

*How To Become Wise*

Henry David Thoreau, the 19th century American author, naturalist, and philosopher wrote in his journal, "A man is wise with the wisdom of his time only, and ignorant with its ignorance."

That's what it seems like sometimes, doesn't it? We seem to see life only in the context of our narrow little span of time.

Fortunately the wisdom of our time isn't the only place to get understanding.

Some people say "Experience is the best teacher." If you tell a child repeatedly to stay away from the hot stove and they don't listen inevitably they're going to touch the stove.

When they do, they'll get burned and they'll finally stay away from the stove.

That's true but when my kids were small I didn't take their hand and press it on the hot stove to teach them. Experience may be a convincing teacher but it can also be a painful teacher.

Experience can scar our flesh and it can scar our emotions.

It's always better to learn from someone else rather than to have to suffer the consequences of our own mistakes. Those consequences can have a life long impact on us.

In fact, sometimes they can have an eternal impact on us.

Of course the question is, where do we get wisdom we can depend on?

There's no shortage of information sources today, but how do you know what to believe?

Here at faith Community Church we have found that the Bible is a trustworthy source of wisdom. We're not going to go into all the reasons why this morning because just finished up a series 2 months ago where we covered topics like "Can I Believe The Bible?" You can get those messages on our web site ([faithcommunity.net](http://faithcommunity.net)).

What I'd like us to do for the next several weeks is to delve into the Old Testament book

of Proverbs. Proverbs is part of what we call OT Wisdom Literature. It actually refers to wisdom 49 times in 31 chapters.

If there's a theme in Proverbs it's wisdom. Where it comes from, how to get it and how to hang on to it.

If you could choose a teacher, you couldn't do better than Solomon, the main author of Proverbs. Solomon was the son of David, who wrote most of the Psalms.

Solomon was the third king of Israel and lived around 900BC. The Bible says something very interesting about Solomon. **Turn to I Kings 3 pg 303 Read vs 5-12**

**Now just flip over to chapter 4 and read vs 29-30, 32**

God oversaw the writing, editing, and collecting of Solomon's proverbs, and they became part of the Bible.

As a sad postscript to Solomon's life he later ignored his own proverbs and ended up really messing up his life. You can read where he ended up philosophically in the book that follows Proverbs which is Ecclesiastes. .

Solomon also wrote Ecclesiastes and in it he basically says, "I had to learn the hard way." And this is what I learned, "Without God all is empty and meaningless, a chasing after the wind."

Some people would say that shows the Bible isn't true. If Solomon had all this God-given wisdom and he blew it, how can I trust what the Bible says.

I'd say just the opposite. People who were making up a religious story wouldn't expose the gross failures of their heroes. The Bible tells about peoples successes and their failures, but in each case it was the person's failure, not God's.

That's exactly what happened to Solomon. He stopped applying God's truth and he began to act more and more foolish.

That's why he writes at the end of Ecclesiastes, "Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man."

Proverbs is a book filled with timeless wisdom. Divine wisdom.

So look there with me. **Turn to Proverbs 1 Pg 560**

One of my favorite ways of preaching is to go verse by verse through books of the Bible. With Proverbs though, I want to cover it topic by topic.

Proverbs is an instruction manual that covers all of life. The beginning chapters present a series of lessons that a father is teaching his son and the latter chapters emphasize how God's wisdom applies to his changing life situations as he matures. As we listen in during the next month, we can become skillful at:

Speaking No Evil (next week)

Understanding God's Gift Of Sexuality, Dealing With Pride, Parenting Children, Handling Money, Having A Right Attitude About Our Job, And Learning to Hate!

You know we spend a lot of time in sermons talking about God's love and how we're supposed to love as He loves, but the book of Proverbs also tells us what God hates. We're going to learn the right kind of hate.

Solomon starts right off explaining his purpose.

The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is found in 1:2-6 **Read 2-6**

Proverbs was written so that you and I can become wise people. The aim of the book is to help us acquire and apply God's wisdom to the decisions and activities of every day life.

