

GOD'S WISDOM

SERIES: HOW TO: LIFE | WEEK 1 | 6.14.2020

We get to start a new series today, I love new series, this one I'm super excited about called HOW TO: LIFE. We're studying The Book of Proverbs. I hope you have your Bible with you. I hope you have a notebook with you. And I hope that you'll open up to the book of Proverbs. First, let me start out by just going before God.

Lord Jesus,

I pray over all who would be listening, the theme of what we've already heard as we've sung it out, that your hand of blessing would be upon each person that listens on today. And as they hear your words that those words would help them sort out the questions they have in life right now and know what next steps to take. And so I pray that your words would speak through me today and that each of us would hear your word in a way that would impact us where we need it most.

We ask in Jesus' Name. Amen.

So I hope you've turned to Proverbs Chapter 1. Today I just want to get us leaped into this book. Many of our messages are going to be based on just a single proverb, but today Solomon introduces us to the wisdom that he's going to share to us. So I'm just gonna read this, I'll make a few comments as we do because he opens up verse 1 of Chapter 1 by introducing who writes it, it's Solomon:

¹ The proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel;

Written around 900 B.C. while Solomon was reigning as the third King of Israel. It was during the golden era of Israel, both politically and culturally and economically, things were flying high and over the top. The second half of his time was not quite at the same level. He was the one who built the temple. It was a phenomenal time in the time of Israel's history. And God gives the opportunity to Solomon to make a request. He requests wisdom and in the course of that request God gives it to him and now he puts down the wisdom that's come from God to him on the pages of inspired Scripture. And here what's so awesome about that is we get to know the inspired wisdom that is from God. It's gonna teach us how to think. Let me let me keep on reading here. So he tells us why he writes this, verse 2:

***² To know wisdom and instruction,
to understand words of insight,***

— and he goes on to give more details, he's gonna talk here a little bit about character that we're gonna learn, he says:

***³ to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness, justice, and equity;
⁴ to give prudence to the simple,***

— this is who he's writing to —

***knowledge and discretion to the youth—
⁵ Let the wise hear and increase in learning,***

— so those who are older —

***and the one who understands obtain guidance,
⁶ to understand a proverb and a saying,
the words of the wise and their riddles.***

– PROVERBS 1:7-6 (ESV)

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And now he lays the foundation:

⁷ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;

— now he gives the warning, there's sort of this back and forth between wisdom and the fool in this text, and he says:

fools despise wisdom and instruction.

— And I'll just read one more fraction of verse 8:

⁸ Hear, my son, your father's instruction,

– PROVERBS 1:7-8a (ESV)

Sixty-four times he mentions his son. What an amazing training opportunity we'll have in front of us. So here's what we think about today. There are a lot of life questions that all of us have all the time that oftentimes you can't just go to a chapter and verse to get the exact answer to. Questions like, um, do I marry this person? Should I take that job in another city? What do we do about kids that are out of control? How do we handle a bill that is late? How do we handle a boss that we're struggling falling under? How do we rise to a higher level in our workplace? Or even just really, currently, right now, how do I deal with systems and systemic problems and people and sadness and confusion, historical stuff, how do I deal with all of that brokenness? I mean, let us go so straight up with where we're at today: masks and racism.

The reason why the Proverbs is gonna be so helpful to us and why I am so hoping that you'll take me up on this challenge to read one chapter a day based on what today's date is, because here God gives us the opportunity to renew our mind and to train our mind with God's wisdom. And that's why this is a key, key book of the Bible. So in a world of chaos—you agree we're there?—in a world of chaos you and I need to determine our anchor point, and in the midst of this chaos there aren't many of those. And I continue to lead us to say hey, let's anchor in on the Word of God. We chose a long time ago that this week we would start studying the book of Proverbs and here we get the wisdom of God that will begin to train us to think; to think about life through the lens of God.

