

Text: Proverbs 1

Title: “Street Smarts”

On your way to work tomorrow you accidentally change lanes and cut someone off. You didn't see them in your side mirror and as they honk at you they have to slam on their brakes. As you come to the next stop light you stop several feet short so you don't have to look at the person you cut off. But they pull up right beside you with an angry glare on their face. He has rolled down his window and is giving you ... a piece of his mind. Thankfully you have learned street smarts from ...

Proverbs 15:1 - A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

So you roll down your window and you say, “I'm so sorry. I didn't see you. I hope you're OK.”

Or maybe you're the one who was “cut off.” Someone makes an insensitive, cruel comment about you. You're first instinct is to strike back, but you don't because you have learned street smarts from...

Proverbs 19:11 - A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

You have learned that two people at your office are having a disagreement. You're tempted to get in the middle of it, but you have learned street smarts from ...

Proverbs 26:17 - Like one who seizes a dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.

You're scrolling through your favorite internet news site when you see a “news story” with some very suggestive photos. There's a powerful enticement to “click here,” but thankfully you have learned street smarts found in...

Proverbs 4:25 - Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you.

Open your Bible to the book of Proverbs. I'm beginning a series today entitled “**Street Smarts ... God's Wisdom from the Book of Proverbs.**” We need the wisdom of God for everyday life ... for life in the streets ... at home, at work, on dates, filling out your income taxes, or raising your kids? God has wisdom for us in the streets of life.

Proverbs 1:20-21 - Wisdom calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out, in the gateways of the city she makes her speech:

And one of the ways wisdom raises her voice is through the Word of God, and most pointedly in the book of Proverbs. This is the central book of the category of biblical literature known as

Wisdom Literature. Its companion are Job, Ecclesiastes and some of the Psalms. We're not certain what the original purpose of the book of Proverbs, but it's possible King Solomon collected the proverbs (most written by himself, but many written by other wise men) for the purpose of training young people to be leaders in his vast royal administration. Whatever the case, the Proverbs are indispensable wisdom to be *taught* to our young people and to be *modeled* by rest of us. **Read Proverbs 1:1-7.**

If you just jump in and start reading Proverbs you might get the impression that these are just sayings thrown together with no discernible order or purpose. The first chapters are intended to attract us to wisdom. So to get us started let's allow these verses to whet our appetites for God's wisdom.

1. THE VIRTUES OF WISDOM

ILLUSTRATION – Many of our students are looking at colleges to attend when they graduate. And you've probably received all kinds of brochures and booklets wanting to attract you to one university or another. Well that's what Solomon is doing here. He is stacking virtue on virtue to entice us into the school of God's wisdom.

Proverbs 1:1-2 - The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel: for attaining wisdom and discipline; for understanding words of insight;

(Circle the words in your Bible. I'm reading from the NIV.) **“Wisdom”** is a broad term that simply means the art of skillful living under the guidance of God. **“Discipline”** reminds us that learning wisdom involves the painful process of correction. **“Understanding”** is the ability to look at the heart of a matter and to discern choices that have to be made.

Proverbs 1:3 - for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;

“Disciplined life” is a skillful life. This is the ability to apply wisdom and the success that results from that. Wisdom also leads to a **“prudent life,”** that gives us the ability to live in a way that is right, just and fair. Those are basic Christian virtues which Jesus taught us to pursue.

Proverbs 1:4 - for giving prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the young—

“Prudence,” is a different word in Hebrew, but with the same meaning as in v.3. It also yields **“knowledge”** ... knowing and doing what God requires. **“Discretion”** means to look at two different paths and then to see what is God's right path. Notice that this is needed for the **“simple”** ... people who are naïve, easily influenced or seduced by foolishness. It is also needed for the **“young”** ... those whose values and virtues are still being shaped.

Proverbs 1:5 - let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—

So when we listen to the wisdom of God's Word we add to our **"learning."** We grasp and comprehend something well enough to even teach it to others. Discerning people hunger for **"guidance"** that helps us see the dangers that may be down the road and to steer along the right course in life.

Proverbs 1:6 - for understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise.

These are different ways that wisdom is communicated. You see, God in His wisdom didn't just build us with all the wisdom we will need for life already installed. This wisdom has to be downloaded into our lives through listening to wise teaching and then be disciplined enough to put that teaching into practice. Remember that the teachers were not training young people to answer questions for game shows like Jeopardy. They were shaping the next generation of leaders who need to learn to think rightly about God and about life. That should be our aim.