It's one thing to be educated and have knowledge but there are some well educated people who we wouldn't describe as wise.

We need wisdom, which is the ability to use the knowledge that we have.

Knowledge can be theoretical but wisdom isn't theoretical. Wisdom is always practical.

This morning I want us to see five steps to wisdom.

I. *Learn To Fear The Lord* **Read vs 7**

Proverbs 1:7 is both the theme of the book and the key that unlocks the way to wisdom.

According to Proverbs there are two classes of people: the wise who fear the Lord, and the fools who don't. The beginning of knowledge means its origin or principal part.

The first lesson we need to learn in the school of wisdom is to develop a proper view of God.

We think of a fool as someone who's silly. Maybe someone who's not too bright.

But in Proverbs, a fool is the one who doesn't follow God's ways. He's the one who knows the right thing to do but instead does the opposite or else he doesn't know and doesn't care.

How do you make the transition from fool to wise man? Start with the fear of the Lord.

Proverbs uses the word "fear" 20 times. Fifteen of those times it's in the phrase "The fear of the Lord."

Solomon wrote in Hebrew and he used the word *yirah* in each of those 15. It comes from the Hebrew verb that means to fear, to reverence, to awe.

Do you wrestle with why you should fear a God who loves the world? A God who calls Himself a friend and a brother?

Well, part of it is that we should reverence God. We should be awestruck because he is awesome.

But another part is we should fear God for who He is. Sometimes we have such a laid back, superficial view of God that it's like we're not taking Him seriously.

The fear of the Lord means being afraid of what He could do to me. He's awfully big and I'm real small. The fear of the Lord means being afraid of displeasing Him. It recognizes His absolute holiness and His hatred for sin.

The fear of the Lord realizes His anger is something to avoid. It produces a real desire to please Him and to trust Him.

The thing about pleasing God is though is, I have to know His values if I'm going to honor Him. What does He care about?

When we truly fear the Lord, we recognize that He's the Creator and we are the created. He's the master and we are His servants. He's the Father and we are His children.

You can tell that you fear God when His opinion about your life matters more than anything else.

The truth of the matter is, we'll never rise any higher than our view of God. And if our view of God is one-sided and we're complacent about His holiness then we're going to sink down into misunderstanding rather than rise up.

It seems like so much of the culture deifies humans and humanizes God, and Christians have unfortunately gone along with a lot of this false thinking.

So what does it mean to fear the Lord? To fear God is obviously not to be so terrified of God that we're crippled with fear. But it is to fear what God can do. He can do as he pleases and if He so chooses He could destroy us all and be completely just in doing so.

One man wrote, "When a person dies, we have a tendency to say, 'How could God let that happen?' We have no right to ask that. What we should ask is 'What are we doing alive?'"

God is holy and just because He's gracious toward us is no excuse for us to be indifferent. God must be taken seriously. Psalm 7:11 says that *God is angry with the wicked every day*. To fear the Lord is to have the same type of healthy fear that a child has of a loving parent who stands for right and punishes wrong.

Want wisdom?

I. *Learn To Fear The Lord*

II. *Learn To Reject Evil*

## **Read 8-10**

Human nature doesn't change over the centuries. People are still sinners who want their way over God's way. But the avenues for enticement just keep multiplying.

In Solomon's day, and for all but very recent human history, the avenues were limited to what someone heard one on one from others and from what that person might see in everyday life.

Now we have a seemingly endless array of sources to bring us good, but to also bring us evil.

The search engine Google just released a study that concludes that Google Internet search requests via cell phone are mostly to find porn.

The Google study found porn inquiries outnumbered the combined tally of the next four

most popular Google mobile search topics.

In our media age the enticement to evil is everywhere.

Solomon writes listen to your parents instruction.

Sigmund Freud taught that every boy between the ages of three and six desires to kill his father and have sexual relations with his mother, and every girl has a desire to kill her mother and have sexual relations with her father.

