


The Art of Wise Living Part 1 The Virtues of Wisdom

TALKING POINTS WALKINGPOINTS

Leader's Guide

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Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. –Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. –Joshua 22:5

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

Note: For each of the following questions, refer to the **Sermon Summary** inside.

Observation—*What do I see?*

- 1 Connect these dots: Solomon is the primary author of the Book of Proverbs (1:1)—how does Solomon's request of God (1 Kings 3:9) relate to the purposes of the Book of Proverbs (1:2-4)?
- 2 What key terms are defined in the sermon from Proverbs 1:2, and what do they mean?
- 3 What contrast is presented in Proverbs 1:7?
- 4 How do student perspectives differ from teacher perspectives (vv. 3–4)?

Interpretation—*What does it mean?*

- 5 What is the significance of “the fear of the LORD” as the beginning of knowledge?
- 6 What does it mean that wisdom is “appropriately applied knowledge”?
- 7 How does corrective discipline contribute to wisdom?
- 8 What is the role of discernment in wise living?

Application—*What do I do with this?*

- 9 Where do you think you might be relying on knowledge without applying it wisely?
- 10 We should respond to God's corrective discipline with submission and teachability, recognizing it as a means of growth rather than merely punishment. How do you think you're doing in that area?
- 11 Pastor Doug urged us to ask “Is it wise?” instead of “Is it wrong?”
In what areas are you doing well at that? In which ones, well, “not so much!”?
- 12 What could you do to cultivate the fear of the Lord in daily life? Be concrete!
- 13 What concrete action can you take this week to pursue wisdom?

- 1 Solomon asked for wisdom—specifically the ability to distinguish between right and wrong (1 Kings 3:9), and the purposes of Proverbs are to know wisdom and instruction, to discern understanding, to receive instruction in wise behavior (righteousness, justice, equity), and to give prudence, knowledge, and discretion.
- 2 Wisdom = skillful living; instruction = corrective discipline that leads to changed behavior.
- 3 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
- 4 The student receives wisdom's benefits (v. 3), while the teacher gives prudence, knowledge, and discretion (v. 4).
- 5 It establishes reverence, submission, and obedience to God as the foundation for all true understanding and wisdom.
- 6 Wisdom is not merely knowing truth but consistently acting on it in real-life situations.
- 7 Discipline exposes error, corrects behavior, and trains individuals to align with God's order, producing growth and righteousness.
- 8 Discernment enables a person to distinguish between good and evil, wise and foolish choices, and even between good and better options.
- 9 Be prepared with your own brief, concrete thoughts on this, but let group members go first.
- 10 Ditto.
- 11 Ditto.
- 12 By practicing reverence, obeying God's commands, acknowledging His authority, and remembering accountability before Him.
- 13 Intentionally apply a specific proverb (e.g., listening before speaking), seek counsel on a decision, or change a pattern that leads toward folly.

Sermon Summary Proverbs 1:1-7

When asked what he wanted, King Solomon requested that God give him wisdom, that is, the ability “to distinguish between right and wrong” (1 Kings 3:9; 1 Kings 4:29–31). Not only did God give Solomon wisdom, but He also blessed him with riches beyond imagination. Solomon had it all. But it was his great wisdom that was the source of his success. Proverbs may well be the most practical book in the Bible as it teaches the art of skillful living in multiple aspects of everyday life. While the wisdom of Proverbs may be stated in a way that is simple to understand, it is profound in its life-changing force. Reading a given proverb only takes a few seconds, but applying it takes a lifetime. Wisdom is appropriately applied knowledge.

Verse one serves as a title to the entire book of Proverbs as Solomon is the principal author, and it's believed that he is the one who compiled all of these proverbs together into a single volume (Prov.1:1). Solomon was the third king of Israel, being the son of David and his wife Bathsheba. Remember Saul was the first king, followed by David and then Solomon. Like his father David, Solomon loved the Lord, but also like his dad, he had some serious flaws (1 Kings 3:3). Wisdom can be defined as “appropriately applied knowledge.” It is the application gap that gets us, right? Solomon knew the right thing to do; he just didn't always do it.

