

## WHY DO I NEED TO KNOW THIS?

... tuning in on a different wavelength

Proverbs 1:1 – 7

WEFC July 4, 2010

**Many a person thinks that they have an open mind about a subject when it's merely vacant.**

**Even if you are on the right track, you will get run over if you just sit there.**

**You can't fill an empty bucket with a dry well.**

**Even a woodpecker owes his success to the fact that he uses his head.**

Every society has its short sayings that are packed with “wisdom” – we call them PROVERBS.

They stick around for years because they have truth woven through their words.

There is a book in the Bible that is filled with PROVERBS.

Through the month of July, in particular, we will be going through the Old Testament book of **Proverbs**. Take the time to read it.

Go at it slowly. You can't speed read **Proverbs**.

This book is filled with God's marinated statements. They are sirloin strips – small chunks of phrases that have been soaked for more than 24 or 48 hours in the sauces and juices of life.

They are filled with experiential flavor, glazed with tangy observation, savored with some of life's rarer spices and they are sticky ... they are coated with a honey, a sweetness that attaches itself to our minds and is not easily forgotten.

Read the **Proverbs**, and, this summer, get their full flavor.

### Intro:

Life today is different than it was 3,000 years ago ... much different. They sent smoke signals; we twitter.

They road donkeys, camels and horses; we fly.

On the other hand, over 3,000 years - nothing has changed.

They got jealous; so still do we.

They lost their cool and murdered; so do we.

They talked too much; so do we.

But we just can't read **Proverbs** any old way.

It takes wisdom to figure the proverbs out.

### Understanding the Proverbs

**- Proverbs are a condensed comment on human behavior**

It is those things that have not changed ... those seemingly “eternal laws” of human behavior ... that have been observed and recorded by thoughtful minds in distilled, truth-packed statements that continue to stand no matter who is being addressed, fit in any culture and stand no matter what century we are in.

Reading them, though, is not like reading a novel or poetry.

A Valentine’s Card and a recipe are not read in the same way. One is dripping with syrupy, sugary, gushy words, while reading a recipe is ... do this, do this, add this, and then do this.

**Proverbs** in our Old Testament has a special way of saying things about us.

Do not make the **Proverbs** what they are not. Do not force them into being what God never intended them to be.

**- The Proverbs are part of the Bible, but they are not like the rest of the Bible.**

They are God’s Word ... with a different slant. If we miss this ... then we will find ourselves questioning the **Proverbs** as to their validity.

We will claim that they are not “true” or that they don’t “work” ... and thereby, are not to be trusted.

They can be fully trusted ... and they do work ... when we see that **Proverbs** is meant to be

**It is necessary to know “how” a text means before you can know “what” its means.**

**The proverbs often have limits.**

There is no fine print, no footnotes explaining in what precise circumstances this proverb is useable, no list of exceptions.

That is why we need so many of them.

We need both "**Haste makes waste**" and "**He who hesitates is lost.**" ... or "**silence is golden**" with "**at times silence is just plain yellow.**"

Each is precisely true in certain situations; neither is true in every circumstance.

Knowing when and where to use them is part of wisdom.

**- The Proverbs are not absolute promises, but are the normal way that things work in God’s world.**

**There is a difference between a PROVERB and a PROMISE.**

The Proverbs are observed consistencies not solid promises.

They are procedures on how we need to behave.

They are guidelines, not mechanical formulas.

Example of a “misuse” of the Proverbs:

**Proverbs 22:6**

**Train up a child in the way he should go,  
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.**

This is not a “blanket promise”.

This gives us one slice of parenting, not the whole parenting package.

This truth needs to fit in with other parenting and family “truths”.

Along with this proverb we need to throw in the child’s responsibility to accept instruction.

If parental training where the whole truth about child rearing, then why would the book of **Proverbs** be addressed to youth and not parents?

There are times when God’s Word does not specifically address the situation in which we find ourselves.

In those unique settings, we are given broad, general directions that are to guide us through un-mapped, un-walked, and un-experienced situations.

**- The Proverbs are the observation of the way things generally work in God’s world.**

Again, these are not absolute promises, but are the normal way that things work in God’s world.

Here are observed consistencies ... because God’s nature and human nature are unchanging.

Balance that out with one further matter.

**- The Proverbs present wisdom, but from a unique point – God and His input.**

Wisdom is wisdom wherever it is.

The world of that day had its collections of wisdom, but God’s Word is different from all of the collections of international wisdom.

Its sayings are special in that they are not just general wisdom, but are given from God’s vantage point.

These are not things we figure out on our own.

