

WISDOM AND ITS PURSUIT

I. FINDING GOD'S WILL SO FAR

A. DEMYSTIFY GOD'S WILL—LIBERATION

1. God's will is not an endless maze of dead ends with only one way out
2. God's will is not a bulls-eye target with only one center shot
3. God has a plan for my life but not one I have to know completely beforehand

B. LIVE TO CHRIST, DIE TO SELF—Be more concerned with who you are than what you do. “The most important task in life is not what you do but who you become.” (John Ortberg) God's will for our lives: I Thess. 4.3, 5.16-18, Col. 1.9, Eph. 5.17-20, Matt. 22.34-40. So, when you make a decision, ask is this Biblical? Is this good for my sanctification, beneficial, enslaving? Will it help me to love God with my whole being? Will it help me to rejoice and cause me to pray? 95% of our decisions will be made off the cuff so to speak without much thought or reflection—this is why character is important. “Out of the heart the mouth speaks (Luke 6.45).”

C. RISK IS RIGHT—Peaceful easy feelings are not always the means by which God communicates His Will, otherwise 99% of grooms would never actually walk the aisle. I have met with people who felt a great “peace” about their adultery. Conversely, I have met with those who are very disconcerted over large and difficult financial or medical decisions. Jesus Himself was troubled at times (see Luke 22.39-46; John 11.33, 38, 12.27). I would not say that He had a “peace” about going to the cross though He very clearly knew it to be God's will.

1. All of life involves risk, and this risk is God's Will for us so that we will depend on and seek Him
2. Risk for adventure or simply risk's sake is unbiblical, but risk for the sake of God's glory and others' good is not only permitted but commanded in Scripture.
3. We should not let the risk in a situation be the determining factor for whether or not something is God's Will or not. We will consider risk wisely but also recognize that God may be calling us to take serious risks for great purposes. It is better to lose our lives for Christ than to waste it on anything else.

D. TRUST IN THE PROVIDENCE AND CHARACTER OF GOD—He is a good Father; He is not sneaky. The more we know Him, the more we can rest in Him.

E. OPEN UP THE TARGET—God gives *freedom* and calls us to *responsibility* in decisions not specified in the Bible. God's world is wide and opportunities endless for ways that we can serve and glorify Him. When Paul made decisions, he prayed, planned, prioritized, and persevered based on spiritual goals. When he did not have special revelation, he did “what seemed best” given God's Word, counsel, priorities, and personal wisdom.

II. GOD GIVES WISDOM FOR DECISION MAKING—If you had one wish what would you wish for? In 1 Chronicles 1.7-13 we see the only time that God basically offers to grant a wish *carte blanche*.

A. CHARACTERS IN PROVERBS:

1. Wise

2. Simple (14.15)—Not beyond hope—9.4, 16. Describes many today (ch. 7), aimless, complacent, inexperienced, drifting, tinkerers. They will meet tempters who “know what they want and what they half want.” (Kidner)
3. Fool (1.7b, 14.9, 15.8)—not beyond hope (8.5) but their complacency will eventually destroy them (1.32). Unlike the simple, they are knowingly opposed to God (1.7b).
 - a. Scoffer/Scorner (3. 34, 21.24)
 - b. Wise in own eyes (26.12)—almost beyond hope

B. CALL TO WISDOM

1. Proverbs actually pictures wisdom personified as a woman calling out to us, inviting us in to her banquet of delicious foods: “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 (8.34-36).” “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here! (9.4) She is a beautiful woman willing to give herself to anyone asking and seeking. “Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight. Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life. (4.7, 13).”
2. New Testament: Live not as unwise but as wise...Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is (Eph. 5.15-17). “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God...and it will be given to him (James 1.5).” We have not b/c we ask not.
3. Misconception about wisdom from J.I. Packer
 - a. Wisdom is like seeing the airport from the control tower (like the conventional view of God’s will we have been discussing). Even Hollywood.
 - b. In reality it is more like learning to drive

C. BENEFITS OF WISDOM—FROM PROVERBS 1-9

1. Knowing God (2.5)
2. Protection (2.7b-8)
3. Ability to do justice (2.9)
4. Deliverance from evil (2.12)
 - a. From men with evil purposes (2.12-15)
 - b. From lust and adultery (2.16-17)
 - c. From Spiritual Death (2.18-19)
5. Straight Paths (3.6)
6. Healing and Refreshment (3.8)
7. Confident Sleep/Rest (3.24, 26)
8. Lamp and a light for life (6.23)
9. Great Sex and Marriage (6.15-19)
10. Life itself (9.6)

D. DEFINITION OF WISDOM

1. C. John Collins: “Wisdom is skill in the art of godly living.”
2. J.I. Packer: “Wisdom is the power to see, and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.”
3. Piper: “Wisdom is the insight and sense of how to live in a way that accomplishes the goals for which we were made: the glory of God and the good of man.”

4. Jeremy: “Wisdom is being Biblically trained to adopt and feel both the burdens and the joys of God.” We want to love what He loves, hate what He hates and value what He values. This takes the Spirit, work, study, humility—transformation. Psalm 37.4 and Romans 12.1-2. Wish there were a shortcut but there is not. **Ex. Ralphie on Christmas Story when he gets his decoder.** God is working to transform us into being like Him. It takes serious time and effort to adopt and feel God’s burdens and joys. Most religions are about completing God’s to-do list but Christianity is about taking on the very character of God. If you want to be an great football player, you want a great one to mentor you, to make you like him.
5. Some decisions are big and afford lots of time (in fact, our time on a particular decision should correspond to the level and importance of that decision in our life—where to live or what major to choose should take a bit more time than deciding where to have lunch or if you should buy a new coat), and some decisions will have to be made quickly. This is why seeking long term transformation is so important—when our heart is implanted with godly desires, we make godly decisions “off the cuff.” From the abundance of our hearts the mouth speaks—what is running over abundantly in your heart? This is a way of life and not a formula for each decision.

