



BACK TO THE BIBLE SERIES: Win the Day!

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Message Title: The Need for Wisdom pt. 2

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**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)**

Fear is a respect, a sense of awe. In the context of Proverbs fear carries the idea of God *knows*; God is the *teacher*; God knows the *truth*; God is the *definer* of what is right and wrong. Therefore, I listen to Him; I learn from Him; I submit to that. That's what it means here in Proverbs. **The fear of the Lord is the beginning.** Beginning does not mean chronologically as much as it means it's the foundation stone. It's not like something I start with and I leave behind but it's the foundation upon which all wisdom is built.

The fool—this Hebrew word for fool is used over and over again in Proverbs and it simply means a “*Know-it-all*” —someone who doesn't need to learn. “I don't need to be instructed; I don't need to listen to what God has to say; I know it all.” The Know-it-all **despises wisdom and instruction.** That's the idea of verse 7. Are you a Know-it-all or do you believe there is one who can offer you wisdom and truth that will help you live with great skill?

Starting in verse 8 he kind of goes on to this discussion about the outflow of your choices. 22:16 I want to pick it up in verse 17. It would come with the question, “How foolish are the foolish?” The answer is, “Even a bird gets it. Even a bird gets it but the foolish do not.” Verse 17:

**Indeed, it is useless to spread the *baited* net
In the sight of any bird;**

In other words, the imagery is it's foolish to set a bird trap while the bird is watching because even a bird gets it. I'm not going there. Verse 18:

**But they, the fools, lie in wait for their own blood;
They ambush their own lives.**

Meaning they set a trap, and then they step in their own trap and **they ambush their own lives.** I would suggest to you life is complicated enough without ambushing your own life. I think the world in which we live has become extremely confusing. I have a heart for these young people that are trying to sort this out and figure it out. It's very complex. It's very confusing. You have hundreds, thousands of voices telling you what's right and wrong and what's good and bad and telling you how to live, and they are supposed to sort this out and make good choices. There was a time in society where it seemed like all of us as adults were on the same page. We had a general sense of morality, a general sense of what's right and wrong. Parents and schools and businesses

and government—we were all on the same page. We were all working together. But those days are long gone. Now those environments are filled with competing voices. It's very difficult for these young people to sort out what's true. It's complex enough without ambushing your own life which is what the text is saying. 25:04

Verse 20:

**Wisdom shouts in the street,
She lifts her voice in the square;
At the head of the noisy *streets* she cries out;
At the entrance of the gates in the city, she utters her sayings:
“How long, O naïve ones, will you love being simple-minded?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing
And fools hate knowledge?” (Vs. 20-22)**

Wisdom is personified as if wisdom is a street preacher and wisdom goes to the streets. Basically, what's described there would be every area of culture. We would say wisdom goes to the streets; wisdom goes to the schools; wisdom goes to the universities; wisdom goes to the marketplace; wisdom goes to the government; wisdom goes to families; wisdom goes to churches and cries out, “How long will you keep acting so foolish and live with the consequences?”

And then in verse 22 she describes three different categories of fools. The first one is the **naïve**. It's the same one mentioned in verse 4. They love being naïve; they love being simple-minded. It's a Hebrew word meaning to be simple-minded, to be gullible—one that doesn't really think about much of anything, one who is easily persuaded, one who basically will believe anything to be true. It is the fruit of this nonsense called *relativism*. Once I've convinced myself that there is no such thing as absolute truth, then anything can be true, and so I simply choose to believe what I want to be true. But the fact of the matter is that that doesn't make it true, and you end up ambushing your own life by that foolishness.

