

Topics from Proverbs: Wisdom - Dave Stough

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church. Knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. The preaching of the cross is foolishness, sounds like foolishness to the world, but to those of us who are saved, it is the power of God. Amen.

Amen. There's an old story of Sherlock Holmes and his friend Watson going on a camping trip. Has anybody ever heard this illustration? Okay, good. I heard it's an old one, I just found out about it weeks ago myself. So anyway, as the story goes, Holmes and Watson go on this camping trip, and they pitch their tent, and they go out and do all kinds of fun activities during the day. When the evening rolls around, they partake in a little, let's say, liquid refreshment. They probably had too much of. And when night comes, they're sound asleep. And in the middle of the night, they wake up, and Holmes, Sherlock Holmes, nudges Watson and says, Watson, look up.

[1:24] What do you see? Watson says, I see stars, stars and more stars. Holmes says, well, what does that tell you?

Watson says, well, it's a big universe. He says, I think astronomically that tells me there's millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets.

He says, I can see the Big Dipper, and I can see the North Star, and it's probably about 3 o'clock in the morning. Meteorologically, it tells me weather looks good for tomorrow morning.

And throws in there theologically, it tells me, you know, this is a big universe, and we're just one little speck, just a little part of the whole. He's like, well, why, Holmes?

What does that tell you? He goes, Watson, you idiot. Somebody stole our tent. You know, a person can be very intelligent in their assessments and sound profound in their answers, but actually be missing out on what God wants them to know the most.

[2:45] We live in a world full of deception. It's Satan, the father of all lies, has so thoroughly saturated with his view that even we as Christians sometimes are willing to overlook what we need to know the most.

Today we are looking at our third topic in the book of Proverbs, wisdom. And as an upfront disclaimer, I'm not going to sit here and pretend like I have never made foolish choices, and those of you who know me, I don't have to say that.

I did, however, receive encouragement from preparing for this study from the Scripture when I was reminded that wisdom is really something that comes from outside of us.

It actually comes straight from God. And a brother in the Lord recently reminded me, and Scripture teaches that really we're all born foolish because we're born sinners.

So while I was preparing this message, I was led to focus on, because of those reasons, focus on how we can take this wisdom that God has, and hopefully in some small measure from doing the study and hopefully from sharing today, we can find some practical steps to applying God's wisdom to our lives.

[4:21] Now, the Bible does proclaim that wisdom flows straight from God's character. It does not come from human nature, but like salvation, it is a gift from God.

Proverbs 2.6 says, For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. James 1.5 says, If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who will give to you generously and without rebuking you for doing it.

This morning, we're going to look at a couple passages in Proverbs and one in James that lay out what I think are three foundational truths that if we walk out of here thinking about them, will give us help in applying God's wisdom or letting His wisdom come through our life.

So can you turn on that overhead there? The first of these, read with me if you would. We're going to look at Proverbs 1.1-7.

Can you guys hear me good back there? Is this going to be one of those recordings that's not loud enough or it's got bad background noise or do you know? Okay. Proverbs 1.1-7.

[5:43] These are the Proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel. Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise.

Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives. To help them do what is right, just, and fair. These Proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.

Let the wise listen to these Proverbs and become even wiser. Let those who understand receive guidance by exploring the meaning in these Proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles.

The fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. The Hebrew word for wisdom in this text is *chakmah*. I don't know if I said that right. It doesn't matter. The word is a noun that means to have or possess knowledge that gives you skill.

[6:54] It is translated in English different ways. Sometimes it's translated *shrewd*, maybe like in a business deal, or in specifically what I read, *shrewd* in the act of warfare.

It's also used to show one's understanding and skill on how to administrate things or solve problems. It's used in conjunction with the word *prudence* to think ahead before you're acting.

Now you notice Solomon says in verse 3 that the purpose of the Proverbs is to give instruction in wise behavior and to help us to do what is right, just, and fair.

He invites those who are simple and those who are already wise to read it. It will give knowledge, insight, and discernment to both. Now, I thought it kind of interesting that the words *correction* and *discipline* are used three times in these verses and often are used throughout the Bible.

Correction and *wisdom*, or *discipline* and *wisdom*, are used a lot together in the same verse. Why is that?

[8:11] Well, one thing for sure we can know here. The ones who are willing to take *correction* will be the ones who are wise. Proverbs 15.33, *For the fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom, and before honor comes humility.*

So, since we are sinners and rebellious by nature, the wisdom God gives has to come with *correction* and *discipline*, right?

So, verse 7 says, *To fear God, for that is the foundation of wisdom.* So, *fearing* is not running away from Him, right?

