, at this point in redemptive history, we are at the height, at the apex of wisdom and worship in Israel's history. The wisest man, the wisest king ever. The temple being completed; that which David longed to do, but God reserved for Solomon to do. It's being completed where the glory of God is going to dwell among His people. This is at a point in history, redemptive history, where, in the Old Testament, wisdom and worship are coming together like they have never come together before, and like they will never come together again in the Old Testament. This is the apex of the mountain.

Redemption Anticipated in Solomon...

God-centered worship at the temple.

So, when you think about this, redemption anticipated in Solomon. In the reign of Solomon, we're seeing two things. Number one: God-centered worship at the temple. That's what's going on historically here, and we're going to not spend a lot of time talking about the actual temple, because we're going to do that next week, but just like Proverbs 1:7, 9:10 said, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" The wisdom of Solomon is tied to the worship of Solomon. His relationship with God affecting his relationship with each other, with other people and creation around him.

So, when you look in Proverbs, what you realize is this is not just a book about wisdom. This is most definitely a book about worship as well. You see exhortations all over Proverbs to revere the person of God. At least 18 different times, we see "*the fear of the LORD*" mentioned. "Fear the Lord." "Revere the Lord." "Respect the Lord." "Stand in awe of the Lord." At least 18 different times.

This is where wisdom starts. This is the spring from which wisdom flows. Revere Him as the almighty Creator of all things. I'm going to throw out some different verses. We don't have time to turn to all of them but just random verses in Proverbs. 3:19 and 20, "*The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds dropped down the dew.*" Proverbs 14:31 reminds us that the Lord is our maker. He is the one who formed us and fashioned us. He is the one who created us. This is where wisdom starts with an acknowledgement of God as our Creator.

This is why you can take the most brilliant atheist in the world today with all kinds of intellectual knowledge, and Proverbs and Psalms and the rest of Scripture would label him a fool, and it's not because he doesn't know anything. He has tons of knowledge. There are a lot of smart atheists, but the reason he is a fool is because all of his knowledge is viewed through a perspective that is godless; that denies the existence and the truth and the reality of God, and as a result, the lens through which he views everything in the world is ultimately empty. That's foolishness. It may look like wisdom in the world, but it is foolishness compared to the wisdom of God. Wisdom springs from an acknowledgement and a reverence for the Lord as the almighty Creator of all things. Wisdom starts with worship of God as Creator.

The Lord is not only the Creator; He is the sovereign sustainer of all things. Proverbs 16...this is all over Proverbs 16. 16:1, *"The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD."* Verse 3, *"Commit your work to the LORD, and your plans will be established."* Verse 9...a very common verse, *"The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps."* You may make plans, but the Lord is the one who establishes your steps. Proverbs 16:33, *"The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD."* Chance does not rule. Man does not rule. God rules. God reigns over everything. He is the author and the sovereign sustainer of all things. He is guiding, leading, all things. All times are in His hands.

He is the sovereign sustainer of all things, and the Lord is the eternal judge of all peoples. He's the eternal judge of all peoples, and *"A just balance and scales are the LORD's; all the weights in the bag are his work."*, Proverbs 16:11. Proverbs 11:21 says, *"Be assured, an evil person will not go unpunished, but the offspring of the righteous will be delivered."* All throughout this book, we see different things the Lord hates that are an abomination to the Lord, and the reality that God will judge all peoples ultimately. This is cause for fear.

You, right where you're sitting at this moment, were fashioned and created by the infinitely wise, all powerful Lord and King over all creation, and He holds your days in His hands. You may make plans, but He guides, and one day, He is going to judge you. That gives us pause. That brings about a holy fear for the Lord, and this is the spring from which wisdom flows. We revere His person. We rejoice in His grace.

So, we continue on with this picture of the Lord in worship in Proverbs. Proverbs 3:3-6, talking about steadfast love and faithfulness that God gives, and the verses that are very common to us. *"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths."* Proverbs 28:12 says that when we confess our transgressions, we receive mercy from God. Even His discipline...Proverbs 3:11-12...is evidence of His love for us. So, we revere Him. We rejoice in His grace.

We receive His Word. Proverbs is filled with instructions to heed the word of the Lord, hear the word of the Lord. Proverbs 13:13, *"Whoever despises the word brings destruction on himself, but he who reveres the commandment will be rewarded."* We receive His Word. It's part of wisdom.

Wisdom springs from His Word, and we remember His purpose. The picture throughout Proverbs is we see the way God acts and the way God displays His character, the way God reveals His glory, and that's what the temple was all about. This whole worship life of the people of Israel is about revering Him: rejoicing in the grace He gives, receiving His Word, and remembering His purpose to make His glory known in all the world. All of that is spread throughout Proverbs.

