

Psalms of Wisdom

By Pastor Gary Buck

Continuing sermon series on the book of Psalms.

Ever get a song stuck in your head?

The Psalms are a collection of poems and songs, specifically written to be repeated by others. And in that sense, they are unique in the Bible.

The psalms were both personal and corporate at the same time.

The Psalms are full of wisdom!

ASK: What if the church was wise? What if our nation was wise?....

One of the greatest epidemics facing our world is FOOLISHNESS. Why?

Wisdom and knowledge are two very different things.

Knowledge: Facts, information and skills acquired by a person through experience or education.

Americans are great at acquiring knowledge.

Encyclopedias. Remember the salesmen that used to come around and sell you encyclopedias? Now we've got encyclopedias on our phones.

Wisdom: The soundness of an action or decision with regard to the application of experience, knowledge and sound judgement.

So you take all your knowledge, experience, training and common sense and put that together, make a decision based on that, and that's wisdom.

Red Robin analogy- If there was an 8th day of creation, that would have been when Red Robin was created. So I have the menu, all the facts about calories. I know what all the saturated fats and sodium will do to my body. But it tastes amazing. I take the information and make a choice. Will I be wise or will I have the best dinner ever?

"Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is knowing not to put it in a fruit salad." Brian O'Driscoll

Knowledge can never save you.

Adam and Eve did not eat from the tree of wisdom. It was the tree of **knowledge** of good and evil.

Some of the smartest people in the world are not very wise?

Intellectual Pitfalls- A recent study revealed that the most intelligent people in our country experience the following issues at a higher rate than those who are less intellectually gifted (quickly summarize):

- 1) Socially more lonely, mostly because they tend to talk about themselves
- 2) More likely to be an atheist. Did you know that a study showed that atheists don't live as long? There was a 28% reduction in mortality.
- 3) More prone to being addicted to technology.
- 4) More prone to being addicted to substances.
- 5) More prone to being workaholics.
- 6) More prone to lying because they're better at keeping track of their trail of lies
- 7) More prone to fall for scams
- 8) Book smart, not street smart (another word for wisdom)

Sometimes the smarter we are the better chance we get in the way of ourselves. It's easier to feel self-empowered.

"True wisdom comes to each of us when we realize how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us." Socrates

Wisdom cannot be taught but it does take discipline.

What if the church was wise?...what would that do to our nation?

STEPS to GODLY WISDOM

1) The fear of God is our safety belt

Remember when seat belts were just a suggestion? Remember those old station wagons with the wood paneling. I remember driving in one down to the shore, and we put sleeping bags back there. We'd start a camp fire and eat smores.....No seat belts.

Now, I don't even pull out of the driveway if one of my kids don't have a seatbelt on. Why? Information. We've all seen the stories and watched the videos of what can happen if you don't have a seatbelt on. It's the **law**.

Psalm 111:10 (NIV)

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom;
all who follow his precepts have good understanding.
To him belongs eternal praise.

The Greek word for fear here is Yirah, which means "respect and reverence." It actually carries with it a positive connotation.

So what we are saying is that we hold the law and the word of God up high, with reverence and respect, knowing that it protects us and blesses us.

So if you drive by a cop do you check to make sure your seat belt is on?

Turn to Psalm 34

One of the actors from Lord of the Rings, Christopher Lee, was a massive fan of JRR Tolkien who wrote the books. Many years ago day he actually ran into Tolkien. Lee said he started trembling and almost knelt.

Something happens when we come into the presence of greatness. And how much greater is God than J.R.R. Tolkien?

Psalm 34: 8-14 (David is the author)

- ⁸ Taste and see that the LORD is good;
blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.
⁹ Fear the LORD, you his holy people,
for those who fear him lack nothing.
¹⁰ The lions may grow weak and hungry,
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

Taste and see. David is asking us to sample the Lord. Have you ever gone to an ice cream place and asked for a sample? I did that at this one place my family really likes to visit. Now...I don't need to sample anymore. I know what's good.

We can do the same thing with God.

But the closer you get to God, the more you realize how holy He is, and how unholy we are. And that brings about a healthy fear. But when we truly taste of God and His goodness we will leave satisfied.