In fact, verse 2, let me read that again, "*To know wisdom,*" so here's why he's writing this, "*To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight.*" So God's gonna give us insight in the area of wisdom, so wisdom is always about the skill of living, but if we take that even a little bit further is that we're able to see life and the events of life and the issues of life as God sees them. So we're gonna be trained in that wisdom, that skill of living, and on top of that instruction to move from just merely information to a clarity of the facts that get applied through wisdom. And he says this is gonna happen through a number of things.

I'm gonna take you to verse 3, if you're reading verse 3 I wouldn't be surprised if the words of verse 3 jumped off the page at you. If those words of verse 3 were on Facebook right now, you wouldn't be at all surprised. Reality is – most of them are if not all of them. Let me read to you verse 3:

*to receive instruction in wise dealing,
in righteousness,*

— listen to these last two:

justice and equity;

– PROVERBS 1:3 (ESV)

I'm gonna say this say today, four character traits that need to be taught to us, that we need to grow in, that we need to learn, and he says if we'll read the Proverbs and we'll study the Proverbs and we'll let this sink in. Again, why we read one a day—to get it inside of us; these things are going to be part of our lives because we're gonna understand God's wisdom.

WISE DEALING So the first one, I'm just gonna go over these four real quick, but the first one it says is "*wise dealing*." My wife was a brilliant parent in raising children. And one of the things that we used to do a lot in the car—you know how kids sort of lose their mind in the car and so then you start figuring out car games to play—my wife would say, "What game do you want to play?" to the kids. And they would almost always say, "We want to play the wise and foolish game." And the wise and foolish game was simply this, she'd create scenarios, would it be wise for dad right now to pull out in front of that tractor-trailer or would that be foolish? And they'd giggle and they'd scream out, "Foolish!" And then she'd go, "Well, would it be wise for daddy right now to go the speed limit or it would be foolish for dad to go the speed limit?" "Wise." And then as time went on they weren't such absurd or simple things, she began to raise up the issues that came and sometimes they would have to think longer about it before they would say wise or foolish, and in the course of time they were able to in their minds distinguish between wise dealing and foolish dealing.

In the book of Proverbs that's the whole discussion, it's the wise person and it's the fool. I don't know about you, I don't want to be called the fool, but when you read this sometimes you find – I was foolish, that was a really foolish thing that I just did. I want to get to a place in my life where I say no, that was a wise thing, that was a wise decision. We're gonna look at the family and go, "What would be the wise choice in this moment?" And that's not just this sort of snarky remark we make, but rather one of going let's think through that. In wisdom what would be the wise thing? Unfortunately, in our time here's where we go to: Jump onto Facebook, shoot out a message to all of our friends, like, "If you were to make a decision on this, what would you do?" And then you get 33 things down there and then you sort of poll those and pick the one that you like. And what we get in the book of Proverbs that he's trying to say is I want to instruct you in wisdom. And when you get instructed in wisdom here's one of the things we're gonna instruct you in, a character trait, and that is wise dealing. Wise sinking or foolish thinking, wise action or foolish action.

IN RIGHTEOUSNESS The second thing that he says here is "*in righteousness*." Hey, I'm gonna go to the most simple definition of that: Right living. So in a lot of ways when we say, "You need to be trained in righteousness," anyone could be trained in righteousness. We've heard oftentimes about people being described in a secular mindset as "the righteous." Oftentimes that's right living, like, they did the right thing in the midst of war or in the midst of being treated horribly, someone came in and did the right thing. So even people that aren't followers of Jesus oftentimes will be called "the righteous." Unfortunately, we wrongly equate moral lifestyles with genuine faith and we have to be careful about that, we talk about that oftentimes. There's this ongoing performance-based life that oftentimes gets equated with, "Well, they're a good person so they're Jesus followers." They're not. You have to come to Jesus to have that relationship with Him.