The second category is the **scoffers**. They actually delight themselves in scoffing. The scoffer is another term that is used throughout the book of Proverbs in these cycles. A scoffer is a mocker; it is one who is driven by anger and bitterness. A scoffer is one who scorches anybody in his or her path. Proverbs goes on in the cycle to describe a scoffer as one who, every time he opens his mouth, he burns everyone in the room. Flames come out of his mouth. The scoffer really doesn't care about the facts; the scoffer doesn't care about the truth. The scoffer doesn't care about the community or the culture or the society or even his best friend. He will do what is necessary to advantage himself, including scorching those around him. It is driven by an anger and a bitterness that is rooted deep inside. They actually delight in the damage they do. 28:48

The third category is the **fool**. This is the word that's used in verse 7—the “Know-it-all”. This is the one who doesn't need anyone to tell him or her what to do. “I don't need you to tell me; I don't want you to criticize me. I don't want you to judge me; I don't want you to correct me because I know it all.” When it says the **fools hate knowledge**, again, let's define our term correctly. It's not information. What they don't like is this knowledge that is experience. In other words, the Know-it-all says, “You don't need to tell me; I know it all,” and yet the evidence of his or her life is that everything is breaking down. This is the experience. This is the reality. “Listen, Mr. Know-it-all, it's not working,” but he says, “I hate that; I don't care about

experience. I don't care about the evidence; I don't care about the facts. I don't need you to tell me what to do, I know it all. Verse 23 is wisdom's cry, "It's never too late to become skillful."

**"Turn to my reproof,
Behold I will pour out my spirit on you;
I will make my words known to you."**

It's as simple as this: **God, in His grace and mercy, has made His wisdom available.** He has a treasure chest full of what you and I need to know to live skillfully, and again and again and again wisdom cries in the street, "Just listen to me before it's too late".

Starting in verse 24 down to verse 32 it's basically the consequence if you choose not to. Wisdom is personified and wisdom is said to laugh at the calamity of the fools. Now it's not saying that God is laughing; it's saying that wisdom is laughing. The idea is that wisdom warns again and again and again but when the fool chooses not to listen, the fool sets a trap and then steps in his own trap— ambushes his own life—and wisdom mocks that. Wisdom is constantly there saying, "That is so foolish; it is so ridiculous. Why would you do that?" That's the basic idea of the discussion that follows. I think verse 29 well captures our current culture:

**"Because they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the Lord."**

I don't think there's any doubt as a culture, as a society, we have forgotten God. We have concluded we don't need God's voice. We know it all. I would suggest to you that we, as a nation, are well down the path of becoming a secular nation because of a gross misunderstanding of the constitution and a desire to get God out of every public arena. We want God out of the schools; we want God out of the universities; we want God out of government; we want God out of the neighborhood. We want God out of every social discussion. Christians are not asking for the government to have the state religion be Christianity. Christians are not asking to create a theocracy. We would just like God's voice in the discussion, but we have concluded that there is no such a thing as neutrality. We have to be neutral in the schools; we have to be neutral in the universities; we have to be neutral in the marketplace; we have to be neutral in the social discussions. But I would suggest to you that neutrality is a myth. There is no such thing as neutrality. Once you have eliminated God and His voice the only thing left is to be my own god which is the religion of secularism. As long as we embrace secularism as our national religion, there is no chance for righteousness; there is no chance for justice; there is no chance for equity. It not only breaks down my life individually, it breaks down my family; it breaks down my neighborhood; it breaks down my community; it breaks down our society; it breaks down our culture because every single person will advantage themselves by disadvantaging the community, and a culture cannot survive that. The fruit of that is everywhere around us. Verse 33 ends by reminding us that there is a better way.

**"But he who listens to me shall live securely,
And will be at ease from the dread of evil."**

I just want to close with a couple of comments. I think all of us are aware that within our universe there are what we refer to as *natural laws*. We understand there is such a thing as gravity. I'm not going to the top of a building and jump off. There is such a thing as a need for oxygen to breathe, food to eat, water to drink, rest for my body. These are natural laws and whether or not you're a relativist or not you still, at the end of the day, acknowledge this is true. I

have never known a relativist to go to the top of a building and jump because, at the end of the day, deep in his or her gut there's a reality there is a law here, and no matter what I believe, the law wins.

