

Good morning, I hope you are well and blessed. Happy Father's Day.

Lesson for June 21, 2020 "The Gifts of Wisdom" Scripture passage is from Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21.

Johnny Carson on the old Tonight Show used to do a sketch which gives directions and as he pointed to a map, he would talk about how you would come to "the fork in the road" and a picture of a fork would pop up. That was a funny bit. But sometimes, the forks in the road we come to on the journey of life are not so funny; and we need God's wisdom to help us decide which way to turn. Sooner or later, we all come to that "fork in the road" and have a decision to make. How do we know which way to go? By the wisdom that God provides, we can be kept from taking a wrong turn in life and making a big mistake.

An angel appeared at a faculty meeting and told the dean that in return for his unselfish and exemplary behavior, the Lord would reward him with his choice of wealth, wisdom or beauty. Without hesitating, the dean selected wisdom. "Done!" said the angel, and disappeared in a cloud of smoke and a bolt of lightning. All heads turned toward the dean, who sat surrounded by a faint halo of light. One of his colleagues whispered, "Say something." The dean looked at them and said, "I should have taken the money."

That story reflects the world's view of wisdom - that it is something that one can get by without, if they have to choose between it and something of material value. But the Bible's view of wisdom is quite different. Wisdom, we are told, comes from God, and is therefore of infinite value.

"If any of you lack wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5)

In the chaotic days in which we live, men and women need wisdom to avoid the treacherous pitfalls on the road of life. Proverbs gives timeless principles regarding human character and conduct

In the text, Wisdom is personified as female, and in her humanity finds all knowledge, insight, and truth. Wisdom is also portrayed as delighting God. The question of the relationship between Yahweh and Woman Wisdom is significant: is Wisdom God's laborer, an attribute of God, or God's partner in creation? As it turns out, the relationship between Wisdom and God is also about the delightful relationship between God and humanity.

From the section stepping into the word - Proverbs 8:22-31 tells us that Wisdom was present with the first person of God before anything else

existed, before the first act of creation. Like God, wisdom cannot be limited to our human definitions of gender expression or other forms of identify, but the use of familiar images can enable us to imagine both God and wisdom in ways that have meaning for us.

The Proverbs 8, opens with Wisdom calling out to all people from the places of human interaction and discourse. She calls from the centers of economic and juridical exchange (the "crossroads" and the "gates" in verses 2-3), as well as from the ordinary spaces of societal life ("On the height, beside the way" in verse 2). Wisdom cries out to "all that live" (verse 4), for the "simple" to receive instruction (verse 5), and for rulers to "govern rightly" (verse 16). Thus Wisdom is a prophetess, a preacher, who stands amidst the people and demands attention. She does not work quietly, behind the scenes, but she is to be the guiding force in all-human affairs.

A "definition" of Wisdom here is necessarily multiple, reflecting the vibrancy of Wisdom in the many aspects of human life. Looking beyond the appointed text for today, verses 5-21 provide us with a picture of this multiplicity. Wisdom is, of course, centrally concerned with knowledge, in its many forms. Prudence, intelligence, truth, instruction, discretion, insight (verses 5-14). Wisdom is all knowledge, and she is the ability and the power to discern the proper exercise of knowledge. As noted above, it is by Wisdom that rulers govern (verses 15-16).

For all people, Wisdom is the most valuable of possessions, and she bestows wealth on those who love her (verses 18-19). Finally, and significantly, Wisdom walks "in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice" (verse 20), guiding human affairs in the right direction. Indeed, the very purpose of knowledge, insight, and discretion is to lead people into the right ordering of just society.

In this chapter, wisdom is personified as a female (see Proverbs 8:1-3) and here she speaks (see Proverbs 8:3-6) saying **"All the words of my mouth are in righteousness."** Everything wisdom says is right and good and in right standing with God. Then wisdom says that **"there is nothing froward or perverse in them."** The word **"froward"** means "crooked" and **"perverse"** can mean "contrary." Here both words are synonyms meaning they mean the same thing. Because wisdom only speaks words that are in right standing with God, there is nothing **"crooked"** or contrary about her words.

Verse 9 says, **"To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.** Wisdom's words are **"right"** to anyone with **"knowledge."** Since wisdom's words are **"right"** and **"plain,"** they should be obeyed (see Proverbs 8:32; 12:15) and rule our lives (see Proverbs 1:33).

