

Today we're kicking off a 4 week series called Walking Wisely. Our key passage for the series comes from Ephesians 5:15-17.

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15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Ephesians 5:15-17

It's a command that Paul is writing to the church in Ephesus and to us today. "**Be VERY careful how you live, not as unwise but as wise.**" Because Paul knew if we lift up our feet and allow the current of culture to carry us our default would not be to live wisely but foolishly. We're surrounded daily by examples that just a decade ago would have seemed completely almost comedic in their absurdity but they are becoming accepted, normal, common ways of thinking.

"Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil." Paul was writing to a church that was located in a city that was infamous for its worship of a pagan goddess, Artemis. The days the church of Ephesus was living in were very evil and they were surrounded by people who as a part of their worship were committed to transgressing boundaries. All expressions of "love" and sexuality were accepted and celebrated and pushing any and all moral boundaries was not the exception but the rule. It parallels perfectly with what we're experiencing today. And one of the biggest signs that is given to us in the Scriptures to let us know we are in the end of the end times is there will be a falling away from the truth. And without truth it's impossible to understand wisdom.

"Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is." Paul under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is calling the Ephesian church to live differently, to live wisely. And he challenges us today the same way. "Don't be foolish, don't be driven by desires and appetites, don't close your ears and your heart to wise counsel even when it stands in opposition to your plans, especially sometimes when it stands in opposition to your plans. Hear and understand what the Lord's will is."

Thankfully God has given us an entire book of the Bible dedicated to teach us how to actually live out that command to live wisely called, Proverbs, written by Solomon, King David's son, who was the wisest man to ever live outside of Jesus Himself. If you want to hear the account of how God gave wisdom to Solomon, go online later this week and listen to Darrell's message at our Chattanooga Campus.

But as we're going to discover today and through the coming weeks, wisdom is interwoven throughout all of Scripture because it's how we were designed to live.

Next week we're going to look at 3 different groups who Solomon talked about all through the book of Proverbs who ignored wisdom: the simple, the fool, and the mocker and the consequences of living foolishly and the remedy for each of those situations.

Then we're going to get into some major applications of wisdom. And I'm going to teach you the best question ever. The question doesn't come explicitly from Scripture but it is founded and rooted in the principles of wisdom from Scripture and will help set you up to walk the path of wisdom and avoid the pain, hurts, regrets, and brokenness that comes from walking the path of foolishness.

And in the final week, we're going to show you how to apply that question to specific situations and choices in your life, especially the really big ones. Like should I go to this school or that school? Should I take this job or that job? Who should I marry? How should I handle my finances? The possibilities are endless! It can be applied to any situation. And it will help you to choose wisely.

In our series Family in Focus, the first week we looked at how God designed the family, because as our Creator, He understands best how we are to function as a family. And if we go against His design, we're setting ourselves up for failure. So, as we're spending the next 4 weeks looking at Wisdom we need to start off looking at God's design.

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1. God's Design

Proverbs 3:19-20

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19 The Lord founded the earth by wisdom,

He established the heavens by understanding.

20 By His knowledge the ocean depths were burst open,

And the clouds drip with dew.

Proverbs 3:19-20

Later on we're going to look at multiple passages from Proverbs 1-9 where wisdom is personified as a woman, Lady Wisdom. But listen to how Lady Wisdom describes the creation story.

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22 *"The Lord formed me [Wisdom] from the beginning,
before he created anything else.*

23 *I was appointed in ages past,
at the very first, before the earth began.*

24 *I was born before the oceans were created,
before the springs bubbled forth their waters.*

25 *Before the mountains were formed,
before the hills, I was born—*

26 *before he had made the earth and fields
and the first handfuls of soil.*

27 *I was there when he established the heavens,
when he drew the horizon on the oceans.*

28 *I was there when he set the clouds above,
when he established springs deep in the earth.*

29 *I was there when he set the limits of the seas,
so they would not spread beyond their boundaries.*

And when he marked off the earth's foundations,

30 *I was the architect at his side.*

*I was his constant delight,
rejoicing always in his presence.*

31 *And how happy I was with the world he created;
how I rejoiced with the human family!*

Proverbs 8:22-31

Before anything else in creation was made, wisdom was formed because everything in the universe was created to function by wisdom. I told Jim Fleming that I was going to borrow some of his material from a few weeks ago when he spoke on the Divinity and Centrality of Jesus. I highly recommend you go back and watch it on our website if you missed it. And it starts off in John 1 with Jesus at the center of the creation story.

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*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with
God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All
things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing
was created that has been created. John 1:1-3*

We know from the Genesis 1 account the physical things that were created: light, sky, earth, seas, vegetation (seed-bearing plants, fruit trees), sun, moon, stars (also), living creatures in the seas, winged creatures in the sky, living creatures on the land, and finally, mankind.