God-given wisdom for the king.

So, what we see at the time when these are being written, is God-centered worship at the temple which leads to, second, God-given wisdom for the king. We've got both of these together. God-centered worship at the temple, and God-given wisdom for the king, and the height of wisdom is displayed here in all of these Proverbs that we have written down.

Now, how do we understand these Proverbs? Just to give an overview of what we've got in these 31 chapters, what we need to remember, first and foremost...and you've got this in your notes; this is huge...Proverbs are guidelines for living, not guarantees in life. That's

big, when you read through Proverbs, to realize these sayings, particularly Proverbs 10-31. They're guidelines for living not guarantees in life. Really the whole book.

Here's what I mean by that. You look at Proverbs 3:2 where it says, "If you obey the commandments of the Lord then you will have long days in this life." Okay. That's a good guideline for living, but the reality is, when you look at David Brainard, Robert Murray M'Cheyne, Henry Martin, missionary to India, all of these brothers who were giving their lives in radical abandonment to the commands of Christ, they died in their early 30s. So, it's not like a steadfast, "Well, if you obey the Lord then you're going to live past your early 30s." In the same way that you see, at one point, Proverbs 11:8 says, "*The righteous is delivered from trouble.*" That's a general guideline, but we know we have persecuted brothers and sisters all around the world who are pursuing righteousness now who are not being delivered out of trouble.

Now, it doesn't mean the Proverbs aren't true; doesn't mean they're all false. What it means is that's not how they're supposed to be interpreted as promises to claim like this happens. "This is like a lucky charm you pull out. Claim this one. It's going to be that way every time." That's not the way Proverbs are intended to be interpreted. Instead, what we've got are general guidelines for living, for our lives that are very helpful. We need to remember these kinds of things. They're patterns, but they're not promises that we claim in every single circumstance that we face in life. Guidelines for living, not guarantees in life.

What I did in your notes here is I wanted to give you an overview of just some of the recurring themes. This is, by no means, exhaustive, but I want you to just kind of see, get a feel for some of the themes that we're seeing over and over again in these sayings in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs puts a lot of focus on the family. Exhortations in two main areas: one is to love your spouse loyally. There's a little bit of flavor of Song of Solomon in Proverbs 5:15-19 where husband and wife are encouraged to enjoy one another sexually and emotionally in love with one another. You see, in Proverbs 6, at one point, a husband's jealousy for the affections of his wife is looked at as natural and good.

Obviously, we have in Proverbs 31, a picture of a godly wife, a godly woman. It's one of the most intense passages in Proverbs, come in this area with warnings against adultery. Proverbs 2, Proverbs 5, Proverbs 6, Proverbs 7 and Proverbs 9 all have stern warnings. The kind of warnings that I think we would be wise to meditate on regularly. I don't want you to look; I don't want you to turn here. I just want you to listen to this with me. Just meditate on this for a second. Proverbs 7:6, "*For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.*" So, basically, he's wandering toward a woman in darkness when no one else is around.

And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now at the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, "I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows." [She's cloaked in this religious language.] "So now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey..."

With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that this will cost him his life.

And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol [hell] going down to the chambers of death.

Men, if there is any inkling in you wandering toward, in thought or deed, another woman, meditate on Proverbs 7 and see yourself as an ox walking willingly to a slaughter, and let it soak in that you do not know what you are doing will cost you your life.

Obviously, this is written from Solomon's perspective, a man, the whole picture and throughout the Proverbs from man's perspective, but the picture, obviously, even to look at it from the woman's perspective, to encourage sisters across this room to stay close to your husband. Do not be found wandering away from them; stay close to your husband. Do not let your house, your life, be a way of death. These are wise words. Love your spouse loyally.

Then, Proverbs exhorts parents, "Instruct your children intentionally." Instruct your children. In Proverbs 23:13-14, it makes clear that there is a place for the rod. It's funny. This morning, I usually get up early and come here early in the morning to study and pray, but due to a couple of circumstances, I stayed at home and studied and prayed there and then came with the family, which was a good, humble reminder for me of all that's involved with bringing the family together on Sunday morning. There was, at one point, when one of my sons was not being very obedient, and I looked at him, and I said, "Buddy, I've been meditating on Proverbs 23:13-14 which does not bode well for you at this moment, because it says the rod will save you from death, and I'm about to bring salvation." So...okay. I didn't say exactly that. I thought that.

