

## WISDOM AND ITS PURSUIT PART II

### I. FINDING GOD'S WILL SO FAR

- A. DEMYSTIFY GOD'S WILL—LIBERATION FROM THE TARGET
- 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)
- C. RISK IS RIGHT—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. Wisdom is what God promises us in decision making.

### 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*. When Solomon responds, he asks for wisdom and is commended. The book of Proverbs bears out the ‘wisdom’ of this choice. What do we want most in life, do we recognized our *tangible need* for wisdom, are we praying for it?

- A. CALL TO WISDOM—wisdom is a beautiful woman calling to us, but what is gaining wisdom like?
  - 1. Airport Control Tower—Wisdom is like seeing the airport from the control tower, getting insight into the ways of God in the world, being allowed access to the most intimate of details and decision making strategies of God Himself (like the conventional view of God's will we have been discussing). Even Hollywood gets this!
  - 2. Learning to Drive—In reality it is more like learning to drive. When we drive we don't ask deep philosophical questions about why certain cars are parked where, why the road is narrowing or widening, etc. To be a good driver, we need to be able to react quickly, make good decisions, and remain safe in any conditions or circumstances. We do not seek to find out WHY each condition or circumstance is the way it is; we merely seek the right response to it—we are called to fear God, keep his commandments, enjoy His gifts with gratitude, work hard love the people around us well, and seek fruitfulness for the Kingdom of God, but we are NOT to play God!
- B. BENEFITS OF WISDOM—FROM PROVERBS 1-9
- C. DEFINITION OF WISDOM
  - 1. “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.
2. Wisdom is a way of life. 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, a God-centered life and not a formula for each decision.
  3. Wisdom is a process of growth—Priests → Kings → Prophets, Moses → David → Daniel

#### D. 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. One actually must be wise to understand the sayings of the wise—the simple or the fool will simply look for superficial help. Wisdom comes from pondering the riddles and working them through. 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? I think our media focus is often incorrect. We normally hear that TV and movies are giving us bad models and desensitizing us to violence/illicit sex. This may be true but more importantly as Marshall McLuhan said, “The medium is the message.” In other words, the constant flow of info and media have actually made us internally different people, created a world of fast-paced and frenzied business, and a culture that no longer cultivates the necessary sensibilities to gain wisdom—reading and listening slowly to texts like the Bible and the ability to distinguish between significant and insignificant. 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. Call out to others to help you. Seek out sages and seek to become one
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; John 14.6, Col. 1.16-17, John 1.1-3, Hebrews 1.3, 10-12. Implications? Truth is no longer abstract but personal. Wisdom is not an achievement but a gift. If the least in the KOG is greater than John the Baptist, then Christians, filled with the Spirit of Christ, instructed by His Word can exceed Solomon!

### III. WISDOM AND DECISION MAKING—What my dad and Warren Buffet have in common

#### A. WORK/VOCATION—What career should I pursue; should I switch jobs, start a new business?

1. Is the job honoring to God?
2. Called to Work and Provide (I Tim. 5.8). Take any job over no job at all
3. Good for my sanctification? (I Thess. 4.3) Is there a Bible preaching church nearby? Does this position fit into my plans and priorities.
4. Have I talked with friends and family about whether or not this is the right fit? Are you qualified, trained, gifted, etc.? If you're terrible working with numbers, pursuing your CPA might not be a good idea. If you really can't stand being on the phone, telemarketing isn't for you. But again I will stress that sometimes we are expecting a little too much fulfillment from our jobs. Every job will come with some frustration and boredom (Gen. 3.17-19), and it's more important that we do work than that we have our dream job.
5. Pray about the decision—But you said that God wouldn't tell us the exact right choice so why pray? **DeYoung's Example—deciding to go to new church.** We pray for honesty, integrity, reality. We pray for clarity about important issues and to give a true presentation of ourselves. We pray that we have proper motivations and that we don't decide out of fear or a desire to please others
6. You can honor God in any profession (I Cor. 10.31) so pick one and work hard. Used to be that only the priests had true callings—Reformers blew that up.
7. Godliness with Contentment (Phil. 4.13; I Tim. 6.6) in all we do

#### B. MARRIAGE—Should I get married? To whom? Is the idea of “the one” Biblical?

1. Should I get married at all? (Matthew 19.12; I Cor. 7.7)
2. One man and one woman for life (Gen. 2.18-24)
3. Christians marry Christians of similar maturity levels and faith (I Cor. 7.39; II Cor. 6.14)
4. Any 'dating' will have marriage in mind
5. Will this person help me die to self and live to Christ every day?
6. Studies have shown that “falling in love” creates a level of dopamine in the brain that goes as high as 800x the normal amount. This means when we are in love, we are nearly insane! Objective counsel is more important here than anywhere. What do our friends, siblings, and parents think about this relationship?
7. Pray for pure motives—don't marry for money, family expectations, from cowardice, or to spite an ex. Dating is one of the most dishonest enterprises in our culture so pray that you would present yourself honestly, not pretending and hiding.
8. Pray that God would give you the character of the godly man or woman that someone else would be honored in marrying. God's will for your life: sanctification (I Thess. 4.13).
9. Go for it!

