

## Making a Meaningful Life

Proverbs 1:1 – 7

**Proposition:** Through the fear of the Lord wisdom enters our hearts so we might live godly lives.

### Application:

1. Develop the *fear of the Lord*.
  2. Devote yourself to the *Word of God*.
  3. Determine to ask for wisdom in *prayer*.
  4. Dedicate yourself to the *Lord Jesus*.
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3000 years ago, teachers in colleges of the Ancient Middle East, would often give exams by stating the first half of a wise saying and students would finish the saying. In our culture there are a lot of wise sayings. So here we go, I will say the first part of a famous saying and you shout out how it should end.

A dog is a man's.... (best friend)

Don't cry over.... (spilt milk)

Don't count your chickens... (before they hatch)

Many hands.... (make light work)

Never judge a book.... (by its cover)

Early to bed, early to rise... (makes you healthy, wealthy and wise) – Benjamin Franklin

Here is a bonus question:

The pen is mightier.... (than the sword)

Today we are looking at a passage from Proverbs. Proverbs is called wisdom literature. There are five books in the Bible that are called wisdom literature: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. Each book teaches a certain aspect of wisdom. The wisdom of Job teaches us *how to suffer well*. The wisdom of Psalms teaches us *how to pray well*. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes teaches us *how to enjoy well*. The wisdom of the Song of Solomon teaches us *how to love well*. What does the wisdom of Proverbs teach? The wisdom of Proverbs teaches us *how to live well*. It has been said that many know how to make a living but only few know how to make a life. In today's message we will explore some thoughts on how to live well. The main theme from this passage is that through the fear of the Lord wisdom enters our hearts so we might live godly lives.

### I. Theme of Proverbs (1:1)

A proverb is a wise saying taken from day-to-day life with the goal of helping us decide on the best way forward given a range of options. Proverbs is a course in the skill of living. It was

written for any person who wishes to grow in wisdom. Apart from Jesus, Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. His great wisdom was esteemed by many (1 Kings 10:23, 24). His wisdom has been compiled and preserved for us. We have access to Solomon's personal library.

## **II. Purpose of Proverbs (1:2 – 6)**

How does the Bible define wisdom? For the most part wisdom means skill (Ex 28:3). Wisdom is the skill at living life. Wisdom teaches us to do the right things and do things right. The goal of Proverbs exhorts us to allow wisdom to govern and guide our lives. Who should be governed and guided by wisdom? The Statue of Liberty was an icon of freedom to the early settlers of the US. On the statue is a caption that reads: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" These are the kind of immigrants that built the US. Like the Statue of Liberty, wisdom summons the naïve, the young adult and the wise person to come and enjoy the treasures of wisdom. The invite first goes out to the naïve.

*The Naïve (1:4a):* Who are the naïve? They are the progressive thinkers, inclined to endorse a way of life that is contrary to moral integrity. Mottos of the naïve may be as follows: "everything is permissible;" "ignorance is bliss;" "Don't confuse me with the facts;" "We go along to get along." In the end the naïve endorse an everything is permissible way of life. The naïve are taken in by the craftiness of deceit. For instance, a naïve person may support a ruling to legalize same sex marriage and also support a ruling to make it illegal to display the 10 commandments on public property. To the naïve it is ok to teach the virtues of same sex marriage to five-year-olds in public schools, but God forbid you should allow the public to see statements such as "honour your mother and father, do not steal, do not commit adultery and do not murder?" To the naïve good is evil, evil is good. Right is wrong and wrong is right. They do not ponder the dangers of an *everything is permissible* way of life. *The basic need for the naïve is prudence.* Prudence put brakes on an *everything is permissible* way of life. Prudence helps the naïve not to be so quick to believe persuasive narratives and endorse permissive lifestyles.

Wisdom's first invite goes out to the naïve. The second invite goes out to the youth.

*The Youth (1:4b):* Youth need wisdom because they have a future ahead of them. We don't want to build our future on a series of repeated mistakes and bitter experiences. We have likely heard the saying, "*an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.*" This means that it is better to avoid making bad choices than pick up the broken pieces after making them. *The basic need for youth is discretion.* Behind the word discretion is "*to devise*", to have the skill to make workable plans for the future. Discretion gives young adults ability to make realistic goals and the blueprint to reach them. Planning the future without discretion can lead to disappointment and regret; planning the future with discretion leads to the realization of one's goals.

The naïve need prudence, the youth need discretion. We come to the last invite, the wise.