Jimmy, and his son, Davey, were playing in the ocean down in Mexico, while his family—his wife, daughters, parents, and a cousin—were on the beach. Suddenly, a rogue riptide swept Davey out to the sea. Immediately Jimmy started to do whatever he could to help Davey get back to the shore, but he, too, was soon swept away in the tide. He knew that in a few minutes, both he and Davey would drown. He tried to scream, but his family couldn’t hear him.

Jimmy’s a strong guy—an Olympic Decathlete—but he was powerless in this situation. As he was carried along by the water, he had a single, chilling thought: *My wife and my daughters are going to have to have a double funeral.*

Meanwhile, his cousin, who understood something about the ocean, saw what was happening. He walked out into the water where he knew there was a sandbar. He had learned that if you try to fight a riptide, you will die. So, he walked to the sandbar, stood as close as he could get to Jimmy and Davey, and then he just lifted his hand up and said, "You come to me. You come to me."

If you try to go the way your gut tells you to go—the shortest distance into shore—you will die. If you think for yourself, you will die. God says, "If you come to me, you will live." That's it—death or life.

*John Ortberg, in the sermon The Way of Wisdom, PreachingToday.com*

The PROVERBS require God's input, His revelation, seeing things through God's eyes ... we would not necessarily figure them out on our own.

... and this why the contribution of **Proverbs** is necessary and helpful – it is wisdom ... God's wisdom distilled for human consumption.

It gets us to see outside of ourselves and recognize that this world operates ultimately under God's authority.

### **The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:**

**for attaining wisdom and discipline;  
for understanding words of insight;**

**for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;**

**for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young**

**- let the wise listen and add to their learning,  
and let the discerning get guidance -**

**for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.**

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.**

Solomon, a king in Israel, reputed for his wisdom, which was gifted to him by God, is the main author of what is contained in these pages.

### **Intro**

As we wake up in the morning, we do not necessarily know what the day will be like. But that does not mean that we need to go into the day unprepared.

We may face very intense circumstance. Never before have events turned in this particular way. Now what do we do?

When no specific part of God's Word addresses our situation, the Spirit of God directs us to **wisdom ... PROVERBS**. Here are guidelines, insights, mental coat-hooks upon which we can hang the factors that will lead us to making a good choice.

Psychologist Jonathon Haidt had a hypothetical exercise: Imagine that you have a child, and for five minutes you're given a script of what will be that child's life. You get an eraser. You can edit it. You can take out whatever you want.

You read that your child will have a learning disability in grade school. Reading, which comes easily for some kids, will be laborious for yours.

In high school, your kid will make a great circle of friends; then one of them will die of cancer.

After high school this child will actually get into the college they wanted to attend. While there, there will be a car crash, and your child will lose a leg and go through a difficult depression.

A few years later, your child will get a great job—then lose that job in an economic downturn.

Your child will get married, but then go through the grief of separation.

You get this script for your child's life and have five minutes to edit it. What would you erase? Wouldn't you want to take out all the stuff that would cause them pain?

I am part of a generation of adults called "helicopter parents," because we're constantly trying to swoop into our kid's educational life, relational life, sports life, etc., to make sure no one is mistreating them, no one is disappointing them. We want them to experience one unobstructed success after another.

One Halloween a mom came to our door to trick or treat. Why didn't she send in her kid? Well, the weather's a little bad, she said; she was driving so he didn't have to walk in the mist.

But why not send him to the door? He had fallen asleep in the car, she said, so she didn't want him to have to wake up. I felt like saying, "Why don't you eat all his candy and get his stomach ache for him, too—then he can be completely protected!"

If you could wave a wand, if you could erase every failure, setback, suffering, and pain—are you sure it would be a good idea? Would it cause your child to grow up to be a better, stronger, more generous person? Is it possible that in some way

people actually need adversity, setbacks, maybe even something like trauma to reach the fullest level of development and growth?

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The PROVERBS know that life can be normal and un-normal. We do not always know what is coming.

So how do we handle what comes at us?

*Key Thought:*

**Whether we do or do not know what we are facing, we can know how to respond.**

This is possible because of wisdom ... and what it brings to the table.

Wisdom is no cheapskate. She generously gives the much needed insights and balance that help us walk in narrow and tight conditions without losing it.

Wisdom puts herself out there for us to see her.

She dresses up as attractively as she can so that she would entice us to choose her as our close companion.

**1. Wisdom dresses up in all her beauty to entice us to go steady with her**

Wisdom, all dressed up, is beautiful. No one comes close to matching her.

Her beauty is accented by her character – she sticks with those who choose her and never lets them down.

