

CROSS-CENTERED RELATIONSHIPS

Week #5

“Wisdom”

Throughout the course of time there has always been a battle on the grounds of “wisdom”. It could be the stage of Mars Hill where the Areopagus got together to argue the purpose of life (Athens, Greece). It could be in Rome during the time of Augustine during the era of heralds. Or, for that matter, all of the time frames of Aristotle, Socrates, and Plato.

Mankind loves to discuss (philosophize in my terms) from their own “wise” perspectives. 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 reminds us that no matter how smart, cunning, or wise we think we are, God’s wisdom is always superior. Matter of fact, the wisdom of man does not even appear to be wise at all if it is not from God. This is proven in the simple message of Paul to the Areopagus on Mars Hill found in Acts 17. It was this very point that John Bunyan was proving when he introduced Mr. Worldly Wiseman into the story of Pilgrim’s Progress. All wisdom that truthfully brings any power or surety must come from God.

It is for this reason that Solomon begs God for wisdom beyond what this world could offer (1 Kings 3:6-9). To this, Solomon, after years of successes and failures, writes much of the book of Proverbs to those that would come after him. The beginning of the book starts with “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). Through the first 3 chapters of Proverbs Solomon also outlines that Godly Wisdom contains: Knowledge, Understanding, and Discernment. Nothing is considered truly wise without these three components.

When we come to the Lord for wisdom, and then live out what He gives, we are promised 6 things as benefits of Godly wisdom:

- 1) Strength & Dignity (Exodus 15, Proverbs 18:10, Psalm 8:5, Psalm 21:5)*
- 2) Surety in place of Anxiety*
- 3) Good Counsel*
- 4) Speech (responses) that are True & Kind*
- 5) Attentiveness to situations near us*
- 6) Preparedness for what Lies Ahead*

Consider these benefits in a world that struggles with strength to keep going, anxiety over what to do in tough times, knowing which advice to take, how to respond best, seeing pitfalls before it is too late, or even actions to go about doing so they are ready for life’s fires. If Godly wisdom provides benefits to these things, then we can see why it is more precious than any, and all, treasure of fine jewelry.

Please take this thought into the rest of this week’s short devotional for men, women, and young people...

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MEN:

This world is trying to destroy our roles as men in the home. Pressure is constantly put on men to take a stand, and most have chosen to not to fight but give in. Solomon notes in Ecclesiastes 9:13-18 the value of one man who was wise in a town that was being besieged. Verse 18 reads, "Wisdom is better than weapons of war..." Men, our homes and church are a battleground under siege. Godly wisdom is seen as the strength and ability to stand and stand well.

Solomon, the man of Godly Wisdom, writes in Ecclesiastes 4:12-15 that a wise lad is better than the king who foolishly stops taking counsel. Even for the king of any kingdom advisors are seen with great value. For that matter, in our relationships, men with each other and our spouses, God has given us the gift of wise counsel. Not only is that counsel beneficial to us, it is also a strengthening to relationships around us! However, in our pride we often become like the foolish king that shuts out sound counsel. We may not be able to be called lazy, but we can sure plunge head-long into great demise. This is why God calls those relationships not just a gift, but a treasure to our soul (Prov. 2:1-12).

As it regards relationships, men, we have been given a gift by design from God in our wives. Proverbs 31 is written to us men first you may recall. One of the things we are to note in our marriages is the aid and counsel of our wives in all affairs regarding daily life. She is praiseworthy if she is a woman that gives good counsel, but nonetheless she is given by God as a partner and wise counsel to us men.

READ Proverbs 11:14, 15:22, and 24:6...

Each of us men know there are many battles in life. Our manly testosterone can often get the best of us. Unlike the actions of the foolish king in Ecclesiastes 4, what do these verses have to say about a man of wisdom? What relationships do you have in your life that fit this description from God's Word?

READ Colossians 4:5-6 & Proverbs 15:1...

Godly wisdom is valuable and effective for many great things. One benefit is its effect on our tongue. We can often be crushing to those near us with the words that come out of our mouth. 1 Timothy 5:18 reminds us to not "muzzle the ox." In other words, take care of those that are a care for us by God's grace. Wives, Godly friends, and brothers/sisters in Christ. What do these verses say about wisdom being applied to our tongues toward those around us? How are you doing practicing these things at home, church, and throughout your day?

