

Top Priority: Get Wisdom

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Date: 11 October 2020

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[0 : 0 0] Well, every culture has its own form of proverbs. Ours does too. Maybe you can think of some proverbs that circulate in our culture.

! We say there's more than one way to skin a cat. That's both an idiom and a proverb. And so if someone is telling you that, they're trying to convey in a very short little phrase some truth that you might need to think about.

So another proverb, strike while the iron is hot. And unless you are a blacksmith, that doesn't have a literal meaning for you.

But we use it because it's conveying some truth that we need to know in a very small package. And you can probably think of some other proverbs that we use. Here's two more to get us started.

Get while the getting is good. Get while the getting is good. So if like seven months ago or so, if you showed up at Walmart at 6 a.m. in the morning, you might be able to find some toilet paper on the shelf.

[1 : 1 2] And there could be a few packages there. And if you had a few rolls at home, and only a few rolls at home, and you were there at 6 in the morning, you are probably going to get what you could while you could.

You get while the getting is good. So if there's a possibility, if there's an opportunity to get something and you need it, that's the time to get it. Here's another one.

Same basic meaning. Make hay while the sun shines. Make hay, we say. That is basically saying if you have a good opportunity, again, the sun is shining.

It's not raining. It's now. Now it's time to make hay. It's time to be out in the fields getting that hay ready. Don't wait. Go to it. So when is the best time to get wisdom?

So if we're going to strike while the iron is hot, if we're going to make hay while the sun is shining, if we're going to get while the getting is good, when is the best time to get wisdom? Young people, here's the answer.

[2 : 1 6] In the days of your youth, that is the best time to get wisdom. So young people, teenagers, adolescents, now is the time.

Reese just prayed that God is a giver and God is a great giver. Gardner Spring was a pastor in the 1800s and he was preaching on James 117.

Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of the lights. And this is what he said. There are other sources of enjoyment, but he is the great source.

Others give, but he is the great giver. The sun gives its light. The clouds, their rain. The earth, its fruit. The sea, its treasures. Angels give.

Men are givers. Yet of all givers in the universe, God is the greatest. And why I'm bringing that up is because God is the one who gives wisdom.

[3 : 2 3] And so, and he makes this promise. If any of you lacks wisdom, and that's all of us to some extent or other. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault.

He's giving it out. It is available. And now is the time to get it. Young people, now, especially for you, is the time to get it.

Now, this is in contradiction. This is a contrary statement to what the world is telling you. The world is telling you to wait. The world is telling you to wait.

The world is saying that is pretty serious stuff. You don't need to be so serious. You want to enjoy your life. And we need to be very clear. The Bible isn't against young people enjoying their life.

The exact opposite is true. That's the devil's lie. That God wants to ruin young people's lives by making them all miserable and everything. Ecclesiastes 11.

[4 : 27] Be happy, young man, while you are young. And let your heart give you joy in the days of your youth. The Lord wants young people to enjoy the days of their youth before days of darkness and difficulty come.

But in the middle of that, of that pursuit of joy that you really should be after, and really so that you can be happy your whole life and even into eternity.

So for your eternal joy, God says, remember your creator in the days of your youth. Now is the time to get wisdom. Now is to have that fastened down that the Lord is my creator.

And I'm thinking about him. And I'm living in the presence of his light. And so here we are in Proverbs chapter 4. And the main point of Proverbs 4 is get wisdom.

Get wisdom. Get while the getting is good. And so young people, be happy. Enjoy the days of your youth. But in these days, now is the time to get wisdom.

[5 : 34] And God and the Bible and the wise men who wrote Proverbs and, yes, your parents and, yes, your pastors, we are doing you the honor of taking you seriously.

Young people, teenagers, adolescents, we are doing you the honor of taking you seriously. The world is the one who doesn't think you.

You, as a person, your soul, your life, your existence, is really worth anything. You know how the world thinks of you, teenagers?

I want you to be very clear how the world thinks of you, primarily in our culture, as passive consumers. You are just another section of people with some income and some spending money. And so what do they do? They create things that appeal to you and your youth. They create things that tickle and scratch where you itch.