He said, "Parents are nothing but riff-raff. The only useful purposes they serve are to help us earn a living and to provide learning material. In any case, we cannot help them."

According to Freud parent's rules were destructive to a child's life.

God says their like a chain about the neck.

I'm sure plenty of kids would say, "You got that part right. I'm in chains alright."

But that's not the kind of chains the Bible's talking about. These aren't prison chains. In Solomon's day they would be ornamental chains.

They adorn. They enhance beauty. Kind of like Mr. T!

Parents are saying, God is saying, the church is saying don't listen when evil calls because the end is ultimately emptiness and destruction.

Instead of being a chain of blessing it will be a chain that will weigh you down.

What are we going to do? God says, "Do not consent."

That's not going to happen unless we prepare a head of time. We have to begin with the fear of the Lord. We have to begin with a passionate commitment to our holy God.

- I. *Learn To Fear The Lord*
- II. *Learn To Reject Evil*
- III. *Learn The Truth Of The Bible*

Where do we find out what things please God? How do we tell the difference between good and evil in a culture that blurs the lines?

Colossians 2:3 says that in Jesus Christ *are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

1 Corinthians 2:6 An Apostle named Paul wrote: *However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature,* referring to the writing of the New Testament.

The command in Colossians 3:16 is to *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom.*

Wisdom isn't hidden. **Read 20-21**

The Bible uses the word, "wisdom" over 200 times. It repeatedly says, "Wisdom comes from God."

Psalm 19:7: *"The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple."* Psalm 119:130: *The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.* 2 Timothy 3:15: *"...The holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation..."*

Wisdom isn't hidden, it's all over the pages of the Bible. The Bible is the divine handbook for living. The owners manual for life.

There's no way to become wise apart from the Word of God! It doesn't matter how smart someone is, if he or she does not know the Bible, they're wisdom deficient.

Here are some practical things you could do to learn the truth of the Bible.

Read the Bible through. One of the best ways to understand the overall picture of the Bible is to simply read it from cover to cover. you're not going to do that at one sitting. Give yourself a year. But start today.

Read one chapter from Proverbs every day. Since there are 31 chapters, you can read the chapter that corresponds with the day of the month. When you read, discipline yourself to write down one verse from the chapter and ponder that verse during the day.

Bring your Bible to church each week. As you follow along in your own copy of the Scriptures, you will get more out of the sermons and be more motivated to do your own

study between Sundays.

Attend a weekly Bible Study. There's a ladies self-confrontation study just starting on Thursday evenings. Forty five ladies signed up. Join them.

You say I'm not interested in what God has to say about life. I don't want to read something that's going to tell me I need to make some changes in my life.

## **Read 22**

You may not like that, but God, who only has your ultimate good in mind, says your simple. The Hebrew word means naive, gullible, immature

There's plenty of scorers who delight in their scorning. That's total arrogance. That's pride. That's thinking you as a puny little created being know better than your all encompassing, all knowing, all powerful Creator.

If you hate divine knowledge, God says your a fool.

But there's hope. There's something we can do: **Read vs 23**

Recognize that God's Word is truth, that God is the only dependable source of wisdom, that even if you don't understand how it will all work out, you can trust Him.

That's wisdom.

- I. *Learn To Fear The Lord*
- II. *Learn To Reject Evil*
- III. *Learn The Truth Of The Bible*
- IV. *Recognize The Consequences Of Rejecting Wisdom*

Solomon's writings in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes mention wisdom 74 times. Listen to some of these verses:

Proverbs 2:6 *For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding;*

Proverbs 2:10-11 *When wisdom enters your heart, And knowledge is pleasant to your soul,*

*Discretion will preserve you; Understanding will keep you,*

*Proverbs 3:13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding;*

*Proverbs 4:7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.*

*Proverbs 8:11 For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her.*

Wisdom is the principle thing. But what happens if we reject it? **Read 24-32**

Those are riveting words, aren't they? They're here to stand as a powerful warning to everyone who rejects God's wisdom.