#### IV. BONUS

- A. PRAY—What do I pray for if not for perfect direction in each decision? When I'm starting my day, I might pray Psalm 90.14—that my heart would be satisfied in God. Before reading the Bible, pray Hebrews 4.12 that we will not just read the Scriptures but that they will read us and expose us. Pray for illumination from the Spirit to know and apply Scripture. Pray for attitudes and desires that are godly. Titus 2.15 says that God's purpose in redemption is to make us *zealous* for good works. We want to truly love, desire, and hate what God loves, desires, and hates. Pray for the things of the Kingdom—revelation of your sin, attitude of trust, love of justice, desire to help the poor and end injustice, spread of the Gospel, your church and its leaders, your nation and its leaders, pray for conversions, pray for those you love, pray for a thankful heart, a servant's heart, etc. (Matt. 6.33). Pray for your attitudes and motivations in decision making. God's will for our attitudes is love not lust, reliance not independence, humility not pride, gratitude not presumption, diligence not laziness, generosity not selfishness, courage not cowardice, contentment not greed.
- B. BIBLE STUDY—Practical suggestions for Studying Scripture.
1. Have a plan—"Discipline without direction is drudgery." (Donald Whitney)  
[www.greentreechurch.com/resources/study-materials/links/www.navpress.com/dj/content.aspx?id=138](http://www.greentreechurch.com/resources/study-materials/links/www.navpress.com/dj/content.aspx?id=138)
  2. Pray for heart inclination (Ps. 119.36), illumination and satisfaction (Ps. 90.14) in your study
  3. Write down important verses or passages on index cards that you can keep in your car, pocket, desk, or refrigerator. This is another way that the Word can "dwell in us" (Col. 3.16)
  4. Don't just read, study. And don't just study, reflect (II Tim. 2.7)—Gaining wisdom requires pondering, thinking, and considering. Take one phrase or verse away from each day's reading on which to meditate throughout the day or week.
  5. Build Endurance the same way you would in training for a race or with any workout plan.
  6. Don't read the Bible like an historical record—it is of course rooted in history but it is the Holy Spirit speaking. (I Thess. 2.13; Hebrews 3.7)
  7. Pray through the text—how would you turn this passage into a prayer back to God?
  8. Don't get overly discouraged when you miss a day or don't feel like you understood 'today's reading.' Expect to be puzzled or confused at times; expect the Bible to contradict certain aspects of your life. When desire wanes, confess your lack of desire to God, ask Him to change your heart, recognize that dry times will come, persevere.
  9. Consider getting the Bible on CD to listen to while you exercise or ride in the car
  10. Outline Biblical books as you read—make up your own outlines of books and chapters.
  11. Try taking a shorter book like Philippians, Titus, Colossians, or I John and reading it through slowly every day for a month—you can also do this with a monumental chapter like Romans 8.
  12. Ask questions constantly about the text you are reading—who is the author? What is the situation he is writing into? What sin or brokenness is being addressed? What would this passage have to say about my problem at work, my children, my fear, my marriage, my grief, my attitude? How would this passage change the world if it were followed? How does this point me to Jesus? What is being communicated about God, His actions, His character? What is this passage calling me to do or believe? How does this compare with or contrast what I saw on TV today? What would this say to my neighbor?
  13. Get a good study Bible to explain history, context, geography and provide book introductions. The ESV Study Bible is the best in my opinion and can be attained from Amazon for about \$20.
  14. Prepare to hear the Word preached by reading/studying beforehand the passage from which the sermon will come. Think about how you would outline it, explain it, and apply it.

Words of David Watson just before his operation for the cancer that would ultimately take his life:

As I spent time chewing over the endless assurances and promises to be found in the Bible, so my faith in the living God grew stronger and held me safe in his hands. God's word to us...spoken by His Spirit through the Bible, is the very ingredient that feeds our faith. If we feed our souls regularly on God's word, several times each day, we should become robust spiritually just as we feed on ordinary food several times each day, and become robust physically. Nothing is more important than hearing and obeying the word of God.

Freedom and Discipline—opposites or can they go together? Apollo Ohno illustration—he was rebellious and defiant, wanting freedom. Competed in Olympic trials for 1998 Nagano games where he was favored but finished dead last. His father drove him to a remote cabin on the Washington shore and left him there. After 8 days, he decided that he wanted to be an Olympic athlete. From there he worked every day to achieve his Olympic dreams. Was he free or slave? Did he find freedom or choose discipline? Also cannot confuse discipline with legalism.

Prov. 26.4-5 (Contradictions? No. Different applications in context. Many hands make light work and Too many cooks spoil the broth.

Wisdom = the choice between life and death in Deuteronomy and Proverbs (8.35-36)

Eschaton, the 'wise' will shine—Daniel 12.3

Great sin in Proverbs is lack of teachability (9.9)

Even the wise will die—not a means to get into God's control tower, to always have the keys to success, or to guarantee outcomes (Ps. 49.10; Eccl. 2.12-17, 8.16-17)

“Do Something, even if it's wrong.”

“Never Suck your thumb.” Gather in advance any information you need to make a decision and ask a friend or relative to make sure that you stick to a deadline. (Buffet's Ten Rules)