So, the picture is, parents...and I know there's a lot of discussion of how this looks...but parents, no question in the book of Proverbs, must discipline and instruct their children. This is a responsibility. If we do not discipline our children, then they will rebel against authority, ultimately God. It is important, out of love for them, that they receive discipline from us, however that looks...instruction from us. This is not the responsibility of a school teacher or someone in the children's ministry. This is the responsibility of every single parent in this room to discipline our children. That's the picture. Instruct them out of love for them, for the family.

Proverbs among friends. Proverbs encourages us to avoid evil company. Avoid evil company. We imitate our friends. So, Proverbs 24:1, for example, says, "*Be not envious of evil men, nor desire to even be with them, for their hearts devise violence, and their lips talk of trouble.*" We sent out some high school students who were graduating from college, and I would just say to every high school, college student...I mean this is across the board...but some of the greatest counsel I received in high school and college was to be wise with the friends that I surrounded myself with, because that has every effect on how our lives end up looking, every effect. Avoid evil company.

Promote good companionship. We see positive pictures of selfless, sensible friends...honest friends all throughout Proverbs. "*A friend loves at all times,*" Proverbs 17:17. Proverbs talks about words. "Guard what you say. Don't speak in haste." How many words do you regret

because they were spoken in haste? Proverbs says, "Be quiet. Think first." Verses in Proverbs say, "The tongue has the power of life and death. The tongue has the power to heal and destroy. The tongue has the power of reward and damage." Proverbs 10:18-21, "Guard what you say and guard what you hear." Proverbs talks about how to receive words, words of criticism, words of flattery that aren't always good. Guard what you hear. Guard what you say.

With wealth: Proverbs over and over again tells us that hard work is valuable. Proverbs tells us in 14:23, "*There is profit in work,*" and says over and over again don't be lazy. "Oh, sluggard, get up and do something. That's wise. Do something." Get up out of your bed and work, and so there's a high value on work here, but it's not work to gain more and more barns for ourselves. Hard work is valuable. Proverbs also talks about helping the needy; it's vital. Proverbs makes strong, very harsh statements about those who neglect, who ignore the poor. Proverbs says in 29:7, "*A righteous man knows the rights of the poor; a wicked man does not understand such knowledge.*"

All the Proverbs says about health, about wealth and poverty, it seems to be an overarching truth that Proverbs teaches that extreme wealth and extreme poverty are both undesirable. There's a lot we could dive into there that we, obviously, don't have time to, but it's interesting, when you look at it...the book of Proverbs...we see people who are righteous and are wealthy, people who are righteous and are poor. We see people who are evil and are wealthy and evil and are poor. So, there's no ground to say, "Well, if you're righteous, you'll be rich, or if you're evil, you'll be poor," or vice versa. Instead, what we see, Proverbs 30:7-9, "*Give me neither poverty nor riches.*" So, there's emphasis on wisdom that is found in contentment in the Lord.

So, we see all these different kinds of truths coming together, but what I want us to see today is that we can talk for days about all of these different things. There's so much to saturate there, but instead of thinking about all these specific Proverbs, I want us to come back to this overarching picture of worship and wisdom and how the two go together. "*Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.*" Worship is the beginning of wisdom. A right relationship with God brings about a right relationship with the world around us.

So, that's the picture we see at this point in Solomon's life, but if we've read any more in the Old Testament, we know what's coming. It's not going to be long before Solomon turns his heart away from the worship of God, and he actually turns his heart to the very things he has warned us not to turn our hearts toward; toward wealth and women, and as a result of his worship life being misdirected completely, and his wisdom wanes, and Solomon's life ends nowhere close to how it looks here in 1 Kings 3 and 4 and 5 and 6, 7, 8, which shows us a mirror of ourselves. Don't miss this: left to ourselves, we are prone to worship the things of this world and to follow after the wisdom of this world.

Redemption Achieved in Christ...

What we see in Solomon is possible and present in every single one of our simple hearts in this room which means we need someone else besides Solomon to help us, and that's where we see that Solomon was only anticipating redemption in his life and setting the stage for now...I want you to see how Proverbs fits into redemptive history and how reading the book of Proverbs, although it does not mention the name of Jesus once, leads us to love Christ and to lean on Christ because this is redemption that would be achieved in Christ.

Now, turn with me to Luke 2, and I want to show you something really, really, really, really, really cool. Luke 2:41, this is where my study in Proverbs just came alive this week as I saw these truths that we talked about, this relationship in redemptive history between worship and wisdom and those coming together: God-centered worship, God-given wisdom.

