

How To Be Wise

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 July 2011

Preacher: Jason Webb

[0:00] Proverbs chapter 4, verses 1 to 9. Listen, my sons, to a father's instruction.! Pay attention and gain understanding.

! I give you sound learning, so do not forsake my teaching. When I was a boy in my father's house, still tender and an only child of my mother, he taught me and said, lay hold of my words with all your heart.

Keep my commands and you will live. Get wisdom. Get understanding. Do not forget my words or swerve from them.

Do not forsake wisdom and she will protect you. Love her and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme.

Therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost you all you have, get understanding. Esteem her and she will exalt you.

[1:05] Embrace her and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a crown of splendor.

Ask for anything. What would you say? Would you like to be healthy again?

Would you like to be young again? Would you like that certain person to notice you finally? Would you like to win the lottery? Would you like to have that relationship restored?

Lord, what would you say if everything was on the table? What would you say? Well, you know what Solomon said when he had that opportunity.

He said, Lord, make me wise. Make me wise. Solomon must have already had a little bit of wisdom if he had asked if he asked for something so magnificent as wisdom.

[2:06] He must have had a little if he knew that he needed more of that. So I wonder, do you have the same high opinion of wisdom as Solomon did?

Or are you willing to say, well, yeah, wisdom is a good thing, but I think I'm doing all right on my own without it. I'm doing OK. I can handle myself.

Or is it the big thing? The big thing. Do you say with with the Bible and Proverbs that we just read that wisdom is supreme?

Therefore, get wisdom. Proverbs says wisdom is value, more valuable than any amount of money. It's more valuable than anything else.

Listen to what Proverbs 3 says. Wisdom is more precious than rubies. Nothing you can desire can compare with her. Long life is in her right hand and in her left hand are riches and honor.

[3:05] Her ways are pleasant ways and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her, to those who lay a hold of her. They will be blessed. So did you catch all that?

Wisdom is like a picnic basket with lots of treats on the inside and you take them out. And so in in wisdom's right hand. There is long life, a long, blessed life with God's smile upon you every day.

That's what wisdom brings you. How valuable would that be? Well, what's in her left hand? Riches and honor are in her left hand. So do you want financial security?

Do you want financial prosperity? Do you want the respect of other people? Get wisdom. That's the way you do it. Do you want to walk in a pleasant way? Do you want paths of peace?

Then get wisdom. Wherever you see strife and families and strife and friction and companies and in countries, you can be sure that there's folly at work.

[4:13] There's something going on that is foolish and that brings the strife. So have you seen what's going on in Greece lately? Maybe you watch the news or maybe you listen to the news.

Right now, the country of Greece is in all sorts of chaos and strife. The people aren't agreeing with the government and the government can't agree with themselves.

It's sort of like everyone, I don't know if you understand, but everyone's sort of been living in this pipe dream that you don't have to work for very long and you don't have to work for very hard and we can all take it easy and everyone can have the easy life.

And really where Greece is at right now is the whole country is deeply in debt and everyone is at each other's throats. Well, folly always leads to strife.

That's on the national level. When a whole country goes down a foolish route, it's going to lead to strife. But wisdom is the path to peace. So get wisdom.

[5 : 20] So why should you want to be wise? Because it's a tree of life. It's a tree of life to those who embrace her. Wisdom not only protects you from death. Proverbs 1 through 9 is clear about that, that wisdom can protect a young man, a person from death and folly.

It can protect you from the adulterous house, which is a pathway to the grave. It's a highway straight down into hell. But wisdom protects life. But it also produces life.

It's a tree of life to those who embrace her. And so the farmers markets around here are starting up. And this week we were able for the first time to get fresh peaches and fresh plums.

So the trees are beginning to produce fruit. So wouldn't you like to have a peach tree or plum tree, whatever your favorite tree is, in a greenhouse, growing all year round in your backyard.

So whenever you wanted, in the dead of winter, you could go out, trek through the snow and pull down fresh peaches or fresh plums or whatever you like. That's what wisdom is like.