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WOMEN:

Throughout the course of history, there is only one 'first-hand to the belief' book that promotes women, and that is none other than God's Word (the Bible). The Judeo-Christian heritage is the only place any woman has found a true promotion. While the world may scoff at the positions God builds within the household, it is only God that promotes the place of the woman in society.

This may be a bit of a redundant statement considering the last few week's Bible studies. However, the Proverbs 31 woman and Ruth give us a look at what makes the Biblically Excellent woman so valuable and esteemed. We must first note that throughout Proverbs 31 we see the excellent woman attentive to her family's needs as she works through morning, afternoon, and evening to make sure those needs are met (v.12-19). We see her not growing anxious with the upcoming winter or general storms/problems of life (v.21). Her words are wise in counsel and encouraging in delivery (v.26). In all of these different things we see the woman of excellence attentive and preparing for what lies ahead. Her work doesn't sound easy. Most women avoid their call and construction by God because they know the task is difficult. However, God says that this is the mark of a wise woman... And this woman is commanded by God to be praised by her husband and children. She is a truly treasured and irreplaceable asset to the home.

A study of the Godly women in Scripture reveals much of where they drew their source of wisdom. We could see in Ruth 1 how Ruth rested in God's teaching, Mary the sister of Martha who sat at Jesus' feet to learn (Luke 10), Hannah who sought out the Lord (1 Samuel 1), or Esther who prayed and cried out to God (Esther 1-4). It does not matter which Godly woman of Scripture you choose to look at of the many. Each one found themselves only able to offer anything of value because they had been at the feet of the Lord. It was only there that they gained strength and wisdom for the tasks ahead. This is what made them so beautiful in the Lord's eyes and valuable to those around them.

READ Proverbs 14:1 & 31:25-27...

The home is not just the man's responsibility, but also the woman's as a co-leader of wise counsel in the home. If you don't believe me, consider the definite article in Proverbs 14:1, "her house"... While the woman's role might be different, the role still requires immense wisdom to win in life. Each of the women mentioned above found themselves before God for their wisdom and provision. These verses call the woman's attention to wise living and counsel in the home. What is your daily source for the wisdom you bring into the home?

According to the same texts above, what are the benefits that you as a wise and Biblically excellent woman can bring to the home? (see list on page 1 of this devotional if desired)... After making that list, note that each of these benefits describes an action, and then ask yourself if these things are truly present in your life today...

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YOUNG PEOPLE:

Proverbs chapters 1 through 3 show us what defines wisdom, and also that it only comes from God. In those chapters we see that wisdom has three parts that must be present. They are, as stated on the first page of this study, Knowledge, Understanding, and Discernment. Knowledge is a basic fact information gathering of what things are. Understanding is knowing how to use these different things in life to your benefit. Discernment is knowing what your pitfalls or troubles might be along the way. Unless all of these pieces are working together, then there is no wisdom involved in the actions we choose to do.

As a young person, Jesus was noted in Luke 2:52 as growing in both wisdom and stature. In verse 51 it tells us that Jesus subjected Himself to His parents and leaders. He didn't do this because He didn't know any better, but rather to set an example for young people then and today. He knew it would be helpful to set an example that would prove valuable for the rest of your life. So, He operated under the schooling system of that time. I mentioned in this past week's message that this schooling would have had 3 tiers of training. While the names were a little different for the types of training the purposes were interesting to note. In the younger years the children would have the School of Knowledge where they would listen, memorize, and learn facts of life. Then they would grow into the School of Understanding where they would begin to be able to ask questions and start practicing what they were taught. Finally, for those that seemed to show soundness in knowledge and understanding, they could potentially go into the final School of Discernment. It is at this point that they would ultimately work out wisdom as they observed not only what things are or their purpose, but how to use them as God intended without falling or missing the mark along the way. For this reason, the School of Discernment was a lifelong pursuit of growing in Godly counsel.

Young person, today you are called to be a learner so that one day you can be a wise leader. It is hard work to learn. This is why in Psalm 119:33-40 the psalmist asked God for the heart and mind to learn and live out wisdom. It is impossible without God. But it does take a willing heart to sit at the feet of Jesus and learn so one day you can walk in wisdom.

READ Proverbs 2-3...

The amount of times that Solomon addresses the young person in these chapters makes it very clear God wants you to learn something. While this is a bit more reading than usual, I encourage you to take a moment to think through these chapters. Write down the benefits of wisdom you find in these two chapters and then compare them with the 6 benefits given on page 1 of this week's devotional. What do you learn about wisdom and its value?