It is equally true that our universe has other laws. We would call them *moral laws, social laws, spiritual laws* and they are just as true, and they are just as binding. When you choose to ignore them, the consequences are equally disastrous as when you choose to ignore the law of gravity. We as a culture are suffering the effects of thinking we can beat the system—that, because I'm a relativist, I can go to the top of a building and convince myself I can fly and jump off. Guess what? Whether you're a relativist or not, true truth wins, and you plummet to your death. Moral laws, social laws, spiritual laws—the simple-minded naïve fool may come along and say, "There's no such thing as truth; there are no moral laws." But just because that person chooses to believe whatever he or she wants to believe doesn't mean that what that person believes is true. Belief doesn't make it true. Just because the scoffer comes along and scoffs and makes fun of what's true and right doesn't mean it's not true and right. And just because the Know-it-all fool claims to know it all doesn't mean that fool knows it all. At the end of the day every one of us makes a choice as to whether or not we think God knows. After thousands of years of God offering His treasure chest of wisdom, there is overwhelming evidence that God knows the right way for individuals, cultures and societies. You can choose to believe that, or you can choose to be a fool. But listen to me now: "You cannot beat the system."

Our Father, we're thankful that You love us so much You tell us the truth. Lord, we live in a culture that simply denies laws that you have put into this world—moral laws, laws that govern society, laws that define spirituality. We live in a culture where we think we know better and, God, we live with the effects of that foolishness every day. Lord, my prayer would be for every one of us that we would not live the fool, but we would live our lives with the highest degree of skill which begins by acknowledging that You and You alone are right. Lord may this be so in each of our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen. 40:31

Welcome back to Proverbs 1. One of the things we find in Proverbs 1 is the introduction of 3 different types of fools that we talked about. In verse 22 one is called **the naïve fool**. It's a Hebrew word that just means "the simple" in the sense of those who are willing to believe anything is true. I think a lot of this goes back to relativism in our culture and the thought that I can believe whatever I want and that makes it true. Proverbs would say that's naive.

The second is **the scoffer**, and this is the Hebrew word that talks about the fool that's just angry and bitter and scoffs and makes fun of everything and pretty much will do whatever is necessary to advantage themselves. The scoffers are pretty obvious in our culture today.

The third is the most common and it's what I refer to as **the know-It-all fool**. It first shows up in verse 7. This is just the fool that says, don't tell me how to live - I already know! Ultimately the fool ends up destroying himself or herself and then blames everybody else for it and really can't see that It's the result of their own choices and way of living.

The other thing that's worth considering is more and more as a nation, we're becoming a secular nation. We've drifted far from our Christian roots. I think there's a lot of people that feel like if we can just get a couple of election cycles where we elect somebody different, everything will change and go back to the way it was before. I think we have to recognize where a long way from that and we've traveled far down the path of secularism, and there's going to be a

consequence to that.

So we're used to the concept of natural laws like gravity. And we understand that gravity is true whether I choose to believe in it or not. So, if you go up on top of a building, you're free to believe whatever you want to believe about gravity. But if you jump off, gravity wins because it's a law. Well, equally the Proverbs talks about social laws and spiritual laws and they are equally true and they're equally binding, and there's going to be a consequence to violating these laws. So, I think people need to realize we all end up living in the culture we create. And the more secular we become, people want to think we can create a neutral culture in government and in the workplace, but it's not neutral. It's secular. And basically, secularism is the new religion that's being forced on most people.

So as long as we keep going down this path, the righteous won't prevail. And so, the wicked are those who are willing to disadvantage others to advantage themselves. And as long as they prevail, there's no chance for Shalom. There's no chance for flourishing. There's no chance for justice and equity and equality. These are all things we think we want, but it's never going to happen on the path that we're on. So that also creates opportunity for us as Christians and for us as the church to step up, to at least reveal pockets of flourishing, to give glimpses of the world the way God intended it to be. And actually, it's a great opportunity to advance the gospel if we choose to see it that way!