

The Key to Becoming Wise

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[0 : 00] You know, one of the most important qualities that we need to develop, to put into practice if we're going to live the best life possible, is wisdom.

And I want you to think with me about it. Some people would think that the most important quality is love, and I certainly wouldn't disagree when you start talking about putting love at the top of the list. But doesn't love need to be expressed wisely? Wise parents know that sometimes you need to express what would be considered tough love.

And when you express that tough love to your child, your child considers it anything but loving. Modern technology is great. It has given us the ability to instantly communicate with people about anything that crosses our minds.

[1 : 12] But if we don't use it wisely, we may use the best communication tools ever invented to spread stupidity.

Or to stir up unnecessary controversy. Or just waste time. Just about everything that we do in life requires that we act wisely in order to achieve the desired results.

Now, we're turning back to Proverbs this morning. Going back to the subject of wisdom. Seeking to grow in wisdom.

Seeking to become wise. And when you hear that word wisdom, when we talk about being wise, let me just remind you. We're talking about more than just having understanding.

Just having knowledge of something. We're talking about more than someone just being smart when we talk about a person being wise. The wisdom that we need most, all of us, is God-given wisdom.

[2 : 22] The kind of wisdom we see described in Proverbs. The goal of the writers of Proverbs is to help us as God's people to live wisely.

And we can summarize what that means like this. A wise person has correct knowledge. That's intellectual wisdom. Understands how to apply that knowledge to life.

Practical wisdom. And then demonstrates godly character in all things. That's moral wisdom.

Probably the most well-known part of Proverbs to most of us is in chapter 3, verses 5 and 6.

Maybe verses 5 through 8. I want you to turn there if you would. This short section of Proverbs 3 shows us the key to developing the kind of wisdom that we're talking about.

These verses emphasize that wisdom is developed in the context of a relationship with God in which we trust Him wholeheartedly.

[3 : 38] Wisdom is not something that you just achieve through an academic exercise. There's really no formula that you can follow to acquire God-given or biblical wisdom.

There's a lot of things we can read, we can study, we can observe that'll help. But the kind of wisdom we're talking about, it happens, it develops, it matures in the context of a right and close relationship with God.

And that's what Proverbs 3, verses 5 through 8 is talking about. Let's read it. What does it mean to trust God?

I'm going to guess that a lot of people in this room, you memorize trusting the Lord with all your heart and lean not into your own understanding. Well, what does it mean?

Well, to trust the Lord means simply to depend on Him, to rely on Him, to lean on Him, to put your confidence in Him.

[5 : 13] The idea of doing this with all your heart means that we trust God totally. The word heart refers to more than just our emotions.

Some people think, you know, if you do something with all your heart, it's just all your emotions. No. In fact, I listened to the sermon that Mike preached a few weeks ago when I was gone, just a few days ago, actually.

He did a great job. And he explained that the idea of loving with your heart is more than just a feeling. We're talking about loving God with all that's within us.

We're talking about trusting God with every fiber of our being. And, you know, we can only trust God like that if we have a relationship with Him. Do you trust people you don't know?

Do you trust people that you are just casually acquainted with? Hopefully you don't. And just as a word for some people who may need to be encouraged or reminded, people who call you or people who send you emails and ask you personal questions and they want personal information, don't trust them.

[6 : 31] They're out to con you, to scam you. Just use good old common sense. Don't trust yourself, anything about yourself, to people you don't know, that you don't have a relationship with, that you cannot be sure that you can confide in.

That's what we do. And so in order to really trust God with all of our heart, we've got to have a relationship with Him. And the kind of relationship that we need to be thinking about is a relationship that comes through faith in Jesus Christ.

Jesus made it real clear in John 14, verse 6, the end of that, that no one comes to the Father and talking about no one can have a relationship with the Father except through me.

So the first step, really, and we've talked about this in days gone by, in this series, the first step to being truly wise is to know Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. The first step to becoming a wise person and having the kind of relationship where you can trust God with all your heart means you've got to have a relationship with Jesus.

Look at the next idea. In all your ways acknowledge Him. Verse 6. To acknowledge God means more than just be aware of Him.

[7 : 54] Even the devil is aware of Him. It means to truly know Him. To know Him in a personal way. To have fellowship with Him. This is really just another way of saying trust in the Lord with all your heart.

Solomon is telling us that trusting God requires that we be totally committed to Him. Look at the verse. With all your heart and in all your ways.

