

## Wisdom for Life

We all want to know what to do. We all want to know what to do, I want to know what to do. What are we going to do?

We exist in a world where things happen – this isn't news to you. When things happen you have to do something. Choices to be made, decisions that affect your immediate and long term future. Decisions that cause anxiety and sleepless nights.

*What are we going to do? What are we going to do with our lives?*

The need to know what we are going to do has produced an industry of self help books and seminar speakers. There is a multitude of options

Produced a world of consellers and a business of self help books. 10 steps to being a better spouse, 14 steps to being someone people want to be friends, 11 steps to making your friends be better people, 1 step to changing your life buying one of these books.

This is not restricted to people who aren't Christians, even in the Christian world - there is a plethora of books of 10 steps to be more spiritual, The 12 steps to spiritual freedom, 50 steps to being a better preacher (I kind of want that one).

The books range from how to date Christianly to how to make sure your kid is a Christian.

*What are we going to do?*

Of course if books fail or if we cant be bothered reading them there is always google. Google will have something to say and it will be short and you don't have to buy the book.

I typed it into google and got some advice on finances, six steps to Buddhist wisdom, and a psychologist who promised I could find my life purpose in 20 minutes.

For those who are really keen. There is always facebook. Its amazing watching someone put on facebook a sentence which can summarised as 'hey people of facebook I don't know what to do with my life in this particular circumstance, what should I do' These are usually followed by 50 comments of people who disagree with each other.

We want to know what to do. Everybody does. We want to know what to do

Why? We all want to know what to do because we all want the best life possible, don't we ? We want order out of the chaos of life, we want to know the answers that provide us with the clear path through the chaos of everything going on around us.

So many decisions. So much chaos and to that chaos we want to provide order. To the chaos of our money worries we want to add the order of stability. To chaos of crazy children we want to add the order of disciplined perfect children who listen to every word their parents say. To chaos of relationships I want the order of finding the perfect person for me and for them to be perfect.

*What are we going to do?*

We all want to look back at life when we are 80, look back at our lives and say well that went alright. No one wants to have regrets on their deathbed, no one wants to look back and think well all my life choices were bad there.

This term we are learning from Proverbs. Proverbs is a book in one sense that tells us what to do for the best life. More accurately it guides you in what to do. It gives us wisdom. Proverbs aims to help us find order in the chaos.

As we continue to ask the question what should we do we are entering into proverbs to find out. This sermon is an introduction to the series. The other sermons will be inherently more practical, this one will be slightly theoretical. Don't switch of your brains because it sounds a bit theoretical – I hope this sermon will help understand the rest of the series.

Today I am going to give you idea of what proverbs is, what wisdom is, and how do you get it according to the book of proverbs.

## **What is proverbs about?**

### **1.1-6**

Book written by Solomon, who is a king

v2 – for attaining wisdom and discipline

- For attaining wisdom – knowing what to do
- Discipline – sticking with the decisions we make
- Prudence – which means don't just do things, think about what you are doing. To use discretion, to think ahead , to be of good sense.
- Understanding – which means she calls people to understand how the world works. Understand what is going on. Don't just continue in what they have always done

So this book is to help us have good sense and know how to make right decisions. Good book. Might be helpful – just maybe. I would read that book.

## **Where did proverbs come from?**

The author of proverbs is universally agreed to be King Solomon. To understand the book we need to understand its author.

King Solomon is a king over God's people in the bible. We read about him at the start of 1 kings. He is a king and he is doing all right. He is young and is about bit worried about being a king.

He has just gotten married at the start of chapter 3 when God says he will give him whatever he wants. Woah, whatever he wants. He doesn't ask for what I would ask for.

He asks for help with knowing what to do – he asks for a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. God gives him wisdom. God promises that if Solomon follows God then he will live a long life.

- Then Solomon wakes up in 1 kings 3.15 and realizes it had been a dream. Its like an end to a bad movie.
- The dream however comes true in 1 kings 4.29

Here is what we learn from the story of our author -

- God thinks wisdom is a good idea as well, God thinks we should know what to do
- Wisdom comes from God – Solomon doesn't use a self help book on leadership or use his equivalent of facebook (asking everyone in his kingdom what he should do) – Solomon asks God and he gets wisdom that brings kings and queens from around him to ask what they should do. The wisdom from God works.

