

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Sermon Series: Beyond Belief
To be used with: Session Five, God is Wise
Sermon Title Possibilities:
 Wisdom From Above

Scripture: Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:5-7

Connection to Unit Theme: To complement the small group study of *Beyond Belief*, these sermon outlines will use the same Scripture passages as are being studied in small groups, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

The main point of Session 5 is, “God will give me wisdom when I humbly seek it.” Wisdom is not something that naturally gain over time. Wisdom comes from God, and God wants us to seek Him.

Introduction Idea: *Earning Freedom* is the account of how Michael Santos rebuilt his life. At age 19 he was sentenced to 45 years in prison for heading an illegal drug organization. In prison he developed a plan to educate himself, network with a support group, and contribute to the good of society as he prepared to enter the world again. He earned two degrees, built a website, wrote several articles and books, and helped other prisons develop skills to cope with life in prison. After serving 25 years of his sentence, he was released. Today he writes and speaks about the power of human determination and will.

When it comes to wisdom, this is how many think we become wise—human effort. And while we will see the role of human effort in wisdom, the Biblical vision for becoming wise is one in which God is the center of our lives. Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs for this very purpose, to show his son (and us) how to seek after wisdom. But he knew that no one becomes wise simply by learning facts, but by fearing the Lord. Let’s read from Proverbs.

[Read Proverbs 2:1-6; 3:5-7]

From these passages we learn what it means to become wise. Consider three truths about wisdom.

Point 1: We must pursue wisdom (2:1-4).

What is interesting about this section, and the entire book of Proverbs, is that Solomon calls his son to seek after wisdom. It is not something that simply falls in our lap. He calls his son to action. We should notice the force of his language in 2:1-4: *receive, treasure, attentive, inclining, call out, raise your voice, seek it, search*. Wisdom is something that is to be pursued and sought after. We are not naturally wise and discerning. Therefore we need to seek after wisdom.

In fact, the mark of true wisdom is that we pursue more wisdom: “The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight” (Prov. 4:7). James said something similar when he wrote, “James says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5). The point is clear: we must pursue wisdom. We must pursue it the way we pursue career advancement or financial success (2:4). But whereas we are not guaranteed these things, we are guaranteed that if we seek wisdom, we will find it. He says, “Then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God” (2:5). This is a glorious truth. God will not keep us in the dark or play games with us. He will give the wisdom that we need and ask for.

Application: Are you seeking wisdom? Make wisdom a matter of prayer, study, and thought this week.

Point 2: Wisdom comes from God (2:6).

There is no wisdom without God and if one has God, He will empower them with wisdom. Wisdom does not come primarily from age or from experience, though God certainly uses those things. But wisdom comes primarily from God (2:6). The fool is the one who tries to pursue wisdom apart from God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Prov. 1:7). God does not give us the luxury of being wise (in the biblical sense) apart from having an intimate and passionate relationship with Him. Unfortunately many people do not understand this.

On January 9th, 2007, Joshua Bell sold out Boston's Symphony Hall. Seats were nearly \$100 each. Bell plays a violin worth more than \$3 million and is one of the best musicians in the world. Three days later he entered a metro station in Washington, D.C. wearing casual clothing and a ball cap. He opened his case and played his violin for 45 minutes. Only six people stopped, 20 gave money (a total of \$32), but no one recognized him.

This is how millions of people are living their lives. The God of the universe has extended His hand, and is offering Himself to any who would call upon Him. But

Application: What are some ways you seek wisdom apart from God? Do you find yourself looking to Him only after you have exhausted every means you could think of? Pursue this week the God of all wisdom.

Point 3: Wisdom frees us from self-reliance (3:5-7).

The meaning of this passage has two arenas, one negative and one positive. The negative theme here is that we are not to lean on our “own understanding” (3:5) nor are we to be wise in our own eyes (3:7). The positive side is that we are to pursue the Lord by trusting Him, acknowledging Him, and fearing Him (vv. 5-7). The hope of this passage is to be freed from self-reliance through trusting and leaning on the Lord. We can't refrain from self-reliance through mere will power. We must actively pursue the Lord and replace self-reliance with God-reliance.

This is what Thomas Chalmers had in mind when he preach his famous sermon *The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*. He said, “The heart must have something to cling to—and never, by its own voluntary consent, will it so denude itself of all its attachments that there shall not be one remaining object that can draw or solicit it” (*The Expulsive Power of a New Affection*, 17). In other words, sheer will power isn't enough to repel sin from the heart, we need something more attractive than sin. This is why this passage says to both turn from self-reliance *and* seek the Lord. We need both.

Application: In what ways are you wise in your own eyes? What might God-reliance look like for you and for us as a congregation?

Conclusion Idea: As we discuss wisdom we should inevitably confronted with our own foolishness, and thus discover that we will never become wise without Jesus who “became to us wisdom from God” (1 Cor. 1:30). He is our wisdom and its through Him that we truly become wise. Do you know Him? Is He your Savior and God?

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