[6 : 43] And so they create boy bands to give you young ladies the feeling of, oh, I am this close to being in love. And if I was in love, that would be so great.

So they create these boy bands, carefully structured, carefully one in each kind of person that a lady would like, a young lady would like the moody one, the serious one, the old one, the young one, the cute one, all of them, in order to make this romantic love something that would appeal to you.

They don't tell you that to tell you the truth. They don't tell you that to make anything really of you. They tell you that in order that you'll buy their music, you'll buy their t-shirts, you'll download, you'll consume their content.

Now, the world wants to get their hooks in you. They want to advertise to you. But your mind, your mind, your soul, your heart, your happiness, they don't really care about that.

They don't. They don't take you seriously. They want you to turn off your brain. They want you to shrink your soul. They want you to open your wallet.

[8 : 07] And they certainly don't want you to see through them, to see what they're after. They don't want you to be wise with eternal perspectives, things that matter, things that count.

And so the world is just telling, just wait. Just wait. Tomorrow will be a good day to be wise. And so really, if tomorrow is a good day to be wise, I guess what they're saying is it's okay to be an idiot now, a fool now.

Waste your time. Waste your days. Don't make anything of your life now. But what the book of Proverbs is saying is the exact opposite. They are doing you the honor of taking you, your soul, your mind, your happiness, your relationship with God and the world very seriously.

Your life matters more than that. And so now is the time to get wisdom. So look at Proverbs chapter four, verse seven. Wisdom is supreme.

Number one, the greatest thing. Wisdom is supreme. Therefore, if wisdom is supreme, therefore get wisdom. And if wisdom is supreme, then you should give whatever it takes in order to get it.

[9 : 23] Though it costs all you have to get understanding or another way it could possibly be translated or whatever else you get, get understanding.

So Sam, Hallie, Scott, Seth, Phoebe, Mark, Reese, Molly, Hayden, Riley.

Now is the time for you to get wisdom. Get wisdom now. So where? Where should I get this wisdom? Where do I want it to be? Well, it says in your heart.

But lay a hold of my words with verse four says, lay hold of my words with all your heart. This is, again, heart level where the wisdom is down in in the core of your being.

Now, why? Why? The world is saying, don't do it now. The world is saying, go on being foolish, being short sighted.

[10:29] But I am saying, and God is speaking through his word, is saying wisdom is worth giving up everything for. It's worth giving up everything in order to get it.

So why? Why? Why would? Why should you make such a sacrifice? Why should you have such intention and such purpose?

Why should you be different than your friends? Why should you do that? Well, he's going to give three reasons. And the first is, this is the family tradition.

And this tradition is good. Now, traditions are just things that one generation hands down to another generation.

And we have all kinds of traditions. You have all kinds of traditions in your families. So look at what he says in verse three. When I was a boy in my father's house.

[11:30] So this is now Solomon. He's saying, when I was young and I was in my father's house when I was living with David, still tender and only child of my mother.

My father taught me. And he said, lay hold of my words with all your heart. Keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom. Get understanding. It will cost all you have. Get it. Don't forsake it.

So this is the family tradition. Some traditions are good. And some traditions are bad. Some things we receive from the previous generations are bad things.

And some are good things. I saw, I guess, a cute video of six generations of women dancing. And so there was this teenage girl.

I don't know. She's 17, 16. I don't know how old she was. And she's dancing. And she says, hey, mom. And mom comes out. And she's dancing. And mom says, hey, mom.

[12:29] And grandma comes out. And she's dancing. And then grandma says, hey, mom. And she comes out. And, you know, they got to great. And I'm not joking.

They got to great, great, great grandma. And here's this little lady dancing. Really cute.

Until you realize you're looking at her tradition of teenage pregnancy. Until you do the math in your head. And you realize each generation was on average pregnant at the age of 16.

There's nothing like being a 48-year-old great grandmother. And so what do we have here? It's a tradition of sexual promiscuity. No doubt poverty.

And heartache. Some family traditions are bad. Daughters of abused women often end up dating and marrying abusers themselves.

[13:34] And the cycle goes on. So there are traditions that are spirals downward. That spiral downward. But you know what? Thank God there are traditions that spiral upward.