### **What /who is wisdom?**

In proverbs 8 wisdom is personified as the lady of wisdom. Importantly the lady of wisdom is contrasted with the lady of folly in Proverbs 9.

*The image we are given is of two people calling out to us. We used to play this game when I was at youth group. There were two teams. One person from a team was blindfolded and taken to a random part of the hall. They were to follow the voice of their team mates to win the game. The role of the other team was to stop the blindfolded person from getting to their team by shouting louder then their team mates. So you as you can imagine there were 50 kids screaming in a hall. If you can imagine being in darkness and all you can hear is loud noises.*

One team is the team of wisdom calling out to the person. Come this way and you win and people will stop screaming

The other team is the team of folly who distracts from wisdom and their aim is to lead the person astray.

Both wisdom and folly call out to people but where do they lead.

Proverbs 8 –

The lady of wisdom calls the simple to have good sense and the foolish to look for understanding. Picking up the beginning of proverbs.

It reads like we are interviewing someone to be our friend. At the end of the interview we are left to decide whether we want lady wisdom as our friend. Here are some important characteristics of Lady wisdom –

- She is just and hates wickedness
- She is more precious than rubies and nothing your desire can compare to her – knowing what to do is pretty valuable
- By wisdom kings reign and people make rules that are just, princes rule the earth, by wisdom politicians make decisions
- With lady wisdom are riches and honor – people who have wisdom do well

Then jump with me Proverbs 8.34-36

Whoever finds wisdom finds life, whoever doesn't find wisdom finds harm in themselves.

This sounds like a friend I want to have.

What are we going to do? Proverbs says get some wisdom.

## Wisdom at creation

In proverbs 8.21-31 we find the key characteristic of wisdom that gives it such power. Wisdom existed before the creation of the world. Wisdom was there when the world was created, wisdom is insight into the created world we exist in.

Wisdom knows the very foundations of the world. Wisdom knows the framework and deepest inner workings of the human brain. Wisdom knows us and our world intimately because she was there when everything was created. God's wisdom understands the very foundations of all creation.

- *When my phone breaks I don't fix it myself. I don't know how my phone works. I wasn't there when it was made. I don't know how this little bit of metal does that to this other bit of metal. I don't even know what type of metal it is. I take my phone to its creator because they know how it works. I can also go to the apple shop and they can show me all the cool features I have on my phone that I never knew I had.*

God knows how the world works. God knows how you and I work. So when we search out God's wisdom we are searching out the understanding of the way the world was created to be. When God's wisdom is made clear to us we see God's world put right.

- *We bought Lucy a board game to teach her about rules and following rules. About not cheating and also about winning and losing. The first time I played it with her she had already played a few games with Erin. She out right cheated. She just started making up her own rules, her own way of playing. I explained to her the rules and she said she liked her version better.*
- *That is not how the game works. When you change the way you do things then you change the game and it ceases to be what it is meant to be. Candyland changes to Lucyland. Humans existing in the world as God intended them to changes to Humans living as disobedient people in the world. Instead of following the rules to get to king Candys castle she*

make our rules to jump to the end, and thus ignores the game she is actually playing.

Wisdom understands the foundations of creation and therefore understands the best way to exist in this life. God's wisdom describes the best way to live discipline and understanding lives in the world. Wisdom reveals the best life.

Wisdom is best way to live in this world. Wisdom knows the order in the chaos because she was there when the order was created.

The world is throwing things at you like a kid blindfolded in the middle of room. Wisdom is the order – knowing which voice to listen to in the midst of the cacophony of noise.

The world is chaotic. We want order. Wisdom is that order. Wisdom helps us know what to do.

Sounds good – I am sold. Wisdom is a good idea.

### **How do you get wisdom?**

Solomon gives us the key to wisdom. The key rather than being something we do, it is something we are. The question of what we should do in a situation returns back to us and asks who we are –

Proverbs 1.7 –

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.*

Proverbs 9.10 –

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy one is understanding.*

The answer to the question of what should do we do to have the best life is not found within ourselves. It is not 10 steps of how do I make myself better and take

control of my own life. The answer is how do we relate to the creator and Lord of everything. How do we relate to God?

The key according to Solomon is to Fear of The Lord. The key is how we are related to someone rather than what we need to do.

