

A Proverb A Day Keeps the Fool Away

A General Truth

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: Proverbs 3:5-7

Speaker: Joel Greenwood

April 14, 2024

If I could grant you one wish, anything you wanted, what would you ask for? And no, you can't ask for more wishes. All right? There are so many possibilities, right? If somebody said anything you want, you could ask for power. You could ask for wealth. You could ask for athletic ability, love, health, looks, popularity, happiness. It's kind of fun to think about, but what if it were really true?

Would you believe me if I told you that it was true for one individual, and his name was Solomon, and many of you have probably heard of Solomon, we are told in 2 Chronicles chapter 1 that Solomon had just been named the next king of Israel. He had just been named king, taken over the throne from his father, David, and we enter into what is known as the golden years for the nation of Israel.

Of course, it was a huge responsibility as he was going to be leading God's chosen people, his special possession. And we read in 2 Chronicles chapter 1 verse 7 that God appeared to Solomon that night and said, "Ask for whatever you want me to give you." Can you imagine God asking you that and knowing that He could provide anything that you wanted, anything that you want, ask and I will give it to you.

You would be pretty excited. And yet, I am amazed at the answer that Solomon gives. Of anything that he could have ever been given, Solomon said, "Give me wisdom and knowledge that I may lead this people of all the things that he could ask for. And because Solomon didn't ask for wealth, riches, or honor, nor the death of his enemies, since he didn't ask for long life, the Scripture tells us that God granted him his request and gave him wisdom and knowledge in order to govern the Israelite people.

Therefore, as Scripture tells us, Solomon would become known for his great wisdom all throughout the ancient world, so much so that people would come from all over the ancient world in order to sit in his counsel and hear his wisdom due to this story. Whenever anyone asks me, "Pastor, how can I pray for you?" No matter what's going on in my life, my answer has always been my first answer is I pray that you would ask God to grant me wisdom and knowledge.

Now, of course, I don't have the enormous task of ruling a nation, governing an entire group of people, especially God's chosen people, the Israelites. But I do take my task of leading this congregation and this group of people very seriously. Just like you all, I am presented with difficult situations weekly, if not daily.

As people come and ask questions and seek advice, and my prayer is always that I would give godly advice and not advice that is simply from man. I want to give godly advice. I am often reminded about what James said in chapter 3 of his letter when he said, "Not many of you should presume to be teachers because you know we who teach will be judged more strictly." That verse terrifies me.

"Those of us who teach will be judged more strictly. And so because of that, for large amounts of time in my life, I have enjoyed reading a proverb a day. I've made it a commitment many times throughout my life where I'm just going to read a proverb a day. You know There's 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs. Many months have 31 days, and so every day I will just read one of those Proverbs.

And if you've never done this before, that's going to be my encouragement today because for the next three weeks, as a congregation, I want to spend some time in the book of Proverbs. As many of you know, Proverbs was written mostly by King Solomon, and he shares with us why he is writing down these Proverbs, why these have been preserved for us. So look at this. Proverbs were written for one, attaining wisdom and discipline. Number two, Proverbs were written in order that we might understand words of insight.

Proverbs were written so that we could acquire a disciplined and prudent life. The Proverbs are written for doing what is right and just and fair. And finally, Proverbs are written for knowledge and discretion for the young. Remember, a proverb, as its very definition, says it is a pithy saying that states a general truth or piece of advice. In the first eight chapters of the book of Proverbs, they're a little different than the remaining 23.

In the first eight chapters, we don't just have Proverbs written one after another, but instead we have sections that are dedicated to certain things that King Solomon said, "You know what? I want to spend a little more time on this subject." And so there in the first eight chapters, we have the benefits of wisdom. We have the warnings against adultery and warnings against the adulteress. We have warnings against folly, and then we have wisdom's call to us, wisdom personified as it cries out to us.

And then, beginning in chapter 9, Proverbs is followed by hundreds of these individual Proverbs line by line, giving advice and information about life. And so today and next week, I want to spend time in those first eight chapters. And then the final week, what I'm going to do is through the next 23 chapters, I'm just going to pick out some Proverbs that God has really used in my life and in the lives of those that I know to speak truth to us.

