

Biblical Psychology 101

Introduction to Biblical Psychology - Wisdom

Lesson One

INTRODUCTION:

- I. Someone once said "the book of Psalms teaches us how to get along with God, while Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people."
 - A. The Psalms certainly help us in our devotional life, while Proverbs provides us with practical, divinely inspired advice for every day living.
 1. While most of the Psalms were written by David, a man after God's own heart; the majority of the Proverbs were written by Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived.
 - a. Solomon enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage – a spiritual heritage that was passed down to him from his father David, king of Israel.
 - B. The advice Solomon gives (because that's what proverbs are – "wise sayings for practical living") is the kind of practical advice we would expect to hear from someone who's been "down the road."
 1. It's the kind of wisdom we would expect to hear from someone who has struggled with the same problems we struggle with.

2. But it's really more than that – more than just the sayings of someone who has experienced it all.
 - a. When Solomon speaks, we're not simply hearing the voice of some wise man, we're hearing the voice of God.
- II. This morning we're going to launch into a brief series of lessons I've entitled "Biblical Psychology 101 – God's Prescription for Emotional and Spiritual Stability."
- A. All of us understand God knows far more about the mind of man than anyone else because He created man – He knows how our minds work.
 1. So, in many ways, that makes the Bible the oldest and certainly the best book on psychology ever written, because it comes to us from the very One who created the human mind.
 2. Within the pages of the Bible we find God's prescription for maintaining stability during the many emotional and spiritual crises we face throughout our lives.
 - a. In other words, the Bible provides us with very specific guidelines for dealing with every situation we may encounter – whether good or bad.

- B. Therefore, to begin this study I want you to turn with me to the book of Proverbs where we discover the first essential ingredient we need to maintain emotional and spiritual stability.
1. Solomon begins this wonderful book by listing several benefits we receive from studying these proverbs.
 2. **Proverbs 1:1-4** – *"The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment, and equity; to give prudence to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion..."*
- B. Let's look more closely at the four specific benefits Solomon mentions here.
1. The first benefit of studying Proverbs is to help us *"know wisdom and instruction."*
 - a. Wisdom has been defined various ways:
 - (1). Some define wisdom as, "The ability to use knowledge in a practical way."
 - (2). Others have defined wisdom as, "The ability to grasp the deep spiritual truths God teaches us through His Word."

- (3). And closely related to that definition is, "The ability to make application of those spiritual truths in various situations."
2. Solomon said the second benefit we receive from studying Proverbs is to *"perceive the words of understanding."*
 - a. If wisdom is "being sensitive to the leading of God in our life," then understanding is "The ability to comprehend why following God's lead is so critically important, and the desire to submit to His lead."
3. The third benefit from studying Proverbs is that we will "receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity."
 - a. The word "receive" in this verse is used to describe a vineyard worker plucking the choicest grapes..
 - b. In this instance, the word "receive" speaks of one who "plucks" or "harvests" the wisdom, or wise instructions, of God.
4. And finally, Solomon says when we study these Proverbs we gain "prudence," "knowledge," and "discretion."
 - a. Prudence is the opposite from being gullible – easily influenced or swayed.

- b. Knowledge is the ability to discern or distinguish between right and wrong
 - c. Discretion is the practice of always choosing what is right in every situation.
5. But notice that Solomon specifically says "the young man" receives these benefits (v. 4), meaning, by studying Proverbs:
- a. A young man will not be gullible, and will not be easily swayed by the opinions of others – especially by those who are outspoken in their opinions.
 - b. But rather a young man will not only know the difference between right and wrong, and will always cultivate a desire to do what is right – regardless of what others may think.
6. However, Solomon's advice to the "young man" is not limited to the young – it's just as important for those of us who are older.
- a. When you were growing up, how many times did you hear someone say, "You're not old enough yet!"
 - b. Solomon never puts an age limit on who can benefit from the study of this book.
 - c. The young as well as the old have something to learn from this wonderful book.

BODY:

- I. When it comes to solving the problems we face in life, nothing helps more than having the wisdom God extends to all of us.
 - A. However, when we come to the end of Proverbs chapter 1, notice how Solomon takes the abstract principle of "wisdom," and turns wisdom into a person – notice how he "personifies" wisdom.
 1. Solomon presents wisdom as being like a woman who cries out in the noisy streets.
 - a. Unfortunately, as she cries out, people simply go on their way paying no attention to her.
 2. Before we make the same mistake – before we walk past her, lost in our own thoughts, and thinking about how we are going to solve our own problems – let's stop and listen to what she has to say.
 - B. There are three important observations we need to make from this woman called "Wisdom."
 1. First, we learn wisdom is always available to teach us what we need to know.
 - a. **Proverbs 1:20-21, 23** – *"Wisdom calls aloud outside; she raises her voice in the open squares. She cries out in the chief concourses, at the openings of the gates in the city she*

speaks her words... Turn at my rebuke; surely I will pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you."