To have those physical objects, massive numbers of sciences were also created to define, sustain, and support those items explicitly stated.

2) The non-obvious/not explicitly stated:

i. Physical sciences: physics, chemistry, astronomy, meteorology, geology

ii. Formal sciences: mathematics, logic

iii. Life sciences: biology, anatomy, bacteriology, biochemistry, biological oceanography, biomechanics, biophysics, botany, cell biology, ecology, enzymology, ethology, genetics, histology, immunology, marine biology, microbiology, molecular biology, mycology, neuroscience, parasitology, phycology, physiology, population biology, quantum biology, structural biology, systems biology, zoology

iv. Social sciences: anthropology, history, linguistics, psychology, sociology

We could honestly spend the rest of our lives just trying to unpack and understand all that God created and how He made it work perfectly together. In fact, Ken Ham and Answers in Genesis and the Creation Museum are dedicated to just that. But if God used such massive amounts of wisdom, far more than we can comprehend in a lifetime just to create us to begin with, it serves to reason and is explicitly stated all throughout the Scriptures that we were created to walk in wisdom for the rest of our lives.

Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Solomon wrote down all the wisdom that had been given to him. And it's not just knowledge or facts, the word in Hebrew that is used is "**KHOKHMAH**". It's not just a mental activity, it requires action as well. It's a skill or applied knowledge. It's the same word used in Exodus to describe the artists and craftsmen living in Israel. It's written to give you the practical skills to live well in God's world.

In the first 11 chapters of 1 Kings and the first 9 chapters of 2 Chronicles we have stories of people traveling from all over the world to come to the court of Solomon and hear his wisdom. And if you or I in that day wanted to receive his counsel, we'd have to travel for weeks just to get to Jerusalem. Then, we'd have to wait even more days or weeks for an audience, if we'd be able to get one at all. And even if we made it that far, because there were so many demands on his time, we would only have a few moments with him.

So, God had him write down all of his wisdom so that it could be shared with generations to come. And it starts off like this:

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1 These are the proverbs of Solomon, David's son, king of Israel.

2 Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise.

3 Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair.

4 These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.

5 Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser.

Let those with understanding receive guidance

6 by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles.

7 Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

Proverbs 1:1-7

When we hear fear in our context today we think of fear as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain, or a threat. And when we apply that to God, it doesn't draw us near to Him, it makes us want to run away. But this isn't what Solomon is referring to when he says, "Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge." What Solomon is referring to is:

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FEAR - Recognition and reverence that leads to submission

We recognize that God, who created all of these things in an instant with just the power of His words is our Lord. He is our Creator and out of reverence, we submit to what He says for our lives. We follow the path of wisdom because He calls us to. He is God and we are not.

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2. Parents' Responsibility

Proverbs 1:8-19, 2:1-22, 3:1-12, 3:21-35, 4:1-9, 4:10-19, 4:20-27, 5:1-23, 6:20-35 and 7:1-27.

In the Family in Focus series we also talked about the parents' primary role in the home is to disciple their children. And that's exactly how Solomon starts off the entire book of Proverbs. In the first 9 chapters, there are 10 conversations from parents to children.

And it sets up the whole rest of the book that will be filled with Proverbs or short, clever sayings that pack a punch and offer you some kind of wisdom on how to live the abundant life that Jesus offers us. But we have to recognize that these aren't just clever sayings passed down that convey simple truths like:

- A stitch in time saves 9
- A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket, etc.

The first 9 chapters establish that this wisdom collected in the Scripture comes from the source of all wisdom, God Himself. And that our responsibility as parents is to first walk in wisdom so that we can model it for our children, but to also take time daily to teach them how to be wise.

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A Father's Exhortation: Acquire Wisdom

8 My child, listen when your father corrects you.

Don't neglect your mother's instruction.

*9 What you learn from them will crown you with grace
and be a chain of honor around your neck.*

Proverbs 1:8-9

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- 1 *My child, listen to what I say,
and treasure my commands.*
- 2 *Tune your ears to wisdom,
and concentrate on understanding.*
- 3 *Cry out for insight,
and ask for understanding.*
- 4 *Search for them as you would for silver;
seek them like hidden treasures.*
- 5 *Then you will understand what it means to fear the Lord,
and you will gain knowledge of God.*
- 6 *For the Lord grants wisdom!
From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.*
- 7 *He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest.
He is a shield to those who walk with integrity.*
- 8 *He guards the paths of the just
and protects those who are faithful to him.*
- 9 *Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair,
and you will find the right way to go.*
- 10 *For wisdom will enter your heart,
and knowledge will fill you with joy.*
- 11 *Wise choices will watch over you.
Understanding will keep you safe.*

Proverbs 2:1-11

We don't have time to read all of these conversations today, but parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, family friends, teachers, neighbors, church family members. I encourage you to go home this week and read each of them to hear how we are to share wisdom with our children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews, students in our care. To help them understand just how important it is to walk the path of wisdom and all the benefits that come from walking wisely.

