

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS TO COMMON PROBLEMS

Lesson - 1

"Wisdom: An Essential Ingredient in Handling Problems"

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. Psalms certainly helps us in our devotional life, while Proverbs helps us in our practical, every day life.
 1. Most of the book of Proverbs was written by Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived.
 - a. He enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage.
 - (1). This spiritual heritage was passed on to him from his father, David king of Israel.
 2. The advice he 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."

- a. The kind of wisdom we would hear from someone who struggles with the same kind of problems we struggle with.
- 3. But it's really more than that – more than just the sayings of someone who has experienced it all.
 - a. When Solomon speaks, not only are we hearing the man, but we are also hearing the voice of God.
 - b. Because, when Solomon speaks, he is sharing with us the priceless wisdom God has given to him.

II. Solomon begins his book by listing the benefits of studying these proverbs.

(Prov. 1:1-4)

- A. The first benefit of studying Proverbs is that we will *"know wisdom and instruction."*
 - 1. Wisdom has been defined various ways.
 - a. "Wisdom is the ability to put to use the knowledge we have gained."
 - b. The one I like is, "Wisdom is the ability to see things from heavens point-of-view, or from God's perspective."
- B. The second benefit we receive is that we will learn to *"perceive the words of understanding."*

1. If wisdom is LOOKING at life from God's viewpoint, then understanding is RESPONDING to life from God's viewpoint.
- C. The third benefit is that we will "receive the instruction of wisdom, justice judgment and equity."
1. The term "receive" suggests action or mobility.
 - a. It's the term associated with "plucking grapes and taking them with you."
 - b. In this instance, it refers to instruction that is to be TAKEN ("plucked") and enjoyed.
- D. The fourth benefit is that we'll gain "prudence," "knowledge," and "discretion."
1. Notice that Solomon specifically includes "the young man" in this benefit (v. 4)
 2. But what Solomon says is not LIMITED to the young; it's just as important for those of us who are older.
 - a. How many times while you were growing up 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.
 - (1). Young and old – we all have something to learn.

BODY:

- I. When it comes to solving the problems we face in life, nothing helps more than having wisdom.
 - A. When we come to the end of Proverbs chapter 1, Solomon takes the abstract principle of "wisdom," and turns wisdom into a person – he "personifies" wisdom.
 1. Wisdom is presented to us as a woman who cries out in the noisy streets, where people are going along their way, paying no attention to her.
 2. Now, 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. From the things this woman called "wisdom" says, we can make three important observations.
 1. Wisdom is available. **(Prov. 1:20-21, 23)**
 - a. God didn't empty His supply of wisdom on Solomon.
 - b. It is still available to us every time we open our Bibles and allow ourselves to become receptive to His Word.
 2. Wisdom can be spurned. **(Prov. 1:24-25)**
 - a. Our problem is not being exposed to wisdom, our problem is allowing it to impact our lives.

- b. How many times has someone given you advice that you ignored, and later wished you had listened?
 - c. So, before we carelessly walk past wisdom and say, "No, thank you," as we strain to look for something more exciting, let's stop and listen to what she has to say.
3. Wisdom can also be completely rejected, with catastrophic results. **(Prov. 1:26-32)**
- a. These verses vividly describe what happens when we hear wisdom's voice and reject it.
 - b. When we reject wisdom's advice, wisdom says, "Don't come running back to me when trouble comes and panic strikes, and expect me to get you out of hot water."
 - (1). It will take time to get out of a troubled situation.
 - c. I think there's a very good reason why God does NOT always come to help us with a QUICK RESCUE.
 - (1). If we've rejected His wisdom – if we've refused to listen to His advice, and turned our backs on His leading, we need to feel the full impact of our own UNWISE choices.
 - (2). Otherwise, we'll continue reject God's advice, get into trouble, and run to God for some kind of a

quick-fix for our problems – and NEVER LEARN ANYTHING.

- (a). We need to remember that God is NOT some kind of Cosmic Vending Machine that dispenses instant cures for our own foolish choices.
- (b). He sometimes chooses to let us suffer the consequences of our own choices so we'll learn to choose His way next time rather than our own.

II. Let's go back to verse 22 and notice something very important.

A. This verse profiles three types of people who commonly refuse to listen to wisdom.

1. THE SIMPLE. (**Prov. 1:22a**)

a. The word "simple" or "naive" carries the idea of a "wide open door."

(1). 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 therefore not aware of the dangers.

c. Solomon also tells us that the simple never learn from their mistakes. **(Prov. 22:3)**

(1). In the original Hebrew, this text conveys the idea that they are making the same mistakes today that they were five years ago, and will be making them five years from now.

d. Back in Chapter 1, Solomon adds one more insight concerning the simple – fact that they “love their simplicity.” They are content with being gullible.

e. The simple are not able to see beneath the surface of things.

(1). They often leap before they look -- and suffer terrible consequences as the result.

f. Does being simple describe your life – are you gullible, easily manipulated or easily influenced, the kind of person who makes the same mistakes over and over?

(1). If you are, then some of the problems you may be facing are because you're simple and have not listened to wisdom.

2. THE SCORNER (SCOFFER or MOCKER). **(Prov. 1:22b)**

- a. The word "scorn" or "scoff" means "to turn aside, to reject with vigorous contempt, to refuse, to show disdain, to be disgusted."
- b. Scoffers don't simply disagree, they seem driven to scorn and ridicule (laugh at) anything that opposes their ideas.
- c. The scoffer (mocker) thinks the wise things of God are foolish, and they are always seeking their OWN brand of so-called "wisdom," but never finding the real thing.

