



PARKSIDE
WWW.PARKSIDEVISALIA.ORG

LIFE NEWS

The weekly newsletter of Parkside Chapel



Instruction from a **Father**

**BY JEREMIAH SHAWVER
YOUTH PASTOR**

As we enter the Christmas season, I want to walk through a passage from the book of Proverbs. Many of us will be putting up decorations in the next week. We will either be starting or finishing our shopping and making plans to be with family and friends.

Proverbs may seem to be an odd place to go as we open the season of giving. The author of Proverbs, though, points to wisdom as the most valuable thing we could get. The Proverbs are a collection of wisdom sayings; they are often short and make a general point about the way of the wise person and the way of the fool. The first nine chapters give us a guide to the book. These chapters are written from a father to his son, and it is here that the author gives a picture of the guidance of fatherly wisdom so that those who read this section might pass down this wisdom to future generations. These are not meant to be one father's wisdom for his son but wisdom which any father or mother can use to speak into the life of their child.

The motto of Proverbs in 1:7 states that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. Therefore, the person who finds wisdom is also the one who fears the Lord.

When man seeks the Lord, he will find Him and will acquire wisdom; with wisdom comes blessing. It is with that in mind that I want to look at Proverbs 3:13-26 (The following translation is my own).

- ¹³Blessed is the man who finds wisdom
And the man who obtains understanding
- ¹⁴For she (wisdom) is better than the profit of silver
And her revenue (is better) than the gain of fine gold
- ¹⁵She is more precious than precious jewels
And all the desirable things are not comparable to her
- ¹⁶Length of days are in her right hand
In her left hand are riches and honor
- ¹⁷Her paths are pleasant ways
And all her paths are peace.
- ¹⁸She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her
And those who grasp her are made happy.
- ¹⁹With wisdom the Lord founded the earth
He established the heavens with understanding
- ²⁰By his knowledge the depths were broken open
And the clouds dripped the dew
- ²¹My son, do not let them depart from your eyes

- Keep sound wisdom and discretion
²² So that they should be life to your soul
 And grace to your neck
²³ Then you will walk safely on your path
 And you will not strike your foot
²⁴ When you lie down you will not be afraid
 And you will lie down
 And your sleep shall be sweet
²⁵ Do not be afraid because of the terror of suddenness
 Or the destruction of the wicked when it comes
²⁶ For the Lord will be for your confidence
 And he shall keep your foot from being caught.

The author of this section of Proverbs begins this section of fatherly advice by extolling the value of wisdom. Wisdom is not simply to be one thing that the son pursues. No. Wisdom is more valuable than silver or gold. The money we have or the gifts we buy cannot compare to the value of the wisdom of God. Not only is wisdom more valuable than gold and silver, but wisdom is also where the son can find life and peace. It is in the wisdom of God the son will find what he may be searching for in the riches of this world. The father continues in verse eighteen to use the imagery of the Tree of Life to show the value of wisdom. The Tree of Life in Genesis 3 was a tree from which Adam and Eve could eat and which would give them everlasting life. He instead ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil; this brought death on all men. Those who find wisdom will live. They will begin to live the life they were meant to have in Eden. In contrast, those who reject wisdom will, like Adam, find only death and destruction.

The reader is left wondering, “What is the Wisdom of God?” While the proverbs will give us short sayings on what is wise and what is foolish, Ecclesiastes will tell us that wisdom in this sense is useless. Scripture answers a different question: Not “what” but “Who is the Wisdom of God?” Proverbs 1:7 points us in this direction by showing us that to fear the Lord will put us on the path of life. Ecclesiastes concludes with a plea to serve God and keep his commands. 1 Corinthians 1 tells us that Christ is the Wisdom of God. That faith in him is synonymous with the “fear of the Lord.” It is when we search for him that we find something more valuable than treasure, we find peace; we find the tree of life (Rev. 22) so that we might live even though we die (John 11). When we read the Proverbs, we understand that the fear of the Lord begins with the belief in Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. We look to

the book of Proverbs as a guide to living a life that flows from the fear of the Lord.

We cannot undervalue the importance of Christ here; in fact, the following verse reinforces the truth that Christ is the Wisdom of God. It is in the words of Wisdom that God created the world, the writer of Proverbs tells us. John 1 confirms that all things were created and held together by the Word of God, namely Jesus Christ. The Father encourages his son to seek after that which God used to create the whole of the universe, and in seeking wisdom and keeping it before him always, he will find life. Or as Paul writes in Colossians 3, “Set your minds on things above where Christ is seated...” The life the son will find is one which is aligned with the path of God. It is in this path we can find peace and rest. Not only peace and rest but a life without condemnation. As we walk in the wisdom of God, avoiding the snares of the enemy and walking in the path of God, we will not have to worry about the day the wicked are judged. Paul often prays for churches that they would be mature in Christ that they would be able to stand blameless on the day of judgment. This is the hope of the father for his son. Not that he would make his Father proud but that he would be in right standing with God.

With Christ at the center of our reading of this section of Proverbs, what are we to do with this passage? First, the first nine chapters of Proverbs are meant to be passed on to future generations. We are meant to be calling those in our families to a life of wisdom—not the wisdom of this world—but the wisdom of God (who is Christ) to a life in the light of Christ. This means we must be encouraging our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, and children in our church to seek wisdom. It is only from the wisdom of God that they will find value, peace, and life. Second, we must pass this wisdom on in our communities. We must be sharing Christ with those around us. As we do this, we live lives of wisdom so that they will see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven. Finally, Proverbs points us to something crucial in the community of faith. The author of Proverbs does not leave the son with “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Instead, he walks through what life in light of the Wisdom of God looks like. Evangelism is one part of discipleship. We are meant to walk with those who are younger in the faith that they would be able to live their lives in light of the Wisdom of God—that is, Christ.

by Jeremiah Shawver, Youth Pastor