- b. God didn't empty all His supply of wisdom on Solomon.
 - c. Wisdom is available to us every time we open our Bibles and open our hearts and minds to allow wisdom to speak to us and instruct us from God's Word.
2. But, even though wisdom is always ready to teach us, wisdom can be rejected and spurned.
- a. **Proverbs 1:24-25** – *"Because I have called and you refused, I have stretched out my hand and no one regarded, because you despised all my counsel, and would have none of my rebuke..."*
 - b. Our problem is not knowing where to find wisdom, our problem is listening to wisdom and allowing wisdom to impact and change our lives.
 - c. How many times have you ignored the advice of a wise person, only to wish later that you had listened to what they were trying to tell you?
 - d. So, before you carelessly walk past wisdom and say, "No, thank you" – before you think you don't need the counsel of

someone much wiser than yourself, stop and listen to what wisdom has to say.

3. Solomon also says when we choose to reject wisdom, the results are almost always catastrophic.
 - a. Wisdom says: **Proverbs 1:26-32** – *"I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes, when your terror comes like a storm, and your destruction comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies. For the turning away of the simple will slay them, and the complacency of fools will destroy them..."*
 - b. These verses provide a vivid description of what happens when we refuse to hear the voice of wisdom and deliberately reject her wise counsel.
 - c. Wisdom essentially says, "Don't come running back to me when the choices you make turn out to be huge disasters –

don't expect me to rush to your rescue and bail you out. You had your chance to follow my advice, but chose to reject it."

- C. I tend to think this is one of the reasons why God does not always rush to our rescue when we face the disasterous results of our own poor decisions.
1. If we've rejected His wisdom – if we've refused to listen to His advice and wise counsel, and we deliberately turn our backs on His leading, and chose our own way – we need to feel the full impact of our own unwise choices.
 2. Unless we feel the emotional and spiritual pain and suffering from the poor choices we've made, we will never break free from the cycle where we:
 - a. Reject God's wisdom...
 - b. Suddenly see the terrible results of rejecting His wisdom...
 - c. Run to God for some kind of "quick fix"...
 - d. Only to reject God's wisdom in the future.
 3. Unless we suffer the painful consequences of our poor choices we will never learn anything.
 4. Sometimes God chooses to let us suffer the consequences of our own choices so we'll learn to listen to the counsel of the wise, and choose God's way next time rather than our own.

II. Let's go back to verse 22 and notice something very important. This verse profiles three types of people who commonly refuse to listen to wisdom.

A. First, Solomon says there are the "Simple."

1. **Proverbs 1:22a** – *"How long, you simple ones, will you love simplicity?"*
2. The word "simple" or "naive" carries the idea of a "wide open door."
 - a. The simple person is "wide open", easily influenced, gullible, easily manipulated.
 - b. This person lacks discernment. They're easily enticed because they lack understanding and are too immature to recognize danger far enough in advance to avoid it.
 - c. The simple are not able to see beneath the surface of things, and so they often leap before they look – and they suffer terrible consequences as the result.
3. Later on in the book of Proverbs, Solomon also tells us that the simple never learn from their mistakes.
 - a. **Proverbs 22:3** – *"A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished."*
 - b. In the original Hebrew, this text conveys the idea of someone who makes the same mistakes today they made in the past.

And because they are "simple" they will make these same mistakes in the future.

- 4 However, going back to Proverbs 1:22, Solomon adds one more insight about the simple – they love their simplicity.
 - a. They don't want anyone to tell them they're wrong – they are satisfied with their own little world and don't want to move out of their "comfort zone."
 - b. They're content with being gullible.
- 5 Does being simple describe your life?
 - a. Are you gullible, easily manipulated or easily influenced?
 - b. Are you the kind of person who never looks before you leap – who never really sits down and considers whether a choice you're about to make might just be harmful to you or to others?
 - c. Are you the kind of person who seems to make the same mistakes over and over?
6. If I've just described you, then some of the problems you may be facing right now in your life, could be the result of not listening to "Wisdom."