From the section - "A word about wealth", one of the risks of reading Scripture is concluding that all faithful people will acquire earthly riches, with its corollary understanding that anyone who does not have those riches must be doing something wrong. Just as Scripture employs metaphor to portray God in terms accessible to human minds, the wealth referred to in Proverbs is not a promise on financial security to those who live according to a particular set of rules. Proverbs 8:17-21 offers wealth as a metaphor. We risk missing the figures of speech if we do not read the passage for context, looking back to verses 10-11: "Choose my instructions instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold; for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing that you desire can compare with her." If we read to the end of chapter 8, Woman Wisdom tells us, that Wisdom is wealth found in our relationship with God.

Although Wisdom hates her evil enemies, she loves those who seek her out. "Seek me early" attempts to translate the poetic intensity and eager searching the word connotes. Wisdom is not trying to hide. The beginning of the chapter showed that she is calling publicly for any who will listen. Anyone who seeks for her will find her. For the second time in this one speech (verse 11), Lady Wisdom says she is more valuable than silver and gold, repeating herself so that even the simple will remember and understand. Not only is wisdom more valuable than gold, silver, and rubies, but wisdom has those same things in her possession. She has material wealth and riches to benefit us economically, plus she has "honor" (usually translated glory) and righteousness to benefit us spiritually. "Durable" or lasting riches are found only with wisdom, as the Bible asserts often that wealth is transient. "Revenue" refers to one's agricultural income, whether fruit, grain, or cattle. In an agrarian society as Solomon's, fruit, grain, and cattle were signs of wealth just as much as silver and gold. Wisdom tells us what her fruit and revenue are in the following verses.

Look at what God's wisdom says in verses 22-23, "The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began." Compare them with John 1:1-4, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.

What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.”

This was the opinion of commentators like Matthew Henry – “Wisdom, here is Christ, in whom, are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” This is verified in the New Testament that sees the fulfillment of God's wisdom in Christ.

Wisdom is what God is like. These are the exact qualities that wisdom is described as having:

“I am the truth” Proverbs 8:7 “My mouth speaks what is true.”

“I walk in the way of righteousness” Proverbs 8:20 “I walk in the way of righteousness.”

“I was in existence before the beginning of the world” Proverbs 8:22 “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works.”

“I helped to create the world” Proverbs 8:30 “Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.”

“I followed every command of the LORD” Proverbs 8:20 “I walk in the way of righteousness along the paths of justice.”

“He who finds me finds life” Proverbs 8:35 “For whoever finds me, finds life and receives favor from the LORD.”

Job 28, addresses the subject of wisdom, emphasizing that it is only found in God. Wisdom preceded creation, it was "the first of His works." The spiritual is more important than the physical. Everything that God made was good, and mankind was very good (Genesis 1); there is a similar distinction here, as wisdom rejoiced in creation, but delighted in mankind. God's character is reflected in all He made. The godly, having responded to the call of wisdom (verses 1-5), are characterized by certain attitudes. Listen and obey; true faith does what God says. Heed God's instructions; do not despise the good things of God. Watching, like a beggar at the gate, for blessing; waiting, like a servant at the doorway, for a command. We anticipate that we will hear from God and receive from Him. Seek wisdom with zeal and urgency. To neglect or reject God's way is a serious error. Woman wisdom tells us, wisdom wealth is only found in our relationship with God.

The Bible clearly states that Jesus is the Wisdom of God. In this week's lesson, the spotlight is put on wisdom personified as a woman who is noble, just, and true. She calls out to people, declares her value, and promises eternal rewards to everyone who embraces her. Wisdom does not seek to be popular. She simply speaks the truth. The follower of wisdom loves truth so much that she hates evil because it is the mortal enemy of all that is decent and good. Because the words of wisdom are in perfect accord with God's reality, she can confidently declare that all she says is just, or righteous.

If we are going to live life on purpose, we must not only connect with God, but we must seek His wisdom. God desires to guide us with His wisdom, which He will gladly bestow upon us if we will only seek Him and ask for it. When He bestows wisdom upon us, He does so graciously and generously, without condemning us for not having asked for His wisdom before. He is simply delighted to bestow His wisdom on us so that we might be blessed.

Closing: For the love that casts out fear, the faith that sustains and the hope that never perishes, be with us now and forever more. Amen. God watch over us and take care of us.

Next week's lesson June 28, 2020 "Wisdom's Feast" from Proverbs 9.

Sources for this lesson: The Bible, Halley's Bible Handbook, Matthew Henry Bible Commentary, Live by God's Wisdom Series, by Dave McFadden, The Daily Verse, Knowing Jesus, and The Present Word Adult Bible Lessons.