Solomon goes on in verses 2-7 to state the purpose of this book—the end product it is designed to produce (Prov.1:2). Wisdom in Hebrew means “skillful living”. You can also become highly skilled at the art of “living well.” Next, we come across the word “instruction” (Prov.1:2). It refers to corrective discipline that results in changed behavior. The idea here is not self-discipline, but rather the kind of wisdom-producing discipline that comes from God Himself. When we disobey God, there is usually a painful consequence that comes to us as a reminder that we have stepped out of bounds. This painful reminder comes to us not for the purpose of guilt, but for the purpose of growth. This kind of corrective discipline is a key building block for cultivating wisdom (Hebrews 12:5-11). If you will submit to this discipline and learn from it, you will become wise and life will be kinder to you. You will experience a greater degree of God's blessing.

The word translated as “discern” in v. 2 is very important. The Hebrew word behind it refers to “the learned ability to distinguish between things that differ.” It involves the ability to distinguish between that which is good and that which is evil, between courses of action that are wise, and those that are foolish and perhaps even dangerous. To live successfully in this world, we need a wise and discerning mind. Solomon continues his introduction to the book of Proverbs, but whereas in verse 3 the virtues of wisdom are seen from the student's perspective, in verse 4 they are seen from the teacher's perspective. Wisdom is to be both taught and learned! The word “naïve” describes someone who is highly impressionable, someone who is open to all kinds of influences, whether good or bad. Prudence means shrewdness—and refers to a practical wisdom (1 Kings 3:16-28; Prov.18:17).

Solomon lets us know that wisdom isn't just for the young and foolish, it's for everyone (Prov.1:5,6). Growing wiser involves consistently applying truth over time. The word “understand” in verses 5-6 means more than just being “a person with discernment.” A person with understanding doesn't just see the difference between two different paths, they have lived long enough or know God's Word well enough to understand which choice is actually God's preference.

When your “understanding” increases, your surprise level decreases because you are able to more accurately anticipate what will follow from a given decision—whether problems or benefits. Usually, the lens through which we ask questions is, “Is it wrong?” If it's not wrong, if it is not illegal, then it must be right. That is foolish thinking!! In many situations, it may not be wrong, but it's certainly not wise. True Biblical wisdom is rooted in “the fear of God” (Prov.1:7). This God who loves us so much is also holy and righteous and just. And He lovingly disciplines His children and punishes the wicked (1 Peter 1:17). A healthy fear of God is the root from which true wisdom grows. Where in your life are you traveling down the path of folly? What negative consequence might come your way if you don't change paths? What decision will you make this week to put you more solidly on the path of wisdom?

Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

***Solomon was the second wisest man who ever lived (1 Kings 4:29–34).
Let's see what we can learn from the One who surpassed him—Jesus!***

Monday— Jesus consistently demonstrated a perfect grasp of, and submission to, the will of God. His wisdom was rooted in alignment with divine truth rather than human opinion.

How is this truth revealed in:

- Mark 7:6–13?
- John 4:34?

Tuesday— Jesus communicated profound truths with clarity, precision, and adaptability. His wisdom is seen in how He tailored truth to the condition of His hearers.

How is this truth revealed in:

- Matthew 13:10–17?
- Matthew 22:15–22?
- Matthew 7:28–29?

Wednesday— Jesus consistently answered His adversaries in ways that exposed error and avoided traps. His wisdom enabled Him to remain truthful, composed, and unassailable under pressure.

How is this truth revealed in:

- Matthew 22:15–46?
- Luke 20:26?
- Matthew 4:1–11?

Thursday— Jesus demonstrated perfect discernment in how He dealt with individuals. His wisdom is evident in His ability to apply truth personally and appropriately.

How is this truth revealed in:

- Luke 7:36–50?
- Matthew 23?
- Compare John 3 with John 4

Friday— Jesus acted with deliberate awareness of the proper time for every action. His wisdom included perfect timing and purposeful restraint.

How is this truth revealed in:

- John 11:1–6?
- John 7:30 & 12:23?
- Luke 6:12–13?

Saturday— Jesus demonstrated ultimate wisdom through the cross—which represents the highest expression of divine wisdom—achieving redemption in a way that upholds both righteousness and grace.

How is this truth revealed in:

- Mark 8:31–33?
- Luke 24:25–27?
- Romans 3:25–26?