- a. And if it's because you don't like hearing the wise counsel of others and don't want to change, then you're most likely the kind of person Solomon calls "Simple."
- B. The second kind of person who refuses to listen to "Wisdom" is the "Scorner" – the "Scoffer" or "Mocker."
1. **Proverbs 1:22b** – *"For scorners delight in their scorning..."*
 2. The word "scorn" or "scoff" means "to turn aside, to reject with vigorous contempt, to refuse, to show disdain, to be disgusted."
 - a. Scoffers don't simply disagree, they seem driven to scorn and ridicule (laugh at) anything that opposes their ideas.
 3. The scoffer (or "mocker") thinks the wise counsel of God is foolish, and they are always seeking their own brand of so-called "wisdom."
 - a. This is how the apostle Paul described the reception of the Gentile world (especially the Greeks) to the preaching of the Cross of Christ.
 - b. **1 Corinthians 1:18-25** – *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Where is the wise? Where is*

the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men."

4. Unfortunately, for the scoffer, in their desperate search for wisdom and meaning, they never finding the real thing.
 - a. **Proverbs 14:6** – *"A scoffer seeks wisdom and does not find it, but knowledge is easy to him who understands."*
5. "Wisdom" warns us about dealing with this kind of person.
 - a. **Proverbs 9:7-8 (NIV)** – *"Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you."*

6. Unfortunately, no amount of godly advice and counseling will change this person's attitude.
 - a. No amount of exposure to Biblical truth will penetrate this person's thick crust of skepticism.
 - b. God is the only One who can penetrate the defenses of the skeptic (the scoffer or mocker).
 - c. But in doing so, God often has no choice except to put the scoffer through some really terrible and tragic experiences.
7. Therefore, the only thing you can do with this kind of person is turn them over to the Lord, and stand back – keep out of the Lord's way while He deals with them.
 - a. Sometimes there may be a real temptation to rush in and rescue them out of their troubles – especially if the scoffer is someone we love and care about.
 - b. But if we rescue them out of their troubles we might be interfering with the work of God.
8. Does this describe you? Probably not. Otherwise you most likely would not be here this morning.
 - a. However, you probably know those who are scoffers.
 - b. They're the kind of person who laughs at spiritual things and makes fun of them.

- c. They delight in ridiculing the concept of holiness and righteousness.
 - d. They take pleasure in mocking those who contend for God's standards of morality and righteous living.
9. If so, then perhaps the only way to penetrate their thick crust of cynical skepticism would be for the Lord to bring a number of painful experiences and trials into their life.
- a. These trials may be very painful at first, but if they are able to learn from them, those trials may be the very thing that turns their life around, and ultimately result in the saving of their eternal soul.
- C. In Proverbs chapter 22 verse 1, Solomon mentions one more kind of person who rejects "Wisdom" – the "Fool."
- 1. **Proverbs 1:22c** – *"And fools hate knowledge."*
 - 2. Typically, we think of a "fool" as someone who lacks intelligence.
 - 3. However, in the Bible a "fool" is not so much someone who lacks mental powers, but "one who misuses them."
 - a. Not someone who lacks the mental capacity to think or reason, but "one who reasons wrongly."
 - 4. Solomon gives us one of the best descriptions of the fool.

- a. **Proverbs 14:8-9a** – *"The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit. Fools mock at sin..."*
- b. Now, compare this with what Solomon says: **Proverbs 1:7** – *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction."*
- c. This is why in: **Palms 14:1a** – *The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."*
- d. It's not that the "fool" doesn't know God exists. The "fool" is a "fool" because he doesn't want to believe God exists.

Because if God exists then that means we would need to revere, honor, worship and obey Him.
- e. This is why the Psalmist added: **Psalms 14:1b** – *They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.*
- f. As long as they can convince themselves "There is no God," the fool can continue being corrupt, doing abominable works, and be totally worthless. If there is no God, there is no accountability.

- g. This is why Solomon says, "*Fools despise wisdom and instruction*" – they despise all forms of wisdom and instruction, especially the wisdom and instruction of God.
5. Are you a "fool"? Once again, you probably would have no interest in being in worship services this morning if you were.
- a. But as before, you probably know someone who fits this description.
- b. They're someone who has misused the wisdom God has given them.
- c. They may be blessed with great intellect – highly educated, and blessed with the ability to reason. But their reasoning is blatantly deceitful – they're "intellectually dishonest."
6. Sadly, they will also suffer the consequences of their foolishness. Perhaps they already have, or may be suffering right now.
- D. Now that we've seen the kinds of people who reject wisdom, let's look at the characteristics of those who embrace her.
1. Out of all the 186 different characters Solomon talks about in the book of Proverbs, there is one who stands out above the rest – the "wise man."

