

The Way of Wisdom

Discussion Questions:

1. How many hours on average do the people in your table spend on input from school (lectures, reading, office hours with professors, etc.)?
2. How many hours on average do you spend on input from pop culture/entertainment?
3. How many hours on average do you spend doing some ministry?
4. How many hours on average do you spend reading the Bible and/or praying?

What is wisdom?

Proverbs 2:1-6

2 My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
² turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding,
³ and if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
⁴ and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
⁵ then you will understand the fear of the LORD
and find the knowledge of God.
⁶ For the LORD gives wisdom,
and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Wisdom, in Proverbs, is always moral. The fool, the opposite of the wise person, is not a moron or an oaf. The fool is the person who does not live life God's way. Wisdom is knowing God and doing as He commands. Foolishness, on the other hand, is turning from God and listening to yourself. So when we talk about wisdom... we are talking about a profoundly God-centered approach to life. Biblical wisdom means living a disciplined and prudent life in the fear of the Lord. (DeYoung, Just Do Something, p.89)

Wisdom is this: knowing what to do those situations in which the Bible does not explicitly address.

How much do we value wisdom?

Imagine if someone came to you tonight and said, "I'll pay off all your bills. I'll pay off your mortgage. I'll load up your Roth IRA. I'll give you money for vacations. I'll give you 20,000 square feet to live in, and any car you like, or I can make you wise." What would you say to that person? If you fear the Lord, you'll take wisdom in a heartbeat. (p.90)

I would modify the above questions for our (Asian American) audience: "I'll pay off all your student loans. I'll pay off all your future tuition and fees. I'll get you into any graduate school program you like. I'll give you the advanced degree. I'll get you into any job you want. I'll get you the highest salary of anyone in that field. I'll even get your parents to compliment you, to show you affection, to be proud of you, and to love whomever you choose for a spouse... or I can make you wise."

How to become wise?

Become Wise through working hard at knowing the Word

Wisdom is the difference between knowing a world-class biologist who can write your papers for you and studying under a world-class biologist so that you can write the kind of papers he would write. Too many of us want God to be the world-class scholar who will write our papers and live our lives for us, when God wants us to sit at His feet and read His Word so that we can live a life in the image of His Son... if God figured everything out for us, we wouldn't need to focus on Him... (p.92-3)

God says, "I'm not giving you a crystal ball. I'm giving you My Word. Meditate on it; see Me in it; and become like Me." (p.93)

Become Wise through people who work hard at knowing the Word

Those who are wise read and memorize Scripture. They love to hear it read, preached, and sung. But the wise also know you need to read the Bible in community. You need to listen to what other Bible-reading Christians say. (p.94)

Many Christians who are active in ministries spend way more time doing things than in reception and reflection upon the Word. I wonder what would happen if we lived by a ratio? Do we think it would make any difference if, for example, for every 1 hour we'd spend making decisions and serving, we spend 1 hour in the Bible (or in prayer)?

One of the virtues I appreciate most in others, and it's a virtue I hope I have in some measure, is teachability. Are you willing to change your mind when another person's case has more merit than yours? Are you able to hear good advice when it comes from some mouth other than your own and may even contradict your preconceived ideas? Are you willing to admit "I didn't think of that" or "I see your point"? If no one has ever heard you change your mind about something, then you are either a god or you have mistaken yourself for one. (p.95)

Become Wise through Prayer

When we pray to God to help us about a decision, what do we often pray for the most? We pray for a specific leading for a specific direction. I'd argue that for most of us, that's the only thing we pray for.

But what do we pray for if we aren't asking God to tell us exactly what to do? Well, first of all we pray for illumination. We ask God to open our minds so we can understand the Scriptures and apply them to our lives. Don't forget about this prayer. God can show you amazingly relevant things in His Word if you ask Him to. (p.96)

Second, pray for wisdom... Third, pray for things that you already know are God's will. Pray for good motives in your decision making. Pray for an attitude of trust and faith and obedience. Pray for humility and teachability. Pray for His gospel to spread. You know that He wants these things in the world and for our life. Pray for them. (p96)

After You've Sought Wisdom

And then after you've prayed and studied and sought advice, make a decision and don't hyper-spiritualize it. Do what seems best. Sometimes you won't have time to pray and read and seek counsel for a month. That's why the way of wisdom is more than getting a decisive word about one or two big decisions in life. The way of wisdom is a way of life. And when it's a way of life, you are freer than you realize. (p.96)

If you are drinking deeply of godliness in the Word and from others and in your prayer life, then you'll probably make God-honoring decisions. In fact, if you are a person of prayer, full of regular good counsel from others, and steeped in the truth of the Word, you should begin to make many important decisions instinctively and some of them even quickly. (p.96-7)

Now, the last thing I want to do is discourage people from praying... But isn't it possible that if we are walking with God in daily prayer, and we have some sanctified common sense, that we should be able to make decisions on the spot once in a while? (p.98).

Study the Scriptures, listen to others, and pray continually—that's the best course of action, not just at the moment of crisis, but as a way of life. And as you engage in these practices, don't forget to make a decision—always with wisdom, always with freedom, and sometimes even with speed. (p.98)

Enoch's Thoughts

1. Wisdom means learning things that don't seem immediately relevant to you, but older, more experienced Christians think is worthwhile.
2. Foolishness is asking for wisdom only when you think you need it and only for the topics that you think are important.

Next week: Quick Questions for Making Decisions