That what you've received from your parents, now that's the foundation. And you're able to build on it. And then you're able to hand it off to the next generation. And they're able to build on it.

And that's exactly what Solomon is saying. When I was young, listen to what grandpa said to me. Now, why is he willing to pass this on?

Because what Solomon has found is this is really good. And I want you to have it. So get wisdom. Grandpa David had one big concern for young Solomon.

Get wisdom. And therefore, when it came time, the Lord appears to Solomon in a dream. And he says, Solomon, what do you want? I will give you anything. And it is not by accident that Solomon says, I want wisdom.

[14:36] That didn't just come out of nowhere. That came from his parents and his mom and his dad saying, this is what you should want. This is what you should get. This is what you need.

And so Solomon said, make me wise. And the tradition continued. So wisdom, that's our family tradition. It's the tradition in the Christian church.

We hand down the wisdom from one generation to the next. And so let me talk to parents and grandparents right now. What traditions are you starting and continuing in your family?

What traditions are you carrying on? Solomon is saying, dad told me this and I took it to heart and it was good. Now carry that tradition on. So I hope and maybe you have a tradition of godliness and wisdom in your family.

You were born into it. You inherited this from your parents. And that is good. So cherish it, treasure it, whatever you do, don't take it for granted and pass it on.

[15:48] Realize the treasure that you have and pass it on. And maybe you don't have that tradition. Well, then it's time to change the family tree.

And so start a new tradition. You don't cry over spilled milk. What you should do is you should get wise. You should get wisdom.

And then you should pass it on. You lay the foundation and then pray that the Lord would take that foundation and your children and your grandchildren will take it further than you ever could have taken it.

And young people, if your parents are trying to pass wisdom on to you, if you can see grandpa and grandma saying, listen to me, and mom and dad saying, listen to me, then take it for yourself. Take it for yourself. It's not just going to automatically come into your life. It's going to be a choice to actually get it. Now, it won't come without work.

[16:51] It won't come without cost. It says, he says, it might cost you everything. You're going to have to turn from the foolish desires of youth. Foolish desires of youth.

And you may be walking down a lonely road. Your friends might not be gathering all around you and impressed with what you are trying to do. Not all of your friends are going to be with you in this. They are chasing a mirage. And I hope you can see that. And I hope you can appreciate that and understand it. Wide is the road that leads to destruction.

And there are many people on it. Narrow is the road that leads to life and few find it. And so to give up wisdom or to get wisdom, you, young people, are going to have to give up your self-confidence. And I don't mean that in a good way. I mean that sense of I can handle anything and I don't need to learn anything. I know what I need to know. It's going to mean laying down your pride. It's going to mean giving up the self-rule of your life.

[17:53] It's going to mean there's going to have to be a new sun in your solar system. You can't be at the center anymore. Instead, now you have to replace you with the fear of the Lord.

And so now where he is the important one. Another person is at the center of your life. That's the fear of the Lord. So he's the all-ruling one.

He's the all-seeing one. He's the all-giving one. He is the all-helping one. It means really putting all of your trust in him. And that's going to look like he speaks and I listen and then I do.

He speaks and I believe and I act accordingly. That tradition, this tradition begins with having heart dealings, heart dealings with Jesus.

Because it is at the foot of the cross where we are emptied of all of our self-confidence and our self-rule. And where he actually comes in and becomes the number one in our hearts, number one in our lives.

[19:05] And so this is where this wisdom begins. It's heart level. It's real stuff. It involves your desires. Your love.

Your hopes. And having your pride peeled away, that hurts. But that is healing. And it will cost you. But it's worth everything you pay for it. So whatever you get, get wisdom. So that's the family tradition. If that is your family tradition, you know how you can honor your parents?

By taking it on. By listening and taking it to heart. Get wisdom. Why? Secondly, verse 6.

Do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you. Love her. And again, do you see the heart? This isn't just what you think. It's your heart.

[20:05] It's what you love. And she will watch over you. So wisdom will be a shepherd. The Lord is my shepherd. Wisdom will be a shepherd. Wisdom will be a wall of defense.

Wisdom will be armor. It will protect you. And you need protection. Protect from what? Well, the book of Proverbs is really an explanation and an exploration of all the things that wisdom can protect you from.