[6 : 28] That's what it's like to have wisdom in your heart, to lay hold with all your heart wisdom. It's like a tree of life. And so whenever your life's in its difficult stages, when you're in the winter of life, when things are hard, wisdom becomes a tree of life.

It blossoms and then it produces fruit. So young people, if you want anything, if you want anything, you should want wisdom.

Wisdom is supreme. Therefore, get wisdom, though it costs all you have. Get understanding. Well, how much should you want it? Even if it costs you everything, you should want it.

It's sort of like the parable that Jesus told about the man who found the treasure in the field. He found it, he buried it, and then he went and sold everything he had in order to get the field, in order to get the treasure. Wisdom is that.

If it costs you all that you have, if you have to sell everything, then you should take, then you should get wisdom. But the question that I want to answer tonight is how do you get wisdom?

[7 : 36] Where do you find wisdom? How can I become more wise? And I think that's a question that is for the young to answer and to figure out because they need wisdom.

And it's a question for all of us because we all need more wisdom. So how can we get this valuable thing that is more valuable than gold or silver?

It's a tree of life. How do we get it? Well, we're in a series called How To. And it's a series about answering these basic questions about how to live the Christian life.

And this is actually the last sermon in that series before we go on to something else. But before we move on, I wanted to ask and answer this question of how do I become more wise?

How do I get wisdom? Well, I have five things. Five things I want to say. And none of them are new. But I found that I needed to review them.

[8 : 32] And I think you will, too, if the Lord blesses the message. So first, how can I be more wise? Come to Christ. Come to Christ. We're going to spend most of our time in Proverbs tonight.

But I want you to turn to the book of Colossians. At the beginning here, Colossians chapter 2. We'll be briefly in Colossians and then we'll be back into Proverbs. Paul has something very important to say about wisdom.

Colossians chapter 2, verse 2. Paul in this passage is talking about what he is trying to accomplish with the church in Colossae and with the church in Laodicea.

All these churches that haven't seen him. What is he working for? And this is what he says. Look at verse 2. My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love.

Why does he want that? So that they may have the full riches of complete understanding in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

[9 : 42] Now, it would take a whole sermon to unpack this verse and everything that it means. But did you catch what it said right there at the very end? I want you to know Christ.

I want you to know Christ and whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. So where do you go to find the treasure of wisdom?

According to Paul, you need to come to Christ. You need to come to Christ. If you know Christ, then you know wisdom. Well, why is that? Because if you know Christ, then you know the beginning and end of all things, the Alpha and the Omega.

Look at chapter 1 and verse 16 of Colossians. It should be right over in the next column or over on the next page. Verse 16. For by him, all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things were created by him and for him.

So if you don't know Christ, you don't know the first or the last thing about anything. Whether it's in heaven or on earth, you don't know the first or the first thing about these things.

[10:58] Everything is by him. Jesus Christ is the way that God created. It all comes from him. It's for him. It's for his use.

It's for his glory. It's all about him. So do you want to understand anything in your life? Well, you have to understand where it came from and what is it for? And Paul says it's for Jesus Christ.

He is supreme in all things. So how could you be wise if you don't know where anything came from and you don't know what anything is for?

It's impossible. So your car breaks down. Happens, doesn't it? Your car breaks down. Would you take your car to a bushman from the Amazon who's never seen a car, who has no idea where cars come from, has no idea what they're for?

Would you take your car to be fixed by a mechanic like that? Well, that would be folly. I mean, he might be able to wash the car. He might be able to clean the floor mats.

[12:03] But he could never fix it. Why? Because he has no wisdom. What is this car? Is this a fancy animal? Is it a house? Is it an idol that I bow down to?

Where did it come from? What am I supposed to do with it? He has no idea. What is it for? It would be absurd. But that's what people are like who don't know Jesus, who haven't come to realize who Jesus is and who haven't who haven't put themselves under Christ as the Lord.

They don't know Christ. They can't have wisdom. And so where do you come from? You ask them. Well, I don't know. Well, why are you here?

Well, I don't know. So ask Richard Dawkins, the famous British atheist, the star in the British or in the atheist intellectual world.

