

First Baptist Church Merritt Island
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SCHOOL OF WISDOM – Life Lessons from Proverbs
Delighting in the Fear of the LORD
Proverbs 1:1-7

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Last month, Amy and I had the chance to do something that's been on our bucket list for years: we went on an Alaskan cruise. Like other Floridians, we traveled thousands of miles northwest for the glorious possibility of experiencing a miracle in July: 50-degree weather!

We saw what we came to see. We took the pictures. We did not buy the T-shirt, but we did bring home great memories. As I think back on that great trip, what still resonates within me more than what my eyes saw was a story my ears heard, and mind tried to imagine...the Klondike Goldrush.

At the Port of Skagway, we boarded the White Pass Railway, a scenic ride through the mountains. We saw breathtaking beauty from our comfortable and safe railcar. But over 100 years ago, this same route was once a brutal climb for those swept away by the Gold Rush.

History tells how they came in droves, not seeking creation's beauty, but chasing a rumor of riches. It's known as the Klondike Gold Rush of 1896. The price of their dream came at great risk without a guaranteed reward.

This morning, we open the Bible to discover a treasure far greater than gold: the wisdom of God. For the next several weeks, we will explore the riches of Wisdom in the book of Proverbs.

We will not search for it with pride's pursuit or determination. Instead, we will enter what could be called The School of Wisdom. It is a classroom of humility and reverence leading to practical godliness.

This morning, we will discover three lessons that are foundational for the weeks to come:

1. What true wisdom is.
2. Where it begins.
3. How it comes alive in us.

So, get your pencils out and let's begin. Here is our first lesson of the morning.

Lesson 1: Wisdom Belongs to God and is Beyond Human Reach

What is wisdom? Throughout history,

- philosophers have tried to define wisdom,
- religions to own it, and
- scientists to uncover it, and
- historians to explain it.

Scripture makes this very clear. Wisdom isn't ours to discover; it's God's to give. We need to start with a definition for the word Wisdom:

The Hebrew word is KHOK-mah (*chokmah*). Wisdom is a God-given heart posture that responds to Him with reverence and lives according to His will.

When I started preparing for this morning, it is no surprise that I went straight to Proverbs chapter 1. But the LORD redirected me to begin in a very different and unexpected place...Job.

About a thousand years before Solomon, there lived a man who did not sit on a king's throne but in the shadows of suffering. His name was Job. This was a man who had lost everything: all of his family and worldly possession. In the middle of his sorrow while surrounded by friends doing more harm than good, he asked two profound questions.

Job 28:20-21, 23-24, 28

"From where, then, does wisdom come? And where is the place of understanding? 21 It is hidden from the eyes of all living and concealed from the birds of the air. 23 God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. 24 For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. 28 And he said to man, 'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.'"

In Job's place of brokenness came an absolute surrender to God. He was able to see something that we must see today. He saw that wisdom is not a thing to be mastered, but a gift to be received. His desperate need was not to have answers to the question of "why"; it was to BEHOLD the One who does.

Before we continue, take a moment and sit with Job's questions. Where does your wisdom come from? Where is the place you run to for understanding?

What Job found in torn clothes and ashes, Solomon would learn wearing a royal robe. Same truth. Same God. Lesson 1 focused on what true wisdom is and Lesson 2 moves us to learn where true wisdom begins.

Turn to our main passage this morning: Proverbs 1:1-7.

Proverbs 1:1–7

The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel: 2 To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, 3 to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity; 4 to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth—5 Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance, 6 to understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles. 7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.

Lesson 2: Wisdom Begins With a Humble and Reverent Posture Before the LORD

Together, we just declared what is not only the Centerpiece of this passage, but the whole book of Proverbs.

Proverbs 1:7

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."

With this new lesson, comes a second definition this morning. What is the fear of the LORD? The fear of the LORD is a humble and reverent heart that honors God, trusts His rule, and obeys His Word with joy. This fear is void of dread or anxiety. It does not have the posture of shameful cowering. It does not run away from the LORD. The fear of the LORD runs to the LORD. It has a heart-posture of humility and respect for Him. It is filled with awe and worship before Him.

Proverb's opening six verses build toward the mighty truth parallel truths in verse 7 and all 908 verses that follows flow powerfully from it.

- Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord.
- Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

When I read verse 7, I have a visual in my mind. One of our stops on the Alaska trip was to see and experience a waterfall called Nugget Falls. The name Nugget sounded like it was small, but it was anything but small. Amy and I stood at the foot of this waterfall and felt its force, heard its roar, and admired its beauty.

What made these falls possible? Its source is the mighty Mendenhall Glacier. This was not just another waterfall. In the same way, Proverbs 1:7 is not just another verse in the list of many; it's the Mendenhall glacier of the book of Proverbs. It's the source. It's the weight and power behind every practical insight that follows.

