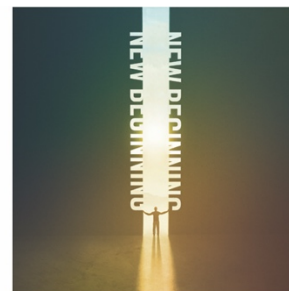


Wisdom

A new beginning happens best with wisdom. And if there's anything we should want in times of confusion, it should be wisdom. Other than Jesus, the wisest man ever on earth was Solomon, who offers exactly what we need. Let's revisit the Bible's old wisdom in a new way to give light to a wise path forward.



INTRODUCTION

Proverbs teaches us that the awe of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. It then proceeds to expound on the topic of wisdom for our lives. A new beginning happens best with wisdom. If there is anything we should want in times of confusion, it should be wisdom. Other than Jesus, the wisest man ever on earth was Solomon, who offers exactly what we need. Let us revisit the Bible's old wisdom in a new way to give light to a wise path forward.

STARTER QUESTION

Wisdom. We hear about it, we see it, and we may have learned that Proverbs is the supreme book on this topic. What exactly is wisdom and how do we get it? How do we become wiser? In what areas of our lives do we need to grow in wisdom?

INTO THE WORD

1. Read Proverbs 1:8-9 and Proverbs 6:20-23. As we learned in this week's sermon, wisdom is "walking with the wise," and these verses encourage us to follow the instructions of our parents. However, as we all know, not all parents are wise or give wise instructions. When we doubt the advice of our parents, how can we determine if the advice is sound? If we determine that our parents' instruction is unwise, how do we reconcile Proverbs' instruction to walk with the wise with the Bible's many verses that tell us to honor our parents?
2. Pastor David referred to Hebrews 12 in relation to suffering that God allows. Read Hebrews 12:1-11. Why doesn't God keep those He loves from suffering? In what ways does suffering make us like Him in this passage of scripture? What role does suffering play in our relationship with God? Read Romans 5:1-5. What good fruit can suffering produce in our lives?
3. Proverbs 13:20 indicates that wisdom is gained by walking with the wise. What positive and negative examples do you recall from God's Word that reflect this truth? Are there examples you can think of from your life where you were blessed/rewarded for or benefited from following wise instruction or example? Refer to Psalm 49:10 and Proverbs 3:35 to learn more about the difference between wise and foolish living. Are there other examples?

APPLICATION

4. Pastor David said that the word for wisdom in Proverbs is from the Hebrew "hökma" which means to make choices that go beyond. The word is used 100 times in Proverbs. We learned

that wisdom is making right choices based on the truth of God's Word when the truth is not expressly stated. What does this definition mean in your life? Do you have examples of times you have had to apply this type of wisdom? What does being able to go beyond say about your character and your priorities?

5. According to Pastor David, we make mistakes in three ways: unintentionally, because we are ignoring something we should not be ignoring, or because we are being foolish. However, wisdom is learning from our mistakes. We do not have to fall back; we can "fall forward." What does this mean to you? What are some lessons we can learn to avoid making the same mistakes?
6. Read Proverbs 1:7. Discuss why a reverence for God expressed in submission to His will is the starting point for *wisdom*. Refer to Job 28:28, Ecclesiastes 12:13, Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10, and Proverbs 15:33 for more insight.

PRAYER

Dear Lord, we come to you in awe of your majesty, power, and *wisdom*. Like Solomon requested, please give us *wisdom*. Through our relationship with Jesus, help us to make *wise* decisions and trust You to guide us as we encounter new beginnings and the challenges of life. Let us put into practice the discipline needed to abide in the *wisdom* so freely given in Your Word. Remind us of the true meaning of wisdom in all we encounter this week. Amen.

SUGGESTED ANSWER GUIDE / MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT FOR SELECTED QUESTIONS:

In reference to question 1:

In Matthew Henry's Complete Commentary on the Whole Bible, Henry refers to Proverbs 6:20-23 as "a general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God," and stresses that Solomon assumes that we learned the Word of God from our parents. When we compare these verses with other verses that talk about God's Word, such as Psalm 119:105, Proverbs 3:1-3, and Proverbs 3:23-26, the similarity in wording seems to support Henry's assessment that Proverbs 6:20-23 is talking about God's Word as passed on by parents or spiritual "parents." When we also consider verses that stress the responsibility parents must give Godly instruction (such as Colossians 3:21, Proverbs 22:6, Ephesians 6:4), it suggests that Proverbs is referring to Godly commands given by wise, godly parents.

Discuss what wisdom you have gleaned from parents, mentors, or other people you respect.

When receiving advice from any source, including other Christians, testing it against the Bible's truths is essential. James 3:13-17 has helpful guidelines to determine if wisdom comes from God. Discuss the differences between earthly and godly wisdom.

In reference to question 2:

Suffering in our lives sometimes is for an end much greater than even our lives. Jesus' life laid down made possible for all of humanity to have a relationship with the Father. The Father and Jesus suffered at Calvary. Jesus washed His disciple's feet and told them to love each other as He loved them. Then He faced Calvary. Suffering in our lives is also an encouragement to change. It provides us an opportunity to rest in His love, not just in His blessings. Suffering that corrects our course in life also identifies us as His children.

Perhaps Job is the most commonly referred-to example of suffering in the Bible. Matthew Henry's Commentary states the following on the verses in Romans:

"It works an experience of God, and the songs he gives in the night; the patient sufferers have the greatest experience of the divine consolations, which abound as afflictions abound. It works an experience of ourselves. It is by tribulation that we make an experiment of our own sincerity, and therefore such tribulations are called trials. It works, *dokimen* —an *approbation*, as he is approved that has passed the test. Thus, Job's tribulation wrought patience, and that patience produced an approbation, that still he *holds fast his integrity*..."

Discuss how suffering has created integrity in your life or the lives of others you know.

In reference to question 5:

When making decisions, it is wise to use some Biblical guidelines, such as:

Seek Godly council - Proverbs 12:15, Proverbs 11:14.

Which option brings Glory to God - 1 Corinthians 10:31, Philippians 4:8.

Have all the facts - Proverbs 18:13-17.

What motives are driving my decision - Proverbs 16:2.

Avoid rushing into a decision - Proverbs 21:5.

Consider the possible outcome of your decision - Proverbs 14:15.

(Inspired by writings of Blake Holmes, Watermark Community Church)

When we make mistakes, remember the hope we have! We will all make foolish mistakes, so it is wonderful to remember the Grace and Love of God! Read Proverbs 28:13-14, and 1 John 1:9-2:1.