

## Sermon Follow-up | January 19, 2020

### **5 Books of Wisdom and Poetry — The Art of Skilled Living**

**Focus Passage:** Proverbs 1:1–7, 20–23

**Additional Context:** Proverbs 8:22–31

**Corollary Scripture:** John 1:1–14

**Other Passages Referenced:** Psalm 130; Proverbs 16:25; 26:4–5; Matthew 6; Luke 12; Philippians 4; 1 Tim 6; James 5:1–5

**Sermon Recap:** The *Book of Proverbs* was referred to as the “Swiss Army Knife for Everyday Life.” As a sort of Swiss Army Knife, *Proverbs* has a tool for dealing with anger, jealousy, shame, laziness, fear, injustice, anxiety, money, peace, relationships with anybody and everybody, and more. The sermon addressed the question, “How do we safely use the *Book of Proverbs*?”

Proverbs are observations, invitations, little models of reality that build on and interact with one another. More than facts to know, proverbs offer us skill for daily living in a fallen world. The *Book of Proverbs* is best understood when studied with other people, with other proverbs, and with all of Scripture. Taking only a verse or section of Proverbs in isolation from the rest can lead to dangerous conclusions. *Proverbs* and the wisdom books collectively reinforce two foundational truths: (1) God created everything, therefore there is a God-given design and order for the way things were intended to work physically, spiritually, relationally, and morally; (2) The world is fallen—God’s intended design and order have been broken as a consequence of sin. True wisdom takes into account the tension between these two truths for skilled living. The starting point for this kind of wisdom and skilled living begins with a proper “fear of the LORD” that trusts He is still in control. Jesus, the embodiment of wisdom in human flesh dealt with both truths at the cross. Jesus acknowledged God’s order that death is the penalty for sin. He also acknowledged human brokenness and inability to overcome sin on their own. On the cross, Jesus paid the penalty and began to restore the brokenness of fallen people in a fallen world.

### Relevant Definitions

- The “fear of the Lord” motif occurs in three distinct ways in the Old Testament:
  - As an expression of corporate Israelite religion—the religious system of worshiping Yahweh. Occurrences of the phrase “fear of the Lord” in the general sense of religious piety mostly appear in Wisdom texts. In this sense, “fear of the Lord” is an essential component of Israel’s theology (Perdue, *Wisdom and Creation*, 78–79). It essentially means faith in Yahweh.
  - As a description of personal piety—the act of worshiping and obeying Yahweh. In Deuteronomy 5:29, God declares to Moses His desire that the people would fear Him enough that they would obey His commandments. “Fear” can be expressed as (positive) obedience caused by reverence for Yahweh and/or (negative) obedience caused by the threat of divine punishment (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11*, 325).
  - As an identification of a religious person, i.e., a worshiper of Yahweh. Joseph identifies himself as a God-fearer when he is reunited with his brothers (Gen 42:18). Jonah similarly identifies himself as a God-fearer when he is questioned by the sailors (Jonah 1:9; compare Pss 25:14; 33:18; 34:9).<sup>1</sup>
- “Fool”— There are five different Hebrew words used to translate “fool” in Proverbs:
  - The *simple* or *stupid* fool who can’t discern between right and wrong

<sup>1</sup> James W. Knox, [“Fear of the Lord,”](#) ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

- The *perverse* know-it-all fool who despises wisdom and instruction
- The *stubborn* fool who does what he/she wants
- The *scorner* or *mocking* fool who hates authority and is abusive to others
- The *wicked* fool who says there is no God.

## Group Gathering

### **Connect:** *Making Honest Connections with One Another*

- What did you sense God saying to you through the sermon or your Bible reading this week?

### **Grow:** *Listening to and Learning from God's Word*

1. Make a list of all of the verbs with the infinitive structure—"to \_\_\_\_\_"—in verses 1–3. How does the progression compare to the framework of "listen to ... learn from ... live by ... and let others know" we've been using in our approach to the sermons and God's word?
2. What four terms are used to describe different groups or stages of learners? Can you identify individuals in your sphere of relationships that fall into each stage? In which stage would you identify yourself?
3. Looking at the definition above, what does it mean that the "fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge"?
4. Looking at the 5 words for "fool" above, Proverbs 1:7 refers to the "wicked" fool who does not believe in God. With which category of fool do you most identify in your more foolish moments?

### **Serve:** *Serving King Jesus and Others, By Living Out and Letting Others Know God's Word*

1. How does your pursuit of wisdom compare with your pursuit of material wealth and pleasures?
2. Considering this quote by Tremper Longman from Sunday's sermon, which principles make you most uncomfortable?

If you study Proverbs and the 100 sayings on all things money you find at least seven key principles:

- God blesses the righteous with wealth
- Foolish behavior leads to poverty
- The wealth of fools will not last
- Poverty is the result of injustice and oppression
- Those with money must be generous
- Wisdom is better than wealth
- Wealth has limited value (Tremper Longman III)

3. What theme in Proverbs would you most like to study (i.e. anger, jealousy, shame, laziness, fear, injustice, anxiety, money, peace, relationships)?
4. With whom will you share what the LORD is teaching you through this study?

### **Further Resources**

- Illustrations and quotes from the sermon can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of [www.wchapel.org](http://www.wchapel.org)