Fearing is regarding Him in your heart as the one you need to listen to. It is realizing that He is the Almighty, all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere at the same time, God, who created everything and is the one who will actually judge us as believers at the judgment seat of Christ.

Wisdom and moral character cannot be separated. Proverbs 9.10 says, *The fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is instruction, and results, and good judgment.*

[9:41] *Wisdom* is first and foremost a matter of a person's will to honor God before it's a matter of intellect. *Fearing* God, as I said, is not running away from Him, but is running to Him.

Not *fearing* God is running away from Him. Not *fearing* Him is running away from Him. Romans chapter 3 says this. You remember that passage in Romans 3 where it lays a picture of mankind out apart from God in their life?

And it goes on to say that no one seeks after God, and one of the curses of that is that there's no fear of God before their eyes. So it is a curse not to fear God.

Fearing God is coming to Him through Christ, through the provision He made for us at the cross. where He died for our sin. *Fearing* God is placing Him where He belongs, which is at the seat of our

will.

So the one who died for us has something to say about how we need to live in the here and now. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. So point number one, if you got that, she's already got it up there.

[11:03] The people who are willing to take correction and discipline because they fear God are the ones who will receive wisdom from Him. The second truth that I found when going through Proverbs is found in chapter 2.

Chapter 2 of Proverbs. Verses 1-10. My son, if you will receive my words and treasure my commands within you, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding. For if you cry out for discernment, lift your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver and search for her as hidden treasures, then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.

For the Lord gives wisdom and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice.

And He preserves the way of His godly ones. Then you will discern righteousness, justice, and equity in every good course. For wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

[12:31] A person who is submitting to God's Spirit will be searching what He has already revealed in His Word to us. Not only will a wise person want to know what God is saying, He will also be asking God, it says, to cry out for discernment.

Be asking God, how does this work in my life? Silver and hidden treasure are located beneath the ground, aren't they?

Normally, when they first mine out, so, they require digging. This analogy tells us that wisdom is something that needs to be sought after.

Yes, God gives wisdom, but He also tells us we need to seek after it. It takes a willing person to dig for it. Why would God not make wisdom easier to gain?

Well, as you're reading here, and I think many of you already understand, wisdom requires character development to obtain it. He placed wisdom as a hidden treasure under the ground for those who really want it, just like those who desire silver or gold don't mind digging for it, so those who desire God's wisdom don't mind taking the time to dig into the Word.

[13:58] That's where the Holy Spirit meets you. So, if a student is too lazy to study for a test that they need to study for, that they know they need to study for because they're worried about passing, and they fail the test, what do they have to complain about, right?

What does that tell you about the student's desire to pass? If a Christian doesn't take the time to study what God has so greatly preserved for us in His Word, then we shouldn't be surprised if the lack of understanding is prevalent when it's needed.

The Lord Jesus Christ, the one in whom is stored up, in Him is stored up all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, the one who laid down His life for us is asking us, how much do you love me?

How much do you want to walk with me? God freely gives wisdom to those who want it. We need to know what God is saying in His Word so His Holy Spirit can use that and put that in our minds. So, second point. God's Spirit speaks to us more clearly when we take time to study and dig out what He has revealed in His Word.

[15:35] The third point for applying God's wisdom in our lives is the more we know God's character, the easier it will be to recognize His voice.

voice. The more we know God's character, the easier it will be for us to recognize His voice. We have a lot of thoughts going through our heads, don't we?

Do you guys remember the story in John chapter 21 where Jesus appears after His resurrection to the disciples who were fishing? And they don't know it's Him because this is a post-resurrection body and He does alter Himself and then He reveals Himself.

But in this case He's standing on the shore and they're out in the boat. And it's almost like three years earlier when Jesus first called Peter. And Peter and John and others are in this boat. And He goes, little children, have you caught anything? And they're like, kind of like the first time, we've been fishing, I haven't got anything. Well take your net and put it on the other side.

[16:42] And so they did it and the fish were so much it's breaking the net. And all of a sudden John realizes, I guess they didn't understand His physical feature, they didn't recognize His voice, but from that event he remembered the mercy and the kindness that he showed at the beginning.

And he knew that was God's, he knew that was Jesus. And he goes, it's the Lord. Remember that? So that's kind of what I'm talking about. When we understand God's character, it could be a lot easier for us to hear His voice when we're in our everyday lives.

So as we go through our day, we get a lot of different thoughts that go through our head, don't we? Now some are easy to distinguish what's from God and what's not, and other ones, they're not so easy.

A lot of times we're just busy doing our things and we're not really paying attention, kind of like they were in the boat, right? So we need to learn to distinguish between the voice of godly wisdom and Satan's deceptive pleas in our minds.

