

May 17th, 2020

Finding Victory Through Wisdom

Proverbs Chapters 1-4 and 16-18

Sermon Summary

This message looks at some of the amazing proverbs from the book of Proverbs in the Bible. The Scriptures covered deal with the topic of wisdom. Passages from our reading plan are utilized to find answers to six questions concerning God's wisdom and its application to our lives. The six questions are as follows:

What Motivation Fuels God's Offer of Wisdom? What Purpose is Filled by Offering Us His Wisdom? What is our Responsibility in Finding God's Wisdom? What are the Benefits of Following God's Wisdom? What are the Consequences of Failing to Accept God's Wisdom? What is the Main Reason People Forego God's Wisdom?

Full Sermon Notes

How blessed are we to have such amazing and talented people who are so willing to serve our Lord with their gifts. Each week we are led into the very presence of God through their worship leadership! Thanks worship team! I love singing worship to our Lord because He is so worthy and because He loves us so much and provides us with everything we need for life! And one of those things we desperately need for life is wisdom! God's Word tells us if we lack wisdom all we have to do is ask for wisdom. Let's pray and ask God to teach us about wisdom today!
Prayer!

Last week we talked about finding victory through the Word of God! We learned how important The Word of God is and the place of prominence it should hold in our lives! Today we're going to learn some of the practical application of God's Word in our lives because of the wisdom that comes from His Word! We're going to do this by looking at the wisdom found in the Book of Proverbs! Much of the book of Proverbs is written by Solomon, a son born to David and Bathsheba after their first son passed away. Solomon's name meant "his peace" or "his replacement." Solomon reigned as king for around forty years. You might remember that God appeared to Solomon one night in a dream and told him to ask for whatever he wanted. Here was Solomon's reply...

1 Ki 3:7 "Now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties.

1 Ki 3:8 Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number.

1 Ki 3:9 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

1 Ki 3:10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this.

1 Ki 3:11 So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice,

1 Ki 3:12 I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be.

Solomon was not a perfect man and even with all of his wisdom, made some serious mistakes, especially towards the end of his reign. However, he was given amazing wisdom as a ruler and God inspired Solomon to record some of his wisdom for us in the Bible.

The writers of our Foundations 260 devotional guide put it well when they wrote:

"Proverbs contains some of the most practical advice in the entire Bible, and its wisdom covers everything from relationships to leadership, from how to spend money to how to spend time."

I heard a very successful Christian business man speak at my home church many years ago and he shared that he attributed his success to his faith in Jesus and to something he did everyday. Because there are 31 chapters in Proverbs, he would read the one that corresponded with the day of the month. He stated that the practical advice he gained from the Proverb's wisdom on his relationship with God, his relationship with people, and how to live a life of integrity, gave him an advantage in life and business! I've followed his advice quite often down through the years and so my book of Proverbs is covered up with underlines, asterisks, stars, and little notes in the margin. As we get ready to delve deeper into the Old Testament wisdom of Proverbs I want to begin with this word about wisdom from The New Testament...

James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

James 1:6 But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.

So if you want true wisdom, ask God to give it to you and trust Him to answer your prayer. If you ask but don't really think He's going to give you the wisdom you need then you will be tempted to ignore the wisdom and then say you asked for wisdom but God didn't give it to you. That would be just another way of putting the blame on God for the unwise choices we sometimes make. And you might remember from last week's message that we have a responsibility to read and follow God's Word. In other words, if we don't avail ourselves and dig into, and mine the Word of God for the Wisdom of God then we shouldn't blame God when we make foolish decisions, mistakes, and missteps in life. Now there are, of course, other places where you can gain certain types of wisdom besides the Bible. There have been other teachers down through the years who have offered proverbs and wisdom, some good and some not so good. In fact some of the wisdom we find in the Old Testament could be found in other wisdom writings of their day, but the wisdom writers of the Bible filtered what they wrote through their understanding of Yahweh God and His leadership. Because of this the Bible has a divinely

inspired component that sets it apart from all other wisdom. In fact, listen to this from James Wood in a work published in London back in 1967 and quoted in the Broadman Commentary...

“It is important to note that the form of Wisdom found in Proverbs 1-9 does not come to man as an “it” (i.e., as a teaching, commandment, ritual or the like), but as a personal “I” who summons men to life. Wisdom is nothing less than the personal presence of Yahweh in the world and among men.”