Now, one quick caveat before we move on. These Proverbs are not laws or formulas and lots of people have gotten discouraged and disappointed by treating them as such. The book of Proverbs is not created to give you the formula to input for whatever situation you're facing to get the outcome you desire. But what it does is give you a path to walk that will position you to be in a place of blessing, protection, understanding, and peace.

But, Jesus Himself told us in **John 16:33** “*I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.*” Jesus always chose the wise thing to do, he always made the right decision and they accused him of being demon possessed, a drunkard, a glutton, everything under the sun. So, that may happen to us too, in fact Jesus said it would. **John 15:18** “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.*”

But we as Christians have been called to live a life that is different that follows the path of wisdom and trusts God with the outcomes. Obedience is our responsibility, outcomes are God’s. But He has shown us how to live a life that has less regrets, less pain, less brokenness and it comes when we walk wisely.

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3. Wisdom Personified or The Blessing of Wisdom

Proverbs 1:20-33, 3:13-20, 8:1-36 and 9:1-18

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*13 How blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who gains understanding.*

*14 For her profit is better than the profit of silver
And her gain better than fine gold.*

*15 She is more precious than jewels;
And nothing you desire compares with her.*

*16 Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.*

*17 Her ways are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.*

*18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
And happy are all who hold her fast.*

Proverbs 3:13-18

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*1 Listen as Wisdom calls out!
Hear as understanding raises her voice!*

*4 “I call to you, to all of you!
I raise my voice to all people.*

*5 You simple people, use good judgment.
You foolish people, show some understanding.*

6 Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you.

Everything I say is right,

7 for I speak the truth

and detest every kind of deception.

8 My advice is wholesome.

There is nothing devious or crooked in it.

9 My words are plain to anyone with understanding,

clear to those with knowledge.

10 Choose my instruction rather than silver,

and knowledge rather than pure gold.

11 For wisdom is far more valuable than rubies.

Nothing you desire can compare with it.

12 "I, Wisdom, live together with good judgment.

I know where to discover knowledge and discernment.

13 All who fear the Lord will hate evil.

Therefore, I hate pride and arrogance,

corruption and perverse speech.

14 Common sense and success belong to me.

Insight and strength are mine.

15 Because of me, kings reign,

and rulers make just decrees.

16 Rulers lead with my help,

and nobles make righteous judgments.

17 "I love all who love me.

Those who search will surely find me.

18 I have riches and honor,

as well as enduring wealth and justice.

19 My gifts are better than gold, even the purest gold,

my wages better than sterling silver!

20 I walk in righteousness,

in paths of justice.

21 Those who love me inherit wealth.

I will fill their treasuries.

Proverbs 8:1, 4-21

Doesn't this describe the life that every single one of us wants to live? Full of common sense, success, insight, strength, riches, honor, justice, blessing... But how many of us have committed our lives to walking wisely? The book of James has been called the "Proverbs of the New Testament." And in **James 1:5** he says, "*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*"

So, looking at your life, have you been walking wisely? In any areas that you need wisdom, have you asked God to help you or have you been more apt to turn to the comment section of social media for advice? Have you invited Him in to help you walk wisely? If your answer up to this point is no, I have wonderful news! You can start today! You can leave the path of folly or foolishness today and follow the path of wisdom. If you need to be reminded of all the blessings that can come with it, read and reread all the passages we've put in your notes. Make it a daily habit, they were made with 31 chapters to correspond with the days of the month. Ask God to teach you not just the head knowledge, but how to put it into action to gain the skill of walking wisely.

This has become a common prayer in our family and one that I pray almost every day. In fact, we're working through a situation right now that we've never encountered before. We don't have any experience to fall back on and honestly there's no cut and dry answer as to how to address it. And I will be completely honest with y'all I have failed miserably in the way I've handled it multiple times. But our prayer is this:

"Heavenly Father, give me the wisdom to know what to do, and the courage to do it."

I'll tell you this, we've had a tiny breakthrough. This whole situation has humbled me, and reminded me again that I cannot do this on my own. I need wisdom directly from God Himself to know what to do, because left to my own devices, I have failed and will continue to fail. But during our breakthrough I could feel the Holy Spirit guiding me, giving my heart peace and understanding. What had been impossible, just days before suddenly was becoming not only possible, but turning into something that strengthened all of us.

Let's Pray.