To reject and ignore wisdom and not learn from it's rebuke has serious consequences.

When troubles finally come, as they inevitably do, wisdom mockingly refuses to help scorners.

It might sound cruel for this personified wisdom to be said to laugh at disaster and calamity, but here's what I think that means.

If I knowingly, repeatedly reject God's wisdom for my life, that spurned advice will come back to haunt me when calamity finally comes.

Wisdom had called but I refused her. Now the reverse happens. I call to her but she refuses to answer me.

*Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.*

We can turn our backs on God. We can "pretend" God doesn't exist. We can make up all kinds of excuses and theories about how the universe was created without Divine Intervention.

We can say we believe in Him but live like we don't.

But ultimately, God will have the last word.

Every of us will have our turn to meet our Creator face to face.

Jay Adams has what he calls the Christian Counselor's Commentary Series. He approaches books of the Bible from the perspective of how we would use them to minister to others.

This is what he says about these verses.

"These are terrifying words. And because they are, it is best for you to read them and not try to paraphrase them. People need to hear directly from God's Word itself about the jeopardy into which they are plunging themselves."

"Therefore, when dealing with a scorner in counseling you might choose to close the discussion in a powerful way by reading this section. I urge you not to avoid such portions of the Scriptures; they are given precisely for such purposes and ought to be so used."

We all need to hear the consequences of scoffing at God's wisdom.

Proverbs chapter 1 is sobering. But it ends on a positive note. **Read vs 33**

Whoever listens can rest in God's safety and peace.

- I. *Learn To Fear The Lord*
- II. *Learn To Reject Evil*
- III. *Learn The Truth Of The Bible*
- IV. *Recognize The Consequences Of Rejecting Wisdom*
- V. *Earnestly Seek Wisdom*

### **Read 2:1-5**

God's wisdom for life is available to every one of us. It's here in the Bible.

A lot of people view the Bible as an irrelevant old book that is out of step with where we are today.

It's a book of timeless wisdom that will bless our lives if we take it seriously.

If we were wise we'd be seeking, and searching out, and applying God's truth to our life situations.

Only a fool would reject God's amazing offer of life.

The New Testament, in I Corinthians 3 says, *Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.* (18-19)

The wisdom of this age says "You can make it without God." The wisdom of God says, "Without me you can do nothing."

Without God's wisdom we wouldn't have the slightest idea how to find forgiveness and eternal life.

All you have to do is look at man's religions down through the ages. They all have something in common. They all say there is something we can do to be forgiven.

The things they say we need to do are different with different religions but it's always doing something.

God says there's nothing we can do to bring about our own forgiveness. In fact He says, *it's not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.* Titus 3:5

He says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.* Ephesians 2:8-9

There's nothing we can do because God is perfect and our best works are imperfect. God wants and deserves all the worship and recognition. He is the Savior.

Isaiah 43:3& 11 *For I am the LORD your God, The Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I, even I, am the LORD, And besides Me there is no savior.*

Isaiah 60:16 *You shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior And your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.*

Hosea 13:4 *"Yet I am the LORD your God Ever since the land of Egypt, And you shall know no God but Me; For there is no Savior besides Me."*

Savior doesn't just act as an example He saves. That's what God wants us to realize about Him. He saves all who trust in Him for the forgiveness of sin.

How about you? Do you see the wisdom? Do you see the truth in the Bible? The truth

about grace and forgiveness? The truth about the wisdom of serving God.

The truth that we can be a whole lot wiser than the wisdom of our time only, and we don't have to be ignorant with its ignorance.

Death Valley, California is the hottest, driest, lowest spot in North America.

Death Valley is a deep bowl 140 miles long and about 20 miles wide.

The depression works like a convection oven, recirculating hot air and making the valley one of the hottest places on Earth, with ground-level temperatures that can reach 200 degrees in the summer.

It got its name in 1849 from silver miners heading to California. More than one died trying because that silver seemed so important to them.

God says, Search for wisdom as silver. Recognize how valuable it really is. Then go after it with all you've got.