Jesus said in John 10, my sheep hear my voice, and I give unto them eternal life. As we grow in the Lord, we learn to more easily hear what He's trying to impress upon our hearts.

[18:07] There's a passage in Hebrews chapter 5. It talks about distinguishing good from evil, and it uses the analogy of milk and meat for understanding the word, and it says solid food belongs to those who are mature.

That is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to distinguish good and evil. Now, the characteristics of our Lord's voice, we'll say, I'll just use it that way, the characteristics of His voice, I understand we're probably not dealing with audible voices, but you know what I mean, what we're understanding in our spirit.

The characteristic of what He's saying, I think, is best described in James 3.17. Some people say, I think maybe I heard Dave say this a couple weeks ago, Proverbs and James.

James is like the New Testament counterpart to Proverbs on the topic of wisdom. And James really nails it here in describing what this voice, this wisdom from God is like.

It says, the wisdom that is from above is first of all pure. than peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds, impartial and sincere.

[19:47] Look at that. It's first of all pure. God's voice in your inner man, the thoughts from God to you will have in your mind, they are always affixed to holiness.

The Greek word for pure here could be used of a spring gushing forth water with absolutely no impurities in it.

First Corinthians chapter 13 says, agape love hates what is evil and clings to what is good. God is holy. That is His character.

He does not change. He cannot change. Therefore, the wisdom that comes from above is pure. God's holiness can be seen in all that He does, even in the way He forgives sin.

So, all the wisdom that comes from Him will be founded in and never separated from holiness.

God's wisdom is first of all pure. Now, what is the first thing, wisdom from Satan, which James describes as earthly, natural, and demonic.

[21:04] What is the first thing it is? Anybody know? Fill in the blank. The wisdom from below, from beneath, is first of all, give me some feedback, somebody.

Selfish. Selfish. Worldly. Well, we know that Satan, he's not going to come and directly say, well, this is impure, right?

I agree, it's worldly, it's selfish. But I was taking a tact here, I was thinking of the way Satan normally operates first, is the wisdom from beneath is first of all, independent.

And Satan's first tactic is to get you and I to do things our way. Isn't that right? He doesn't come up saying, hey, you need to do something wrong. He just comes up and says, you know, you could try

this, you know, you're smart, you can do it this way.

What do you think he did to Eve in the garden? Satan deceived her by convincing her she could do her thing, her things, or I should say, do it her way and everything will be alright.

[22:23] So she believed, in Genesis 3 it says she believed that lie, Adam followed her and look what we have today. I think we have the same type of thing going on over and over again.

It might be Satan's best tactic. right? So what was really the sin there? She desired knowledge apart from God.

From trusting what God said. She was going to go in contradiction to what God said. She wanted this knowledge apart from what God said. She, in essence, believed that God was like holding out on her.

Right? And everything's going to be okay. I can do it this way. Then the solicitation, the lie, the direct lie, oh you won't die.

That comes out. God's like, he knows that you want to be like him. He doesn't want you to be like him. That's all a lie. But there was an appeal there to wisdom apart from trusting God who knows what's best.

[23:29] So the impulses of this fallen flesh we live in, the pressure from this world, and Satan's demons will craftily try to convince us of this.

But those who fear God will choose to trust God when the heat is on. Because we know the wisdom from above is first of all pure.

It's always pure. Everything after this that it is, when it's peace loving, it's still pure. When it's gentle, it's still pure. The second thing, the wisdom from above is peace loving.

This simply means that a wise person loves peace. He or she will do all they can to maintain peace without sacrifice and purity.

The Greek word carries with it the idea of an absence of emotional distress, an absence of that peace. Now man's wisdom leads to the exaltation of self, does it not?

[24:37] Isn't that what we see or what we tend to do? So when that happens, when the flesh is exalted, there's usually sin at some point.

And where there's sin, there's a lack of peace. The world's wisdom says, hey, don't worry about the sin, just sweep it under the rug so we can all get along.

It'll be okay. God's wisdom says, eh, you ain't gonna have any peace with that. God's wisdom says, confess that sin. My peace will come to you and it'll keep things together.

So God's wisdom is first of all pure, then peace loving. then it is gentle. The Greek word is sometimes translated considerate.

It carries with it the idea of showing moderation in your responses. At times, it involves patience. It, like all of these qualities, could be cross-referenced with the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

[25:45] The gentle person does not deliberately cause a fight. A gentle person will not compromise God's truth, but will be measured and gentle in their actions and in their responses.

Wisdom from above is forbearing. I read this, it's kind of cool, I had to write it down, I can't remember who said it, but wisdom from above is forbearing, not overbearing.