How did life get here? How did life come from nothing? I've heard him say this. Well, he said, I don't know. And then the interviewer pushed him further and he came up with this brilliant idea.

[13:13] He said, well, aliens from another planet brought it here. Okay. Where did those aliens come from? I don't know.

So that's your answer. That's the best you can do. You can push it off, but you can't answer it. So do you see the wisdom of this world? Where do you get when you ignore the beginning and the end of all things?

You get folly. So what can this world say about what's wrong with this world? I don't think anyone is so blind as to say this is the ideal world that we're living in.

There's obviously something wrong with this world. And how do we fix it? And the world, the Western world's answer is it's ignorance. And so we need education.

And the Germans were very educated when they slaughtered six million Jews. There's very many educated people that are absolute crooks and murderers.

[14:14] Education doesn't cure the problem. It can actually make it worse. So ignorance is clearly not the problem. And education is clearly not the answer. But in Christ, we actually see the real problem.

And we actually have the real solution. So we're sinners. We're sinners. There's a fundamental problem between us and God.

We are in rebellion. We are born in rebellion against him. And see, it's we've chosen to go this way. We've done this.

And so here we are. We were in the pigpen now. We've left our father's house and we're going to the far country. We're doing our own thing. And that's the accurate picture of what is wrong with us. We have a problem with God. We don't like him ruling over us. And we're guilty. And we know we're guilty. And we need a savior. And Christ is the way back to the father's house.

[15:12] It's the way back. So in Christ, you have the answer to your deepest need. And dear friend, if you're here, you don't know Christ. Your deepest need is to be forgiven, to be reconciled to God, to have your sins washed away because you're guilty.

It's not only that you don't like God, but God is pouring out his wrath upon you. And there is a day of judgment coming. So you are condemned and you're no amount of your own resourcefulness will take care of it.

You don't have enough wisdom. Can you argue your way out of this case? Can you really stand and argue with the almighty God? So there you are.

And if you're honest, your works and your ideas about how to fix things, they're just rotten balloons and they don't hold air. But God presents Christ to you and he says, this is my wisdom.

This is the treasury in which all my wisdom is stored. And so do you need forgiveness? Come to Christ. Do you need reconciled with God? Come to Christ. Do you need righteousness?

[16:24] Well, there's a righteousness in him that is for us if we will take him. So you'd be a fool. You would be a fool to ignore Jesus Christ.

It's like ignoring the rowboat when you're you've just fallen off the Titanic and you're drowning in the icy waters. I'll do very well on my own. Thank you very much. Or it's like pushing away the man who would carry you to shore when you're drowning.

It's folly to ignore Jesus Christ. Because he is the wisdom of God. He is the remedy for our problem of sin.

So if you want to be wise, come to Christ. Now, secondly, if you want to be wise, fear the Lord. So let's go back to Proverbs.

Proverbs chapter one, verse seven. If you want to be wise, fear the Lord. Verse seven says this.

[17:37] Very familiar passage. The fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord. Is the beginning of knowledge. But fools despise wisdom and discipline.

The big question is, what does fear mean here? What does fear mean in this verse? Well, it means respect. It means honor.

It's the opposite of despising something. So where does wisdom begin? It begins with the fear of the Lord. And you notice in your English translations, the word Lord is all cap in all capital letters. And when you see that, that means the Hebrew word behind that English word is Yahweh. It's God's covenant name. It's the name that he gave to Moses when Moses said, well, who should I say is sending me?

You tell them Yahweh is sending you. It's the name that he took when he was on Mount Sinai. And God came down and he spoke the old covenant to the people. And so wisdom begins not with some sort of general fear of something divine.

[18:48] It's not some amorphous, shapeless, I'm afraid of something out there. It's a fear. It's a respect of Yahweh, the covenant Lord that you and I, we both have to do with.

And so this is where wisdom begins. It begins with fearing him. He's the great I am forever and ever. Continually present with his people. He's the creator of the heavens and the earth.