So here's what you need to know. If you're a follower of Jesus today, when we say the word *righteousness*, yes, we mean right living but we realize that all of us are sinners and that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and so we are wicked. So here's where our righteousness comes from and this is an important thing that sets apart righteousness in a moralistic sense from righteousness in a God sense—remember I said a few minutes ago at the very foundation of all of this is

the fear of God, it's how we perceive God, it's how we view God, so righteousness in how we understand God is this—He looks on us and He sees us separated from Him but He wants to give us His righteousness and He gives us His righteousness. The big church word is *imputed* righteousness. He gives us His righteousness because of what Jesus does on the cross, and in so doing God looks at us and says you're righteous. That's cool. And it's not because of something *we've* done, it's because of everything and what *He did*, and as a result of that—and we've talked about righteousness before—that we are given a place in His family. You wanna talk about having an identity, all of a sudden my identity is that I am a child of God and that God loves me, and as we're given that identity we're forgiven, we're placed in a family and we're transformed.

Here's what I want you hear: Righteousness has a blueprint and that righteousness comes from a foundation from God. Moralism, as in on the other side of this, is all about me pleasing other people or doing what other people think is right. They get to choose and they decide on that and at the end of this all it's about saving yourself, that's moralism. I would encourage you, don't depend on the moralist to tell you what righteousness is; don't depend on the moralist to tell you what right living is—listen to God's Word. So again, that's why I wouldn't jump onto Facebook and go, "Hey, what do you all think we should do about that?" That's one thing if you're asking what restaurant to go to or where to go play miniature golf, that's one thing, but if you're wanting to know how to figure out life and how to interpret the issues of society in our time and the questions of whether you should move or how you deal with your kids or how to deal with the relationship with your wife or how to manage this debt that you're handling, you need to go to God's wisdom. And that's what's put all the way through here in the book of Proverbs.

JUSTICE Hey, let me go to the third one. So we started out where we're saying wise dealing, wise or foolish life choices; righteousness, it's imputed to us by God but it's right living where we learn what the Bible says is right living. But we don't get right living just because we're good people, that's moralism, we get right living because God has given us His righteousness because of Jesus. The third one is so relevant for right now and that is justice. Now let me give you a definition of justice as being a restoration with God, where we're being made right and what was lost is being restored. Isn't that a great thing?

The concept of all of these horrible things that maybe have happened to you in your lifetime you say, "I'd like to get justice for that," and you start asking people what their opinion of justice for that would be. There's all sorts of decisions that would take place—this is what a person would have to do, this is what a nation would have to do, this is what a system would have to do—somehow in the midst of that there has to be a restoration of what is lost. And here's what I want any of you who are trying to figure out the answer to everything that's going on around us to hear is my Bible says that Jesus goes to the cross because our sins separate us from God so we lost a relationship with God. When we lost that relationship with God, believe me, the relationships with each other went down the tube and things went south fast.

So to restore what has been lost God places on Jesus on the cross the punishment—that's what we're normally looking for when we're asking for justice, we want someone to be punished, we want a reparation to be made—Jesus pays that price on the cross for all humanity and when we receive that, I just want to tell you it's in that moment that justice is fully understood and fully received, it is fully laid on to Jesus, and He looks at us and He offers us forgiven. I just love what Jesus says there on the cross, "Father, forgive them," [LUKE 23:34]—that's what He wants to do and that's what we're all longing for, that's what we're all looking for. When you take something that is broken and you restore it you make it

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whole again. That is an absolutely beautiful picture and all of us are trying in the tiniest little way to figure out how to restore what has been broken.

There's this great story¹ about Solomon, the guy that writes this, again, in his wisdom. This one lady has another lady's baby and they come to Solomon and go, "Determine whose baby this is," and, you know, no one knows, they can't tell, and these ladies were both saying, "It's my baby!" "It's my baby!" And they come to Solomon, he didn't know, and in the wisdom that God's given him you'll remember he says, "Cut that baby in half," and immediately the real mother doesn't want that to happen and Solomon in that moment recognizes who the real mother is. But here's how he made sure justice was found by making sure this mother was made whole and she got her baby back.

And so when you think about the time that we are in, you and I find ourselves walking into injustice so as to bring wholeness and healing to this moment. And honestly, many of us are confused how to do that. It's not necessarily an easy thing. Let's use racism as an example because you talk about justice, that's the thing that is flaring at this moment. The character of God, remember I said in that last verse that we read there in verse 7 it says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,² so we've got to make our decisions based on what God says. The character of God makes it very clear that we are all made in the image of God and that all are of the same value and all are of the same worth—case closed. Thus, we need to do whatever we can to restore what has been broken.