(Prov. 14:6)

- (1). This is how the apostle Paul described the reception of the Gentile world (especially the Greeks) to the preaching of the Cross of Christ.

(1 Cor. 1:18-25)

- d. Wisdom cautions us when dealing with this kind of person. **(Prov. 9:7-8 - READ FROM NIV)**
- e. Unfortunately, no amount of counseling will change this person's attitude.
 - (1). No amount of exposure to Biblical truth will penetrate this person's thick crust of skepticism.

- (2). God is the only One who can penetrate the defenses of the skeptic (the scoffer or mocker).
 - (a). But in doing so, God often has to put them through some really terrible experiences.
- (3). 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 **His** way while **He** deals with them.
 - (a). There will be a real temptation in wanting to rush in to rescue them out of their troubles, but to do that would ruin the work of God.

f. Does this describe you?

- (1). Are you the kind of person who laughs at spiritual things, makes fun of them, and ridicules the concept of holiness and righteousness?
- (2). If so, then the only way your thick crust of skepticism can be penetrated is by the painful experiences God will bring into your life.
 - (a). It may be very painful at first, but it will ultimately result in the saving of your soul for an eternity.

- g. When we return to Proverbs chapter one verse 22, we see one more person who rejects wisdom.

3. THE FOOL. **(Prov. 1:22c)**

- a. Typically, we think of a "fool" as one who lacks intelligence.
- b. But the Biblical meaning of "fool" is not so much someone who lacks mental powers, but "one who misuses them" – not one who doesn't have the ability to reason, but "one who reasons wrongly."
- c. Solomon gives us one of the best descriptions of the fool. **(Prov. 14:8-9a)**
 - (1). Now, compare this with what Solomon says in chapter 1. **(Prov. 1:7)**
- d. This is why the fool says, "...There is no God!" **(Psalm 14:1)**
- e. Are you a fool?
 - (1). Are you one who has MISUSED the wisdom God has given you?
 - (2). Are you someone who has been blessed with the ability to reason, but you're reasoning has been

blatantly deceitful – someone who is
INTELLECTUALLY DISHONEST?

- (3). Then you will also suffer the consequences of your foolishness – perhaps you already have, or maybe you're suffering right now.

III. Now that we've seen the kinds of people who reject wisdom, let's look at the characteristics of those who embrace her.

A. 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" who demonstrates three characteristics.

1. Wise people are WILLING LISTENERS. (**Prov. 1:5a; also 12:15; 13:1; 15:31-32; 19:20**)

a. Solomon begins with "hearing" – something people have a lot of trouble hearing (paying attention).

b. But Solomon says “a wise man will hear” – He will LISTEN because that’s how he LEARNS.

2. Wise people DESIRE TO LEARN AND GROW. (**Prov. 1:5b; also 9:9**)

- a. Too often in our culture we concentrate all our learning in our school years and think we're done when we graduate.
- b. But the wise person never thinks he or she "knows it all" – they keep learning.
 - (1). They make learning new things and expanding the horizon of their mind a life-long pursuit.
- c. Solomon says, "Increase in learning."
- d. That's why Solomon said, "Wise people store up knowledge. . ." **(Prov. 10:14)**

3. Wise people **EAGERLY SEEK OUT AND ACCEPT WISE COUNSEL.**

- a. Rather than taking an "I-can-do-it-myself" attitude, wise people realize they don't know everything, and therefore seek the wisdom of others.
- b. But this is important -- they don't accept just ANYONES advice, they seek those who give **WISE COUNSEL** (those who give counsel from godly wisdom).
- c. The wise person will always exercise a great deal of discernment as to **WHERE** they get advice.

- (1). They want to know what GOD'S will is for them, and they seek advice from those who are familiar with, and who live by God's Word.
- d. I think those of us who are older are often a little too quick to criticize young people for getting bad advice from their friends.
 - (1). How many adults do you know who have done the same thing – seeking advice from the “self-help” section of the bookstore, or by watching “Oprah,” or “Dr. Phil.”
- e. Wise counsel can only come from those who have the wisdom that GOD gives, and from the wisdom revealed in HIS Word.

CONCLUSION:

- I. When it comes to handling problems, can you see why wisdom is so important – why wisdom is “an essential ingredient in handling problems?”
 - A. This is really where we need to start.

1. While some problems are NOT our fault at all, OTHERS ARE – and THOSE are the problems that are generally brought on by not exercising wisdom.
2. As we go through each lesson, we'll learn how to apply God's wisdom in dealing with these problems – lessons that will deal with:
 - a. Loneliness
 - b. Worry
 - c. Feelings of Inferiority
 - d. Anger
 - e. Resentment
 - f. Discouragement
 - g. Facing Impossibilities
 - h. Being Misunderstood
 - i. Temptation
 - j. Spiritual Defection
 - k. The Problem of Questionable Things (Avoiding Offending the Conscience of a Weak Brother)
 - l. The Problem of Loss
 - m. Death (Looking at Death from the Christian's Point of View)
 - n. Finally, a lesson on Hope

B. From time-to-time, all of us need an "attitude check-up."

1. If you truly want wisdom, and realize you lack it, James, the Lord's brother, has the answer:

a. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)*

II. 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 complete trust and obedience?

1. If you're NOT a Christian – are you willing to trust in God's wisdom to direct you to the only One who can heal the wounds of sin in your life – Jesus Christ?

2. If you ARE a Christian – are you willing to trust in God's wisdom enough to follow Him and listen to what He's trying to tell you about your life.