

WHERE DO YOU STAND WITH YOUR FAITH? #7
“Wisdom For A Healthy Lifestyle”
2 Chronicles 1:7-13, I Corinthians 1:18-31, James 3:13-18
October 15 & 16, 2022

“A man went to his friend’s house to hang out and watch television. His friend had a small 19” color TV, but they both sat down and relaxed in front of what turned out to be a great movie. The young man jumped up during a commercial and proclaimed that he intended to run back to his house and continue the movie on his brand-new 72” color TV.

“So the man gets home, turns on his 72” color TV set, and doesn’t get the movie. He keeps turning channels but can’t find the movie. Even though the picture is sharp, he can’t get the movie. Even though he’s got great sound, he doesn’t get the movie. He had no idea that his friend, even with his little-bitty TV, was hooked into a satellite that gave him the ability to pull down that great movie. His friend had the ability to pull a picture from up above that he himself did not have access to. The man may have had a bigger and better TV set but he couldn’t get reception because he didn’t have cable.

“If you are a Christian, you have God’s cable system. You have access to God’s viewpoint. If you are a non-Christian, you may have a bigger set, but you don’t have God’s cable system. You can’t hook in and link into a divine frame of reference no matter how expensive your life is, no matter how much money and no matter how much power or prestige you have. So many non-Christians have a lot to show of this world but they can’t pull in a divine picture because they don’t have a good cable connection with God the Father. This is the state of natural man.”¹ Without Jesus Christ in our lives, we are unable to find another viewpoint except what the world provides. And oh, the things we miss!

We have this same situation when we look at wisdom. There are two types of wisdom for us today, the wisdom of this world, and the wisdom that is from God. **True wisdom comes from the Lord God, and we have access to that wisdom only as we turn our lives over to God and let Him connect us with His ultimate wisdom.** Listen to how James 3:13-18 explains it. (READ James 3:13-18)

¹ (Tony Evans, *Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations*, [Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009] pg. 213, #645)

Without God's wisdom in our lives, we may turn out ok, but there will be no greatness in us because we are working only with the wisdom of this world. **The wisdom of this world is limited and imperfect, so when we rely upon this type of wisdom, we tend to make lots of mistakes and grieve God by what we do to one another.** As we rely only upon the wisdom of this world, we separate ourselves from the Lord God, and thereby find ourselves lost in sin against all of God's ways. The only way to find real life, then, is to rely upon the wisdom of the Lord.

In our Old Testament lesson of 2 Chronicles 1, Solomon realized that he was not able to lead the people of Israel all by himself, with only his wisdom that was from the world. Therefore he said to the Lord, "...*You have made me king over a people who are as numerous as the dust of the earth. Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of Yours*" (2 Chronicles 1:10)? Solomon needed God's viewpoint in order to lead the people of Israel well. He needed God's wisdom in order to fulfill the laws and commands that God has for all of us.

Solomon knew that leadership is hard because people are always tempted to lead in such a way as to bring about an advantage only to ourselves. **Leading according to the ways of the world always focuses us on "What's in it for me," instead of what's good for the people under our leadership.**

Leading according to God's ways is very difficult, because it demands that we give up on our own personal agendas and seek to follow the Lord's will and the Lord's ways. It means that we "*humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God so that He might exalt us at the proper time*" to bring Him glory and honor - not us (I Peter 5:6). It means that we turn from the desires and wishes of this world and focus on doing things according to the ways that God commands us.

Unfortunately, when we do that, the world comes to hate us because it hates God first. The world always asks why we have to follow an unseen, and often unknown, God. The world says, "We can handle it all on our own, so why do we need a 'God' to direct us, especially a 'God' who has such strict guidelines. We can do it better on our own so we reject God's laws and commands." Therefore, anyone working outside of the world's ways quickly finds anger and contempt from the world, for the

world hates the good and the righteous and desires all people to turn away from the Lord God Almighty and follow its wisdom that seems right to humanity. The world's wisdom calls all of us to conform to its ways or else be chastised and belittled by the rest in the world.

We heard last week that leadership also brings about higher standards for those in leadership positions (Ja. 3:1). More responsibility is given to the leaders, so they are held to higher accountability. Those in leadership are scrutinized more carefully than those not in leadership, so that makes it harder, since we have higher standards to live by. Leaders are expected to live exemplary lives as an example of how the rest of the population should live. Christian leaders live by an even higher standard, living according to the wisdom of God, showing the world the advantage of having God's wisdom.

However, when we live according to the ways of the world, we tend to neglect those higher standards and seek only what we want out of the position in which we serve. And those who are not Christians only have the viewpoint of the world to base their leadership upon. It is only a natural consequence that we fail without Christ Jesus in us because we don't have God's viewpoint to direct us as we serve.