So the wisdom we find in God’s Word is the very wisdom of God! But there are other ways of gaining wisdom that are not written down in any book! Have you ever heard of being streetwise? A person gets streetwise by learning things the hard way as they attend the school of hard knocks! And what is the school of hard knocks? Well if you decide to gain your wisdom from the street, then you will be living your life by trial and error and when you get knocked down by the harshness and cruelty of the world, you will hopefully learn a hard lesson and write that down in your playbook so you don’t have to learn that lesson again. However, my dad told me this many years ago and I’ve never forgotten it. “A smart man learns from his own mistakes! A wise man learns from other people’s mistakes, but a foolish man learns from no one’s mistakes!” I’ve decided I would like to be in the category of the wise man, but I’m afraid that hasn’t always been the case. But here’s something to think about: In life you may not have yet had the opportunity to witness an example of every situation you are faced with in life and so where do you go for wisdom in that case? I would say to you that God’s Word is complete in every way and there is no situation for which you cannot find a principle in God’s Word to help you with what you are going through. Even though the Bible was written many years ago, before the computer age, God’s principles are still extremely relevant for the things you will face even on the internet in the cyber world! The principles for relationships, business, bioethics, politics, governance, entertainment, recreation and everything else can be found in the principles of God’s Word! Yes, it’s that practical and thorough! And I want to say this: The writer of proverbs makes it clear that God has taken the initiative when it comes to offering us His wisdom! James tells us, as I said, that God gives wisdom to those who ask, but it’s an amazing thing that God has encouraged us to ask for and has graciously offered us His wisdom. This leads us to the first of six questions we will ask ourselves concerning finding victory through wisdom as we look at the book of Proverbs!

1. What Motivation Fuels God’s Offer of Wisdom

As I said, God has taken the initiative in offering us His Wisdom and in this we get a glimpse into God’s motivation for making the offer in the first place.

Listen to God’s Word in Proverbs 1:20ff

Prov 1:20 Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares;

Prov 1:21 at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:

Prov 1:22 "How long will you simple ones love your simple ways? How long will mockers delight in mockery and fools hate knowledge?"

As we saw back at the beginning of our Bible readings in January, God made us in His image and by doing so gave us free will to choose how we will live our lives, but He has made it clear that He wants to help us make good life choices! However, He will not force His wisdom, His ways, or His will upon us, but oh how He wants us to have each of these things! Did you hear what the writer says? Wisdom calls aloud in the street, raises her voice and cries out to us! And then we read this...

Prov 1:23 If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.

The writer is talking about wisdom, but because he's talking about God's wisdom, this showcases God's heart! God wants to give you His wisdom more than you can possibly imagine. He desires a personal relationship with you so He can lead you with His loving kindness to discover His wisdom! This is what fuels God's It says...

Prov 1:23 ... I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you.

The motivation behind the offer is love! Later on in the Book of Jeremiah we see this statement...

Jer 31:3 The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness.

And this in Isaiah where we see God described in His awesome power, but then see His motivation towards His people...

Isa 40:10 See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

Isa 40:11 He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

So God loves you with all His heart and that's why He lovingly offers you His wisdom! But this might lead you to ask a second question...

2. What Purpose is Filled by Offering Us His Wisdom?

Prov 1:1 The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel:

Prov 1:2 for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;

Prov 1:3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;

Prov 1:4 for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young--

Prov 1:5 let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance--
Prov 1:6 for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.
Prov 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

So the purpose filled by offering us His wisdom to us is multifaceted! Solomon offered God-inspired proverbs so people could attain wisdom and discipline. When you discover wisdom and begin living a disciplined life you will begin to understand words of insight and you will begin living a prudent life doing what is right, just and fair!

Prudent means: "acting with or showing care and thought for the future!"

Prudence matters so much because every decision you make affects your future! Without prudence we make decisions without regard for how they will affect us or those around us now and in the future! Solomon goes on to say we need knowledge, discretion and guidance! Let me give you a quick example of how God used the book of Proverbs to help give me discretion as a young man. I was one of the managers of an apartment building, along with a fellow staff member of the church I was serving while in college. One morning I got up to read my Bible and opened up to Proverbs Chapter 5 because it was the 5th day of the month. That was a chapter where a young man was given warnings about an adulteress. I was working at a church and attending Bible College and was really good friends with a Christian girl who I thought was the most wonderful Christian young lady I had ever met and whom I would eventually date and later marry! So, I thought to myself, "Well I don't know why I read that chapter. It really doesn't apply to me." Later that evening my co-manager and I were invited over to a lady's apartment for dinner. Two single college boys away from home offered a home cooked meal, who could turn that down, right? This lady's niece was having trouble at home and had come to live with her. After dinner, we were asked to stay to watch a movie. All of a sudden the chapter I had read that morning came roaring into my mind. I respectfully declined the movie invitation and headed back to my apartment. A few days later I saw the lady at the apartment mailboxes and thanked her again for the meal. It was then that she said she needed to warn me about something. Her niece was going through a time of rebellion and had said some things to her, so she told me to be on my guard. It was then I realized how God's Wisdom in Proverbs had given me great guidance for that evening and helped me avoid a potentially compromising situation! God's wisdom has very practical purposes and applications! Here's a third question concerning God's wisdom...