*The Wise (1:5):* Youth refers to young adults, wise refers to the more aged. Why do the wise need wisdom? A wise person is still growing in the Lord and therefore needs to be wiser in the things of God. Mature believers can never say “I got this Christian faith figured out. I’ve been a believer for decades so I’m good. I know enough about God, what more do I need to know?” The knowledge of God is without end. The will of God is still unfolding. The work of God remains to be done. The wise need wisdom because the wise are still growing in the Lord. The way to increase in wisdom is to get rid of the “I know it all attitude,” and instead accept that we are still in need of wise counsel. *The basic need for the wise is counsel.* The sense of the word *counsel* is “rope-pulling.” As we journey through the many and often puzzling stages of life, wise counsel is like a tugboat steering us through stormy waters.

The older I get the more life loses its black and white simplicity. The clean tight package of my faith from days past has been re-shaped through the experiences and challenges of life. The wise person needs wise counsel to steer through the ambiguities and perplexities of life.

The naïve need prudence; young adults need discretion; and the more senior people need wise counsel. These are but three facets of wisdom.

Just as a house is built on solid concrete, wisdom is built on the fear of the Lord.

### **III. Foundation (1:7):**

*The Fear of the Lord:* What is the *fear of the Lord*? Let me answer that by putting two phrases side by side. Both phrases express an intense relationship with the Lord: the *love of God* and the *fear of God*. The love of God leads to obedience. Jesus said, “*if you love me you will obey my commandments.*” Paul said, “*for the love of Christ compels me.*” Notice the relationship between love and obedience. The *fear of the Lord* is not the fear of God’s judgment. There is nothing unusual about that kind of fear. Every person fears the judgement of God. This is not the type of fear that leads to wisdom. The fear of the Lord that leads to wisdom is to be in awe of Who God is that we can’t help but worship Him. As we ponder the profound majesty of God our desire will be to draw near to Him in worship. Those who fear the Lord will desire to seek Him and learn from Him (Ps 2:11). The love of God leads to obedience, the fear of God leads to worship. through worship, by drawing near to the Lord, we discover Who He is, and find His wisdom (Isa 33:6).

Through the fear of the Lord wisdom enters our heart so we might live godly lives. The opposite of one who fears the Lord is the *fool*. Rather than fear the Lord the fool *denies* the Lord.

*The fool denies the Lord:* If a student does not like a certain teacher, they will not take his/her class and therefore miss out on the content of the course. In the same way, we cannot access to God's wisdom unless we accept the Source of wisdom, Who is God. The fool is invited to take wisdom's course, but he never enrolls. He does not like the Teacher – Who is God. How does the Bible describe the fool (Ps 14:1a)? The fool is not someone devoid of intelligence. He may in fact hold two PhD's; earned a Nobel Prize in theoretical physics, be on faculty of a prestigious Ivy League university (Rom 1:22). A fool is a fool because he denies God, has zero desire to seek God, therefore disdains the wisdom of God. If he is obstinate in his unbelief, he will remain a fool. His contempt for wisdom is rooted in his unbelief.

*A Fool is Bound to His Folly:* Not only is a fool obstinate in unbelief he is also hopelessly bound to sin. Parents can remove the folly of a child by discipline. Even though a child does wrong he or she is weakly bound to wrongdoing and discipline will break the weak bond (Prov 22:15). But a fool has a strong bond to his folly. Folly is embedded in his nature. The bond between a fool and his folly is so strong that even severe correction may not break the strong bond (Prov 27:22). Folly is taped to a child but nailed to a fool.

The *fear of the Lord* and *foolishness* are on opposite extremes. Through the fear of the Lord wisdom enters our hearts so we might live godly lives. For the fool wisdom will always be elusive until there is repentance from sin and faith in Christ Jesus.

If you desire to acquire wisdom here are four applications.

1. **Develop** the *fear of the Lord*: It is through the *fear of the Lord* that God's wisdom enters our heart. Pursuing wisdom without the fear of the Lord is like owning a vault full of precious gems without owning the key to the vault. The fear of the Lord is the key to the treasure of wisdom.
2. **Devote** yourself to the *Word of God*: It is not possible to grow in wisdom apart from the Word of God (Ps 119:97 – 100, 103, 104).
3. **Determine** to ask for wisdom in *prayer*: How did Solomon become a wise king? By asking God for wisdom. In the same way we will be blessed with the gift of wisdom by asking in faith (James 1:5, 6a).
4. **Dedicate** yourself to the *Lord Jesus*: He alone is the source of all wisdom (Col 2:3).