¹¹ Come, my children, listen to me;
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

¹² Whoever of you loves life
and desires to see many good days,
(rhetorical question)

¹³ keep your tongue from evil
and your lips from telling lies.

¹⁴ Turn from evil and do good;
seek peace and pursue it.

It is scientifically proven that if you deal with shame because you're caught in a sin-cycle, you're more prone to anxiety. That means you're more prone to health issues. Doing good MAY lead to a longer, blessed life.

Many people in the world fear God, but it's the wrong kind of fear.

Jesus' brother **James** mentions how even demons believe in God and tremble.

What if our fear is misplaced? What if our fear is in man?

STORY- George Orwell, a secular humanist, wrote an essay called "Shooting an Elephant" which is believed to be a true story about himself. In 1920 a British police officer named Eric Blair had a bizarre day in Burma (near China and Thailand). A work elephant had broken free from its chains and was rampaging through the streets, and it killed a citizen. He had a gun, but had no intention of killing the animal. The crowd of citizens started following him, until it grew to over 2,000. They cheered him on to kill the beast. He gave into his fear of pleasing the crowd and shot the elephant. But it didn't die right away. In fact it took a ridiculous amount of shots to kill the beast, and it was a torturously long death.

Misplaced fear is an enemy of wisdom.

So we have the information, and maybe even have a healthy fear of God. What's next?

2) God's revelation is better than our information.

God is the source of wisdom, not Wikipedia.

There are two ways in which God manifests himself to us in the form of wisdom.

1) The Word

Psalm 119:97-104 (NIV)

- ⁹⁷ Oh, how I love your law!
I meditate on it all day long.
- ⁹⁸ Your commands are always with me
and make me wiser than my enemies.
- ⁹⁹ I have more insight than all my teachers,
for I meditate on your statutes.
- ¹⁰⁰ I have more understanding than the elders,
for I obey your precepts.
- ¹⁰¹ I have kept my feet from every evil path
so that I might obey your word.
- ¹⁰² I have not departed from your laws,
for you yourself have taught me.
- ¹⁰³ How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!
- ¹⁰⁴ I gain understanding from your precepts;
therefore I hate every wrong path.

This is why staying in the Word and pressing into the Holy Spirit is KEY to being wise.

2. Holy Spirit *Permit me to jump to the New Testament here to affirm what the Psalms are saying here):*

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 (NIV)

¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand

them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. ¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, ¹⁶ for,

“Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.

Our primary method of decision making—whether it is gathering of information, looking at our past mistakes, or our gut instinct—must be *filtered through the mind of Christ*.

ASK: How do you make decisions? By gathering information and then making a logical choice?

There’s WISDOM, and then there’s SPIRITUAL WISDOM (common sense)

Open door/closed door theology is not Biblical.

So if we’re filtering out decisions through the mind of Christ, we should probably KNOW a little bit about Jesus.

Followers of Christ should study Christ. And one way to do that is to study the Psalms.

If you say you follow the Philadelphia Eagles football team, but can’t name their starting QB, then I doubt you’re really a follower.

There are 91 unique prophecies about Jesus in the Psalms! Jesus also quoted the Psalms more than any other book of the Bible.

Colossians 2:1-3 I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, *Christ*, ³ *in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge*.

Jesus IS the wisdom of God because He is the WORD of God made flesh.

We know that the more information we gather, the smarter we get, the danger then lies in the fact that we can become more self-reliant.

Someone once said, “If you think you know everything, why don’t you just change your name to Google?”

Paul reaffirms where we find true wisdom in

[1Corinthians 2](#) when he talks about God revealing to us his secrets and then says:

¹³ When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit’s words to explain spiritual truths.¹⁴ But people who aren’t spiritual can’t receive these truths from God’s Spirit. ***It all sounds foolish to them*** and they can’t understand it, for ***only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means.*** ¹⁵ Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others.
¹⁶ For,

“Who can know the LORD’s thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach him?”

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ.

You and I have the mind of Christ and the Holy Spirit, and so we can be wise beyond anything that Wikipedia can teach us!

3) Impulse is the enemy of wisdom

The Psalms connect us to our emotions. This is key because how many of you know that when our emotions take over, wisdom flies out the door?