3. What is our Responsibility in Finding God's Wisdom?

Prov 2:1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
Prov 2:2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,
Prov 2:3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
Prov 2:4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,
Prov 2:5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

How powerful are those words? Very powerful indeed! I don't know if you noticed this, but the covenant formula of the Old Testament pops up again in these verses. It's the If/Then formula. It says...

"If you accept my words"

"If you store up my commands within you"

"If you turn your ear to wisdom"

"If you apply your heart to understanding"

"If you call out for insight"

"If you cry aloud for understanding"

"If you look for it as for silver"

"If you search for it as for hidden treasure"

"Then you will understand the fear of the Lord"

"Then you will find the knowledge of God."

Prov 2:6 For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Do you remember these words from Jesus in the New Testament?

Mat 7:7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

Mat 7:8 For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

4. What are the Benefits of Following God's Wisdom?

There are almost too many to count!

Prov 2:7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

Prov 2:8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

Prov 2:9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair--every good path.

Prov 2:10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

Prov 2:11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

Prov 2:12 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,

Prov 2:13 who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways,

Prov 2:14 who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,

Prov 2:15 whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

Prov 2:16 It will save you also from the adulteress, from the wayward wife with her seductive words...

I want to reiterate what I said last week - Reading, studying, meditating and living the Word of God does not mean you will never have issues or problems, or difficulties, you will, but the outcome will absolutely be different! God promises that! The very title of our message today is Finding Victory Through Wisdom and listen to verse 7 we just read...

Prov 2:7 He holds victory in store for the upright...

The reason for this is the fact that God is faithful to give His wisdom, to those who desire it, who seek it, who receive it and who live it! Let me just list the benefits in these verses we just read. In fact you might want to underline them! Those who rely on God's wisdom...

Find victory!

Have a shield more powerful than any fictitious superhero!

Have safeguards in place along life's path!

Have God's protection!

Remember, nothing gets through to a follower of Christ unless God allows it and if He allows it, it's for a greater purpose. This sure brings a great peace. In fact, chapter 3 gives us another list of benefits that relates to this...

Prov 3:21 My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight;

Prov 3:22 they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck.

Prov 3:23 Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble;

Prov 3:24 when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Prov 3:25 Have no fear of sudden disaster or of the ruin that overtakes the wicked,

Prov 3:26 for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

I like to call that Godfidence!

Those who rely on God's wisdom...

Have understanding concerning what's right and fair!

Have insight on which paths to take!

(In fact Solomon emphasizes this in Chapter 3:5-6 and it's one of our memory verses for this week)

Prov 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;

Prov 3:6 in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.

One of the greatest benefits of relying on God's wisdom is that wisdom is no longer just a list of dos and don'ts, but becomes a part of our very being...

Wisdom enters our heart!

Knowledge becomes pleasant to your soul!

God's wisdom brings discretion and a high level of understanding about life's complexities!

Wisdom directs us away from the influence of wicked people!

5. What are the Consequences of Failing to Accept God's Wisdom?

It may seem a no-brainer, but we lose all the benefits we just talked about! What a tragedy. I was telling someone just the other day how I'm constantly reminded of where I would be had I not accepted the love, grace and wisdom that God offered me years ago as a teenager. Man I was making some pretty horrible decisions in life, headed down a terrible path, and doomed for failure, despair and eventually eternal death. However, God called out to me, cried out to me, reached out to me, and offered me forgiveness for my past and Godly wisdom for my future. Now I want to share with you a truth about God's wisdom as we talk about the consequences of failing to accept God's Wisdom. God's wisdom is based on moral and ethical absolutes which He established. In order to accept God's wisdom we must accept that His wisdom is based on His principles, His ethics, His laws! If we reject these things there will be consequences and they are negative. Let me quote you something from one of my favorite writers. It may surprise you, coming from a Baptist preacher, that he is an 83 year old Catholic Theologian named Peter Kreeft. He is a professor of philosophy at [Boston College](#) and [The King's College](#) in New York. He has written over 80 books, many of which are on ethics and apologetics. In his book "Making Choices: Finding Black and White in a World of Greys" he writes...