Remove the glacier, and the falls dry up. Ignore or assume verse 7, and the rest of Proverbs becomes good advice instead of the glacier of God's wisdom.

Without the fear of the LORD, the heart despises wisdom and instruction. Let me show you four realities of a foolish heart that rejects the fear of the LORD:

1. Humility is lost
 - The heart becomes unteachable.
 - Self-sufficiency says, "I don't need help."
2. God's Word is despised
 - The heart becomes the source of its own truth.
 - Self-authority says, "I know what's true."
3. Conscience is dulled
 - The heart becomes desensitized to the Holy Spirit's conviction and invitation.
 - Self-preservation says, "I choose me."
4. Delight is absent
 - The heart becomes joyless.
 - Self-sovereignty says, "I'll take control."

But with The Fear of the Lord, the heart is opened to:

- know wisdom and instruction
- understand words of insights
- receive correction with humility
- avoid being misled
- walk with discretion and
- grasp the deep things of God

As I read these descriptors of one who is wise, what picture do you have in your mind? I googled "picture of a wise man" and this is the first image that it showed. If this is the picture you have in your mind of King Solomon, well don't!

Did you know that it is believed that Solomon became king around age 20? He was young, Inexperienced, and the thought of following in his dad's, King David, footsteps had to be overwhelming.

One night, God appeared to Solomon in a dream and said,

1 Kings 3:5

"Ask what I shall give you."

Solomon didn't ask for riches. Or victory. Or long life. In the original Hebrew, it says he asked for a listening heart. Write that down: A listening heart is for all of us.

And this was God's response to Solomon's request.

1 Kings 4:29, 34

"And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding beyond measure... and people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon."

The wisdom we will be studying over these next weeks did not come from Solomon's intelligence, age or background. God gave Solomon wisdom because he had listening heart that feared the LORD.

If Job beheld the mystery of God's wisdom, if Solomon instructed us in God's wisdom, there is One who would one day embody it. That leads us to our third and final lesson this morning.

Lesson 3: Wisdom Now Lives In Us Through Christ

In the opening verses of Proverbs, we're told that the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. But because of Christ, we now see where that wisdom leads and who that wisdom is.

Christ doesn't replace Proverbs. He fulfills it. He transforms instruction into daily participation with the One who is wisdom. If we read Proverbs only as moral advice, we'll try to live wisely in our own strength. And we'll fail. But if we read through Christ, and we find something better: wisdom formed in us by union, not effort.

1 Corinthians 1:30

And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,

He doesn't just teach wisdom; He is wisdom. He doesn't just model righteousness; He gives righteousness. And in Him, we're invited to walk in wisdom every day. So, Proverbs becomes more than instruction. It becomes an invitation to walk daily life out in Christ and let *His* wisdom take shape in *us*, from the inside out. We've looked at Job 28. We've looked at Proverbs 1.

Let's finish with Isaiah 11 and stand in awe of the One who fulfilled them both.

Isaiah 11:1–2

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. 2 And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.

Do those words sound familiar? Wisdom... Understanding... Knowledge... Fear of the LORD

They are the very same Hebrew words spoken in Job 28 and Proverbs 1. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of them all. And He didn't walk in them out of obligation. Look at the next verse.

Isaiah 11:3

"And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD."

He delighted in the fear of the LORD. Let that sink in. The very One who inspired the words, "Fear the LORD" is the One who fulfilled them perfectly. The One we are called to fear came 2,000 years ago, walked our dusty road, and delighted in the fear of His Father.

And now, if you are in Christ, He lives in you. And what delighted His heart, He now desires to shape in yours.

So how do we walk in the wisdom? Let me offer three simple, daily applications from our lessons today.

1. Behold the God of all Wisdom - start each day this week by worshiping before you start problem-solving.
2. Bow your heart before the LORD - throughout each day, pause and pray, "Lord, give me a listening heart."
3. Delight in the fear of the LORD - at the end of each day, pause and reflect: "Have I lived in the joy of Christ's wisdom?"

Before we pray, let me tell you something that happened this week. I had lunch with Ryan Osteen. As we were catching up with one another, he said, "Carey, I can't get enough of the fear of the Lord. It's been stirring in me for weeks."

He had no idea what I was preaching today. And he sure didn't know I'd ask him to close the service. But what gripped me wasn't just what he said, it was how he said it. Not with dread, but with delight. His heart was alive. His eyes lit up as he told me things he was learning.

This isn't just truth to study; it is something God is awakening in us. So, I've asked Ryan to close us in prayer, not because he's mastered the fear of the Lord, but because he's learning to delight in it. Let his prayer become your prayer too.