Just consider a few things. Anything you can think of. But wisdom will protect your dignity and your good name. And so you can walk without being ashamed.

You can walk with your head held high in a good way. In chapter 5, we're going to get there in a couple of weeks. In chapter 5, the sexual fool, the adulterer, cries out at the end of his folly.

Now he's committed all of this folly. And now he's come to the end of the road. And he cries out at the end of his folly. I have come to the brink of utter ruin in the midst of the entire assembly.

[21:18] You don't get this private situation where it's just you and your sin. It's going to bring shame, is what Proverbs 5 is saying.

In front of everyone, you are going to be humiliated and ashamed and embarrassed. Well, wisdom will protect you and protect your reputation.

Wisdom will protect you financially. Proverbs 21.20 In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has. 10.15 The wealth of the rich is their fortified city, but poverty is the ruin of the poor.

There is a general way things work in God's creation. Wisdom brings wealth, and wealth is a fortified city.

Now, there are other places in the book of Proverbs where it says don't trust in your wealth. But in this Proverbs, it's clearly saying that it is protection.

[22 : 24] It's better to have some money than to have none. It's the ruin of the poor. So, to not have what you need, to not have any flexibility, to not have any margin between you and disaster, that's not security.

So, it brings ruin. Well, wisdom will give you financial margin, protection, a moat around your life that not everything comes in and ruins what you're trying to do.

So, wisdom will protect you financially. It will protect you from over-promising and trapping yourself. So, when you speak something and you promise something, and it turns out it was more than what you thought it was going to be.

So, chapter 6. My son, if you put up security for your neighbor, if you have been trapped by what you have said and snared by the words of your mouth. So, your own mouth got you in trouble by over-promising something.

What do you need to do? Well, he says, you've got to escape. Whatever it takes, whatever begging, pleading, you've got to escape. Like a gazelle out running away from a lion.

[23 : 39] That's how you've got to do it. And so, wisdom will keep you from becoming a terrified gazelle in the first place. And that's better than being one and being devoured.

That's protection. Wisdom will protect you from rash, stupid decisions. What fools we can be. You know, we can turn the accelerator on the boat or whatever on full speed.

And we're going full speed ahead, thinking everything is great. And what we are doing is we are driving that Titanic right into the iceberg. We're making good time in the wrong direction.

And so, wisdom will protect you from that. From hitting the icebergs of life and sinking your ship.

And so, it's not good to have zeal without knowledge.

Nor to be hasty and miss the way. It's completely possible to be really zealous. And then you're doing things. And you're trying to do the right things.

[24 : 40] But you do them in such bad ways that it all ends up backfiring on yourself. Wisdom will keep you from constructing homemade hand grenades that just end up blowing up in your face.

Wisdom will protect you from the wrath of governments. Wisdom will protect you from the exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported exported!! It says, whoever obeys his, that's the king's command, will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know the proper time and procedure. Proverbs 22, a king's wrath is like the roar of a lion. He who angers him forfeits his life. I thought of all of this just this past week.

You probably, I'm sure you've heard of these 13 militia men in Michigan plotting to kidnap or kill or something, Governor Whitmer. And what would the book of Proverbs say about these guys?

They would call them fools. All this plotting and scheming and chatter, and the whole time the FBI is listening in. Some of it was done on Facebook.

[25 : 49] And now they're all scooped up, and they're all sitting in prison, at least some of them with \$10 million bails, freedom gone, jobs gone, families ruined.

I can't imagine being married to one of these. And it's so much for this glorious revolution or civil war or whatever they were trying to accomplish. Well, this needs to be said.

Wisdom will keep you from joining yourself to reckless, foolish political causes and then getting yourself crushed by a king. That's at the maximum.

At the least, it will keep you from committing crimes because who is running away from police all afraid? Well, most of the time, it's people who have committed some crime.

Wisdom will protect you from that dangerous disease of foot and mouth disease. Do you know about that disease? Where you're talking and then you just have stuck your foot in your mouth.

Now, James in the New Testament, and James is the New Testament book of wisdom.

[26 : 55] He says we should be quick to listen and slow to speak. Fools are always blah, blah, blah in their way through life, saying too much.