And so that final week, we're just going to kind of pick out some Proverbs and see how God speaks to us. So today, of course, we're going to begin in Proverbs chapter 1, but I am going to jump to verse 7. So if you have your Bibles with you, I encourage you. Open up to Proverbs 1:7. And while you are doing that, let me just ask for God's blessing upon us. Heavenly Father, we gather before you today. We thank You for the wisdom and the knowledge that is available to us.

But of course, wisdom and knowledge is more than just knowing the right thing to do or knowing what we should do, but it's actually doing it. And so I pray that You would give us that determination. You would give us that effort, that commitment to follow through as we read these Proverbs, as we read this advice that is given to us on how to live a life that is holy and honorable to you, and that certainly would point others to you as well.

We ask this in Jesus' name, amen. So it all begins, really, in Proverbs 1:7, as Solomon writes this, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction." The beginning. If you are interested in gaining wisdom or knowledge of any type, Solomon says it all begins with a healthy fear of God. So what type of fear is he talking about?

I need you to know he's not talking about the type of fear that you have of heights or of snakes or of sharks or spiders. That's not the type of fear that Solomon is talking about. The type of fear that he is talking about is this loving reverence for God. Understanding Him to be the Lord of our lives. Understanding the importance of submitting to His lordship and His commands that He has given to us.

Really, this fear of the Lord is confessing and believing that God is ultimately in control of our lives and provides for my every breath. This fear of the Lord is really an understanding that at any moment, God could hit the power button on my life. He supplies every breath that I have. Now, I don't live in fear that he's going to do that, but I understand that he could, that I don't get to control any of this, that He is in control.

That is the fear of the Lord, recognizing who truly has the power. Solomon also will tell us that wisdom involves surrounding yourselves with the right people, the right crowd. Look at this, verse 10, "My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, 'Come along with us. Let's lie and wait for innocent blood. Let's ambush some harmless soul.

Let's swallow them alive like the grave and whole, like those who go down to the pit. And then we will gather all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with their plunder. Cast lots with us. We will all share the loot. My son, do not go along with them. Do not set foot on their paths for their feet rush into evil, and they are swift to shed blood. Do not go after ill-gotten gain.

And Solomon is not just talking about physically harming others in order to build your own kingdom. It's also this idea of lying, of taking advantage, of not being fair, that when we surround ourselves with people that maybe are in the business world or are doing other things that do immoral things, he says, "Don't associate with them because you will be guilty by association." Even if you yourself don't do those things, you're going to be guilty just by surrounding yourselves with them.

Don't get caught up with the wrong crowd. Doesn't that sound like what a lot of our parents told us when we were growing up? This is the wisdom of King Solomon. And don't get caught up with the wrong crowd because you'll be guilty just by association. You may not even do the things that they do. But if you hang around with them, people will assume you do. Don't get caught up with the wrong crowd.

Chapter 1:32, Solomon tells us, "For the waywardness of the simple will kill them and the complacency of fools will destroy them." It always amazes me how many people walk on this path to destruction, and they ignore every warning sign. They get to that why in the road of their life, and they know that one path is going to lead to health and to potential success and to enjoyment out of life.

And the other path is just filled with temporary pleasures that are then followed up by often long-term pain and consequences. And there's a warning sign after warning sign on that road, but yet they keep walking down that path. I'm just amazed at that. And we all could be guilty of that, struggling with addictions, alcoholic addictions, drug addictions, pleasure addictions that are so temporary and yet have long-term consequences.

And we know that these paths lead to destruction. We know the end, but we start down them anyway. And so Solomon says to his sons, he says to us, "Don't do it." It is always easier to avoid the first step than the second. It is easier to avoid the first step than the second. Let me explain this another way. Every next wrong step gets easier than the previous one.

So don't take that first wrong step. I can't tell you how many times I've talked with teenagers or I've talked with adults in my office that find themselves in a situation in life where they say, "Pastor, I never thought I would be here." And I ask, "Well, how did you end up here then? What happened?" And do you know the answer? One small step, followed by another small step, followed by another small step.

