

A CRASH COURSE IN WISDOM

August 10, 2014

Before starting this morning's message, I thought you might appreciate some pearls of wisdom from some of the wisest people: kids. Just a few: No matter how hard you try...you can't baptize cats. When your mom is mad at your dad...don't let her brush your hair. Never ask your 3-year old brother to hold a tomato. Finally: you can't trust dogs to watch your food.

Well, this morning, we're doing a quick crash course on wisdom - there's so much to say, but too little time to say everything that could be or should be said; so please forgive any deficiencies or omissions because learning about wisdom and what it is and how it operates and how we gain wisdom and so on - it's a an all-you-can eat smorgasboard and we got just enough time to eat a big mac. So let's start by reading in 1 Kings 3:5-14.

That night the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!" 6 Solomon replied, "You were wonderfully kind to my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued this great kindness to him today by giving him a son to succeed him. 7 O LORD my God, now you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. 8 And here I am among your own chosen people, a nation so great they are too numerous to count! 9 Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours?" 10 The Lord was pleased with Solomon's reply and was glad that he had asked for wisdom. 11 So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people and have not asked for a long life or riches for yourself or the death of your enemies -- 12 I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have! 13 And I will also give you what you did not ask for -- riches and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! 14 And if you follow me and obey my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."

In the film, "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade," famed action adventure archaeologist Indiana Jones is searching for the Holy Grail, which will reportedly give eternal life to whoever will drink from it. After navigating past a couple deadly booby traps, he enters a cave guarded by an ancient knight from the Crusades who has been kept alive for centuries to protect the Holy Grail; and around the cave's perimeter are chalices: sterling silver chalices, jewel-encrusted golden goblets - an innumerable assortment of different materials and designs. Finally, Indiana Jones finds a small wooden cup, almost invisible behind and between all these silver and gold chalices; and scooping up this small, plain-looking cup, he drinks, to which the knight says "He has chosen...wisely."

You know, sometimes when trying to make the wise choice we may feel like Indiana Jones trying to find the right chalice in a sea of wrong ones. We find ourselves in a situation or a quandary and there are so many purported answers - an innumerable assortment - what to pick?

Since the beginning, man has sought after wisdom; for why did Eve eat the forbidden fruit? "When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and *also desirable for gaining wisdom* she took some and ate it." (**Genesis 3:6**) So the great-great-great-great grandmother of all humanity sought after wisdom, and people still today seek after wisdom: people will journey to exotic lands to learn at the feet of some acclaimed yogi, they will consult popular self-help gurus, they will turn to advice columnists and horoscopes, they will study the writings of ancient philosophers looking for wisdom, because the world is saturated with perplexing dilemmas, vexing conundrums, confusing choices, and so much apparent gray. People want wisdom in their

interpersonal relationships, their business management, their financial stewardship, their priorities, and so on. Wisdom is a commodity in such demand and of such practical value that Solomon wrote, “Wisdom is more precious than rubies.” (**Proverbs 3:15**) But what is wisdom?

What is wisdom?

Here’s a Biblical definition of the wisdom we are talking about, given by Job who ascribes these words to God: “Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” (**Job 28:28**) According to Job, that is God’s definition or explanation of wisdom. *Now, fear of the Lord here does not mean that we cower in abject dread of God; rather, we mean that fear with which a beloved child ought to fear his father - that fear which is reverent awe and affection, or we could say respect and love.* So the respect and love of God, the fear of the Lord, is wisdom, for as we operate our lives by that fear, as we allow it to inform our thought processes and conduct in every arena of our lives - our relationship with God, our interpersonal relationships, our attitudes toward material prosperity and hard work and engaging in social behaviors and on and on it will help us to discern good from evil, show good judgment, live morally upright lives; and therefore, not only does the fear of the Lord define wisdom - as we read: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (**Proverbs 1:7**)

What does wisdom look like?

So that’s what wisdom is - now, what does it look like?

In James 3, James contrasts 2 kinds of wisdom - one he calls earthly, unspiritual, and of the devil, and he talks about what that looks like in verses 14-16. He then writes about heavenly wisdom and what that looks like. We read, “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” (**James 3:17**) If a man has godly wisdom, he will live a godly life - it makes sense.

Where can I get wisdom?

I remember once when I was younger, my family went to the McDonald’s in Clarks Summit. Remember: McDonald’s. My dad walked up to the counter, and when they asked for his order, he ordered a Whopper. You don’t get Whoppers at McDonald’s...it’s not the right place to get them. I was watching an episode of a tv show, where one flustered, timid character went into a butcher’s shop and ordered so many pounds of this and so much of that and a tube of toothpaste. You don’t get toothpaste at a butcher’s shop - it’s the wrong place. When it comes to wisdom, there are a lot of wrong places to try and get wisdom. What’s the right place?