Don’t shop hungry

Here’s Israel’s response shortly after they saw the parting of the red sea:

Psalm 106:

¹³ Yet how quickly they forgot what he had done!
They ***wouldn’t wait*** for his counsel!

They QUICKLY forgot (being rash and impulsive) and then they could not hear the wisdom and advice of the Lord.

Don't make big decisions when you're spiritually hungry. If you feel empty, spend time in the Word. Drink of the living water and the Holy Spirit.

The last step to wisdom

4) To be truly wise is to learn from past mistakes but fix our eyes on the future

Mistakes are fertile ground for wisdom.

Hitler was rash and full of ego.

Hitler and Russia war during winter. He didn't learn from the mistakes Napoleon made 130 earlier. The Russians were willing to burn their homes and cities to the ground as they retreated just to deny the enemy shelter and supplies. Germany was not prepared for Russia's winter.

When our fear of the Lord is blinded by our own ego, we disregard past mistakes and information.

I had someone ask me how to be a worship leader. I said, "Don't just learn about worship leading. Do it and make mistakes."

Psalm 32:9 (NIV) Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.

We as humans rarely learn from the mistakes of others, especially our parents. We're often prone to repeat their foolishness.

King Solomon was blessed by God with great wisdom. He did amazing things in the name of God. But look at who he surrounded himself with: 1 Kings says he loved many foreign women, including the daughter of Pharaoh. 700 wives and 300 concubines. Do you think his heart was divided? They turned his heart from the Lord.

What other king of Israel's reign was marred by the lust of his heart and it led him astray? David. The difference is that David repented and found grace.

And as much as we look to our past for wisdom, keeping our eyes on eternity will keep us goal-oriented and motivated:

Psalm 24:5-10

- 5 They will receive blessing from the Lord
and vindication from God their Savior.
- 6 Such is the generation of those who seek him,
who seek your face, God of Jacob.
- 7 Lift up your heads, you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- 8 Who is this King of glory?
The Lord strong and mighty,
the Lord mighty in battle.
- 9 Lift up your heads, you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
- 10 Who is he, this King of glory?
The Lord Almighty—
he is the King of glory.

C.S. Lewis said, "If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this."

Conclusion:

There is grace for all of us. Shame is an enemy of wisdom.

Maybe you're sitting here beating yourself up because you feel like you've lived a foolish life.

I believe God wants to revolutionize the church in this area of wisdom, and I believe that our wisdom can lead people flocking back to the church.

Here's the encouragement for us all: Wisdom and grace are intertwined.

1 Corinthians 1:30

³⁰ God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be **wisdom** itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us **pure and holy, and he freed us from sin.**

The most wise thing you will ever do is believe the message and the power of the gospel. And if you do...it will free you and lead you to greater wisdom.

Read together:

Psalm 19:7-14

⁷ The instructions of the LORD are perfect,
reviving the soul.

The decrees of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.

⁸ The commandments of the LORD are right,
bringing joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are clear,
giving insight for living.

⁹ Reverence for the LORD is pure,
lasting forever.

The laws of the LORD are true;
each one is fair.

¹⁰ They are more desirable than gold,
even the finest gold.

They are sweeter than honey,
even honey dripping from the comb.

¹¹ They are a warning to your servant,
a great reward for those who obey them.

¹² How can I know all the sins lurking in my heart?
Cleanse me from these hidden faults.

¹³ Keep your servant from deliberate sins!
Don't let them control me.

Then I will be free of guilt
and innocent of great sin.

¹⁴ May the words of my mouth
and the meditation of my heart

be pleasing to you,
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

Additional Scriptures and quotes:

1 Corinthians 3:18-19

“The Bible’s purpose is not so much to show you how to live a good life. The Bible’s purpose is to show you how God’s grace breaks into your life against your will and saves you from the sin and brokenness otherwise you would never be able to overcome... religion is ‘if you obey, then you will be accepted’. But the Gospel is, ‘if you are absolutely accepted, and sure you’re accepted, only then will you ever begin to obey’. Those are two utterly different things. Every page of the Bible shows the difference.” –Tim Keller