E. HOW TO GET WISDOM

1. Wisdom begins with knowing God. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Prov. 1.7)”—Wisdom is not just learning a set of information or believing truth or following the right advice—it is a profoundly God-centered view of all of life (5.21). Therefore, wisdom is not simply the pursuit of a body of knowledge but the pursuit of God Himself (2.5, 3.6), and the invitation (9.5-6) to wisdom is ultimately the invitation to know and experience the joys of God.
2. Saturate and soak in Scripture—nobody can read your Bible for you. The only way we train in the heart and mind of God is by immersing ourselves in Scripture. We will only become free with a knowledge of the truth (John 8.32). Many of us are enslaved to fear and anxiety simply because we do not know Scripture—we have not taken it deep into our hearts. **Ex. Acts 17.18—What provokes our hearts?**
3. Fight for it—We must pursue wisdom; there is a significant cost to it. It will be ‘hard-won,’ a quality of character as much of mind. Wisdom is a discipline, for disciples only. Wisdom is costly and difficult to attain. God does not put all of his cookies on the bottom shelf. 10 minutes of Scripture per day does not keep the Devil away. Pursue it—1.20-33, 3.13-20, 8.1-36, 9.1-18. Pay a price to get it (23.23)—not to be seen like an investment where you buy and let it improve to sell for a gain. It is itself a gain to be held. **Ex. When do I realize stock gains?** We can train to build Bible endurance, we can develop an appetite. Are freedom and discipline opposites?
4. Treasure up commandments—make ear attentive, incline your heart (2.1-2) Bind it around your neck (3.3); Write them on the tablet of your heart (3.3); befriend it, make it part of your family (7.4). Pursue the Word of God, saturate yourself in it. Discipline to make your ear attentive and the work of the Spirit to incline your heart to love the truth. Don’t simply want to know the truth but to love it! DeYoung points out that we live in a world full of information but empty of wisdom. We are bombarded and targeted for tons of information—the big part of that word being *formation*. People seek to shape us, form us, with their info. Do we realize how the media, internet, commercials, TV, news, radio, ipods, etc are forming us? Do we want relationship without the effort?
5. Call out for it (2.3-5)—seek it like silver, search for it like hidden treasures—Pray, ask God for it. Ask for knowledge of your own heart/life/story. Ask for insight and Scriptural application.

6. Accept Reproof—Do not fall prey to the great sin of unteachability
 - a. From God (3.11-12)
 - b. From others (5.13, 9.8-9, 12.15, 15.22, 19.20)—Ask someone!
 - c. Note on why a personal relationship with God requires this
7. Recognize the value of wisdom
 - a. Not like normal investment (23.23)
 - b. Great Gain, better than riches (3.14-15, 8.10-11)
 - c. Highly Prized (4.8)
 - d. Two Women: Proverbs presents a contrast between Lady Folly and Lady Wisdom both calling, both enticing, both promising great things (contrast chapters 7, 9.13-18 with 8-9.1-12). The two women call us in similar ways from similar places but one holds the key to life and the other the key to death.
8. Wisdom is normally imparted through relationship
 - a. With God first and foremost (2.6-7)
 - b. With others (4.10-15, 20-27, 5-7)—Solomon often describes wisdom as being imparted through a father/son relationship, a father giving his son great words and ideas to live by, a father showing his son both the glories and the dangers of life along with the beauty of relationship with the Lord. We hear first of what he heard and saw from his own father (4.3-9) and how his own father led him down this path. Then he continues this impartation of wisdom (Deut 6.6-9) with his own sons (4.1, 10). We continue through the first 7 chapters to hear him address his son regarding the value and purpose of wisdom, repeating ‘my son’ many times (5.1, 6.1, 7.1)
9. Recognize the Dangers Lurking outside the path of godly wisdom—Warnings are also grace! God does not want you to have to live with regret over what could have been (5.11-14). God, as a good Father wants the best for His children, not ruination, so the warnings come as a means of protection from all sorts of terrible consequences (5.22-23). Proverbs portrays temptation as a wily prostitute lying in wait, seeking out victims, offering the most stimulating visual images, flirting with touches and kisses (7.10-20). This is like an ox going to slaughter or an animal caught in a trap (7.22). It is like a deer being hunted by a skillful hunter and then shot (7.23). In the end it will cost you your life (7.23-27).
 - a. Proverbs especially warns of the danger of adultery, lust, and pornography (5.15-23, 6.20-35, 7.5-27). Why do I say pornography here? I’m not simply making a leap from their day to ours but hearing the wisdom of God’s call to “drink from our own cistern,” to not “scatter my streams abroad,” to let it be for “yourself alone,” and to be “let her [your wife] breasts fill you at all times with delight,” and to be “intoxicated in her love.” Pornography is a violation of each of these as well as of your spouse’s trust. Your spouse must be your delight and joy, not another person whether that be through literal or visual sexuality. In addition, we are told in 6.25 not to desire another’s beauty in our hearts and not to let her looks capture us and in 6.27 that we cannot carry fire close to our chests without being burned. Very practical as well—the husband of the other woman or your wife will hunt you down! (6.26, 32-35)
 - b. Debt (6.1-2)
 - c. Laziness (6.6-11)
10. Wisdom is a person—Proverbs 8.22-31 with Luke 11.31; Col. 1.16-17, John 1.1-3, Hebrews 1.3, 10-12. Implications?