The next word listed for God's wisdom is reasonable. Reasonable. The New Living Translation says willing to yield.

The King James Version says easily entreated. When people approach you and need to tell you their side of the story or maybe they have something to request of you, God's voice inside of you will sense that and make it easy for that person to do that.

That you will accommodate them. It means that you're approachable, submissive, and open to reason. Now I didn't say open to foolishness, but open to reason. Being approachable and willing to submit when needed to promote the truth is the voice of God's Spirit in you.

[27:10] He has to give you the power to do this though, right? It's the wisdom from above. The wisdom from above is reasonable. Next, it's full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds.

And when you hear that phrase, the fruit of mercy and full of good deeds, does a person come to your mind that you know or maybe you read about in the Bible? And those are great illustrations.

James has a lot to say about faith in action. Full of mercy and good deeds. To be full of something in the biblical sense means to be controlled by it.

The person who follows God's wisdom is controlled by mercy. I read in the Strong's Concordance, it's the moral quality of showing kindness towards someone who needs it.

I'm drawn to the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis when I think of this. Remember where their father died and his brothers came to them pledging themselves as his servants because they thought he was going to be rightfully justified in having revenge.

[28:28] So they pledged themselves as servants to him. Do you remember his response? Do not be afraid. Am I in the place of God? I know you meant this for evil, but God meant it for good.

Isn't that the source for us to show mercy is when we realize God's picture on this? We all realize first of all how much we need his mercy and how he's given it to us.

That is the motivation to show mercy. The wisdom from above is full of mercy and good deeds. I believe the natural outflow of showing mercy to somebody is to follow it up with some kind of act of kindness, some kind of deed that you will do for them that they need.

Excuse me. What did Joseph do? He assured them, hey, don't worry, God sent us here so that we might be preserved and I'm going to take care of you guys here in Egypt.

It's all good. We're brothers. He took care of them, their families, their whole tribes financially. There was a big drought and famine. James 3.13 says, Who is wise in understanding among you?

[29:56] Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. The wisdom from above is full of mercy and good deeds.

It also says that the wisdom from above is impartial. To be impartial is to be free from the worldly value system that distinguishes between people primarily based on external features or some kind of worldly value system.

Some kind of temporal factor. Godly wisdom does not show favoritism based on those things. At the cross there's neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but we're all one in Christ.

The wisdom from above is impartial. The last characteristic of God's wisdom in this list is sincerity. This word primarily means genuine, lacking pretense or a prideful showing.

So you get a thought in your mind about, man, I did good on that one. And there's this idea that people are going to see you. We all deal with it, right?

[31:20] But the wisdom from above, you can say, well, I know that's not from above. And Paul said, I don't boast except anything in the cross, except the cross of Christ.

So, now, it's lacking pretense or a prideful showing. It's translated in several versions without hypocrisy.

Not being afraid to admit weakness. Just being who you are. Not trying to be like someone else in order to impress people. Where does that come from?

I mean, we know it comes from above, but doesn't that come from an understanding that you know you're accepted and loved by God not based on anything you do. That's the source of being sincere.

The wisdom from above that is sincere. So, in Proverbs, wisdom is personified by a woman who prepares a big feast.

[32:31] And she goes out and she's inviting all to come in. come in and enjoy the feast. God's wisdom is available to all who want it.

A person, can you put those three points up? A person who chooses to trust and fear God will take his correction.

God's spirit will communicate with us more clearly if we've taken the time to dig out the treasures in his word. And the more we know God's character, the easier it is to distinguish his voice and what he's saying to us in our minds.

We live in a dying and crazy world. God's love. I know you know that. But it just seems like it's worse and worse all the time.

We need God's wisdom to be who he wants us to be in this world. God's love. So when the pride of our fallen human nature and the impulses of this flesh cry out, there is a provision.

[33:50] You know, and I'm just praying from this study that God helps me with this. But when we submit those things, our fallen human nature and the pride that we have in our flesh's impulses, and we quit listening to the world's ideas, and God's word flows through us, then there's this life.

That's the abundant life that Christ has for us. It's found in the realm of faith where we meet him, where we hear him speak wisdom to our heart.

God's wisdom will enjoy an abundant life because they connect with him there. Let's pray.

Father, thank you. Thank you so much for your word. Thank you that you're faithful. Lord, I'm just thankful that each of us, we don't have to worry about the past.

We don't have to worry about the future. we just have to trust you. We don't have to worry about seeing your voice and hearing your voice and seeing your hand in our lives.

[35:08] Help us to gain from this study. In Jesus' name. God bless you. Amen. Yes. Yes.

Correct. Thank you.