

June 21, 2020

Lesson 3

THE GIFTS OF WISDOM

ADULT/YOUTH

ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: **Wisdom's Rewards**
YOUTH TOPIC: **Rich in Wisdom**

CHILDREN

GENERAL LESSON TITLE: **God Gives Great Gifts**
CHILDREN'S TOPIC: **A Great Gift**

DEVOTIONAL READING
Job 28:12-28

ADULT/YOUTH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: **Job 1; 42; Proverbs 8**
PRINT PASSAGE: **Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21**
KEY VERSES: **Proverbs 8:10-11**

CHILDREN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: **Job 1; 42; Proverbs 8**
PRINT PASSAGE: **Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21**
KEY VERSE: **Proverbs 8:10**

Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21—KJV

8 All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them.
9 They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge.
10 Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
11 For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.
12 I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.
13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.
14 Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

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17 I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.
18 Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21—NIV

8 "All the words of my mouth are just; none of them is crooked or perverse.
9 "To the discerning all of them are right; they are upright to those who have found knowledge.
10 "Choose my instruction instead of silver, knowledge rather than choice gold,
11 "for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
12 "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.
13 "To fear the LORD is to hate evil; I hate pride and arrogance, evil behavior and perverse speech.
14 "Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have insight, I have power."

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17 "I love those who love me, and those who seek me find me.
18 "With me are riches and honor, enduring wealth and prosperity.

19 My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

20 I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

21 That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

19 “My fruit is better than fine gold; what I yield surpasses choice silver.

20 “I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,

21 “bestowing a rich inheritance on those who love me and making their treasuries full.”

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: People desire wisdom and hope to be rewarded when they search for it. Why is wisdom so desirable? Wisdom’s value is more than tangible gain; it gives knowledge and courage and leads toward God’s path of justice and righteousness.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Recognize the incomparable value of godly wisdom in producing wealth, righteousness, and justice.
2. Appreciate the difference between Wisdom’s rewards and those of mere wealth.
3. Analyze their life’s pursuit to ensure that godly wisdom, with its attendant rewards, is in view and is not some cheap substitute.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

- Proverbs 8 is the Bible’s most detailed personification of wisdom.
- Proverbs 8 provides background for Christians’ understanding of Christ as the Wisdom and Word of God.
- The prologue to the gospel of John (John 1:1-14) and its understanding of Jesus’ identity are informed by Proverbs 8.
- Adhere to instructions in order to gain wisdom.
- Good instructions and knowledge are more valuable than silver and gold.
- Wisdom, knowledge, and instructions cannot be compared to material possessions.

- Good counsel and sound wisdom are foundational to understanding.
- Wisdom and justice form the pathway to a righteous life.

Teachers of CHILDREN

- Wisdom is personified; she has been a gift of God since Creation.
- Wisdom is profitable and makes the one who embraces her acceptable to God and man.
- Wisdom is received through listening, making right choices, and obeying God.
- Job is an example of someone who used wisdom because he trusted in God, carefully listened to God and people, guarded his speech, and was fair in his treatment of his children and people.
- True wisdom is attained through Christ.
- Wisdom is greater than riches.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

It is difficult to be sure about the exact time that the book of Job (Background Scripture) was written or who wrote it. Many biblical scholars disagree about the timeline. Some believe it may have been written by Moses, and others say Eliphaz, a friend of Job's, may have written it. Still, others believe the story is legend.

There are evidences that suggest that Job lived in the time of the patriarchs or before Moses because he sacrifices to God as head of his family. Job's wealth is determined by flocks and not in money as is consistent with patriarchal times. Job lived long enough to give birth to two families of ten children and still lived another 140 years. He may have lived longer than 200 years; this is consistent with patriarchal times. However, some evidences point to the contrary. One of which is the fact that Eliphaz, in Job 22:16, refers to the Flood as being in the past.

Still, some say he was not an Israelite in any way since he lived in the land of Uz. Uz was a poetic name for Edom and referred to a place that had many wise men and was known for wisdom. The wise King Lemuel was also allegedly from Uz.

It is generally accepted that the wise king, Solomon, wrote the book of Proverbs. This is the traditional view. King Solomon was a wise king who was known to have more than three thousand proverbs and sayings, according to 1 Kings 4:32. Proverbs 8 is one of such attributed to the wise king.

