

ViralStJames Bible Study #14: Seeking Wisdom

The Background – Seeking Wisdom

Proverbs 2:1-11

In this season of testimony at our Sunday Services, one of the threads that run through is seeking for the right direction; for the wisdom to do what is right; crying out when we can't always see the way ahead.

As Nikki Jakeman said, God doesn't give us guidance for life at the outset – it's an ongoing process. So perhaps the aim should be to lay a firm foundation that will help us steer our way through; to cultivate the right attitude that will enable us to make wise choices throughout life.

In the Old Testament, this was often painted as the pursuit of wisdom. The Book of Proverbs has a lot of sound advice on the matter, and the Apostles in the New Testament similarly encourage pursuing wisdom. At this time of uncertainty, when wise choices seem hard to come by, it is worth standing back and asking – where does wisdom lie?

The Passage

Prov. 2:1 My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
2 making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
3 yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
4 if you seek it like silver
and search for it as for hidden treasures,
5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
6 For the LORD gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding;
7 he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
8 guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints.
9 Then you will understand righteousness and justice
and equity, every good path;
10 for wisdom will come into your heart,
and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
11 discretion will watch over you,
understanding will guard you,

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The Questions

- 1) **Where does the writer say that wisdom is to be found? (v6) How is it to be received?**

Wisdom is to be found in God and is a gift freely given – ie it is not something that can be bought or earned.

- 2) **What actions does the writer suggest are necessary to find wisdom?**

- *listening to wisdom and seeking to understand it (v2);*
- *calling out/cry aloud – prayer (v3)*
- *hunting for it, as you would buried treasure (v4)*

All these are activities – listening, praying, seeking – in other words, wisdom isn't something that we receive on a plate – but requires us to actively pursue it. There is an echo of this in the Parable of the Hidden Treasure (Mathew 13. v 44), where Jesus compares the Kingdom of Heaven to a buried treasure hidden in a field waiting to be discovered.

- 3) **The author of Proverbs is often attributed to King Solomon. Read 2 Chronicles 1:8-12. God offers Solomon anything – but what does he choose and why?**

Solomon chooses to ask God for wisdom and knowledge

Note that Solomon's reasons for asking for wisdom and knowledge were unselfish 'so I may lead this great people of yours' – God replies by noting that this request for wisdom and knowledge came from 'Solomon's heart's desire'.

What do we ask God for? Are we more tempted by the 'wealth, riches or honour' that God notes Solomon didn't ask for? What are our motives? What is our heart's desire?

- 4) **If we put the work in, the writer states that 'then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God' (v5). Further on, at Proverbs 9 v 10, the writer says that 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding'. What do you think the writer means by 'the fear of the Lord'?**

It is important to realise that 'fear' in the context used here does not mean being scared, but respect and awe. Our understanding of how to live a good life begins when we realise that wisdom is found in knowing God and asking him in our humility to share his wisdom with us. It is not found in assuming that we can simply live independently off our own wits.

- 5) **For those who do pursue wisdom, what are the promises that are given to us in verses 9-11?**

- *An understanding of what is right and just;*
- *Be able to make good choices – the right path*
- *Filled with wisdom and knowledge*
- *We will be able to judge what is right – discretion*

How useful do you think these gifts would be in your life – your job; your family relationships; your choices in retirement?

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- 6) The writer of Proverbs talks about 'wisdom entering your heart' (v10). For us as Christians, we can rightly associate this with the inward working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Read Ephesians 2 v 15-17. When praying for the Ephesian church, what does Paul ask for and why?

That God will give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation – so that they may know God better. Paul and the writer of Proverbs may be separated by centuries, but the message is the same – wisdom lies in knowing God.

- 7) Read Colossians 2:9-12. There is much in common here with Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, but here there is a lesson about perseverance and purpose. How long has Paul been praying for God to fill the Colossians with wisdom? And what is his purpose in asking for this?

Paul 'has not stopped' praying for them to be filled with wisdom and understanding – in other words, we need to be continually returning to God and asking, calling out, seeking wisdom – this is something that we will be doing all our lives.

Paul's purpose is that they 'may live a life worthy of the Lord.....bearing fruit in every good work.....growing in the knowledge of God'. God gives us wisdom to be able to grow into his likeness, that we may be generous and life giving to others. Wisdom is not something that we keep to ourselves, but use to make choices that help others to flourish as well as ourselves – that we can all enjoy life in all its fullness. And as we give, we grow... it's a virtuous circle...

- 8) What practical steps could you take to pursue wisdom?

Closing thought:

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him (James 1v5)

The Space for notes
