

Proverbs 1

1 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;

2 To know wisdom and instruction; to perceive the words of understanding;

3 To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity;

4 To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.

5 A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels:

6 To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.

8 My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

9 For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck.

10 My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.

11 If they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause:

12 Let us swallow them up alive as the grave; and whole, as those that go down into the pit:

13 We shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil:

14 Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse:

15 My son, walk not thou in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path:

16 For their feet run to evil, and make haste to shed blood.

17 Surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird.

18 And they lay wait for their own blood; they lurk privily for their own lives.

19 So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain; which taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

20 Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets:

21 She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying,

22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorners delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded;

25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:

26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh;

27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you.

28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me:

29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD:

30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof.

31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.

32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

The Proverbs come to us by way of Solomon, whose very name means the man of peace. Why would we pay heed to what Solomon has to say, other than the fact that his words are carefully preserved in the Bible? Might I suggest at least two answers? (1) Adhering to his counsel brings peace. (2) These words from 1 Kings 4:29-34:

29 And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore.

30 And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt.

31 For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about.

32 And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five.

³³ And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes.

³⁴ And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

Only a blithering idiot would not give close attention to the advice of such a man as Solomon, notwithstanding his many foibles.

That advice begins with this bold statement: **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction.** (Proverbs 1:7).

The fear of God has been the subject of many sermons in this church over the years. Just go to our website and type in “Fear of God” if you don’t believe me. Those are available for review at any time.

But let’s look at that filial fear and respect in the light of Solomon’s words. That fear is the beginning of knowledge, which is to say you are not smart or intelligent if you don’t have that fear, no matter how many degrees you may hold. True knowledge and wisdom begins with recognizing and respecting God’s holiness and power, rather than just accumulating facts and information.

The “fear of the Lord” is a phrase which occurs often through the Bible, but especially in the Proverbs. Consider these remarks from Benson: *The fear of the Lord — That is, reverence for and obedience to God; is the beginning of knowledge — The foundation and source of it; without which all other knowledge is vain and useless. Mark well this sentence, reader: all wisdom, which is not founded in religion, in the true and genuine fear of God, is empty and unprofitable, and will be found such in the time of affliction, in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment.*

The next piece of counsel, part 2 of Solomon’s opening 2-part salvo, is this: **My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the**

law of thy mother: for they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. (Proverbs 1:8, 9).

Every youngster, to one extent or another, and at one time or another, believes their parents are idiots. In many cases, the parents may in fact be idiots. (“Idiot” is commonly used to describe a foolish, stupid or unwise person). But as a general rule, a child is far better to heed this advice.

Note the text differentiates between mother and father. As to father, the focus is on instruction, as ordinarily the father is perceived to be more of a teacher than a mother, at least on matters of substance.

On the other hand, the focus concerning the mother seems to be that “law” instilled in children during their tender years, when ordinarily more time is spent with the mother and a type of nurturing instruction is accomplished. Solomon includes this component of his instruction because children, when grown, *are very prone to slight their mothers’ advice, because of the infirmity of their sex, and because they have not that dependance upon, and expectation from their mothers, which they have from their fathers.* (Benson).

And let’s not forget this topic is addressed in one of the “ten commandments”: **Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.** (Exodus 20:12). Paul pounds this theme home: **Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.** (Ephesians 6:1-3).

Beginning at verse 10, Solomon speaks to the issue of hanging out with the wrong people. In the corrections world, it is well recognized that spending your time with others engaged in criminal activities or general mischief only leads to more crime or misconduct. It’s all about who you associate with.

Solomon sternly warns **if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.** (Proverbs 1:10). He then gives a vivid description of how the wrongdoers entice you, with vapid promises and representations. (Proverbs 1:11-14). Solomon next implores proactive action: Don't walk with them, don't have anything to do with their way, actively **refrain thy foot from their path** (Proverbs 1:15) because they offer nothing but evil and violence (Proverbs 1:16).

Given the colorful and dynamic language used in these verses, we are probably looking at a reference to brigandage, an extreme example that includes all the lesser in the greater.