And how much trouble, and I think you could probably think of situations, how much trouble has your mouth got you into?

Or you said too much? Proverbs makes the very wry observation that even a fool is considered wise as long as he's quiet.

So what do we do? We hurt feelings. We hurt relationships. We ruin opportunities. We step on toes. We do all sorts of things with our mouths.

James says, see what a great fire is started by such a small spark. See that great ship just running itself right into the reef, right onto the ground, steered by a very tiny rudder, just this big.

[28 : 04] Steering a person's life into destruction. Wisdom will protect you from your own tongue.

It will protect you and your whole family. 1426, he who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge.

So mom and dad, your wisdom will put an umbrella over your own children. While they are in the home, they are kept safe.

And as long as they are in your home, they have a certain security and a certain protection that your wisdom will cast over them. A thousand other things.

Life is a journey. But Proverbs is very clear. It can be very dangerous. It can be treacherous. Life is a battle.

[29 : 07] And there are casualties. There are casualties coming out of Christian families.

There are casualties, spiritual casualties, financial casualties, all sorts of casualties. It's a battle. And we need protection.

And wisdom is that protection. So get wisdom. Why? Third place. She will exalt you. She will honor you. She will take you and she will put you on the pedestal. Embrace her and she will honor you. Look at, that's verse 8.

And again, I've said this before. And again, I'm trying to drive this home that we're talking about what you want. Young people, we're talking about your heart, where your love is, what you desire.

[30 : 05] It says embrace her. That could mean cuddle her. Hold her. In other contexts, it is a sexually, it's a sexual word.

But that's how close we're talking about. That's what we're talking when we're saying this is the relationship that you need to have with wisdom. It needs to be right next to you.

You need to own her and love her and hold her and give yourself to her. Put yourself in her arms. And if you do, she will put herself in your arms and she will exalt you.

And so is that how you how much you want wisdom? As much as a bridegroom running to be with his bride. And if you do, she will honor you.

She will bring you public esteem. Public esteem. She will bring you public honor. People will think highly of you.

[31 : 12] People will think highly of you. People will want to hear what you have to say. And your words will carry weight.

Your words will carry weight. You will carry weight. Now, fools delight in airing their own opinions. It's true that fools think that everyone wants to hear what they have to say. But everyone just wishes they really just be quiet.

But young people, do you want to be heard? Do you want a place at the table? Do you want your thoughts, your opinion to count? Your judgment? I hope you do. I hope you do.

Because that is a good thing. And that's what Proverbs says. But how do you get there? You don't get there by yelling loudly. You don't get there by arguing voraciously, voraciously with your parents.

You don't get a place at the table just by being older. Do you want honor? Then get wisdom. Do you want other people to listen to you and ask you questions and say, what do you think about this?

[32 : 19] Then get wisdom. Now, there is this tension, I think, that we feel like, isn't it wrong to want to be honored?

Shouldn't we say, God, you get all the glory? And it doesn't matter about me. Well, if you read Proverbs, the clear answer is no.

I think we're trying to be more spiritual than God is. Lady wisdom has gifts to give. And one of those gifts is honor. It's what she's giving.

And God himself, Romans 2, 7, To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life. There should be a part of you as a Christian that is pursuing glory.

I want to be glorified in Jesus Christ. I want to have honor. I want immortality. And if you pursue it in doing good, in the fear of the Lord, out of faith, out of love, God will give you honor.

[33 : 25] It might not. And it's probably not going to be all here. But honor itself is not something that is bad to want. That's why the book of Proverbs is this is the temptation.

This is the bait. This is the encouragement. This is why you should want to get wisdom, because you will get honor. And so God is the rewarder of those who seek him. And so it's not wrong to want the reward.

To want the reward, to want the honor, is to believe what God says and then to pursue it. It's not wrong.

The Olympian who trains and trains for the hour in which she will stand on the podium and receive her gold medal and hear her national anthem played is no mercenary.

She's no honor thief. She has paid the price. She has humbled herself. She has disciplined herself in hours and hours of work.

[34 : 33] And you will not find that she's thinking more highly of herself than she ought. She's always saying, I want to improve. I want to grow. She's always teachable.