However, the proverbs written in the book of Proverbs were not all by King Solomon as the book itself asserts. There were others who contributed to the infinite wisdom in the book. Agur, son of Jakeh, contributed (see Proverbs 30). King Lemuel also wrote a part of it. It is speculated that he may have been a non-Israelite who lived in a place called Uz, where people still believed in Yahweh (see Proverbs 31).

Some parts from Proverbs 22–24 are believed to have been written by a group of people referred to as “wise men.” They are believed to be wise men who were attached to King Solomon as seen in 1 Kings 4:31; 12:6. Proverbs 25:1–29:27 is believed to have been the work of a committee appointed under King Hezekiah (726–698 BC). No one is certain about the date of the writing, but it is widely believed that the book of proverbs was written and compiled sometime between the tenth century and sixth century BC.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

The cultural setting of the book of Proverbs is a very rich one. Some of the proverbs in the book are thought to emanate from ancient Egyptian wisdom, proverbs, or instructions laid down by wise men of Egypt. For instance, *The Instruction of Amen-em-Het* (ca. 2000 BC), which were basically a father's instructions to his son about how people he had favored disappointed him. *The Instruction of Amen-em-Ope* (ca. 1300 BC–900 BC) is another one of such. It is a king's teachings to his son about life.

It is noteworthy that the wisdom in the book of Proverbs speaks largely about wisdom from God and not moral knowledge as is the idea with ancient Greek and ancient Egyptian proverbs. King Lemuel, who was also said to have been the source of some of these proverbs, was from Uz, a place where people feared God and were known to be wise. Uz boasted people like King Lemuel and Job.

There have been arguments that these were probably copied and attributed to King Solomon. Some were said to have been copied from Greek and Persian periods during the post-exilic era. This may be true, as it is often the trend that people sometimes attribute more to great men than they actually achieved. Still, King Solomon was largely regarded as the wisest man of his time and

it is believed that he spoke about three thousand proverbs, some of which are recorded in the book of Proverbs. Generally, culture and scholars agree that he wrote a larger part of the book of Proverbs, namely chapters 1–10.

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Eliphaz: one of Job’s friends who argued with Job.

Job: He was referred to as “the greatest man among all the people of the East” (Job 1:3b, NIV). He was said to be blameless and upright. He stood his ground, refusing to curse God. God Himself boasted about Job’s righteousness to Satan.

King Solomon: the generally accepted author of the book of Proverbs; Proverbs 1 is attributed to him. He was king in Israel and he is said to be the richest and wisest king ever.

LORD: The term *LORD* is used in the Bible to refer to Yahweh. It is the same thing we see here. The book of Proverbs and the book of Job teach and guide people to live right according to Yahweh.

Satan: the tempter. He afflicted Job with severe suffering.

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Arrogance (verse 13)—Hebrew: *ga’own* (gaw-ohn’): “arrogancy” (KJV); exaltation; pride.

Crooked (verse 8)—Hebrew: *pathal* (paw-thal’): twisted; cunning.

Instruction (verse 10)—Hebrew: *musar* (moo-sawr’): discipline; chastening; correction.

Pride (verse 13)—Hebrew: *geah* (gay-aw’): arrogance.

Prudence (verse 12)—Hebrew: *ormah* (or-maw’): craftiness; cautiousness.

Right (verse 9)—Hebrew: *yashar* (yaw-shawr’): straight; right; upright.

Words (verse 8)—Hebrew: *emer* (ay’-mer): speech; utterances; sayings.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

I. Introduction

- A. The Value of Wisdom
- B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

- A. The Value of Wise Instruction (Proverbs 8:8-11)
- B. When Wisdom Speaks (Proverbs 8:12-14)
- C. The Fruit of Wisdom (Proverbs 8:17-21)

III. Concluding Reflection

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Value of Wisdom

Proverbs 8 and the book of Job teach about God’s wisdom. They both admonish us to follow God’s wisdom, no matter what. In Proverbs 8:17, there is an assurance of benefits for those who choose God’s wisdom. The book of Job offers a practical look into the life of someone to whom the devil brought hell. Job still stood with godly wisdom and at the end, he was rewarded.

Proverbs is designed to school young men in the path of wise and moral living. Such a lesson is sorely needed in our times, when morality has become relative and wisdom is

no longer considered an essential possession. Wisdom makes an open appeal to all persons as they go about their daily activities. The value of wisdom cannot be measured in dollars and cents. It is beyond the calculation of finite accounting.