One bad decision after another. And every time it got a little easier because of the previous bad decision I made, I never thought I would do that, but since I did that, I might as well do this. Every consecutive wrong step gets easier. Wisdom, Solomon says, will protect you from much harm. Now, you and I know if you've been alive and in this world for any period of time, that you and I cannot control everything that happens to us.

That's not what Solomon is saying. You and I live in a fallen world, and so we experience pain, we experience hurt, we experience suffering, we experience death because of sin. But if we are honest with ourselves, a lot of our pain comes from our own foolish decisions. If you look back on your life and you think about some of the most painful seasons as I do, many of those painful seasons are because of foolish decisions that I made.

Solomon says that a person of wisdom will be saved from some of that hassle, some of that heartache, from the ways of wicked men. Proverbs is also very clear that wisdom will prolong your life and bring you prosperity. Now, this is a very dangerous section of Proverbs to get into today, isn't it? Because we do live in a world where there are some pastors that will preach this idea of a prosperity gospel. So please keep listening and don't post on Facebook yet, all right?

I am just informing you what Proverbs chapter 3 says that if you will have wisdom, it will prolong your life and bring prosperity. But we don't know what kind of prosperity. And this is not true 100% of the time. It is a general rule. When you read the Proverbs, you need to understand that some of them are truth 100% of the time. It doesn't matter that they're going to be true.

Others of the Proverbs are simply a general rule. Most of the time, this is the way that it's going to work. If you add one plus one, you're going to get two. But let's spend some time in Proverbs chapter 3 and let's look at some of that wisdom that Solomon gives us because chapter 3 is an awesome chapter. We're not going to make it any further this morning because there truly is enough in chapter 3 to spend a month of all of the wisdom that God gives us through Solomon. So let's look at this.

Proverbs 3:3, Solomon says this, "Let love and faithfulness never leave you. Bind them around your neck. Write them on the tablet of your heart." As you're pursuing life, Solomon says, "Let love and faithfulness." He's narrowed it down to these two things. "Let them never leave you. Let them guide your life. Everything that you do, love and faithfulness. And if you do, you will win favor and a good name with others.

It is a great chance that you will be successful in anything that you take on if you have love and faithfulness. When I first came to the church 20 years ago as a youth pastor, there was a youth worker that eventually ended up stepping down six months later, but God brought them into our lives to be mentors and friends, and they were full of wisdom. Many of you know Barry Miller. He once said to me very early on in my ministry, "You know, Joel, you don't have to do a lot to stand out in our world today.

If you simply love others, you're nice to them and you do what you are and you do what you say you're going to do, you're going to stand out. You'll be successful. You'll be put in positions of leadership. People will want you to serve on boards. People will ask your advice if you simply love others and are faithful. Barry didn't tell me he got that from Proverbs, but you know it is true. Let love and faithfulness guide you.

Do what you say you are going to do. Be a man of integrity. Be a woman of integrity. Be honest with others. Do what you say you're going to do. Simply love others and be kind. And isn't it sad that that's all you have to do to stand out in our world? But it's true. You will be different and people will wonder, "Why are you different?" My life verse, my life verses have always been my favorite verses come in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6.

And the danger that I have in many of you understand this. You memorize this verse, and it just becomes part of in your mind, and it's easy just to read it without thinking about it. So I have to be slow when I read this, all right? Proverbs chapter 3, verses 5 and 6, Solomon says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, submit to Him or acknowledge Him as I memorized it, and He will make your paths straight.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Don't lean on your own understanding of things. Don't lean on human knowledge. Lean on God's wisdom. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. This is the best road that we can travel in life. And I can tell you from personal life experience, just when you trust in the Lord, just because you do that, there is no guarantee that life will be easy.

He didn't say that. I wish that that was the case. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and your life will be easy. Wouldn't that be great? It's not what it says, though. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. That's the promise. It's the best way we can live through life. We can have a straight path. It doesn't mean it's going to be an easy path, but we can have a straight path, a goal, a destination that we know is good.

Let's move on to verses 9 and 10. Solomon says to us, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of your crops, and then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. Honor the Lord with your wealth and your barns will be filled to overflowing." Look, if you don't like what this says or

you don't like the prosperity gospel, which is not what I'm saying, don't be mad at me. Be mad at Solomon, okay? He said it. I am just reading it to you.