God was delighted in Solomon asking for wisdom and knowledge. God tells him, *“Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king, therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given to you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions, and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had, and none after you will have”* (2 Chronicles 1:11-12). Solomon went on to be a very good king until his heart was drawn away from the Lord to focus on worldly things.

So seeking the wisdom of the Lord is really essential for us to do a good job at being a leader, both in civil settings and in religious settings. **God delights that we turn to Him and seek His wisdom.** But we have to have God's wisdom as our heart's desire in order to do God's work here among the people He has given to us. Without a heart totally set upon serving the Lord according to His

ways, God will probably not bless us with much wisdom and knowledge, since we would tend to use it only for ourselves. God blesses those who seek to serve Him with His wisdom and knowledge so that they might live as witnesses for Him in our world.

But the viewpoint of the Lord is not only counter cultural, but it is also counter intuitive, because God often calls us to do things that we don't see very clearly as being good. Yet as we trust in Him, and follow His directions, God usually allows us to see the good results that come from our obedience to Him.

The apostle Paul lifts this up in his first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 1:18-31. When we look at the crucifixion of Jesus, at first it doesn't make sense to us for the Son of God to die at the hands of sinful men. Why did Jesus have to die? Couldn't He have made a bigger difference in this world had He not died on the cross? Couldn't Jesus have been able to bring all the world's peoples together to worship God alone through Him if He had lived a full life here? In the world's viewpoint, it doesn't make sense for the "Savior of the world" to die a criminal's death on a cross. What's the purpose of that, they ask?

But when we ask God to explain it to us, as we let our faith in Jesus as our Messiah bring answers to us, we quickly see that Jesus died on the cross in order to satisfy all of the punishment of the sins of all who would believe in Him. Paul tells us, "*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*" (1 Cor. 1:21). Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross was the propitiation to God for the penalty of sin. Jesus willingly gave up His life, taking our place on the cross, paying the punishment for our sins, so that we would not have to suffer an eternity separated from God.

Since God hates sin, the only way for our sins to be appeased was for a perfect sacrifice to be made on our behalf. Jesus was that perfect sacrifice, satisfying the payment needed for us to be forgiven. Paul tells us in Romans 6:23 "*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" Because Jesus died in our place, He became our Savior and we have hope

of forgiveness through His death. The world cannot understand this because it is foolishness to those who don't believe that Jesus is our Messiah. **Without a connection to God's cable system, His wisdom, there is no understanding of His ways to bring Salvation to the world through Jesus.**

Paul asks a few pertinent questions for us to consider. *“Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the Law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know Him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe”* (I Cor. 1:20-21).

It is evident throughout human history, that there are those who consider themselves to be wise, yet neglect the wisdom of the Lord, and they lead in such a way as to bring ruin to the lives of the people over which they rule. It is so clear to us even today. When we reject God's cable connection in order to receive His wisdom and knowledge, we are left only with the wisdom of the world, and we end up failing miserably.

Again, Paul states it well. *“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things - and the things that are not - to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him”* (I Cor. 1:27-29). **What the world considers wisdom is in actuality, very foolish, even nonsensical.** And those who use the wisdom of this world not only cannot see the nonsense in it, they think it is the best thing in the world. And they become very offended when those who use the wisdom of God confront their nonsense with God's truth. And they try their best to then extinguish God's truth so that the world's truth might reign. In their own wisdom, they bring ultimate ruin to their nation.

So James asks the pertinent question, *“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom”* (Ja. 3:13). It's not so important that a person says they are wise; rather it is vital in how they live to reflect their wisdom. One person can boast of how wise they are and yet their life is messed up and full of questionable and contradicting actions. Yet, the wise person is expected to be well informed, in fact an expert, so that

they might demonstrate their wisdom by what they do, not by what they say. Thus it is essential for anyone who is in leadership to show that they have that special understanding by what they do with their life. They are to live a good life, effectively living the truth that they are saying. Their life must be consistent with their words.

It is also imperative that a person who claims to be wise to demonstrate it by having strength and power, yet in gentleness and humility. **Just like a horse that has been broken and trained to submit to a bridle, a wise person is to show gentleness. This gentleness is strength under control, the control of the Spirit of God, enabling us to live a life of godliness.** But this only comes as we have connection to God's perspective through our submission to Jesus Christ as our Savior.