The book of Proverbs aims to show and teach that godly wisdom is the way to go. As the Bible says in Proverbs 1, the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

B. Biblical Background

Proverbs 8 has its background in the cultural Jewish belief system that saw knowledge as knowledge that comes from God. The Israelites never failed to seek God's face in

any circumstance. They often consulted God through the Urim and Thummim, as well as through dreams and visions. In Genesis 28:1-12, King Saul went to consult a medium to help him consult the prophet Samuel just so he could know God's mind.

So, the idea of wisdom's being the best guidance as seen in Proverbs 2 is not far-fetched. It has little to do with the study of the environment. The wisdom is all about God.

Job is a practical example. We see his troubles in the latter parts of Job 1 and we see that he stuck with God throughout. At the end in Job 42, we see that despite the efforts of the devil, his end was better than his beginning.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. The Value of Wise Instruction

(Proverbs 8:8-11)

All the words of my mouth are in righteousness; there is nothing froward or perverse in them. They are all plain to him that understandeth, and right to them that find knowledge. Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

This is the ideal voice of Wisdom speaking to all who will hear and issuing a word of assurance that the hearers can be confident in receiving and applying truth and reliability to the discourse. It is quite a claim to make that every word one speaks is right and just. This is one reason why we know that the source of true wisdom does not come from humanity but comes from divinity. Righteous words emanate from a heart, mind, and soul that is righteous. Because a righteous mind starts with thinking

right thoughts and speaking right words, the end result is righteous actions. This scenario is in contrast to a completely evil mind which thinks evil thoughts and speaks evil words, eventually resulting in evil actions. Crooked and perverse words represent truth that has been twisted. They are partially believable because they have a semblance of the truth but with distinct distortion when compared to the undiluted truth. That is why it is so important to be thoroughly familiar with the truth in order to clearly recognize what is a lie.

Discernment is the ability to judge well. It is the development of an accurate perception with a view to obtaining a spiritually inclined perspective and understanding. Those who possess clear discernment understand words of wisdom because their understanding is enlightened by the Spirit of God. "The person

without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments” (1 Corinthians 2:14-15, NIV).

The Word of God is sometimes confusing and confounding to those without spiritual discernment. Jesus often spoke in ways that those without the knowledge of God could not understand, and those with the knowledge of God could understand. In Mark 4:11-12 (NIV), Jesus places this principle on display when He tells the disciples, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, ‘they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!’” The Word of God is not just for the intellectually elite or for the financially endowed; it is available to all who submit to God’s will and are willing to learn from the instruction of the Holy Spirit.

Two substances that are universally recognized as valuable throughout the world are silver and gold. Historically, they have been widely used as a standard for trade and commerce. As desirable as these may be, godly wisdom is even more valuable and is thus more highly preferred (see Psalm 19:10). Those who spend their lives chasing after silver and gold may seem to prosper for a season, but eventually the quest for wealth above the godly pursuit of wisdom ends in utter disappointment.

Another physical commodity of precious stones is introduced to compare with lady

wisdom. But as was the result with silver and gold, the same is true with rubies which lose their sparkle and appeal when in competition with wisdom. When a heart of compassion and understanding are present along with a willingness to receive the truth in love, wisdom is valued above silver and gold. Scripture gives New Testament credence to the value of a wise and godly perspective: “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (see Ephesians 1:17-18).

B. When Wisdom Speaks (Proverbs 8:12-14)

I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions. The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate. Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

The personification of wisdom continues here with a reference to the residential dwelling mate of wisdom. This mate is identified as *prudence*, which means care, caution, and good judgment, as well as wisdom in looking ahead. *Prudence* is the ability to govern and discipline oneself through reason, skill, and good judgment of one’s available resources even though those resources may be small. When evil joins with laziness, chaos ensues and additional trouble is created. But when wisdom teams up with prudence, amazing things take place and virtuous excellence is multiplied. When two holy forces unite, this harmonious union results in ingenious designs that flow from a

place of goodness, health, creativity, and positive power, which can be used for the glory of God and for the good of humanity.

In verse 13, five additional characters and concepts are introduced to the literary landscape—including evil, pride, arrogance, evil actions, and perverse speech. Wisdom has no dealings, friendship, or kinship with any who belong to this terrible tribe. This is because there can never be a truce called between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light (see Matthew 6:24). It is impossible to love God and not hate evil, just as it is impossible to simultaneously dwell in the darkness as well as in the light.