## **Wisdom**

She's about skill, expertise, masterful understanding.

Here in **Proverbs** wisdom masters life without having to experience failure, pain and regret because she has listened to what others have already gone through.

But wisdom is no fragile beauty queen. Maybe somewhat surprisingly, she is made up of tough stuff.

Wisdom is her first name, but she comes with many other second names ... names that explain her character.

## **Discipline or Instruction**

... Instruction that is discipline in the sense of correction.

... literally – a chastening lesson

Wisdom corrects moral faults by an appeal to reason and conscience..

Wisdom is not wimp – it dishes out what we need to hear but may not like. But what it dishes out is relevant, needed though at times humiliating.

Wisdom doesn't just sit in the back corner of our lives and nod in approval to everything we do.

It stands up when we do wrong and speaks, ““Don't do it that way. This is how it works.”

**Discipline** is not that which forces or beats us into line, but rather that process through which we come to realize that though this is tough, but this is also necessary and good.

## **Understanding**

... figures out how matters were meant to be.

It gets what the design is and “fits in”; it doesn't need to be original.

## **Prudence**

... surprisingly shows that wisdom is “cunning, shrewd, clever” in a good way.

Wisdom is not gullible, believing any and every thing that comes along.

It is calculating in a good way.

Why do we need to go steady with wisdom?

... **doing what is right and just and fair.**

Wisdom is for those who want to be ...

- above board
- have nothing to hide
- care about others

- refuse to take advantage for personal gain

... that is why **wisdom** is so attractive.

It develops character.

Student caught cheating ... teacher goes to admin ... admin gives them one day in-school suspension ... and tells teacher to let student rewrite the same exam or make a new exam for the teacher (much extra work.

Basic premise: Teachers cannot assess on behavior / character; it must be done on the basis of **OUTCOMES**.

**Proverbs** would disagree with this approach. It would say that this is a better assessment than is an exam of where the student is at.

In particular, wisdom wants to go steady with the **simple** and those who are **young**.

It is probably good to keep the two descriptions together.

**Simple** literally means “open”.

Today, we talk about being “open” to a variety of experiences.

“Openness” according to God’s Word is not necessarily a positive quality.

While we may think that being open is smart, God doesn’t see it that way at all; neither does wisdom.

Being “open” is ...

- being impressionable ... for good or bad
- the willingness to experience “anything” and think of the results only after the experience
- to be looking at life, wide-eyed, realizing that you now have new freedoms, are able to make major choices without someone looking instantly over your shoulder ... and saying, “Now I am going to be my own person.”

This is no put-down in **Proverbs**. **SIMPLE** and **YOUNG** is a reality. It is not a reflection on one’s intelligence, rather an indication of what everyone faces as they grow up.

In our youth, we have had few experiences. To a degree, we are making decisions on our own for the first time. This new “responsibility” is what we like to test.

We want to be “real”, “authentic” ... but those qualities without “guards” can put us into major trouble because we are not thinking matters through ... we don’t see everything ... or much.

That is why **WISDOM** wants to be go with us.

Just in case you think this is just for young people, we read ...

**... let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance**

**Wisdom** is for the experienced who know what is going on and those who see things from God's vantage point.

There is more to learn.

These are the kind of people that you see others going to for advice because they really do have it together. They seem to be able to think of the right questions, figure out what no one else appears to factor in.

Wisdom ... it is for everyone ... those who don't know and those who do.

Wisdom want us to skillfully master these lives of ours without being run over or blind-sided by life.

Here is **Wisdom dressed up in all her beauty ... enticing us to go steady with her.**

She has the stuff to take life and not let it dominate us. Rather, she brings into ...

- uncertainty some foundation
- adversity ... perspective
- confusion ... some clarity
- pain ... relief
- misunderstanding ... sense
- opposition ... security

Life is to a degree a clean slate. Wisdom works at keeping it that way.

Wisdom helps to expose life and see a bit beyond the moment.

Wisdom does not merely dissect life and analyze it; it puts it back together and lives ... without regret, a stained conscience, painful memories.

That is why we are given these sayings, these condensed statements of reality.

These truths ... keep us out of life's ditches, humanity's garbage dump, ... give us freedom from addictions, helps us handle difficult people, protect us from damaging responses ...

Taking life "as it comes" is not smart.

Preparing, studying, learning how to handle ourselves with God's wisdom can save us a ton of problems.

That is why wisdom wants to go steady with us.

**That is why she dresses in all beauty ... to entice us to take her and never let her go.**

The entire book is set off with the statement that headlines it.

