

PROVERBS 8 THE CALL OF WISDOM

Sir Roger was born in France. He loved his mother, and his mother loved him. When he was 25, Sir Roger took a journey on the high seas, and he was reported “lost at sea.”

His mother grieved, but she did not give up. She put advertisements in newspapers, and soon she heard that her son was alive in Australia. So she sent him money to come to England, with his wife and children, and he sailed home - twelve years after he had disappeared.

He had brown eyes. Sir Roger’s eyes were blue.

He had a birth mark on his torso. Sir Roger did not.

He did not speak French. Sir Roger spoke French.

The response of Sir Roger’s mother? She proclaimed him to be her lost son, and gave him a generous allowance for the rest of her life.

How do you respond to that story? You wish it had truly been Sir Roger, home after all those years. But as you look at the reality of the situation, you realize this woman was foolish to believe her son had come home.

We might say she thought much with her heart, but little with her head. I suppose we all do that.

But God has not just given us emotions to feel. He has given us minds to think. Part of loving him, is loving him with our minds.

As we read through the Old Testament, we reach the book of Proverbs. We believe much of this book was written by King Solomon.

Proverbs is an extremely practical book. It speaks to the issues we face every day, and how we are to use our minds to love God, every day.

Such “mind-loving” of God is captured in the word “wisdom.” In a culture where we emote lots, but think less, we need to ponder Proverbs.

This week, let’s search Proverbs 8 for truths about wisdom. Next week, let’s see how the wisdom of Proverbs touches a subject we face every day.

In Proverbs 8, Solomon presents wisdom as a person, and this woman called “Wisdom” speaks directly to us. Through “her” words, we discover what wisdom is, what wisdom gives, and what wisdom calls us to do.

WISDOM IS...what? It’s one of those words we all hear, and we might use, but we hardly know how to define.

In Proverbs 8, we do not read a definition of wisdom, but a description of wisdom. Wisdom is what is real, and wisdom is what is right.

Wisdom is **WHAT IS REAL**.

What do I mean by that? Starting in verse 22, Wisdom tells us, “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.”

Wisdom then describes how she came before all the different parts of creation. Then we read, “I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind.”

That sounds like Genesis 1, where God creates, then declares that his creation is very good.

Wisdom is woven into the creation. God has made reality, and wisdom is knowing how to live within the real world God has made.

Have I ever told you what a great cook I was, during the two years between college and marriage?

I was especially good at making hamburgers. But then I had to figure out what to do with the grease. I knew pouring hot, sizzling grease down the drain was not a good idea.

So I got...a paper cup. I poured that hot grease right into that paper cup. That didn’t work too well, either!

Why? Because this is reality as God made it: hot grease destroys paper cups! I might deny that and keep pouring hot grease into paper cups. I might do it, then get really mad about it. But that does not change reality.

Wisdom is the art of seeing the world as it is. Wisdom is shaping our lives, to get along well in the world God has made.

It’s easy to see, as the hot grease melts the paper cup.

But this is also true with all areas of life:

* Our relationships. When I abuse you, you run away from me. That is the reality of God’s world.

* Our bodies. When I misuse mine, it turns on me, and I feel pain or suffer illness. That is the reality of God’s world.

* Our earth. When a cold front smacks against a warm front, storms break out, and I better get in. That is the reality of God’s world.

If I fight against reality, I am a “fool” - a common word in Proverbs. Wisdom is knowing, and living, what is real.

Wisdom is also **WHAT IS RIGHT**.

“Listen,” proclaims Wisdom in verse 6, “for I have worthy things to say; I open my lips to speak what is right.”

Then Wisdom continues, “My mouth speaks what is true, for my lips detest wickedness. All of the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse. To the discerning all of them are right; they are faultless to those who have knowledge.”

Worthy...right...true...just...faultless. What’s the point? Our Creator has proclaimed that some things are worthy, and some are not. Some actions are right, and others are wrong. Some words are true, and others are false. Some decisions are just, and some are unjust. We find flaws and fault.

Wisdom presents this “right” world to us. We do not declare what is worthy and unworthy, right and wrong, and so on. God does.

Do you know this? I once read these words:

“We each have a responsibility to select the values we shall live by and to pursue them with vigor; we cannot appeal to some outside authority...We must find a meaning in life, not suppose that the meaning is conferred by something outside it.”

Wisdom says, “No!” Reality, meaning and values are not defined by us. They are defined by the One who made us. Wisdom follows the paths that are just and true and all the rest, because God has made them that way.

Wisdom pursues the right use of money.

Wisdom pursues the just application of the law.

Wisdom pursues the worthy living out of relationships.

We cannot make our own world, or our own values. He made the world, so it is his right to make the rules.

Wisdom is knowing and living what is right.

Wisdom is...what is real, and what is right.

Then WISDOM GIVES...what? Why is wisdom good for us?

To start with, wisdom gives TRUE WEALTH.

If you read some of these verses, you might think, “This sounds like the prosperity gospel.” You know: follow Jesus and you will get rich!

You might think that, but you better read all the verses, because Wisdom is actually promising something far better than money and stuff. Wisdom gives true wealth.

We pursue money and stuff, but Wisdom cries, “Choose my instruction rather than silver, knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.”

Then: “With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.”

To be wise is to have your “treasuries full” - not with money and stuff, but with wealth that will truly satisfy, and last forever.

What kind of wealth is this? Here is one example: the wealth of peace.

* There is peace of conscience. When we are foolish, our consciences stir up a storm. But when we are wise, our consciences are at peace.

* There is peace of mind. When we are foolish, our lives become full of chaos and trouble. But when we are wise, our minds and lives are at peace.