This comes up from someone who has lived life and was saying, "Listen, if you will be honorable with your wealth, if you will dedicate that to God, then He will fill your barns to overflowing." Now, I want you to notice that He doesn't explain what that means, right? He doesn't say what your barn is. How is it going to be filled? What does that mean? He's not saying that, "You know what? If you call the church today and you give \$1,000 check, I promise when you get home, there's going to be a million-dollar check in your mail." All right? That's not what he's saying.

He says, "Your barns are going to be filled to overflowing. What does that look like? I don't know. If you're like me, I don't want a barn full of grain. That's not going to help me." Right? I would take a John Deere tractor. That would be cool if that's what he's talking about. But it's this idea that if you are faithful with what God has given you, that He will give you more. This is something that is true in Scripture. If you are faithful with little, He'll give you much. Again, I'm not saying that it's one for one or one for 10. I'm not saying that.

I'm just simply reiterating what Solomon is saying to us. If you are faithful and I have watched this be lived out amongst many of you. I've had such a blessing of being at this church for 20 years, and this is such a generous and giving church. You give and you give. You give sacrificially. You give out of your plenty. You just give. And I've honestly watched this. When I look at the lives of those individuals that are giving and are caring for others, it just seems that God continues to bless them.

Now, does it happen every time? No. It doesn't happen every time, but it is true if you are faithful with little, you can be given and trusted with much. Let's move on before I get in trouble. All right. Verse 11, "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke because the Lord disciplines those he loves just as a Father disciplines the Son He delights in." This is one of the truths that the earlier you learn it in life, the better.

Discipline shows love. Discipline is a good thing. Don't run away from it. Don't hide. Use discipline. Learn from discipline. Grow. It's an opportunity to change. It's an opportunity to understand. View discipline as a sign of love because someone cares enough to help you. Now, I'm sure that you are in the same boat I was in as a child, a teenager. Discipline was not fun. You didn't enjoy it.

It was somebody trying to take away your enjoyment or your fun or whatever else. But discipline is a sign of love. Scripture says that it doesn't seem pleasant at the time, but it can lead to a harvest of righteousness and peace. If we will learn from the discipline we experience, recognizing that it is coming from a person who loves us and cares for us, it can lead to righteousness and peace, also recognizing the opposite is true.

If we continue to fight against that discipline, it can lead to frustration and anger if that discipline is not handled correctly. Let's move on. Proverbs chapter 3, verses 21 and 22. Solomon says, "My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight preserve sound judgment and discretion.

They will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck." Solomon tells us, "Use sound judgment, use discernment." In other words, he is saying the very thing that my dad said to me all the time growing up, "Joel, use common sense. Please just have common sense." And in reality, God has blessed us with this common sense where you don't need to be taught some things. It's just understood. It's natural. It's normal. Things that just everybody should know.

If you're on a diet, don't drive over to Shipshiwana and step into rise and roll and smell everything, right? It's common sense. We shouldn't do that. Now, that's the funny one, but there's a lot of other common-sense struggles that we have. And this is going to get your attention. If you struggle with pornography, don't give yourself unlimited access to the internet. Common sense. If we have struggles, don't tempt yourself. If I want to stop drinking Diet Mountain Dew, which I don't, by the way.

But if I did, don't have a refrigerator full of it in your garage. It's common sense. Solomon says, "Use that." God has given that to you. And those of you that have confessed Christ as your personal Savior, you have the Spirit of God living within you, and I believe that Spirit gives us common sense. Things that just we know are natural. And if we will follow that, listen to this.

The result of that, Solomon says that if you do that, if you are submitting to God, when you lie your head down on your pillow at night, your sleep will be sweet. I remember when I first read that as a teenager, and I thought, "I sleep great. I don't care. What is this talking about?" And as I get older, you know sometimes your mind just doesn't want to shut off. Sometimes you're thinking about all the things that maybe you did that were wrong or that you would change or whatever else, and you just can't sleep.

