

Week 22

May 28 - June 3

Proverbs 5-24

It is a joy to read the Proverbs. Sometimes you find yourself laughing at the candid way a proverb is written, and yet other times you find yourself stopping to consider the truth behind what was just shared.

A proverb is a short saying to express a truth. Therefore, it should not be surprising that in this week's passage you will read the words "wisdom" or "wise" almost 100 times. What is surprising is how wisdom is defined.

May 28th

Proverbs 5-7. "Charming Deception"

I watched a documentary on the animals living in the arid deserts of Africa. One of the predators was a snake. In the big open desert it's hard to chase something down to eat, so God provided this snake with a trick. It buries itself, that is all but the tip of its tail. The tail sticking up looks like a blade of grass. A small curious (or hungry) animal will come up to that attractive blade of grass only to be promptly met by the swift bite of a snake. We can think of things that could look appealing to the eye but fatal to the body. Like an alluring poisonous drink or attractive blade of grass the immoral person attracts their prey.

More important than understanding the wiles of the immoral is identifying our best strategy to avoid situations like that. Solomon has several suggestions:

- 1) Don't let the attractiveness fool you, 5:3-4,
- 2) Count the cost, 6:26-35,
- 3) Commit yourself to your spouse, 5:15,18,
- 4) Run, stay away, 5:8,
- 5) Heed the instruction of others, 5:1; 6:20; 7:1-3,24.

May 29th

Proverbs 8-10. "It's More Than Brains"

Wisdom is described in these chapters as that which; is Contrasted by immorality, folly and foolishness; Fears the LORD; Is excellent and right; Speaks truth and hates deception; Has good judgment; Knows where to discover knowledge and discernment; Hates pride, arrogance, corruption, perverted speech, and evil; Rewards with gifts better than pure gold; Was created by the LORD before anything else was created and was yet part of the creation process; and, Will add years to your life.

It is obvious that wisdom is something more than just intelligence. It has the qualities of godliness. Knowing this helps us understand wisdom's benefits. As Solomon continues to describe the "wise" in the chapters ahead it will be apparent he is not defining those with a high IQ or multiple doctorates, but those who perceive things through the eyes of God.

My grandpa was a wise man, though not in degrees or academic accolades. The Word of God poured through his veins and thoughts in such a way that everything was measured against the standard of God's instruction. Look to God's Word for any answer.

May 30th

Proverbs 11-13. "Life-Giving Fruit"

In today's chapters wisdom is associated with humility; with one who listens to advice; with not making a show of knowledge; accepting parent's discipline; giving good advice; and thinking before acting.

As much as I enjoy the idea of elaborating on each of these, there is one characteristic of wisdom listed in chapter 11 that I enjoy more. Verse 30 tells us that "The godly are like trees that bear life-giving fruit, and those who save lives are wise." I appreciate the balance and perspective of other translations. For instance, this proverb in the NIV reads, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise." A wise, godly man is producing life-giving fruit. His actions are imparting something that leads others to life. And what could be wiser than leading someone to life?

What kind of fruit are you generating? What are the qualities of your life? Are your actions producing something that leads others to life? And, what value have you placed on leading others to life? Choose wisely.

May 31st

Proverbs 14-16. "WQ"

"Wise men talk because they have something to say; fools, because they have to say something." –Plato

There are definitely certain characteristics that make a statement. As Solomon continues to describe the wise there are two words that stand out; "witness" and "work." "Witness" encompasses the qualities of the wise. They are pleasant, gentle, thoughtful, careful, humble individuals who think before they talk. And, as we learned yesterday, they pursue godly things.

Now, "work" describes the things they are involved in on a more physical basis. They build and build up, plan, handle money well, increase in learning, seek advice, and other various pursuits. They are actively involved in good viable things.

From these descriptions we are again reminded that true wisdom is displayed more externally than internally. The true measurement of our life is where the passion of heart takes us. It's concerned with how we act (witness) and what we do (work). Perhaps we should focus less on IQ (intelligence quotient) and more on WQ (wise quotient).

June 1st

Proverbs 17-19. "Parental Wisdom"

I counted at least seven proverbs pertaining to children in these three chapters. Several describe the pain a parent can experience when their child is on the road to folly. A few others explain the benefits of discipline. There was one, far more uplifting, although I believe a few teenagers would take exception, which read: "parents are the pride of their children" (17:6). In fact, Mark Twain illustrated my point when he wrote, "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

Parenting is definitely one of those things that go better with wisdom. Wisdom is something every parent wants more of. It seems to come too slowly. Wisdom has a great deal to do with experience, and experience comes with time. Texas Bix Bender wrote, "Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment."

June 2nd

Proverbs 20-22:16. "Dangerous Business"

I enjoy reading quotes by Will Rogers, a great social humorist. One of his comments on chitchat was, "Live that you wouldn't be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip."

In our society we have a lot of jokes and quips about gossip. We've had various comic television series' for years that have a character portraying a nosy neighbor or town gossip. The unfortunate thing is that we have somehow missed the serious perception God takes of gossip. It is not a light, frivolous activity. Romans 1:29 lists gossip as a wickedness associated with other wrongs as serious as murder. Gossip is described in today's passage as harmful and deceitful. Back a few chapters (16:28), we were told that "gossip separates the best of friends." Today we are informed that, "A gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much" (20:19). We are warned not to listen to it, and we are warned not to do it. "If you keep your mouth shut, you will stay out of trouble" (21:23).

June 3rd

Proverbs 22:17-24:34. "Attaining Wisdom"

Repeatedly we are told to listen to the words of direction, and apply our heart, and heed the teaching, and stay attune to instruction. The emphasis would be hard to miss.

"Apply your heart to instruction." Many times, I can rush by a phrase like that and miss out on some of its meaning. I often need to slow down and acquire some clarity. For example, the word "apply" seems pretty simple—or does it? If I apply something, I put it on. I cover something else. I do more than just agree with it, I prioritize it. I become affected by it and concerned with it. I will put it to work and employ its use.

What about the word "heart"? This is a reference to the center and source of our life, emotions and affections. It encompasses our passions, directions, motives, and desires.

What about "instruction"? In this case it would be best for us to define "instruction" from the passage, which has been frequently summed up, as those things which reveal godly wisdom. Cover your life with God's Word.

General Questions for each day:

Summarize the day's Bible passage in your own words.

What thoughts, actions, attitudes or beliefs are addressed in the passage?

How is the Holy Spirit leading you to apply this passage to your life today?

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Bible Discussion Guide:

After reading this week's devotionals and passages, how would you define wisdom?

What are the qualities of a truly wise person?

What are some of the things a wise person avoids? How are they avoided?

Proverbs offers several tools to parenting (i.e. discipline, example, love, etc.). Consistency in parenting is another tool demonstrated between parents, sticking with decisions, and other examples you could take time to think of right now. What makes consistency in parenting so vital?

Why is gossip such a serious offense? List as many of its dangers as possible.

The May 31st devotional focuses on "witness" and "work". We know the importance of our witness. How important is work? How important is it that we are found working when the Lord comes for us?

Personal application: "Apply your heart to instruction." How could you improve or grow in this area?