Now, look with me at Luke 2:41. As you're turning there, you know, we don't have a lot of material about Jesus' boyhood, about His growing up, about His teenage years. We see Him born, and then He's feeding 5,000 people, and there's not a lot in between, but this is one of the glimpses that we do have. Look at what Luke says in Luke 2:41.

Now his parents [Jesus' parents] went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. And when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the group they went a day's journey, but then they began to search for him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem searching for him.

After three days, they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers [those who taught wisdom], listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at His understanding and his answers [which means they started asking Him questions]. And when his parents saw him, they were astonished. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress." And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And they did not understand the saying that he spoke to them. And he went down with them and came to Nazareth and was submissive to them. And his mother treasured up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in [what?] wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man [vertical and horizontal].

Do you see picture here? This glimpse we have of Jesus. He is sitting where? At the temple, at the place where the glory of God dwells, and He makes a startling statement when He asks the question, "Did you not know I must be in my Father's house?" He is saying that, "This, the temple where the glory of God dwells, this is where I belong." That's a bold statement.

Only heightened it even more when you get to John 2 when He's outside the temple. He's beginning His ministry, and the picture we have in John 2, and He identifies Himself with the temple. That's what John 1 had set the stage for. "We beheld his glory, the glory of the one and only full of grace and truth. We have seen the glory of God in Jesus." Jesus identifies Himself at the temple in John 2. "You want to encounter the presence of God? You want to behold the glory of God? Here I am." From this picture, we see Him teaching others wisdom, growing in wisdom, "*increased in wisdom and stature in favor with God and man.*" So, don't miss what we are seeing here in the New Testament; the whole picture we're going to see in the gospel.

Jesus is the true temple.

First, Jesus is the true temple. He is where the presence of God...He is where the glory of God dwells. This is the reality of the incarnation. Do you want to see the glory of God? Do you want to experience the presence of God? You come to who? You come to Jesus. He is the true temple, and in this way, Jesus enables the worship of God. Don't miss it. New Testament, gospel truth: man will not meet with God in a building to worship Him; man will

come to Christ to worship God. Man will encounter the glory of God in the person of Christ. He is the true temple. He is the one who makes worship possible on the cross. He died to reconcile man to God. Curtain of the temple torn in two. Man is now able to relate to God to worship God truly as a result of Christ.

Jesus is the perfect king.

He is the true temple, and then second, He is the perfect king. He is the king that Israel has been waiting for. David failed; Solomon failed. So on and so on and so on, which is why we're going to see...we don't have time to turn to it. Matthew 12:42, Jesus is speaking to religious leaders, and He says, "*One with greater wisdom than Solomon is here.*" Solomon who was the wisest you know in Israel's history has nothing on the wisdom of Christ.

Now, we know that Jesus' wisdom is greater than Solomon's, but here's the question I want you to ask: Why? Why was Jesus' wisdom greater than Solomon's wisdom? Wisdom is the fruit of a right relationship with God. Solomon was not in a perfect relationship with God. He was in an imperfect relationship with God, and as a result, that flowed into imperfect wisdom and a life that failed. Jesus, however, was in a perfect relationship with God; perfectly relating to God, fully relating to God. Identified as the temple with the Father and, as a result, wisdom flowing from Him. The very wisdom of God flowing from Him. Jesus embodies the wisdom of God. He is wise exactly as the Father is wise because of His unity with the Father. That's why Colossians 2:3 tells us that in Christ are "*all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*" In Christ.

Don't miss this: what Solomon anticipated, Christ achieved. The picture in Solomon and his heart was stained by sin. Jesus comes on the scene perfect without sin in perfect relationship to God with perfect wisdom and His relationship with the world around Him. The true temple and the perfect king, which means to every single person in history and...catch this...to every single person in this room, if you want to walk in wisdom and not waste your life in folly, then there is only one path to take. It is the path of faith and trust in and surrender to Jesus Christ. Just like Proverbs presents us over and over again, the way of folly and the way of wisdom, so the gospel presents us with the same choice. A way of folly: follow after this world. Be smart. Be wise according to the standards of this world, indulging in this world out of right relationship with God and lose your life, or the way of Christ to trust in Christ and what He has done on the cross to reconcile you to God to be united in relationship with God, and from that relationship, to have wisdom flow.

Redemption Applied in Us...

This is where it gets...as if that's not good enough...this is where it gets just breathtaking. Redemption applied in us. When you get to 1 Corinthians 1...write this down...1 Corinthians 1:26-31, it says that Christ is our wisdom. "We were the foolish things of the world," Paul says. We were like the things that are not, and God called us in Christ, and He says in Christ, "He has become your wisdom. He has become wisdom to you."

In Christ we live in continual worship.