III. Solomon tells us there are three reasons why the "wise" are wise.

A. First, a wise person is a willing listener.

1. **Proverbs 1:5a** – *"A wise man will hear and increase learning..."*

(Also Proverbs 12:15; 13:1; 15:31-32; 19:20)

a. Wisdom begins with "hearing" – with paying attention to the advice they're being given, and seriously thinking about and weigh that advice.

b. Solomon says the result of the wise person hearing is that they "increase learning."

2. Have you ever tried giving advice to someone who constantly replies "I know... I know" – when, in fact, they don't know?

a. If they "knew" then you wouldn't need to give them advice.

b. Unfortunately, the constant "I know... I know" is a polite way of saying, "I know what you're saying, but I really don't have any intention of following your advice."

3. Or how about the person who is constantly talking while you're trying to give them sound, Biblical advice.

a. They can't learn because their mind is filled with things they're wanting to say, rather than allowing their mind to absorb the things you're trying to tell them?

4. Solomon says "*a wise man will hear*" – He will listen – and because he listens, he learns.
- B. Solomon also says "wise" people are wise because they sincerely want to learn and grow.
1. **Proverbs 1:5b** – "*And a man of understanding will attain wise counsel...*" (Also Proverbs 9:9)
 2. The wise make a life-long pursuit of learning new things and expanding the horizon of their mind – especially deepening and expanding their knowledge and understanding of the Bible.
 - a. Too often in our culture we concentrate all our learning during the "school years," and when we graduate, we think we're finished learning.
 - b. But the wise person never thinks he or she "knows it all." They keep studying, they keep searching, and they never quit learning and expanding their knowledge.
 3. As Solomon said: **Proverbs 1:5a** – "*A wise man will hear and increase learning...*"
 - a. And because of that, Solomon adds: **Proverbs 1:5b** – "*... a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.*" The wise find the wisdom and understanding they're seeking because they listen.

b. And once they've learned, the wise become a storehouse of knowledge, wisdom and understanding for the rest of us:

(1). **Proverbs 10:14** – *"Wise people store up knowledge. . ."*

(2). **Proverbs 15:7** – *"The lips of the wise disperse knowledge. . ."*

C. And, third, wise people are wise because they eagerly seek out and accept wise counsel.

1. **Proverbs 18:15** – *"The heart of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge."*

a. Rather than taking an "I-don't-need-your-advice" attitude, wise people realize they occasionally need the wisdom and wise counsel of others.

b. But this is very important – the wise don't accept just anyone's advice. They seek those who give wise counsel – those who give counsel from godly wisdom.

2. The wise person will always exercise great discernment when it comes to seeking advice.

a. They always seek advice from those who are familiar with, and who live by, God's Word.

3. Sometimes, those of us who are older often criticize young people for getting bad advice from their friends.

- a. But, how many adults do you know who have done the same thing – seeking advice from friends who they know will tell them what they want to hear?
 - b. Or worse yet, how many adults do you know who seek advice from the "self-help" section of the bookstore, or by watching "Oprah," "Dr. Phil" or "Dr. Drew."
4. Wise counsel can only come from those who have the wisdom that God gives.
- a. And the only place where God dispenses His wisdom is through His divinely inspired Word – the Bible.

CONCLUSION:

- I. Perhaps now you can see why godly wisdom and counsel is so critically important.
 - A. Unless we seek to cultivate God's wisdom, we will never truly understand ourselves, nor will we ever be able to relate to others in spiritually healthy ways.
 1. So, this is where we will start – with seeking God's wisdom and wise counsel.

2. Then, in upcoming lessons, we're going to begin applying God's wisdom and wise counsel in handling some the emotional and spiritual crises we face throughout our lives.
 3. We're going to talk about such things as: Loneliness; Worry and Anxiety; Anger, Bitterness and Resentment; Discouragement; Temptation; Loss; Depression; and finally Death and Dying.
- II. But for now, let me ask: "What is your attitude toward the wisdom of God?"
- A. Do you trust in God's wisdom enough to submit you life to Him in obedience to the gospel, and then let His wisdom be your guide through life?
 1. If you're not a Christian, then up to this point in your life you have not looked to God's wisdom to direct you to the only One who can heal the wounds of sin in your life – Jesus Christ?
 2. And if you are a Christian, but have lost touch with God's wisdom, you can regain it by changing your life to conform to His wisdom.