And in every situation, he is the Lord. He's he's Lord. His authority is active in every situation. He has something to say in every situation.

And his word is at work. And he is present with us to bless us or to curse us. And he's in control in every situation that we find him, that we find ourselves.

And we can know that the Lord is the Lord. And he's working all these things together according to his purpose. And so do you see why wisdom has to begin here?

[19:51] It has to begin with respecting and fearing God because he's the foundation of all of reality. He is the foundation of everything. He's the lawgiver. He's the judge.

He's the king. He's the king. It's from him and through him and to him that are that all things exist. We in him, we live and move and have our being. And so how could you ever be wise if you despised him, if you ignored him?

Wisdom. So wisdom begins with a respect for the Lord. Sort of like playing a soccer game. And if you played a soccer game and you were in and you had no respect for the rules and you had no respect for the referee and you just played and did whatever you wanted, would you win?

Would you play well? No, you couldn't do that. Well, what about if you tried playing soccer according to the rules of football? Well, unless you're in England, you would do very badly, I would say.

You can't ignore God's rules and the referee and expect to do well. You can't play by your own rules and expect to prosper.

[21:09] And so young people think God has put into this world certain fundamental principles, certain ways that things work. And you either recognize and abide by those things.

Or you ignore them and be doomed to a bad life. And to a worse life afterwards. So don't despise him. Don't ignore him.

If you fear him. If you fear him, that puts you on the path to the road to wisdom. It begins here. So thirdly, that's the second thing.

Third, pray for wisdom. Pray for wisdom. Do you want to be wise? Well, pray for it. Look at Proverbs 2.6. Proverbs 2.6.

For the Lord gives wisdom. And from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding. From his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

[22:11] So where does wisdom come from? It's an easy question. It comes from the Lord. It comes from him. And so what should you do? You should ask him for it.

It's not hard. But how much wisdom do you lose out on? Do I lose out on? Because I simply don't ask. I think I know.

And then it turns out I don't know what needs to be done. It's such a shame. It's such a shame. Especially when we have a promise like James 1.5.

Where James says, if any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault. So do you need wisdom? Ask God. Here's the promise and God will give it to you.

So, sisters, won't you take God up on this promise this week? When you're in a situation and your kids are driving you crazy and you're at your wit's end or you're faced with a problem.

[23:14] I know. I've been there where the kids are presenting some sort of problem and you want a solution. But it seems like who knows what to say.

Here's a promise. Ask for wisdom and God will give it to you. And brothers, won't you take God up on this promise? When you're trying to figure out your wife and what does she want and what is best for her?

Or when you're trying to talk to your teenagers or when you're at work and you need wisdom, how do you get it? You ask for it. You ask God. And that's a wonderful promise.

Let's take it to the bank. Let's not be slow. Let's go to him and ask and he will give without finding any fault. That's not hard to understand. But isn't it hard to remember when you're in that situation? So maybe we need to mark something on our day catalog calendar. Write something down.

Remember to ask for wisdom. I need wisdom. That's the third.

[24:16] Here's the fourth. Do you want to be wise? Read the wisdom books. Read the wisdom books. Men, if you're anything like me, you probably don't read the instruction manuals on anything unless you need to, unless you have to.

So you give your daughters one of those play kitchens for Christmas. And, you know, it comes in a nice box. And then it's Christmas. And it's 11 o'clock on Christmas morning.

And all the presents are now open. And the play kitchen is all over the floor because you've taken everything out. And so there it is. All of it.

All over your floor. All 10,000 pieces. And unless you're a professional play kitchen put together, you probably are going to say, I need the instruction manual.

I have to look at this. This thing is way too confusing. I need help. So what should you do? You should read the instructions. Now, if you need wisdom, you should read the instruction manual.

[25:24] You should read the instruction manual. So we just read Proverbs 2, 6. Let's read Proverbs 2, 6 again. For the Lord gives wisdom and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding.

So where does wisdom come from? It comes from the mouth of the Lord. Now, where does the Lord speak? Where do we hear the words of the Lord's mouth?