"All of us know from our own experience that hard, unyielding moral absolutes are often very inconvenient. We would very much like to bend the laws a bit; therefore we bend our *beliefs* about the law. It takes only a little knowledge of modern psychology to reveal how much we all rationalize rather than reason, how often our arguments are supports for our desires rather than honest searches after truth."

And here's what happens when we reject the wisdom and principles our Creator God lovingly offered us as a guide for our lives:

Prov 1:29 Since they hated knowledge and did not choose to fear the LORD,

Prov 1:30 since they would not accept my advice and spurned my rebuke,

Prov 1:31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

Prov 1:32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

And in Chapter 4 we read...

Prov 4:19 But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

And we must notice, that the consequences of rejecting God's wisdom is the responsibility of the person not God. Notice it says...

Prov 1:31 they will eat the fruit of their ways and be filled with the fruit of their schemes.

Prov 1:32 For the waywardness of the simple will kill them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them;

6. What is the Main Reason People Forego God's Wisdom?

Pride! Human pride causes people to think they don't need God for anything. Human pride actually causes people to think they can create their own god in their own image! This kind of arrogance causes them to reject the love, grace, mercy, and the wisdom God has offered to give them. The wisdom writer mentions the pride issue several times in chapter 16.

Prov 16:5 The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

And if you were wondering why the Lord detests the proud of heart, it's because of the behaviors which accompany a prideful, arrogant and haughty spirit. Listen...

Prov 16:27 A scoundrel plots evil, and his speech is like a scorching fire.

Prov 16:28 A perverse man stirs up dissension, and a gossip separates close friends.

Prov 16:29 A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good.

Prov 16:30 He who winks with his eye is plotting perversity; he who purses his lips is bent on evil.

Prov 18:2 A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.

Prov 18:3 When wickedness comes, so does contempt, and with shame comes disgrace.

So if pride is the main reason people reject God's wisdom, is there any hope for someone who has been prideful and rejected God's wisdom in the past? I believe the answer to that is an absolute and overwhelming YES! Towards the end of the Book of Proverbs we read this:

Prov 29:23 A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

If you are willing to lose your pride and take on a lowly, humble spirit, God will respond with the very gift of salvation for your soul and you will begin to find victory in your life through the wisdom of God. James put it this way in the New Testament...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

James 4:9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

Why does it say grieve, mourn, wail and change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom? That sounds like terrible advice, but it's not! James is talking about repentance! Grieving your old ways, and the laughter that was the empty and nervous laughter of a person with no real hope or true joy. Give up the fake pleasures, lies and deceptions of the world and embrace the truest joys and treasures that God's wisdom can bring into your life. And talk about victory, James then says...

James 4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

And what does it look like to be forgiven and lifted up by The Lord? Paul said it well in 1 Corinthians...

1 Cor 2:9 However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"--

1 Cor 2:10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

1 Cor 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

1 Cor 2:12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

1 Cor 2:13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

1 Cor 2:14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

1 Cor 2:15 The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment:

1 Cor 2:16 "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Wow! The Mind of Christ! That's ultimate wisdom and will help you find ultimate victory in your life! Let's pray!

If you've never had that personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ and have been missing out on the wisdom that God wants to pour into your life, then you could ask Him today to come into your life by admitting you've sinned and need a Savior, believing that Jesus died on the Old Rugged Cross in order to be your Savior, and committing your life to Him by asking Him

to come into your heart and life! The prayer would go something like this:

Dear God, I admit I've done wrong and need Your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ died on the Cross to pay for my sins, and I commit my life to you this day. I invite You into my heart and life and humbly ask you to begin leading me with Your Holy Spirit and giving me Your great wisdom! Thank You for hearing my prayer, for it's in the Name of Jesus I pray and I believe! Amen.

I know I will see some of you next week as we begin regathering for worship in a safe and responsible manner. Some of you will still opt for our online service and that's absolutely okay! Out of courtesy for the safety of others, I will be wearing my cool facial mask my daughter made for me, except when I'm on stage preaching. It's not required for you to wear a mask, but it wouldn't hurt. Anyway, I can't wait to see you even with a mask, and remember, God's looking at our hearts and not our mask!! Let's sing one more worship song and then Kayla will give us our final announcements! Love you!