This is mind-boggling. It's baffling, breathtaking and overwhelming. Think about this. When you trust in Christ, when your life is united with Christ, two things: first, in Christ, we live in continual worship. What Paul says later, in 1 Corinthians 6:18, is that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit, that we walk in the presence of God. We enjoy the glory of God on a moment by moment basis by His Spirit's presence in us. He houses His presence in our bodies, in us. This is glorious truth.

In Christ, we live in continual worship which means, of all people, we revere His person humbly. We walk in reverence of God. 1 Peter 1, "*We walk in reverent fear.*" He's our Creator, our Sustainer, our Judge, our Savior, and we live in His presence on a moment basis. There is never a moment where there is not reverence and awe.

We walk in continual worship revering His person humbly, rejoicing in His grace wholeheartedly. We know the truth of Proverbs 28:13 in an entirely new way, "*Those who confess those sins receive mercy.*" Praise God. We know that in its fullness. We rejoice in His grace wholeheartedly. We receive His Word consistently. We have the Word of Christ. He says to us in Matthew 7, "*Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock.*" "Hear my word. Put it into practice. You will be wise. Guaranteed. Hear my word. Put it into practice."

Receive His Word consistently, and we remember His purposes daily. I wish we had time to go to Ephesians 1 where we see the wisdom of God in Christ linked to the glory of God in redeeming a people for Himself in human history. The picture is God is redeeming a people for Himself and all for His glory, and all of this is what we walk in: the purpose of God, the Word of God, the grace of God, revering God. We live in continual worship as those who have the Spirit of Christ in us which means...check this out...because, through Christ, we have been reconciled to God to walk with Him in worship.

In Christ, we walk with continual wisdom.

What flows from that? The fruit of a right relationship with God is what? Is wisdom. So, now we walk with continual wisdom. That's the point of what we've seen. Wisdom is the fruit of a right relationship with God. Through Christ, in Christ, we have a right relationship with God which means wisdom is flowing here. Jesus is our wisdom.

What does that mean? How is Jesus our wisdom? Two ways: number one, He gives this wisdom to us whenever we ask. The New Testament makes that clear. If anyone lacks wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. Brothers and sisters, every single time you ask for wisdom, there will not be one time when the Father in heaven looks at you and says, "No." He will give it freely whenever we ask, but here's the beauty. Not only does He give it to us in Christ, but second, He guides us in His wisdom wherever we go.

Here's the beauty. Jesus doesn't say...for Christ to be our wisdom, doesn't mean that He says, "Here, do this. Make this decision. Now, go do it. Take this direction. Now, go do it." Instead, He says, "Here's what you need to do, and I'm going to live in you, and I'm going to lead you, and I'm going to guide you in putting that into practice." That's good.

Brother or sister in this room, just let this soak in: you are in Christ. You are in Christ. In Christ are all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, which means, in every single decision you face this week, you have Christ who has all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom in His Spirit living in you, guiding you and leading you through everything you're walking through. You have no reason to be worried. You have no reason to be anxious, and you have no reason to wonder if you're going to make the wrong decision. If you're trusting in Christ, abiding in Christ, He is good. He will lead you and guide you. He's not going to even lead you to, "Well, let me find this subjective feeling that feels the most right to me," or flip the coin or tell God, "Well, if I do this and you do this, then I'll do this." Like, we see nothing of that in Scripture. Like, leave behind that and trust in Christ who is wisdom from God in you. He's giving you wisdom. Ask Him for it. He's guiding you in wisdom. Abide in Him.

The Answer We Gladly Receive...

Here's where we come back to this question that we anxiously ask, "What is God's will for my life?" The answer we gladly receive: God desires for me to know and follow His will so much that He lives in me and leads me to accomplish it. That is good news. I'm not saying that it's easy. I'm not saying that there's not work involved here. I'm not saying you just close your eyes and, like, it pops right in front of you or something...what you're supposed to do. There's still agonizing. There's still wrestling. There's still pulling out the posters like Heather and I have done before and putting pros and cons, and, "All right. What are we going to do?" Still wrestling through this and researching this or that. There's still all that work, but we're not doing it alone. We're doing it with the Spirit of the wisdom of Christ Himself in us, Him leading, Him guiding. What we discover...don't miss this...is that the goal is not an answer to our question. The goal is intimacy with Jesus Christ Himself, and it's not about getting to a destination, brothers and sisters, Christ is the destination. It's not as much about knowing His will. It's about knowing Christ and trusting in Christ and leaning on Christ and walking with Christ and enjoying Christ as our wisdom at every step of the journey that He leads on.

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