We see Jesus in every person that He deals with treats Him that way. So he goes to Samaria, He goes to the Samaritans and that was a place where the Jewish people, because of the history and the stuff that had gone before there was an incredible divide and an incredible hatred between the two groups, and Jesus doesn't care. He knows what the kind of feedback He is gonna have if He steps into that world. And He steps into that world because He wants to take what is broken and make it whole and bring it back together again. And Jesus over and over goes to those who are marginalized in society, many because of the history there and He goes to them and He cares for them.

I'm convinced that you and I need to walk into the injustices that we see to bring about that healing and that wholeness, but I need you to hear this: The only way ultimately that's gonna happen is through Jesus. And while I may not be able to impact every possible scenario, the scenarios that either I'm involved in or come near me or that I observe or that I can have some weight on in my organization, in my business, in my neighborhood, in my friendships, in my own family, my own extended family, it is on me. It's on you to bring about that justice, to step in to bring wholeness.

I have a dear friend, I'm gonna say his name is Eddie. Eddie and I are best friends. He was Best Man in our wedding. He lives in the Cleveland area. He's an African American gentlemen and we have the most wonderful relationship. And the other day he texted me something and I wrote the text down, I put it in my notes so that I could get it to you. He says this in his text, this is what he says: Send me your message when you preach it." And then he writes, "Here's your premise: Go." And he puts in quotes, "The racism problem will only be solved through Christ Jesus. Love you and yours." I texted back, "I'm gonna go to work on it, brother. Thank you."

Send me your message when you preach it.
Here's your premise: Go.

The racism problem will only be solved through Christ Jesus. Love you and yours.

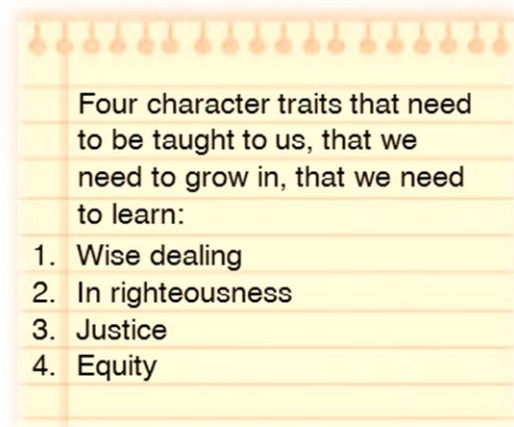
I'm gonna go to work on it, brother. Thank you.

¹ Bible Reference: **1 Kings 3:16-28**

² To clarify, **Proverbs 1:7** states: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;" and **Proverbs 9:10** states: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight."

You know what? There may be some of you who are hearing what I'm saying, "Man, such a simplistic answer." There is only One who came and took on Himself all of the injustice and all of the sin of the world and that was Jesus. He brings forgiveness. He brings restoration. He makes whole what was broken.

EQUITY Hey, just one more word in this little list and I'll roll on quickly, the word "equity." That's a word used a lot right now. In Hebrew it was synonymous with living uprightly and this is where our worldview really comes in, where this foundational mindset that I really believe that a given point we have to make a decision on: Am I going to make my mindset based on the fact that God is my king, God is in charge, and I'm gonna follow His ways. Like I said, we're gonna anchor it in something, the Bible, or am I gonna go to what I want and this kind of thing. When we live uprightly we have to choose an anchor, we have to choose a source for where we're gonna get our information, where we're gonna get our talking points, and where we're gonna get our training. Again, training on how to think, and specifically in this case thinking biblically.



