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Proverbs Part 1

“Proverbs: Wisdom”

Pastor Gary Hamrick

This is the first teaching in Pastor Gary’s seven-part series through the book of Proverbs. In this message, he provides an introduction to the book, as well as an emphasis on the major theme of the book – wisdom. Wisdom is the application of knowledge and understanding, and Pastor Gary will help us understand how we can get more wisdom for daily living.

Historical Background

1. Pastor Gary said: “Right here in the first few verses of Proverbs chapter one, we have the statement of purpose [about] why the book of Proverbs was written; it was written to help those who are considered unwise or simple or young, to become wise. And, [the writer] also adds [that] even for those who consider themselves to be pretty wise... they can add to their learning.”
 - a. **Proverbs 1:5** - *“let the wise listen and add to their learning...”*
2. Much of the book of Proverbs was written or can be attributed to King Solomon, who reigned from approximately 970BC to 930BC.
 - a. Some Bible scholars believe that Solomon may have been as young as 17 when he became king.
 - b. During his reign Israel’s territory expanded greatly.
 - c. Solomon asked the Lord to give him wisdom so he could effectively lead the nation of Israel.
 - d. Although Solomon got off to a good start, so to speak, he experienced trouble, which came from sin, and the ungodly decisions he made.
 - e. Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs early in his life, the book of Song of Solomon in the middle of his life, and the book of Ecclesiastes at the end of his life.

- f. Solomon wrote the first 24 chapters in this book, and chapters 25 through 29 are attributed to Solomon, although they were written by King Hezekiah's men, approximately 200 years after Solomon died.
 - g. The last two chapters of this book were written by Agur and King Lemuel, respectively.
 - h. We read in [1 Kings 4:32](#), that Solomon wrote a vast number of sayings and songs.
 - i. *"He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five."*
 - ii. Of the 3,000 proverbs he wrote, approximately 900 are included in the book of Proverbs.
3. The book of Proverbs is included in what are called the Wisdom Literature of the Bible, which includes Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, and Job.
 - a. Pastor Gary said some Bible scholars also include the New Testament book of James.
 4. Pastor Gary said: "The Wisdom Literature of the Bible has to be interpreted through a very specific lens. If you do not interpret... through this lens, [you will experience] great consternation... If you don't interpret it in the right way it will be confusing to you, or worse, it will be disillusioning to you."

Practical, Not Theoretical

5. This book is not about the finer points of theology; it's about how the Lord wants us to live in practical terms.
6. Pastor Gary said: "It's a very practical book. It ministers to us on a level of everyday living. It's going to help us in terms of how to process life, how to deal with life, how to overcome things, how to manage things better, how to raise a family, [and] how to budget money."

Truisms, Not Promises

7. This book is not about the promises of God; it's about truisms that are generally true in life.
8. Pastor Gary said: "The advice and counsel of the book of Proverbs is basically this: If we build our lives upon these principles [and] these truisms, it will go better for us generally speaking. [These] are not intended to be viewed as promises, in the sense of being guarantees."

- a. One of the most quoted Scriptures is [Proverbs 22:6](#), and many consider this to be a promise/guarantee.
 - i. *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said: “It is a truism, not a promise. It is not saying, [that] if you’re the best parent in the world, you are going to raise amazing children. It’s a truism. This is about cause and effect. It’s about reaping and sowing. This is about the results of what God will do in our lives when we do our best to follow the truisms of his Wisdom Literature. The fact is that you can be an amazing parent [and] do the best job that you know how to do, raise your kids in the ways of the Lord, bring them to church, instill in them Christian values, try to model [the Christian life] the best you can, and sometimes kids [will] still go off the rails. [This] does not mean that God’s Word is not true, and that does not necessarily mean that you are a bad parent.”
- b. Another example would be [Proverbs 13:11](#).
 - i. *“... he who gathers money little by little makes it grow.”*
 - ii. Pastor Gary said: “This [verse] is a truism. This is not a promise. [If you] start to save your money little by little, you invest it wisely over time, [and you get] compound interest and all that stuff, you’re going to have a pretty good nest egg at the end of your life. But there are exceptions. Generally speaking, [this is] true, but sometimes you might make wise investments... [and] the bottom falls out of the stock market or you lose your job for an extended period of time... Sometimes you get into health issues and you have huge medical expenses and at the end of your life you have little to nothing... There are exceptions. The reason that I can’t emphasize this enough is because too many people [become] disillusioned with God or themselves because they do not properly interpret the truisms; they think they are promises. And then, they look at the end of their life and they think [to themselves]: My kids are miserable, my marriage is miserable, [and] I have no money, how come God isn’t faithful to his Word? It is not a reflection of his Word nor is it necessarily a reflection on you being a bad spouse [or] a bad parent or [a bad] manager of your money.”