And that brings us to the next truth about wisdom.

2. THE VOICES OF WISDOM

In Solomon's day there were wise people all over the world, just like today. You see, there are certain truths that even non-believers comprehend as being wise for living. But that wisdom that is found in the world is incomplete. That's why Solomon says...

Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

This is an important theme running all the way through Proverbs. He says it a little differently in...

Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

When it says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge (or wisdom) it means that the fear of the Lord is the *commencement* of knowledge (where it starts) and the *completion* of knowledge (where it all ends). It all starts and ends with God. It is the ultimate in foolishness to despise God and the wisdom that only He gives.

"STREET SMARTS" MEMORY VERSE - Throughout the series I want to challenge you and your family to memorize:

Proverbs 2:6 - For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

The Lord gives wisdom because true wisdom is the very mind of God. Wisdom is what God thinks. Wisdom is speaking in...

Proverbs 8:22-23 - “The LORD brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began.

You see, God spoke the universe into existence by His Word, which is wisdom. So this wisdom is imbedded in the orderly universe God has created. But also God has revealed Himself in the personal Word (wisdom) which is His Son Jesus Christ. The Bible says that the Word became flesh and dwelled among us. So wisdom is embodied perfectly in Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:24 - but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ (is) the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Back to Proverbs 1:7...

Proverbs 1:7 - The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.

OUTLINE - The fear of the Lord is awe that leads to action. It means that we come to God with awe, but it's an awe that leads us to receive His wisdom and put it into action in our lives. We're talking "street smarts." Jesus, in His great Sermon on the Mount said that anyone who hears the teachings of Jesus and "puts them into practice" is like a wise man who builds his house on a solid foundation.

Now here's where we need to be careful. The fact is that all of us are born with foolishness in our hearts.

Proverbs 22:15a - Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.

And yes, we need parents to teach us and discipline us to be wise. But that doesn't solve the heart problem. And this is where the Gospel comes in. We are all born with a tendency toward foolishness and sin. Those sinful impulses start showing up in all of us at an early age. Then we become accountable before God for our sin because we choose to follow the foolish course of sin and self. Our only hope is to have our hearts changed through the new birth that comes through faith in Jesus Christ. You can't live out these principles of wisdom in your own strength.

And the Lord dispenses wisdom through people that He places in our lives ... like our parents. That's why Solomon says...

Proverbs 1:8 - Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Parents, we must be obsessed with getting God's wisdom into the hearts and minds of our children. Why? Because everywhere they turn there are going to be bad influences. One of the greatest voices of foolishness can be heard in media. The wisdom of God is crying out in the streets ... and so is foolishness. We need to caution and warn our children about listening to foolish voices from sinful sources.

Parents, that's why we ask our kids. "Where are you going? How will you get there? What time will you be home? (and one of the most important questions) Who else will be there?"

Proverbs 1:10 - My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them.

So there are the virtues of wisdom and the voices of wisdom but finally we have...

3. THE VALUE OF WISDOM

Proverbs 1:9 - They will be a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

The wisdom of God gives a certain beauty and attractiveness to our lives. The principles of wisdom are like crown upon your head and a beautiful necklace around your neck. There's a huge payoff when we order our lives around God's wisdom. And there are huge consequences when we order our lives around foolishness of this world.

So every week I want to leave you with **STREET SMARTS FOR THIS WEEK:**

- **Become a disciple of wisdom.** Enroll in the school of wisdom. Proverbs are for learners, apprentices and followers of the way of wisdom, which all wrapped up in the Person of Jesus Christ. It's a lifelong quest.

Proverbs 1:5 - let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance—

Read God's Word and feed on its wisdom. Pray for wisdom. James 1:5 says if you lack wisdom, ask God for it.

- **Hang out with wise people.** Find a wise mentor. Proverbs 13:20 says that he who walks with the wise grows wise.
- **Identify the pockets of foolishness in your life.** Have you allowed yourself to be swallowed up in financial debt? Have you become lazy? Do you have an uncontrolled temper?
- **Pursue the only Wise One ... Jesus.** The wisest thing you can do in life is committed your life to Christ. Allow Him to change your life from the inside out.

1 Corinthians 1:30 - Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.