I want you to look at one more phrase that describes what it means to trust God. And we're looking at positive ways we do this. In verse 7. Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. The importance of fearing God is repeatedly stressed in Proverbs.

It begins in chapter 1. You'll find it throughout the book. It's even in chapter 31, the last. From beginning to end and in between. At least 10 times the writers of Proverbs tell us that the key to being wise, the key to having the right kind of knowledge is to fear God.

And as we've already seen in previous studies, that means we need to treat God with reverence, with respect. And in the context here, fear the Lord and turn away from evil, it means that we will seek to obey Him.

[9 : 11] We'll fear Him. We'll honor Him. We'll respect for Him. We'll have respect for Him by... When we learn His Word, when we learn what He says in His Word, we'll want to obey it.

We'll want to do what He says and turn away from every form of evil. That'll be the normal part of our lives if we truly are fearing God and trusting Him with all of our heart.

Now, the idea of trusting God as we're thinking about this morning is not just expressed in positive terms in these verses. Let's look at what you might say negatively, what we must not do if we're going to trust God.

Again, in verse 5, do not lean on your own understanding. Now, this does not mean that you don't use your brain. It doesn't mean that you don't learn from your experiences in life.

You know, there are some Christians who have this idea, because I've heard it come out of their mouth before, that we really don't need to try to think deeply about God and the things of God, especially some of the mysteries of the Bible.

[10 : 17] Some people think in terms we just need to focus on our feelings and our love and our emotional relationship with God, so to speak. Well, that's not true.

We need to love God with our minds, with our hearts, with our will, with everything that is within us. When He says here, do not lean on your own understanding, He's not saying, don't use your brain. He's not saying, don't think. Don't learn from experience. No. That would not only be unwise, it would be foolish. To not lean on your own understanding means, don't look at yourself.

Don't look at the world or to the world for you're a real source of wisdom. In other words, don't reject the truth of God's Word and replace it with your own best thinking.

You know, when we face situations in life, we've got to form opinions, we've got to make decisions. We don't need to just scratch our head and think, well, what's the best that I can figure out here?

[11 : 29] What's other people saying? We need to be always, as Christians, trying to look at life through the lens of Scripture. Trying to understand, what would God have us to think?

What would God have us to believe? What would God have us to do in this situation? If we truly trust God, we're going to look to Him as He's revealed Himself and His will in His Word.

And we're going to make that our source of wisdom, our first priority source of wisdom. The other negative warning reinforces this. He says, Be not wise in your own eyes.

The person who is wise in his own eyes has an inflated and incorrect understanding of himself. And you know, we can, we can all do that, can't we?

We think too highly of ourselves. We think too highly of our opinions. We think too highly of our understanding or wisdom. We need to be, we need to be very careful here.

[12 : 32] There's another place in Proverbs in chapter 26 where we're told that the person who thinks like this too highly of himself is worse than a fool.

Look at it on the screen. Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There's more hope for a fool than for him. Paul says something similar.

He doesn't talk about being a fool, but he says in Romans chapter 12 in verse 16, Never be wise in your own sight. This is repeated in scripture like this because we just naturally think we're smarter than we are.

We, that we know more than we really do. It's just natural for us to lean on our own understanding.

It is great if there are people in your life who have told you or they show it by the way they act.

It's great if there are people in your life who think you're wise. They're just impressed with your knowledge, with your intelligence, and they like to ask you for advice.

[13 : 44] They want to know your opinion. You should be flattered. That's great if people think that. But you cannot think it of yourself because if you do, there's more hope for a fool than for you.

The scripture says. We're setting ourself up for disaster if we, if you, if I, think of myself as really a great source of wisdom.

Now, let's think about how well we are putting this teaching about trusting God into practice. And I want us to do that by answering another question.

Number two, how can I tell if I am trusting God? How can I tell if I'm trusting God like this passage says?

Well, what is the source of what you believe and how you live? Where can you trace your basic beliefs, your worldview, the way you just live life and treat people and do the things you do?

[14 : 59] Is your source the Word of God? Or is it just your own best thinking? Or is it just what everybody else is thinking?

what's popular right now? I want us to look at one of the most controversial issues of today to help us really answer that.

The issue I'm talking about is marriage. How would you define marriage this morning? Would you define it the way God does in His Word in Genesis chapter 2 verse 24?

Here's what Scripture says. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife. King James uses that old word cleave to his wife.

It's using a word here that describes the strongest possible union like being glued together or even welded together. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

[16 : 00] Here's the first question. Do you have the conviction that marriage should be a lifetime commitment or it's a temporary arrangement?