Let me just wrap up with this. When he writes this and he's saying I'm gonna give you the wisdom that God gave me that's going to teach you wisdom versus foolishness, that's going to help you work through making wise dealing with other people, live a righteous life, do justly, and to ultimately live within equity, he says I want to focus this on two groups of people. And I think this is so helpful and so important. In the first group of people he says this in verse 4:

*to give prudence the simple.
knowledge and discretion to the youth—*

– PROVERBS 1:4 (ESV)

He wrote this and many would say to his son, and as he writes this to his son, his son's name is Rehoboam, Rehoboam would be next in line to become the next king and he actually did. And over 64 times in this book he mentions to "my son" because wisdom has to be taught, it has to be trained, that's why he put those two words in the same sentence there back in verse 2 and he wants his son to be trained in that kind of wisdom and so he gives him advice. Here's the crazy thing and this is the thing that will drive you nuts and drive you crazy, if you're older and you have older children that are out of the home and they're not following wisdom, I'm so sorry. I've talked to so many of you and it's so discouraging. His own son, Rehoboam, becomes the next king and loses the kingdom in three days. And this amazing kingdom that was at its pinnacle becomes divided and a guy who should have led 12 tribes ends up only leading two and this whole thing falls apart in a matter of three days.

So just because you have wisdom in front of you—and even Solomon, even with all of his wisdom, you'll have to study it, it's just crazy the directions that he takes. We're still held accountable for that, but I do want to encourage you as a parent there's a lot of talk in here about parenting and I want to encourage you as a parent with this wisdom in front of you, read these chapters once a day, one chapter a day based on the date, so that you can begin to get this wisdom into your heart and mind. They're not that long and, in fact, I would encourage you read them out loud to your kids as part of just getting this into their heads. They'll look like they're not paying attention, they'll be goofing off, they'll be playing a game on their phone, but at the end of the day you'll be surprised how much of God's thoughts and God's truth are being programmed into our minds. Many of life's decisions ahead are going to be determinative based on what you have trained your kids on now.

And the next group it talks about that this book is written to, so not just the kids, it actually says, "*Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one understands obtain guidance.*" So in other words, even if you've lived a while and you have a level of wisdom, you and I know we need to be teachable, we need to be trainable, and there's so much more to learn. And here's what I've even found as I've been studying through this getting ready for this series, I'm seeing this and I'm going, "Ah, that's so good. I needed that." And then all of a sudden I'm quoting it because it makes so much sense and I'm able to apply it in my life, and it's why we just need to keep on going over it.

And his words there are so valuable. It says, "*and the one who understands obtains guidance.*" You're looking for guidance, I'm looking for guidance. You come to me, "Pastor, I'm trying to figure out whether I should take this job. How do I know whether to take this job?" And he's gonna say here is, you know, you can go to ten people and you're gonna get 10 different answers. Some of them are gonna go sound really smart, some of them are gonna sound really dumb, but all you care about is, really, what is the right thing to do? You turn to God and you go, "If You just tell me, I'd do it." He says I am telling you, I'm giving wisdom here, I'm giving you principles here, listen to these principles and put the decisions that you're having to make. Maybe about your child rearing, maybe about a financial situation you're in, maybe about a relational situation you're in, put it through the grids of this book.

By the way, back to the students, one of the things that I read a long time ago, it's why I am really excited about student ministry, is I heard the statement one time is what you believe by the 14th birthday is what you'll believe when you die. And that's why training up our children is so important. And for those of you who are older and you are training up children, that's why you need to be training yourself. Don't just go on what you know and don't just be quoting the latest thing that you saw on social. This is a time to be hearing what God has to say.

Again, what I love about Proverbs, I mean, so many times I hear people say, "Go to the Word, go to the Word" — where do I go? What do I read? How do I know? How do I know which book to go to right now? This is a great place and a very easy way to go about it right now. But here's the big deal: It all pivots on the thing that we keep on talking about – the fear of the Lord verse 7, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,*" then he says, "*fools despise wisdom and instruction.*" Wise foolish game, dealing wisely with a person, dealing foolishly with a person, and you're going to see this go back and forth, back and forth throughout the book as Solomon plays the wise and foolish game with us to help us see whoops, that would be foolish, this would be wise. And what he's going to say is the wise person has a fear of God. People ask me real quick, "What would that look like? What is the fear of God?" I'm just going to turn real quickly to Chapter 9, verse 10, and he says this:

¹⁰ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,

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— you get who God is right, you're on the first step of the path towards having wisdom, and he says:

and the knowledge of the Holy One

— this is why you need to get to know God —

is insight.