* There is peace of relationship. When we are foolish, our relationships are at war. But when we are wise, we develop peaceful relationships.

Proverbs 15:16 declares, “Better a little with the fear of the Lord, than great wealth with turmoil.” Wisdom gives true wealth.

Wisdom also gives TRUE LIFE.

At the end of her speech, Wisdom paints a picture of life and death.

“Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway. For whoever finds me finds life, and receives favor from the Lord.

“But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.”

Love death? Yes. Some people love death. Some people live in a dungeon of hopelessness. Life means nothing. Death would be better than this.

Young people, you see this. Parts of youth culture love death. I decide what is real and what is right, and death flows from my heart, and I love it.

But Wisdom invites us to true life. Foolish living leads to death, and wise living leads to life.

Causes lead to effects. Actions lead to consequences. Choices lead to results. Physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually...Wisdom gives true life.

This is true for all of us, but I do think especially of young people.

You will choose a husband or wife, and you will make a choice that will slowly bring you life, or surely squeeze the life from you.

You will fill your heart and mind with music and videos and entertainment, and you will become like what you take into your heart and mind. It will build life in you, or drain life from you.

You will face temptations. You will resist them and be free to live as you were made to live, or you will pursue them and follow the path to death.

Wisdom gives true life.

Wisdom is what is real, and what is right. Wisdom gives true wealth, and wisdom gives true life.

So then, WISDOM CALLS. In chapter 7, folly wooed the young man. Come, follow this way, not God's way. Now, wisdom woos us.

Wisdom calls and says, SEEK.

Verse 5: "You who are simple, gain prudence; you who are foolish, gain understanding."

Verse 17: "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me."

Verse 34: "Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my doors, waiting at my doorway."

I have offered these words to you before, but I offer them again now, for I cannot forget them. They are the words of a woman who suffered so much in her youth:

"I always get what I want, but I know what to want."

Whether you are 15 or 55, do you know what to want? Wisdom here strikes right at the heart of our desires. Do you want wisdom? Will you pursue what is real and right, and what gives true wealth and true life?

We are seekers. We seek something. All too often, our culture woos us to seek foolishness. But here we are called to seek wisdom.

How do we seek wisdom? I offer three ideas. They may not be new to you, but may God impress them anew on our hearts and minds.

Seek wisdom, in the thoughtful reading of God's Word.

If God has made us, and God has spoken to us, then we need to be people who seek the wisdom he has preserved for us in the Bible.

I once read of a fish caught off the coast of Norway. Inside the fish was a complete Coke can. The fish was starving and dying, because the can filled his entire stomach. He could not receive the nourishment he needed.

Our minds have room for all sorts of things, but do they have room for God's Word? Or do we starve ourselves of wisdom, because life is too full, and we lack the room (or time) to thoughtfully read that wisdom?

Seek wisdom, in the thoughtful speaking of prayer.

Christian author R.C. Sproul once wondered, "What does prayer avail? What does it change?"

"The purpose of prayer is not to change God. He doesn't change because he doesn't need changing. But I do."

Through prayer, in a mysterious way, God changes us. Part of that change is to turn us from foolishness, and to wisdom.

Seek wisdom, in the thoughtful hearing of counsel.

The fox, the wolf and the bear went hunting. Each got a deer. So the question became, who gets what?

The wolf suggested that everybody get a deer. The bear responded to the wolf's suggestion, by eating the wolf.

The fox then suggested that the bear get all the deer. The bear asked, "Where did you get such wisdom?"

Replied the fox, "From the wolf."

Wisdom grows with experience. There are people around you, who have been "eaten up" by experiences in life, and have learned. Will you seek the wisdom they can offer?

Seek, says wisdom. Seek what is real and right, and what provides true wealth and true life.

Seek...ME.

As we have seen, Wisdom is a person in Proverbs 8. Who is this person?

Some say it is Jesus. That seems a bit of a stretch, but it is no stretch to say that this person prepares us for Jesus, and points us to Jesus.

Listen to New Testament words of Jesus, and about Jesus.

Matthew 11:27: "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

In Jesus, we know the wise Father of all creation, who made what is real and what is right, and who promises true wealth and true life.

Matthew 12:42: "...now one greater than Solomon is here." Solomon had great wisdom. But Jesus is greater. In him, is all wisdom.

Then, Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:22-24: "Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God."

In Jesus, we see the wisdom of God. He sent Jesus to reunite foolish people, with the wise Father. On the cross, Jesus suffered for people like you and me, who have foolishly rejected God and his wisdom. Then he rose

from the dead, returned to his throne of heaven, and sends his Holy Spirit into our hearts, to turn us from foolishness, and to himself.

It is foolishness to so many, to think that Jesus would die. But to God, it is such wisdom, to use this to restore our relationship with him.

Seek...me. In seeking Jesus, we seek wisdom. In knowing Jesus, we know wisdom. In loving Jesus, we love wisdom.

Wisdom is about more than just making our way through this world. It is about seeking Jesus, knowing Jesus, loving Jesus. He is real, and he is right, and he gives true wealth and true life.

We are not just seeking an idea, or an ideal. We are seeking a Person named Jesus, who is the Wisdom of God.

The story is told of a city where the power went out. Nobody could fix the problem. Finally a man came, pushed a button, and got it all going again.

He billed the city for a million and one dollars. One dollar was for pushing the button. The million dollars was for knowing where to push.

Do you know where to push? What buttons are you pushing in your life?

Foolishness calls, "Seek me!" Wisdom calls, "Seek me!"

May God stir our hearts to seek and find God's wisdom, in Jesus.