Brigandage refers to organized robbery, plunder, or pillage, often committed by armed bands in rural, mountainous, or isolated areas. It is the illegal activity of brigands (bandits/outlaws) who prey on travelers or local communities. It frequently implies lawlessness, banditry, and a breakdown of public order.

To all such riffraff, Solomon implores the young people to avoid their courses, their conversation and their company. Suppress any desires to hang out with such people and refrain (restrain) yourself at all cost of having anything to do with them. *The society of the wicked (way or path) is dangerous. Avoid the beginnings of sin.* (Jamieson-Fausset-Brown). Dr. Gill says this: *refrain thy foot from their path; their manner and course of life; do not follow it, nor join them in it; when there is an inclination or a temptation to it, withstand it; stop in time, do not proceed, but draw back, and go on in the way thou hast been trained up in, and remember the instructions of thy parents.*

Verses 20-23 present an interesting little paragraph dealing with accessible wisdom. God's wisdom is not hidden; it is out in the open, in public, in busy and noisy places such as the marketplace, public square and city gates, and is accessible. She calls aloud, proclaims openly, exhorts and warns. *She lifts up her voice, not in solitude, but in the haunts of men "without," i. e., outside the walls, in the streets, at the highest point*

of all places of concourse, in the open space of the gates where the elders meet and the king sits in judgment, in the heart of the city itself[.] (Barnes).

But the simple ones passing by, who love simplicity, together with the scorers and fools, hate wisdom's knowledge. Their failure to adhere to this public wisdom is inexcusable given the public, high profile and loud nature of the described presentation. She cries! She's outside in the streets! You can't miss her. This wisdom is up in their face, in their grill, and they hate it.

Great reward awaits those who heed this wisdom. It's two-fold. (1) God's spirit is poured out on them; and (2) God will make known his words to them. What more can anyone ask for? Those who heed will be led by the Holy Spirit into truth and eternal life.

Remember, the Old Testament prophets, Jesus himself and the apostles all preached in the streets, city gates and other public places. They delivered their messages near public traffic to reach the widest audiences. I give just a few Biblical samples to establish this point:

- Jeremiah was to **stand in the gate** and proclaim God's warnings to all that entered those gates (Jeremiah 7:2);
- Jonah preached in the streets of Nineveh **a day's journey** (Jonah 3:1-4);
- Jesus sat daily teaching in the temple (Matthew 26:55), he **spoke openly to the world and taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort** (John 18:20), he taught **by the sea side** to the whole multitude that **was by the sea on the land** (Mark 4:1), and he spoke in a parable of directing servants to **go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city and into the highways and hedges** (Luke 14:21, 23); and,
- Peter lifted up his voice in public places such as Jerusalem (Acts 2:14, et seq.) and (with John) in the temple (Acts 3:11, et seq.) while Paul often did the same, such as at Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22 et seq.) and daily in the market places of Athens (Acts 17:16, 17).

Such examples are similar to the preaching activities of this church. We are in good company indeed.

But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, etc. (Proverbs 1:25, *et al*). We are now presented with what happens when all of this valuable counsel is soundly and willingly rejected as of no value and treated as nothing. We now see how dangerous it is not to hearken to this Word of God.

First consequence: God laughs and mocks your calamity, fear, destruction and distress. Laughter is a rhythmic, involuntary vocal and physical expression of amusement and joy. Laughter releases the body's natural "feel-good" chemicals. God laughs! And God's people laugh. **Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.** (Revelation 18:20).

Second consequence: God won't answer their desperate calls for help. There is an acceptable time to call on the Lord. **Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near[.]** (Isaiah 55:6). **I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.** (Proverbs 8:17). But now, having rejected God's Word, He doesn't know them and will not answer. (Luke 13:25, 27).

Third consequence: They will **eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.** (Proverbs 1:31). They shall receive punishments answerable to their proud sins. What was sweet in their mouths shall be bitter in their bellies. The devices they have plotted against others will fall upon themselves. **The shew of their countenance doth witness against them; and they declare their sin as Sodom, they hide it not. Woe unto their soul! For they have rewarded evil unto themselves. * * * Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him.** (Isaiah 3:9, 11). We want the promises of Proverbs 1:33.