Principles, Not Methods

9. The book of Proverbs is about principles, such as how to manage your money, your friends, temptation, what you say, and how to handle anger and other emotions, etc., however, the book of Proverbs will not give us methods.

10. Pastor Gary said: “Principles should never change; methods can.”

Wisdom

11. The words wise or wisdom appear 120 times in the book of Proverbs, because the aim of this book is to help us acquire and apply God’s wisdom to everyday living.

12. The description of wisdom.

- a. The Hebrew word for wisdom is hakam, which is used to describe an artisan’s skill in building, and one example would be the Temple in Jerusalem.
- b. Knowledge – Understanding – Wisdom
 - i. Knowledge is the accumulation of information.
 - ii. Understanding is the interpretation of information.
 - iii. Wisdom is the application of knowledge and understanding.
- c. When we skillfully apply God’s wisdom we receive the benefits of following his Word.
- d. Wisdom is supreme and we are encouraged three times in the Bible to get wisdom.
 - i. [Proverbs 4:5](#) – *“Get wisdom, get understanding...”*
 - ii. [Proverbs 4:7a](#) – *“Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom.”*
 - iii. [Proverbs 23:23](#) – *“Buy the truth and do not sell it; get wisdom, discipline and understanding.”*
- e. We live in the information age!
 - i. Pastor Gary shared a number of statistics concerning the Internet and social media, including:
 1. Since 2013, the number of Tweets per minute has increased 58%, which is now more than 455,000 each minute!
 2. Every minute 510,000 comments are posted on Facebook, 293,000 statuses are updated, and 136,000 photos are uploaded!
 3. There are 3.6 million Google searches worldwide every minute!
 4. There are more than 15 million text messages sent worldwide every minute!
- f. We do not lack for information; we lack for application, which is why we need wisdom.
- g. “The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits.”
– Albert Einstein ¹

¹ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/albert_einstein_148851

13. The source of wisdom.

- a. The Bible should shape our worldview.
- b. Jesus is the personification and the incarnation of wisdom.
- c. **Colossians 2:2-3** - *"... Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."*
- d. **1 Corinthians 1:30** - *"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."*
- e. Earthly wisdom is different from heavenly wisdom.
 - i. **James 3:13-17** - *"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil." For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."*

14. The benefits of wisdom include:

- a. Happiness
 - i. **Proverbs 3:13** - *"[Oh, how happy] is the man [or woman] who finds wisdom, the man [or woman] who gains understanding..."*
- b. Longevity
 - i. **Proverbs 3:1-2** - *"My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity."*
- c. Honor
 - i. **Proverbs 3:35** - *"The wise inherit honor, but fools he holds up to shame."*
- d. Peace
 - i. **Proverbs 3:17** - *"Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace."*
- e. Protection
 - i. **Proverbs 1:33** - *"... whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm."*

How To Get Wisdom

15. **James 1:5-8** - *"If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of*

the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.”

Discussion Questions

1. Read [Proverbs 1:1-7](#) to provide a foundation for your Bible study time.
2. Provide an overview of the historical background of the book of Proverbs. (See #1 through #6 above)
3. Read and discuss [Proverbs 22:6](#) and [Proverbs 13:11](#), and spend time talking about the difference between truisms and promises. (See #7 and #8 above)
4. What does the word wisdom mean to you? (See #12b above)
5. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they've seen the remarkable ways the Lord helped them apply biblical wisdom in their lives.
6. How does social media and the Internet shape your worldview? (See #12e through #12f above)
7. How do you protect yourself from being drawn away from God's wisdom and toward worldly wisdom?
8. Read and discuss [Colossians 2:2-3](#), [1 Corinthians 1:30](#), and [James 3:13-17](#). (See #13 above)
9. Spend time reading and talking about the Scriptures that help us understand about the benefits of Godly wisdom. (See #14 above)
10. Close your time in reading and praying [James 1:5-8](#), asking the Holy Spirit to give everyone in your group Godly wisdom for daily living.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).