The verse we just looked at tells us: “the wisdom that comes from above.” This morning’s reading also tells us that wisdom comes from God; Solomon asks God for wisdom and God gives it. Just a couple other verses fast that show wisdom is God’s property:

“God alone is wise. Glory belongs to him through Jesus Christ forever! Amen.” (**Romans 16:27**)

“For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” (**Proverbs 2:6**)

So we know what wisdom is: the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. We know what wisdom looks like: a person who is wise with God’s wisdom will live godly: be pure, peace-loving, gentle, full of mercy, etc. Now, one more question: How can I get wisdom? We know we need as we try to navigate through the trials and difficult decisions we face day-by-day; but how can we get it?

How do I get wisdom? First off, know this: if any man has Christ, he already has wisdom; for we read, “But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God to those people God has called - Jews

and Greeks...Because of God you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.” (1 **Corinthians 1:24, 30**) The world may have its wisdom, but Christ is our wisdom. Author and preacher John MacArthur writes of believers, that they “are given God’s wisdom to replace their own” and “Christians can say, without pride or self-boasting, that they have become wise in Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, God gives us wisdom by his Holy Spirit; for we read in 1 Corinthians, “No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone; and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit.” (1 **Corinthians 2:11**) And God’s Spirit who knows God’s thoughts is with us and in us forever as our God-given, indwelling Helper, so that the apostle continues, “And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world’s Spirit) so that we can know the wonderful things God has given us.” (1 **Corinthians 2:12**). So we are already wise; but we can grow in wisdom. In the interest of time, just two ways quick.

FIRST~ **PRAY**. Samuel Morse, famed inventor of the telegraph, gave an interview once, in which he was asked, “did you ever come to a standstill, not knowing what to do next?” Morse answered, “I prayed for more light.” The interviewer continued, “Did God give you the wisdom and knowledge you needed?” “Yes,” answered Morse, “That’s why I never felt I deserved the honors that came to me...I had made a valuable application of the use of electrical power, but it was all through God’s help.” Perhaps that explains the first message ever sent via telegraph: “What hath God wrought!” Morse asked for more light, for wisdom.

We read in James, “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. 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.” (**James 1:5-6**)

King Solomon provides an example of this. Not long after ascending to the throne of his father King David, after Solomon had offered a thousand burnt offerings to God, God appeared to him in a dream and said, “What do you want? Ask and I will give it to you!” (1 **Kings 3:5**) God pulls out his checkbook and says, “Alright Solomon - name it.” What does Solomon ask for? “O LORD my God, now you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn’t know his way around. And here I am among your own chosen people, a nation so great they are too numerous to count! *Give me an understanding mind* so that I can govern your people well and *know the difference between right and wrong*.” And what was God’s answer: “I will give you what you asked for!” (2 **Kings 3:5, 7-9, 12a**)

SECOND~ **READ**. Read the Bible. A few verses: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.” (**Psalms 19:7**) About the book of Proverbs specifically: “The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people.” (**Proverbs 1:2-4**) “You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Jesus Christ.” (2 **Timothy 3:15**)

Sunday's Insert

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1 Kings 3:5-14

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“When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom she took some and ate it.” (**Genesis 3:6**)

“Wisdom is more precious than rubies.” (**Proverbs 3:15**)

I. What is wisdom?

A. “Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding.” (**Job 28:28**)

The fear of the Lord does not mean that we cower in abject dread of God; rather, we mean that fear with which a beloved child ought to fear his father - that fear which is reverent awe and affection, or we could say respect and love. So the respect and love of God, the fear of the Lord, is wisdom, for as we operate our lives by that fear, it will help us to discern good from evil, show good judgment, live morally upright lives. - My thoughts

B. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (**Proverbs 1:7**)

II. What does wisdom look like?

“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.” (**James 3:17**)

III. Where can I get wisdom?

A. “God alone is wise. Glory belongs to him through Jesus Christ forever! Amen.” (**Romans 16:27**)

B. “For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”

(Proverbs 2:6)

IV. How do I get wisdom?

A. We Are Already Wise

1) “But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God to those people God has called - Jews and Greeks...Because of God you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God.” **(1 Corinthians 1:24, 30)**

“[believers] are given God’s wisdom to replace their own...Christians can say, without pride or self-boasting, that they have become wise in Jesus Christ.” - John MacArthur

2) “No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone; and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit (not the world’s Spirit) so that we can know the wonderful things God has given us.” **(1 Corinthians 2:11-12)**

B. Gaining More

1) Pray

“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. 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.” **(James 1:5-6)**

2) Read

a. “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.” **(Psalm 19:7)**

b. The purpose of these proverbs is to teach people wisdom and discipline, and to help them understand wise sayings. Through these proverbs, people will receive instruction in discipline, good conduct, and doing what is right, just, and fair. These proverbs will make the simpleminded clever. They will give knowledge and purpose to young people.” **(Proverbs 1:2-4)**

c. “You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Jesus Christ.” **(2 Timothy 3:15)**