– PROVERBS 9:10 (ESV)

Not a person listening to me right now goes, "I don't want that." You're foolish if you do. You talk about the wise and foolish game. Let me give you the definition of the fear of the Lord, it's found in Proverbs 8, he gives us this definition in Proverbs 8, verse 13, this is fascinating:

¹³ The fear of the Lord is

— and then he gives the explanation —

hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil

— and he says:

and perverted speech I hate.

– PROVERBS 8:13 (ESV)

The fear of the Lord is to hate the things God hates and love the things God loves; get to know God so well that you love what God loves. Have such a big view of God that you're falling on your face in worship of God Himself.

One last thought, it is possible to read the Proverbs, not know Jesus, and just read them as good philosophical thought process, good information, and the average person could do that, say, "Yeah, I'm gonna take that." And if you do, while you'll get good information all it is is moralistic information at that point. Now remember, we said moralistic information is I've got to save myself, so I'm gonna save myself by being the righteous, live right, so I'm gonna try to figure out how to live right and I'm gonna keep on adding things to myself to live right. And here's what we remind you all the time about: **Just living right, just doing a little bit more better all the time will not make you right with God; it will not put you in right relationship with God.** So let me read to you one verse, Colossians Chapter 2, verse 3, I've written it right here in my Bible right beside the 7th verse where it says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;*" Colossians 2:3 says this:

. . . Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,

– COLOSSIANS 2:3 (ESV)

Remember a little bit ago I said it might seem a little bit simplistic to say that coming to Jesus is what's actually going to bring justice and what your friends need and what your neighbors need and what this country needs right now is Jesus, only Jesus can bring justice. Only Jesus can bring knowledge and wisdom and when you put your life and your trust in Jesus, that is where the beginning of wisdom is going to start coming to your life. Again, it all pivots on this verse here, "*The fear of the Lord*" — will I choose to let God be the king of my life? Will I choose to trust in what Jesus did to make me whole? Once I'm whole now I can share with you, "Hey, this is when I got whole, you can get whole." And it is God's plan, it's the only way. I encourage you today it's the only answer to the pain that we're all feeling, that everyone's trying to figure out through their own lens to solve that God has said here. Jesus

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is the message to, again, quote my friend Eddie, preach Jesus is the answer and send me the message. Find someone, my friend, who is broken and tell them that Jesus is the answer, and tell me how it goes.

You're listening on and you're broken and you want to be made whole again, you want justice applied, and nothing else that you've tried has gotten that, Jesus took the punishment on Himself and He offers to make you whole. My friend Eddie would say preach Jesus to them, Jesus is the answer. I love you and I want you to meet Jesus. I want you to have Jesus in your life. Write over in the chat right now, click on there, "I want to put my trust in Jesus. I made a decision today to trust Jesus." And it's as simple as just saying, "Jesus, I'm a sinner, I know, and that separates me from You but I know that You made things that were broken like my relationship with You, You made it whole. I want that." And he says it'll change your life.

I love you. I pray that you have a wonderful week. Let me pray for you before we end here.

Jesus,

I pray that the brokenness that each of us feel will be healed through your son, Jesus Christ.

It's in His Name we pray. Amen.


Let us know if you made that decision.

One last thing. Thank you for giving to this church so that the message of Jesus could keep on going out; it's just going out and going out and going out and there's so much more happening. And just like this afternoon where they're having the parade, all the cool stuff that's happening for our kids, it's just cool, but the message of Jesus is what's continuing to go out, so thank you for giving. And I encourage you right now in the, again, in the chat box there's a place to press GIVE and you can give there, and feel free to mail it in to the church, or you can just automate it as a direct gift from your bank account, but however you want to do it that would be awesome. God bless you. Have a wonderful day.

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