Well, all scripture is God breathed. Comes out of his mouth. Now, this isn't hard either. But we need reminded.

We need to be reminded that if we want wisdom, we need to apply ourselves to the places where God has put wisdom. And specifically, we need to read the wisdom books.

And by that, I mean Job and Psalms and Proverbs and Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs and even Daniel. Those books are the books that God has given us to teach us wisdom.

[26 : 30] To teach us to know how to think about life. And how to interact in all sorts of different situations. And how to think of things on a big scale. And how to think of things on a very mundane, low level scale.

How do you get wisdom? You read these books. So, do you want to know how to think about suffering? We talked about suffering in Sunday school.

Do you want to know how to think about suffering when it's so painful? Then read Job. It's a book about suffering. It teaches us how to think through suffering.

And it teaches us some bad ways to think. And it says, don't think about it that way. You need to think about it this way. Well, do you want to know how to handle pain? And joy?

And trial? And blessing? And loneliness? And betrayal? Then read the Psalms. The Psalms is not just a book of praise. It's a book that actually teaches us how to process these things.

[27 : 33] And how to do it in a way that is in the fear of the Lord. Do you need wisdom for marriage, love, and sex? Read Song of Songs.

Do you want to know how to understand history? And government powers? And what God's big plan for this world is? And what is it like to live in exile when there's oppressive governments over you?

Well, read Daniel. And what about leading a prudent life? And living justly? And righteously? And just about everything in between? Read Proverbs.

Now, some of these books are easy. Some of them are hard. Digging for diamonds is hard. But people do it. Because it's worth it. And how many times in the book of Proverbs does God say, Wisdom is more precious than rubies.

It's more precious than gold, than much fine gold. So the wisdom books. They're like different hills. They're all, you know, and we'll say they're all in California.

[28 : 40] And all these hills. And there's gold in those hills. You need to dig into them. You need to mine down. And you need to dig them out. But if you dig for wisdom like it's gold, you will have it.

So read the wisdom books. Now, fifthly and lastly, pay attention. Pay attention. Do you want to be more wise? Then lift up your head. Think about what you're seeing.

Pay attention to what others and what's going on all around you all the time. Give thought to your way. Solomon had open eyes. Solomon had open eyes.

And, you know, Jesus had open eyes, too. When he preached, he talked about all sorts of things that he saw every day. Lights and candles and sheep and all sorts of things. And that's the way Solomon thought about life.

God gave Solomon incredible ability. When he asked for wisdom, God, no doubt, gave him much wisdom. But I don't think we can say that Solomon, God magically gave Solomon wisdom.

[29 : 46] Like it just boom happened one day and he knew all these things. I think Solomon had to apply himself to what he saw. And when he did, God blessed that. He had to pay attention to what people were saying and what he saw going on in life.

So go through, go through the book of Proverbs sometime. It's absolutely fascinating, really. Where does Solomon get his wisdom? Well, he's looking out and he's looking around and he's talking about all sorts of things that he's seen and what they're like.

So he talks about broken down houses. And he talks about ships. And he talks about churning butter. And he talks about bloody noses. And he's thinking about these things.

And he applies himself and he learns wisdom. So he paid attention to nature. Solomon talks about locusts, deer, snakes, eagles, ants, rabbits, birds, lions, roosters.

Maybe I missed some. He saw them. He paid attention to what he saw and he applied his heart to wisdom. And so when that deer wanders into your headlights and is frozen there, there's some wisdom there.

[30 : 58] You should be learning from that deer. And when you're looking out this week, my kid said, oh, we found a bird's nest. So we went for a little walk and there was this mommy robin sitting on her nest.

And I asked anyone, what can we learn about being wise from that robin? And she says, mommy should take care of their babies. That's very wise, isn't it?

So you can learn wisdom from the robin outside your window. You can learn wisdom from the ants in your driveway. They're there if you want to pay attention to them. Solomon paid attention to other people.

He talked about kings. He talked about nagging wives. And he talked about boyfriends and girlfriends. And wise men and wicked men and sinners. And righteous men and old men and children.