It's a temporary arrangement that exists until problems happen, until we get tired of one another or find someone better.

The world thinks that latter way. The world says that divorce is really, excuse me, okay, it's not ideal, it is painful, but it's just not that really, it's just not really that big a deal.

The world says divorce happens. It happens for all kinds of reasons and we should just accept it as inevitable in about half the marriages that happen in this country.

that's what the world thinks. But God's word says that marriage is designed to be a permanent one flesh relationship.

[17 : 13] Therefore, married couples should be encouraged to work through problems, to grow and develop their relationship, to work and pray and seek help if necessary to make their marriages not just work but mature, flourish.

You know, God intends for divorce to be a rare occurrence and only when there are biblical grounds such as sexual immorality or desertion.

I want to make clear here divorce happens because of sin. God's will, God's design for marriage has been broken.

One man, one woman, one flesh relationship for life. That's God's plan. That's God's will. And when that doesn't happen, His will has been violated. Now, everyone involved in a divorce may not be guilty of sin.

Sometimes, one spouse commits adultery, deserts their spouse, will not reconcile.

[18 : 34] Things like that take place sometimes. And the victim in those situations would not be guilty of divorce. I also want to point out that like all sin, divorce can be forgiven.

God is a God of grace and mercy. And with any sin that we truly confess and repent of, He forgives. He can give us a fresh start.

But what I want us to see and think about right here, God really wants us as His people to understand divorce is not His will.

It's not His plan. And it shouldn't be something that we just think of as, well, it's okay if it doesn't work like I thought it would work.

We need to learn to trust God with all our heart in our marriage. we need to work to please God and have the kind of relationship with our spouse that He intends and that we will enjoy if we'll seek God's way, if we'll not be selfish and self-centered, if we'll put our spouse first.

[19 : 58] Along the same line, how do you encourage other people who talk to you? I know sometimes friends will talk, co-workers will talk, even family members will talk, ask your advice.

Are you quick to encourage somebody that will just be done with them? Or, do you encourage just the opposite?

To work on it, seek help, pray, save your marriage because this is God's ideal. Second question, though, about marriage.

Do you have the conviction that marriage should be between one man and one woman only? Or do you think it's okay for two men or two women to be married?

Controversial thought idea today. The world says that same-sex marriage is not only permissible, but it is actually the law of the land in this country.

[21 : 01] The Supreme Court has ruled it is law in this country. But God's Word says that marriage is designed to be experienced only by one man and one woman.

Scripture also teaches that homosexual behavior is sinful behavior. That means that same-sex marriage is sinful. And I want you to understand that is the only teaching of Scripture concerning marriage.

There is another, there is not another option. If you choose to reject that, you have that privilege. But I want you to understand you are rejecting the Word of God.

You're rejecting the only thing that Scripture teaches about marriage if you reject one man, one woman, one flesh relationship for life.

Now, the world has taken their view one step further than making it legal. The world now says, our culture now says, you can't believe what the Bible teaches and be a respected or acceptable member of society.

[22 : 22] The world now tells us you can't call same-sex marriage sinful without you being condemned. And where it can happen, you be punished.

I'll give you one of the latest examples. Chip and Joanna Gaines are a married couple who hosts the popular HGTV show called Fixer Upper.

I know a lot of you watch that. Chip and Joanna are also committed Christians and they attend a large evangelical church in Waco, Texas.

A popular news website called BuzzFeed has come out with an article condemning them for being a member of this church where the pastor teaches that same-sex marriage is sinful.

This news website, BuzzFeed, implies in their article that because Chip and Joanna are members of that church, they must be against same-sex marriage and that should disqualify them from having a show on HGTV.

[23 : 42] Now, from what I've read, that church that they're a member of and that pastor, they're very much like our church and most Southern Baptist Convention churches.

They teach simply the truth of Scripture about marriage. They speak the truth in love and they welcome everyone into their church including gay people.

they've made that kind of statement and their idea is they want everyone to feel welcome in their church. They want their doors to be opened.

They want everybody to come and they want everyone to hear the good news about Jesus.

Salvation is by the grace of God through faith in Jesus. They want everyone to hear the full truth of God about everything.

and their prayer is as people hear God's Word, as they hear this good news about Jesus, they'll trust Jesus. They'll surrender their lives to Him as their Savior and Lord and they'll want to live their life according to the truth of God's Word and turn from all sin including the sin of homosexuality.

[24 : 55] That is the desire of our church. I hope that you know I've said it on various occasions and various ways.