Some people naively view participation in counseling to be an action by those who are weak. However, this flawed perspective is problematic and is the opposite of the truth. To pursue counseling is an act of strength and wisdom because the strength and insight of another is applied to one's areas of weakness and questions are replaced with answers. This point is verified in Proverbs 15:22—"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (NIV). Another Old Testament text similar in nature and meaning is found in Job 12:13. Sound wisdom is solid and substantial, real and true, and in stark opposition to the so-called wisdom of the world.

C. The Fruit of Wisdom

(Proverbs 8:17-21)

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me. Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver. I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment: that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

A reciprocal exchange of love is accentuated in verse 17. The love of wisdom and the embracing of all that it has to offer come along with valuable benefits of wisdom loving back in response. To truly love God and the wisdom that comes from God involves more than a mere head knowledge of God or a mere academic exposure to the truth. A genuine love for God involves a personal, passionate, intimate, experiential relationship with the God of the universe. Matthew 6:33 encourages this kind of intentional seeking of God: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (NIV). Seeking God can be accomplished through the following ways: reading and studying God's Word; admitting and repenting of personal areas of sin; maintaining a sense of God-consciousness throughout the day; two-way prayer; extending grace to others; and asking good, open-ended questions.

Benefits of wisdom are on abundant display in verse 18. God has no lack of material benefits, because everything belongs to Him. Furthermore, God is not opposed to material prosperity but so often the presence of prosperity results in the absence of God as top priority. Jesus echoes this sentiment in Matthew 19:24—"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God" (NIV). In Luke 16:11, "true riches" are mentioned along with the consciousness of possessing God's honor and favor, called the "unsearchable riches of Christ." These are the durable riches of righteousness rather than the temporary riches of material wealth that eventually pass away. The best way to retain riches is to invest in the kingdom of God and the righteousness of God. The rest will be added.

Verse 19 returns to the metallurgical imagery previously introduced in verse 11 to describe the advantages of possessing wisdom. This time, the imagery of silver and gold is mixed with the imagery of the produce from fruit trees. God's fruit includes such spiritual benefits as redemption, reconciliation, pardon, justification, adoption, and eternal life.

The imagery of walking in the ways of wisdom is reminiscent of Psalm 23:3-4—"he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (NIV). The pathway of righteousness leads to justice and abundance on a variety of different levels. The pathway of righteousness is certainly accompanied by illumination, which enables the traveller to make forward progress and to avoid any obstacles that might block one's path.

The work of wisdom produces a valuable inheritance to those whose lives are reflective of wisdom's relationship. Whomever we walk with, talk with, or work, play, and live with eventually influence the person that we will eventually become for better or for worse. The good that comes from God is a blessing

that is not temporary but one that endures forever. This kind of inheritance is one that is guaranteed for those who are part of the family of God. When our lifestyles are shaped by wisdom, the benefits flow from those wise practices and this habit of continuously wise living contributes to a life of value and worth.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

Immediate gratification may satisfy for the moment, but deferred gratification can satisfy for a lifetime. The quest for material acquisition should not be pursued at the expense of putting God first. Walking in God's ways of wisdom produces fruit that will not spoil—fruit that will remain. The pathway of justice is made possible through walking in wisdom. True wealth is obtained through communing with God, walking with God, and being obedient to God. When we are clothed with the wisdom of God, we can boldly walk by faith without fear of our future. There are no substitutes or shortcuts to the pathway paved by faith and wisdom.

PRAYER

Lord, help us to walk in the ways of wisdom so that our living will not be in vain. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(June 15-21, 2020)

The Gifts of Wisdom

MONDAY, June 15: "Christ, the Wisdom of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

TUESDAY, June 16: "God Abundantly Rewards Job's Faithfulness" (Job 1:1-5)

WEDNESDAY, June 17: "God Restores Job's Family and Wealth" (Job 42:10-17)

THURSDAY, June 18: "Wisdom Calls the People to Respond" (Proverbs 8:1-7)

FRIDAY, June 19: "Wisdom: Present and Active during Creation" (Proverbs 8:22-31)

SATURDAY, June 20: "Choose Wisdom and Live" (Proverbs 8:32-36)

SUNDAY, June 21: "Wisdom Affects All of Life" (Proverbs 8:8-14, 17-21)