And young men, a young man who lacks sense. He talks about drunks and sluggards and gluttons and mad men. He looked at those things.

[31 : 58] He saw those people. He followed them. He thought about what their life was leading to and what they ran into. And he applied himself to what he saw and he became wise.

And so do you want to be wise? Then pay attention to what's going on around you. Follow people. Think about what's going on in their lives. So there you are.

You're standing in the 7-Eleven. The convenience store or wherever. And you see the man in front of you. And he buys a lottery ticket. Have you ever seen that? I'm sure I have.

I know I have. So there he is. He buys a lottery ticket. And you want to think. Now what? Where is this leading? What kind of. Where does this go?

When some people are fooled into buying lottery tickets. So you apply yourself to the situation. Not always. But you go and you look at his car. And it's a beat up old car.

[32 : 54] And you follow him home. And his grass is overgrown. And his flower beds are overrun with weeds. And we'll say that you could get out his checkbook.

And you could see. You know what? He doesn't have enough money to pay his bills. And then you go to the bank. And you say. Well where is so and so's checking. Our savings account. He doesn't have a savings account.

He's one emergency away from a complete disaster. Now think. Now think about that. You don't see a long line of BMWs and Lexuses.

When the Powerball is at 400 million dollars. Do you? Lined up at the convenience store. Saying oh this is how we're going to get all our money. You don't see that. You don't see the millionaires. The affluent businessmen.

Buying lottery tickets. So what do you see? You see poor people. Poor deluded people. Trying to make it rich. Now apply yourself to that. And if you apply yourself properly.

[33 : 53] You would come to a proverb that says. He who works hard will have abundant food. But the one who chases fantasies. Will have his fill of poverty. You apply yourself.

You think about it. And we could go on and on. What can you learn from that? That lady. The neighbor lady. Yelling.

And screaming. At her children. And you hear her yelling at them. Well. A wise man. A wise woman. Builds up her own house. And a foolish woman.

Tears it down with her own hands. You should be learning these things. And the point is simply this. If you want to be more wise. Open your eyes.

Open your ears. Pray. And ask God to give you. Wisdom. Wisdom. The Bible says. Wisdom is a beautiful lady. Calling out. She's saying.

[34 : 48] Come. Come and dine. It's open for everyone. You don't have to be old. You don't have to be big. You don't have to be. All grown up.

To be wise. It's open for everyone. If a fool says. I'm going to be wise. And he comes to lady wisdom's house. He can become wise. And so. Are you listening to her?

Are you going to her house? And are you sitting down with her. And talking with. With lady wisdom. And asking her. And. Seeking wisdom.

Wisdom is supreme. Wisdom is supreme. Therefore get wisdom. So what have we seen tonight? Pay attention to your world. Read the wisdom books.

Pray for wisdom. Fear the Lord. And come to Christ. Come to Christ. And be wise. Well. If you apply those.

[35 : 49] Five things. Those five areas. You will be wise. Wisdom is supreme. So therefore get wisdom. Let's pray. Amen. Heavenly Father.

We thank you that. You indeed give us such a book. As the Bible. That you give us this book. That we would be wise unto salvation. That we could come to know the Lord Jesus.

By whom and for whom. All things exist. And have their being. And. Thank you for the good news. That we hear in the Bible.

That he came for us. To save sinners. Like us. That he willingly laid down his life. To solve our. Deepest. And most fundamental problem.

Our sin against you. Thank you Lord. That. You have. Given us these wisdom books. To read. And to understand. Thank you that you've given us.

[36 : 44] The Holy Spirit. That if we would ask. You would give us this wisdom. Through him. And so Lord. It is my prayer. That you would make us wise. It is my prayer.

That you would stir up a desire. To be wise. In my own heart. In my brothers and sisters hearts. Will you please. Give us.

A thirst. And a hunger. To be wise. And then fill us up. Fill us up. With all the wisdom. That is in Jesus Christ. And that. All that wisdom.

That is in the word of God. And will you please do it. For your glory. That we would be. People that shine. Like stars in the sky. We ask this in Jesus name.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.