We are relational beings. Our identity is bound up in our relationships. Our identity shapes what we do so who we are in relationship with defines what we do.

Let me explain –

- *When I became a dad my relationships changed. My identity was defined differently. Who I was changed and thus what I did changed.*
- *I moved from playing a lot of playstation to playing with duplo. I went from watching movies with lots of guns and death to watching Frozen twice yesterday. I love that movie. I am a dad – I make decisions differently.*

Who our friends are define us, who our family is shapes who we are.

Who we are shapes what we do. Our relationships shape what we do.

**Doing comes from being.** I didn't become a dad by doing the things that dads do. I became a dad so I do the things that dads do.

- Our relationships change us. None more than our relationship with our creator. Solomon says the key to wisdom is to fear the Lord.
- Fear in this context is not hiding under your bed fear. Fear in this circumstance is honor and respect – it is recognising who God is.
- This is what fear of the Lord is – *recognising that God is the Lord of everything and you are not. God is the boss of everything and you are not.*



*So who is God to you?*

For Solomon his relationship with God was with him as the loving saving Lord who they needed to hold in reverent fear

God has revealed himself more clearly now and our relationship is with him as a loving serving Lord who we need to hold in reverent fear

This Lord has come to us and we meet God clearly.

- God has revealed himself clearly in his Son Jesus.

The God revealed by his Son is one who we must revere and honor as his calm storms and teaches great truth. He is also one who is gentle with little children and merciful to those who are in need. In Jesus we see the fear that God deserves and we see the love he gives to us.

In Jesus we see the Lord who we should fear become a servant. Become one of us and die for us. In his death he changes our relationship with his Lordship. Our sin meant that our relationship with the creator of the universe was broken but Jesus dying changes that relationship. We are no longer separated people but now through faith can be called God's children. God's children for whom we hold God in reverence as the Lord over our lives. We fear him but we do not run away in our fear because we know that God is for us and not against us.

The large claim of Proverbs is this - the beginning of wisdom is to fear God.

The way to live the best life is to be in relationship with God.

The way to do life well is to know God as your Lord.

## **What do we with proverbs?**

Lets get back to proverbs – let me draw some parallels between Solomon and us.

- Solomon is one of Gods people living a life in light of Gods saving action  
As Christians we are Gods people living lives in light of Gods saving action in our lives
- Proverbs is written by a man who is in right relationship with God.  
As Christians we are in right relationship with God because of Jesus death on the cross.

*Proverbs and wisdom are not the gospel – wisdom will not save you.*

*Wisdom and understanding are the response to life changed by the gospel.*

When you become a Christian your life is put back the way it was created to be. Our lives are put back on their foundations. We see the world as it was meant to be. We see the world with God in his right place as the Lord of it all.

Proverbs is a book that shows us a life lived on the right foundations. A life lived with creation order in the midst of chaos.

We want to know what to do - proverbs gives us an insight into life following God in right relationship. Proverbs tells us to be something before we do anything.

Proverbs is the best self help book you will ever read because it tells you to get the help not from yourself but from someone who really can help you.

We want to know what to do – we need wisdom.

Fear the Lord – recognise that he is God and we are not. Recognise that he is the boss and we are not.

For God our Lord is the creator. He knows the order in the chaos that we find in our world. He knows the path through the cacophony. The path is following him.

- *I remember my first pastoral conversation. I sat down with this teenager for coffee and the teenager spilled out his life problems to me – he said all these things, parent problems, school problems, girl problems. Then he looked at me with big hopeful eyes and said ‘Myles, What should I do?’ I looked back into those hopeful eyes and thought inside my head ‘I have no freaking idea’.*
- *Then I said lets pray about it. I did that not because I thought God would help but because I was trying to buy some time to come up with a witty knowledgable thing for me to say to him.*
- *I was right though. This teenager needed wisdom. He needed to know what to do. We went to the source of what we should do – our relationship with God. After we finished praying I think I said some self help jargony thing that made sense at the time. I wish I had said lets look at who we are before God, what does our relationship with God say to the decisions you need to make. What does the gospel change about how you live your life? Lets check out proverbs and see if it can help us out.*

What are we going to do? Fear the Lord who has saved us and live forever changed by that relationship.