



CHOOSING A WISE LIFE • PROVERBS 1:1-7 • 7/3/2022

MAIN POINT

Pastor Chuck will be discussing the heart and Proverbs 4. We have jumped back into the first Proverb to discuss a wise life. Wisdom begins with humility and reverence before the God who created all things and is over all things.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is a proverb or short saying that you remember hearing as a kid?

How has your view of proverbial phrases changed as you have matured?

“No pain, no gain.” “The early bird gets the worm.” “Actions speak louder than words.” We’ve all heard these phrases and possibly said them ourselves. We like helpful insights and encouraging axioms because they’re motivating and generally a good rule of thumb. For the most part, they provide sound direction.

The Book of Proverbs calls us to pursue godly wisdom rather than foolishness. This part of God’s Word offers practical instruction for virtually every part of our daily lives. It even includes a warning for those who ignore its truths: their path will lead to heartache and destruction. Will we choose to live wisely or foolishly?

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PROVERBS 1:1-4.

What does a person stand to gain from studying the proverbs in this book?

Which of the benefits listed in verses 1-4 most stands out to you? Why?

King Solomon wrote chapter 1 of the Book of Proverbs. It's important to remember 2 Chronicles 1, when God allowed Solomon a request and he famously sought wisdom: "Grant me wisdom and knowledge so that I may lead these people" (v. 10). Solomon became notorious for his wisdom, leading kings of other countries to solicit his advice (1 Kings 4:30). It's no stretch to conclude that the wisdom collected from Solomon in these verses comes from God—and because of this, we can be assured that these words are trustworthy.

The person who studies the pages of the Book of Proverbs stands to gain much: wisdom, learning, discipline, understanding, and knowledge are all found here. These benefits are not just for the individual who seeks them, for verse 4 instructs us to share godly wisdom with those who are less experienced.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PROVERBS 1:5-7.

What three types of individuals are mentioned in verses 4-6?

In what area of life do you consider yourself a novice? a student? an expert?

In which spiritual discipline would you like to see more personal growth?

Solomon included wise and discerning people among the ones who benefit from godly wisdom. Those who fall into these groups gain learning and guidance from God. There's room for growth for each of the three types of people: the less experienced (v. 4), the wise (v. 5), and the discerning (v. 5).

Where is godly wisdom most visible? How is it manifested in our day-to-day lives?

Wisdom affords a person the ability to think critically, to solve perplexing scenarios, and to understand parables and proverbs. The wise person will be able to understand what he or she sees and hears, then choose a proper course of action and put it into practice. Wisdom, then, bears its fruit in our actions, marking the course of our lives.

A wise person is contrasted with a fool in verse 7. According to Solomon, what are the characteristics of each?

Wise people recognize the Lord for who He is. The Lord is the Creator, all-knowing, and all-powerful One who reigns over all people and things. Our first step in making wise choices is to confess this truth. Our next step is to pursue His instruction. To drive his point home, Solomon said that "fools despise wisdom and discipline" (verse 7).

We fear the Lord when we recognize His authority over our lives and yield to His instruction over all others. Fearing the Lord involves our love for and trust in Him, illustrated through our obedience. Prioritizing His Word, engaging in His church, and seeking His will in our lives are all ways we show reverence to the Lord. Ignoring or disregarding His instruction characterizes foolish living.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

In what area of life are you in need of an extra dose of wisdom?

What is one thing you can do this week to seek wisdom?

Do the thoughts, words, and actions of your life illustrate the characteristics of a wise person or a fool? Explain.

Joy, hope, and meaning in life are the natural outcomes of wise choices; sorrow, heartache, and destruction come from rejecting wisdom and all that God offers. Pursue wisdom by fearing the Lord—you'll reap the benefits both now and in days to come.

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer. Pray for a desire to continually seek God's wisdom and for a heart that yearns to honor God in every part of life.

COMMENTARY

| PROVERBS 1:1-7

The prologue challenges the reader to commit himself to the mastery of this book. It offers the significant benefit of acquiring the key to attaining capability in life. By this book, one can learn the principles that determine success or failure in the major arenas of human activity, including business, personal relationships, family life, and community life. Verses 2–6 describe the purpose of the book, that is, to teach wisdom to the reader. The primary purpose of Proverbs is the instruction of young people and those who have yet to learn wisdom (v. 4), but it is not only for children. Those who are already mature and learned (v. 5) also have a great deal to learn from this book, and they should not shun it as unworthy of their time.

The vocabulary of this section indicates four characteristics of biblical wisdom. First, it is practical. “Wisdom” includes the idea of “common sense” and the ability to cope with daily problems and can also refer to occupational skills (Exod 28:3; Ps 107:27). Second, it is intellectual. This is implied in words like “understanding” and “knowledge.” Solomon’s own fascination with natural history illustrates this (1 Kgs 4:33). Third, it is moral and involves self-control. This is indicated in words like “right and fair” and “discipline.”⁷

Fourth, Proverbs draws the reader into the mysteries of life. This is implied in terms like “parables” and “riddles.” The ancients were intrigued at riddles (Judg 14:12–19), but more is involved here than casual entertainment. Biblical wisdom seeks to resolve or at least adjust to the ambiguities of life. It seeks the reality behind the appearances. Not only that, it affirms that the believer can understand mysteries that outsiders cannot and so may couch its teaching in enigma (Matt 13:10–17).

Verse 7 ties the fundamental principle of biblical wisdom (“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”) to recognition that many will reject wisdom and God (“fools despise wisdom”). A principle that believers must teach their children is that in their pursuit of wisdom they will be surrounded by others going the opposite direction who will be encouraging them to do likewise. In this fashion the polarity of the entire Book of Proverbs—the way of the wise and the way of the fool—is introduced. The reader faces the alternatives and is challenged to attain wisdom through the fear of God.