You see, the world's wisdom is more like what James describes as having "*bitter envy and selfish ambition*" (Ja. 3:14). The world's wisdom focuses us on ourselves, and as we rely upon it, we develop selfish zeal that makes life only about ourselves. This selfish zeal causes us to become partisan defenders of the truth that uses truth only to advance our own agendas and for our own advantage, as well as for our own advancement. Through such bitter and partisan defense, the world's wisdom results in denying the very truth it is attempting to defend. Thus the world's wisdom becomes foolishness, self-seeking ambitions of one who claims to be wise, but in reality is only looking out for themselves.

I don't think it takes us too long to see that happening in our world today. There are many persons who see themselves as wise, using the wisdom of this world, yet through their decisions bring dire consequences to the people whom they are to be leading. Their bitter envy and selfish ambitions are destroying the nations of the world, and the common people suffer the most. The wisdom of the world does not promote stability and growth of a nation, but effectively destroys a nation little by little.

This is what James calls "*earthly, unspiritual, demonic*" "wisdom." "*For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice*" (James 3:15).

In his book, *Why Leaders Can't Lead*, "university president and 'management guru,' Warren Bennis spent several years researching a book on leadership. He traveled around the country spending

time with ninety of the most effective and successful leaders in the nation - sixty from corporations and thirty from the public sector. His goal was to find these leader's common traits. At first, he had trouble pinpointing any common traits, for the leaders were more diverse than he had expected.

“But he later wrote: ‘I was finally able to come to some conclusions, of which perhaps the most important is the distinction between leaders and managers; Leaders are people who do the right thing; manager are people who do things right. Both roles are crucial, but they differ profoundly. I often observe people in top positions doing the wrong thing well’

“The same can be said for most people.”² **When we operate only by the wisdom of the world, we end up doing the wrong things well, because we don't have connection with God's perspective, and we seek our own ambitions over anything else.** However, when we have the connection with God's perspective, when we humbly submit to His wisdom through Jesus Christ, we begin to operate with different ambitions, and we end up doing the right things well.

James explains it like this, “*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*” (3:17). It is so different than the wisdom of the world. Here we see five major differences from the wisdom of the world.

First, God's wisdom is pure. This is the basic characteristic of God's wisdom. This is the absence of any sinful attitude or motive. It is completely opposite of the self-seeking attitude of the worldly wisdom. There is no competition for selfish ambition. There is no ego-centric mindset. The pure wisdom of God looks out for the needs of all people, and the leader that practices God's wisdom is peace-loving rather than having a bitter spirit of competitiveness and selfish ambition.

Second, God's wisdom is considerate. It is thoughtful, kind, understanding, caring, selfless, attentive, sympathetic and respectful. It demonstrates God's character as the King of the Universe. Though He has every reason to be severe and retaliatory with us because of our sins against Him, He is

² (Robert J Morgan, *Stories, Illustrations & Quotes*, [Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000] pg. 774)

gentle and kind toward us, desiring that all of us would come to Him. In the same way, those who are called Christian are to follow God's example and model His wisdom, not insisting on our own way, but rather showing love to those around us so as to gently convince them to come back to God.

Third, God's wisdom is submissive. Rather than being bullheaded in trying to get our way, we work toward collaboration, cooperating with one another so as to bring about the best result for all people. This does not mean that we roll over and play dead, but rather we develop partnerships with others so that they might come to understand the benefits of following the Lord's ways. In this way we are "*full of mercy and good fruit,*" helping those who are in need find help and assistance.

Fourth, God's wisdom is impartial. Rather than being self-seeking, looking out only for ourselves and our own ambitions, God's wisdom encourages us to show no favoritism, discriminating against no one, but rather showing love and compassion toward all people. God loves us all and desires our wellbeing. That's why He sent Jesus as our Savior. We are to show that same loving kindness to everyone to help them see the love of God for all people.

Fifth, God's wisdom is sincere. We are to live practical lives to demonstrate the difference of God's perspective so that we might attract all people to Him. So this is not to be a theoretical mindset, but a lifestyle of healthy living demonstrating to the world the value of being connected to God's cable system. God's wisdom makes a huge difference in our lives and it is so different than the world's wisdom, so putting into practice in our lives every day is vital for the world to see.

The wisdom of God grows righteousness in the lives of all who rely upon it. And as we live peaceably with one another, we encourage the harvest of righteousness. That is the value of God's wisdom for our lives. Let's pray.

Father, thank You for Your wisdom that calls us to be pure, compassionate, submissive, impartial, and sincere in the way we live. Thank you for showing us the benefits of having Your wisdom in our lives. Help us to give up our reliance on the world's wisdom, but fully focus on having Your wisdom leading and directing our lives. Continue to call each one of us closer to Yourself, so that we may find Your presence through the Holy Spirit with us each day. Give us the courage to so live according to Your wisdom, so that we might draw all people back to You. This we pray in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, AMEN.