If there was one single truth that could be given to summarize all the others on the matter of wisdom; ... if we would boil it down ... then this would be the statement, condensed, packed, loaded ... for us to remember.

## Proverbs 1:7

**The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.**

**- Wisdom: There may be many starting points, but only one is right**

**- The starting point and the foundation point – “... the beginning ... “**

This is where we start with wisdom or knowledge, but this is also the point that we never abandon.

This is the beginning in both in sequence and in priority.

This is the first in sequence ... the 1<sup>st</sup> out of 10 items.

But it is also the 1<sup>st</sup> in priority ... and we never leave it out. It always remains number “1”.

This is THE proverb that shapes all the other proverbs.

**- Our attitude toward our “teacher” determines how well we learn – “The fear of the Lord ... ”**

This is a condensed statement, one packed with critical truth.

**- we are not as smart as we think we are**

We are not born with wisdom.

It is not a natural trait.

Neither do we search for it easily.

We think we have it, but it isn't the real thing.

Convicted for possession of drugs, member of rock band Stone Temple Pilots, Scott Weiland talked to *Rolling Stone* about how being in jail impacted his life:

Weiland keeps repeating the word humility.

"It's not me thinking less of myself," he says. "It's me thinking of myself less. A lot of my ways of thinking have backfired on me. My stubbornness. My pride. My arrogance. The difficult thing is that those defects of character become assets in my business, the rock & roll world.

"It's great being a rock star," he crows. "But you know what? Being a rock star doesn't give you the license to view yourself as more important than anybody else. And if I am to become a better man, a man who has some compassion and humility instead of just expecting people to understand me, that doesn't make me less of a rock star."

*David Goetz, Wheaton, Illinois; source: David Fricke, "The Needle and the Damage: The Uncensored Story of Scott Weiland and Stone Temple Pilots," Rolling Stone (6-8-00), p.64*

**- God is at the center of it all**

With that statement we are not surprised, though we do find it hard to follow.

To think of God as being brilliant, all-wise ... that we have been taught.

But when we read in His Word that when we are hit on the cheek we are to turn the other ... if that is “wisdom”; if that is “smart” ... then we are not certain we are in for this kind of wisdom.

**Proverbs**, right at the beginning reminds us ... God is central.

... in what way is explained by the word – FEAR – a rather unique way of getting its point across.

**- a willing and accepted submission to authority**

This description – FEAR – indicates that we get it; that this is important, serious, priority material.

This is not optional nor is it trivial.

This is required and necessary material if we are going to make it.

To “**fear the Lord**” is to recognize that Jesus is our Savior, but He is also our Final Authority and Judge.

What He concludes about us ... not what we conclude about ourselves ... is what is important.

Fearing God means that God matters majorly – that this is the all important factor for each person.

Therefore, we actively shape ourselves to fit with Him. We listen willingly to His spoken words because we know He has spoken them for our benefit.

We give our whole selves to this God because He cares to deeply for us, and wants us to get it right, that He speaks clearly and openly.

We give this God our all ... and He in turn gives us all that we will ever need and more.

This is a great God ... and as we grow in acknowledgement of this ... we take our lives and fit them in with His exposed wisdom.

... and then we live ... knowing that we are not losing anything, gaining everything, as we present to Him our lives.

That’s being wise.

The fool is not dumb. He is just evil.

He refuses to submit and listen ... to God. He mocks at truth and integrity. He cuts corners, speaks his mind without carrying about anyone. He looks out for himself and takes advantage of any unsuspecting soul.

Wisdom ... they scoff at.

Shape up their lives ... not a chance.

**... conclusion ...**

It is not I.Q, but H.Q.; ... not Intelligent Quotient but Heart Quotient.

God does not throw life at us and ask us to live it as best we we can. He prepares us for it.

The God of Scripture is intelligent, wise and brilliant.

He sees things differently than do we.

His ways are not our ways.

... and the most splendid brilliance of God is seen in Jesus Christ.

Here was Jesus ... who “feared the Lord” ... and followed God’s wisdom to the Cross ... which is what His Father asked of Him.

He died to save us ... from sin and to give us life – that’s counter-intuitive.

That’s God’s wisdom ... what we don’t conclude on our own.

**Therefore, if you do not know God, that is the first step – accept Jesus Christ – God’s brilliant solution to our major problem of independence, sin and selfishness.**

**Pray for a “heart” that is willing to going “steady” with wisdom.**

We need to be made willing to listen.

*Key Thought:*

**Whether we do or do not know what we are facing, we can know how to respond.**

We do not need to be unprepared. God has given us wisdom – His wisdom ... at the price of our desire.