The doors of our church are open to anyone and everyone. We're not going to bash anyone because of who they are, what they are, what their sinful condition is because we're all sinful people.

We're all sinners in need of a Savior. And if we're Christians it's not because we figured anything out. If we're Christians it's because God favored us, demonstrated His grace to us by calling us in the midst of our sin to see the truth and turn from our sin and trust Jesus.

Salvation by the grace of God through faith in Jesus plus nothing else. And we want everybody to come and hear this message. We want to love everybody who comes as we try to communicate this message in the most positive and gracious way that we can.

Here's what I want to ask you now. Do you trust God enough to stand on the truth of His Word even about marriage no matter what the world might say or do to you if you do?

[26 : 28] Or could you ever envision yourself leaving this church because I preach what I've just said about marriage? Or because our church and our denominational statement of faith defines marriage exclusively as the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime.

the day has come the day is here when some Christians in this country are being persecuted for simply saying they believe this truth.

The day has come when some people are being Christians are being persecuted because they are members of a church that believes this or a denomination that believes this.

You know right now it's easy for us to say that we trust God with all our heart we lean not on our own understanding when it doesn't cost us anything.

But the real test will come when we have to risk losing friends or jobs or earthly security in order to publicly stand and say that we trust God and we're going to remain faithful to him and the truth of his word.

[27 : 56] That leads us to the final question. Why should I trust God? Well first in verse 6 the latter part he will make straight your paths. The word straight here is used to describe travel made safe by clearing and leveling a road.

The idea is that if we will live our lives according to the teaching of God's word if we'll live our lives according to God's wisdom God will make our path in life smoother and straighter but that doesn't mean it will be easy.

That doesn't mean that doing life God's way living life God's way is going to be the easiest way. A lot of times it will be hard but God's way is always the best way for his people.

That's because God created us God's gifted us God has a plan for our life and the path if we follow him we'll follow the path in life that God designed for us that will most glorify him and enable us to make the best difference in this world.

Another reason why we should trust God is because what it says in verse 8 it will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. As we've said throughout our study of Proverbs Proverbs are not promises.

[29 : 14] They're a description of how life descriptions of how life usually works. This verse is not promising that if we trust God we'll always be healthy but it does mean that living life God's way will help us to avoid bringing unnecessary problems upon ourselves.

A lot of people who suffer in this world have brought a lot of it on themselves. Not everyone. Some of the most godly people you'll never know struggle with health problems with financial problems with family problems but as a general rule living life God's way results in the best life we could experience compared to people who don't live life God's way.

God's way this passage is encouraging us to trust God in all things and warning us don't trust yourself. Don't trust in just what the world is doing.

Or we could think about it like this. This passage is telling us not to live our lives according to that old song My Way. That song was originally made popular by Frank Sinatra and later by Elvis Presley.

Now I would give my Elvis impression and sing it for you but you may not get the point if I do. So look at the first and last stanzas of this song My Way and think about what it's saying.

[30 : 51] And now the end is near and so I face the final curtain. My friend I'll say it clear. I'll state my case of which I'm certain. I've lived a life that's full.

I traveled each and every highway and more much more than this I did it my way. For what is a man what has he got if not himself that he has not to say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels.

The record shows I took the blows and did it my way. Now the writer of Proverbs would say that is an absolutely foolish song that only a fool would sing.

And if there was some way to know we can be confident that Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley would agree I was a fool for singing and living life my way.

When you think about it my way is the name of the road that leads to a whole lot of heartache in this life and to hell for all eternity.

[32 : 09] The opposite of living life my way or as Proverbs says being wise in your own eyes the opposite is to fear the Lord kneel before him and trust in the Lord with all your heart.

That's the key to becoming wise. So now you get to decide are you going to live life my way or are you going to live life God's way?

That's a choice we make every day and it's a choice that we will live with for all eternity my way or God's way.

Would you pray with me? Father help us to see what is the pattern of our lives. Can we get up this morning and sing I did it or I'm doing it my way or are we doing it your way or at least seeking to do that and confessing and repenting of it when we don't.

Dear God show us the key to wisdom is trusting you, loving you, obeying you and living life your way.

[33 : 32] Show us that the beginning of wisdom and a real relationship with you is through faith in Jesus Christ. Surrender to him as Lord and Savior of our lives.

Show us how we should respond now and then in attitude of prayer let's just listen to the Lord.

Respond to him as he speaks and I'll be happy to pray with you during this time I'll be here at the front.

If you want to share something with me you come as God leads.