

Get Wisdom: The Beginning of a New Sermon Series

July 2, 2021

by David Schrock

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.

Proverbs 4:7

In Proverbs, wisdom is likened to precious metals and pleasant fruit (3:13–18), it is personified as a radiant woman (9:1–12), and it is offered as a way of everlasting life and immediate beauty (3:21–22). In short, wisdom is to be pursued with intensity, integrity, and endurance. For nothing else in creation is as valuable as gaining wisdom.

Sadly, such a valuation of wisdom is not shared by our current age. In our day, men and women have exchanged the glory of God for the glory of created things (Rom. 1:21–32). As Paul says in Romans 1:18, God's wrath has been revealed in the way that God has handed the "wise" over to the lusts of their hearts and the devices of their minds. Confusingly, there is in the world a wisdom that is not wisdom. In another letter, Paul calls it the wisdom of this age (1 Corinthians 1). And before we came to faith in Christ, this was the wisdom in which we lived, moved, and had our being. And actually, for many Christians this worldly wisdom is still the operating system that runs our lives.

But it doesn't have to be. When God redeemed us and transferred us from the dominion of darkness to the kingdom of his beloved son (Col. 1:13), he not only rescued us from the follies of this world, he also invited us to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn the wisdom of his ways. This is partly what it means to be a disciple of Christ. As the one "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. 2:3), Jesus teaches us by his Word and his Spirit how to walk in his wisdom. Yet, where did Jesus learn wisdom? And what is its content?

Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." Clearly, as a son of Abraham, David, and Solomon (see Matt. 1:1, 6–7), Jesus' wisdom is related to the whole Old Testament. And like any child growing up in Israel, Jesus had to learn God's wisdom. And in the context of Christ's maturity, the Proverbs would have been central to his life and wisdom. Moreover, the apostles also cited the Proverbs throughout their letters, showing an application of Old Testament wisdom to the Church.[1] Accordingly, if we are going to walk in the wisdom of Christ, we must turn our attention to the book of Proverbs, as well as the rest of the wisdom literature.

Starting this Sunday, our church is going to do just that. For the next two months (July–August), we are going to examine the first nine chapters of Proverbs. This introductory section is often known as the prologue to the Proverbs. And before getting into the proverbs and sayings of the rest of the book, the prologue provides a vision of life that divides into two paths and two destinations. There is the way of wisdom that leads to life, and there is the way of folly that leads to death. In these nine chapters we find, according to scholars like Bruce

Waltke, ten fatherly lectures (1:8–19; 2:1–22; 3:1–12; 4:1–9; 4:10–19; 4:20–27; 5:1–23; 6:1–19; 6:20–35; 7:1–27) and four commendations of wisdom (1:1–7; 3:13–35; 8:1–36; 9:1–18). And in all of them, there is a shared vision of the world suffused with God’s wisdom.

That is what is lacking today—true wisdom about the world. By contrast, the wisdom of God is what Jesus learned from the Proverbs and embodied perfectly in his life. Such wisdom is what we need to learn afresh today.

Indeed, this is why we are taking the time to study Proverbs 1–9. Not only does Proverbs give us wisdom for living, relationships, work, and everything else, but it also informs the way we should approach God and ourselves. Today, the children of God, whether young or old, are tempted to find life, meaning, and identity in the things that they do, the desires they feel, and the ways they look. Yet, the prologue to Proverbs gives us another way of identity formation.

Throughout the nine chapters, Solomon addresses his son (1:8, 10, 15; etc.). Without using a name (like Rehoboam), it is clear Solomon is giving wisdom to a royal figure who will rule in household. At first glance, the masculine “son” language combined with the royal backdrop may seem off-putting or inapplicable to modern readers, especially women. But when we realize that in Christ, all the children of God are heirs of the kingdom (see Rom. 8:16–17; 2 Tim. 2:12), sons and daughters who are royal priests, then we can see how this book begins to teach us wisdom for living in the kingdom of God.

Even more, because of our newfound identity in Christ, we need this royal wisdom. As disciples of Christ, we need to reject the wisdom of this world which continues to plague Christians. In its place, we need new instruction, correction, understanding, and wisdom.

This is what we will begin to consider this Sunday as we look at the Preamble to the Proverbs (1:1–7). In the first seven verses, Solomon explains what the Proverbs are for, and as we set our minds to follow the mind of the Lord, we can expect to find truths that confront us in our folly. However, we will also find proverbs that make us wise unto salvation—both now and forever. This is why we need the book of Proverbs.

May God grant us wisdom, as we set our minds on this ancient book. May he teach and correct the simple. And may he add wisdom to the wise and understanding. The Lord knows we need such wisdom. And thankfully, he is a God who delights to give wisdom to all who seek for it in Christ.

For His Glory and your joy,

Pastor David

[1]Proverbs 3:7 in 2 Corinthians 8:12; Proverbs 3:34 in James 4:5 and 1 Peter 5:5; Proverbs 4:26 in Hebrews 12:13; Proverbs 10:16 in Romans 6:23; Proverbs in 1 Peter 2:17; Proverbs in Romans 12:20; Proverbs 26:11 in 2 Peter 2:2; Proverbs 30:8 in Matthew 6:11. List found in Bruce Waltke, *Proverbs: A Shorter Commentary*, 57–58.