And Solomon says, "Listen, if you will follow wisdom, your sleep will be sweet." Isn't it great when you get a good night's sleep? Your mind turns off. Your body just you're just like, "Oh, this is just relaxing." This is what Solomon says will be granted to us true rest if we will pursue wisdom. Of course, I could keep going as Solomon tells us, "Don't have fear of sudden disaster. You don't need to. If you're following God, there's nothing to fear. Do not withhold food from those who deserve it.

Be giving. Do not plot harm against your neighbor. Do not accuse a man for no reason. Do not give false witness or testimony. Do not envy a violent man. Some of it you may look at and go, "Why do they have all of that? Look at they're an evil person." God says, "Don't envy them. They will eventually get what they deserve. You don't need to worry about it." In Proverbs 3:35, "The wise inherit honor, but fools get only shame." I've never, ever talked to anyone who wants to be known as a foolish person.

We never want to be those people and the stories that we hear and share, right? Those people can't believe them. And surely, no one wants to experience the consequences of acting foolishly. I don't know about you, but in my own life, I have made it a goal to limit the amount of pain I experience. I don't enjoy it. I don't want to have to experience pain that I don't need to experience. Again, there's enough seasons of pain just because of the world I live in.

I don't need to add to it because of my own foolishness. I want to be able to learn from the foolishness of others that I can say, "You know what? I don't want to experience what they've experienced, and I want to learn what good to do from other people." One of the neat things about Proverbs is that many of these were written 3,000 years ago, but they're still true today. Isn't that incredible? 3,000 years ago is when Solomon would have reigned, when he would have written many of these Proverbs, and they are still true today.

This proves that wisdom is lasting and folly or foolishness is temporary. Very temporary, but wisdom will last. Let me give you some practical advice or tip for you. You know what? If you want to gain insight, if you want to gain wisdom, if you want to be known as a man or a woman of wisdom, why don't you make a plan to read a chapter of Proverbs every day? Read a chapter of Proverbs every day. Again, there's 31 chapters.

So today, if it's the 14th, start with Proverbs 14 and just start reading through. Because I truly believe that if you will repeatedly read these words and meditate on them, you will gain wisdom and insight into this world. Proverbs is full of guaranteed truths. There are some guaranteed truths. Truths like if you jump off a ladder, you're going to fall down, not up, right? They're just true. It's true all the time. Doesn't matter when or where. That's what's going to happen.

There are other proverbs that are full of more than likely truths, meaning it's not true all the time, but most of the time. These would be proverbs like you know if you eat an apple a day, you keep the doctor away, right? Well, it doesn't work that way, unfortunately. Not all the time, but you know the proverb is saying, "Eat healthy, be healthy," and you won't have to worry as much. But that doesn't mean that you can't get cancer or you can't get something else, right? These are general, more than likely, truths. Another one.

If you don't save any money, you're more than likely never going to have wealth, right? It's more than likely that's true. It's not always true, but it's more than likely true. Proverbs also helps us with common sense. Proverbs shares with us the way that the world works and operates. Proverbs will accurately help us shape our worldview. So I encourage you, invest some time into it. You never know. Think about this.

Potentially, reading through the book of Proverbs may save you from making a devastating mistake just from the wisdom of somebody who has gone before you. And I do find it somewhat comical a little bit as we read the book of Proverbs written by Solomon, known as the wisest man in the entire world. And next week, we're going to talk about his warnings against adultery and the adulterous. And yet all of us know that Solomon is the man who had 1,000 wives and concubines, right?

Doesn't seem like the man I should be taking advice from about women, but you know he was wise, just maybe not so much in that area. But he can talk about the mistakes. And so there we read these Proverbs, the wisdom that is given to us. And it may save us from making a devastating mistake. Let me close in prayer. Heavenly Father, I thank You that we do live in a world where things are often and can be predictable.

1 plus 1 equals 2. It amazes me that this last week with the solar eclipse that you have created our world with such order that we can predict eclipses down to the second and know when they're going to happen because you are a God of order, not chaos. And so I thank you that we can gain some of that insight and some of that wisdom into how our world works.

We can learn to make good decisions, honorable decisions that you would be lifted up. Help us to live a life that is worthy of you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.