She's willing and she wants to hear what the coach has to say to her. And so it is a continual, I must die to myself. And so the medal of, the gold medal, the medal of honor, fits her.

It belongs on her. Proverbs 20.6.1 says, honor is not fitting a fool. Honor is not fitting a fool. But when Simone Biles, the gymnast, stands on the pedestal with her gold medal on, after hours and days and months and countless hours of sacrifice and pain, there is no doubt that the medal fits her.

It belongs there. The honor is her due. And you see her. You see these athletes receiving the reward for their work.

And isn't there a part of you deep down inside that says, that's right. This is the way it should be. Something is right in the world.

[36 : 00] It's when fools are honored that everything's out of whack. It's when fools are honored that the fabric of God's world is now twisted and things are not the way they should be.

26.1 says it's like snow in summer. It just doesn't belong. And so wisdom will put you on a pedestal. Wisdom will make your words, your opinions, your thoughts, your life weighty.

Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man. That young man pursued wisdom and he received honor.

And so you have to ask yourself. Clear your mind, clear your heart. And I'm saying Solomon and David and God himself, they're saying, do you want to be honored?

Do you want to be able to stand on the pedestal and the world be right? Do you want to be the Proverbs 31 woman who they rise and they say, give her the reward for what she has done.

[37 : 30] Give her the reward she has earned. And get wisdom. If you want honor, get wisdom. Now finally, how do you get it?

How do you get it? Again and again, it's the very same sort of thing. But this time I want to pay attention to these words, how David started his speech to Solomon.

He said, lay hold of my words. Lay hold of my words. Do not forget my words or swerve from them. Young people, older people, do you want wisdom? Then you need to listen. Listen to the book of Proverbs like your life depends upon it.

Like your life depends upon it. And so you read this book and you read it until you've laid a hold of it, until you got it. And so you listen to your parents.

[38 : 33] You listen to the wise teachers. You listen to your pastors. You listen and you read and you get these words. You get this truth inside of you.

And so young people, especially. But we all need to be in this book of Proverbs constantly. Now, I'm not saying that's all you read or anything like that.

And I'm not saying read a chapter every day. That isn't what I'm saying. But every day we should be listening, reading, thinking about these words until these words are in here.

So you're in this book until that book is this book is in you. You can picture it like this.

You hire a home decorator. You hire a home designer. And what do they do? Well, sometimes they're going to knock out walls.

[39 : 36] They're going to change things. Well, you let the book of Proverbs do that. To rearrange the rooms of your mind and rearrange the rooms of your heart. And then you let the home decorator

come in and fill up the rooms with the right furniture.

With the furniture that's beautiful. Well, let Proverbs be your home decorator. Let this book get into here and rearrange the rooms of your mind.

So you have the right categories as you think. So you're in this book until how you think is how this book thinks. And what you think is what this book thinks.

You lay a hold of it until you own it. And these aren't just mom and dad's words. They're words.

Now they are your words. Your thoughts. And if you do that. You do it persistently. And you do it continually. And you pursue it.

[40 : 44] Then you will be wise. And then you will get to sit with the wise. You'll be safe. And you'll be honored. And that is what God in his grace is giving you in this book.

God is taking you young people especially seriously. He takes all of us seriously. And that's what God wants in his grace to give you. That's what he wants for you.

And the question is are you going to take it? Are you going to get while the getting is good? Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you teach us. Thank you that you instruct us. And thank you that you are so persistent. Though we are slow learners. Help us.

Help us to have open hearts and ready to receive your truth. And we pray that you, Holy Spirit, you are a spirit of counsel and wisdom and understanding and the fear of the Lord.

[41 : 52] So come in. And we are giving you the keys to the house. And we're asking that you rearrange our thinking.

And you rearrange our priorities. And rearrange our thoughts. We know that you will make and you'll do everything beautifully.

And so we do trust you. And we ask that you would bless us and give us this mercy. Help especially our young people.

To take this word. And this book. And to take it seriously. To believe what is being offered.

And to really lay a hold of it. And may they do it even better than their parents have done it. Pray this for Jesus' sake. Amen. Amen. Amen.