FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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SERMON: What is Wisdom?
SERIES: Fatherly Wisdom
SCRIPTURES: 1 Kings 3:5-12, Proverbs 1:1-7, 2:6-12, 20
SPEAKERS: Brady Smith
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Credit to Daniel & Jon Akin, authors of Christ-Centered Expository on Proverbs

Good morning, Five Forks Church. For those of you here in the room of tuning in online, what a blessing it is to worship our Lord together.

Growing up, one of my TV favorite shows to watch was **Boy Meets World.** It's a show based on the life of a boy named Cory Matthews who is growing up in suburbs of Philadelphia. The show starts when Cory is just a middle school boy and follows him through 7 seasons as he eventually reaches young adulthood.

Throughout the show, young Cory experiences many wacky and exciting moments. During these times, there was one man who was always there to keep him in check, guide him, and provide him and his friends with some much-needed wisdom as they grew older and matured. That man was his homeroom teacher, and coincidentally, his next-door neighbor, **Mr. Feeny.**

It's funny thinking back on it, when I was younger watching this show, I felt similar to how Cory did at the beginning as a young middle schooler. He would often scoff at Mr. Feeny, complaining about how "annoying" he was with his constant nagging and so on…

However, as I grew up, just like Cory did throughout the show, he eventually expresses sincere gratitude to Mr. Feeny for all the wisdom he provided over the years. Here is a short video showcasing some of that wisdom…

Video Clip

There's something about that, isn't there? The wise words of someone who has gone before you, teaching you and guiding you through this thing we call "life". As it says in Proverbs 15:22,

Plans go wrong for lack of advice; many advisers bring success. (Proverbs 15:22 NLT)

We need advisers and the wisdom they can provide us. Perhaps not so coincidentally, this verse we just read comes from the book of Proverbs, and it's actually here in the book of Proverbs that we will be finding ourselves for these next 4 weeks as we begin a new sermon series called: **Fatherly Wisdom**

As a teenager, I often said the book of Proverbs was my favorite in all of Scripture. That is in large part because I loved the many wise, one verse Proverbs found throughout Chapters 10-31 of the book. For example, my favorite verse as a teenager, Proverbs 17:17…

A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in time of need. (Proverbs 17:17 NLT)

I loved quoting verses like this because it helped enlighten me to a little nugget of wisdom. Not only that, but whenever I would quote it, it often made me feel quite wise myself. Albeit, I often times wouldn't fully understand what the Proverb meant, but as a 14-year-old it at least made me feel wise quoting it!

Now, like I mentioned, it was often the middle chapters of Proverbs that I preferred to read, as they are full of these "nugget of wisdom" verses. As a result, I often skipped the beginning 9 chapters.

Well, let me tell you all this… As a teenager thinking he was becoming all wise by being able to quote these random verses from Proverbs, I was an absolute fool for skipping out on the first 9 chapters.

I say this because Proverbs 1-9 contains some of the greatest wisdom you will ever find in this world, wisdom that I believe is essential for each of us to learn today! That is why we are going to take these next four weeks to explore this profound wisdom.

As we look to do this, there are 3 goals we have for today:

First, we will look into **The Background of Proverbs**.

Then second, we will answer a pivotal question… **What is wisdom?**

Before concluding our morning by answering another question… **How do you get wisdom?**

This will set us up for the remainder of our series, and my prayer is that by the end of these four weeks we will all soak up, receive, and be changed by this Fatherly Wisdom.

Alright, let's now dive into…

I. The Background of Proverbs 1-9

Beginning by looking at…

A. The Author

The author of Proverbs was also born into an incredibly wealthy family where he could have practically anything he wanted. Kind of like the character named Veruca Salt from Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. Whatever she asked for, she received. Whether that was a Golden Ticket or another pony, she got it.

In a similar way, the author of Proverbs had the wealth and power to essentially get anything he wanted, because the author was non-other than **Solomon**, the son of David, King of Israel.

As the prince and eventual future king, Solomon could have anything he wanted, so it's shocking to find that in 1 Kings, soon after David's passing and Solomon now becoming king, we read this brief story where God asks this question to Solomon…

5 That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!" (1 Kings 3:5 NLT)

I understand Solomon was the new king, but I can't help but question God in this moment… why him? Why Solomon? Solomon already has "The Golden Ticket" when it comes to life, so why not provide this once-in-a-lifetime offer to someone else, God? Furthermore, what else could Solomon possibly want?

Well, let's continue reading…

6 Solomon replied, "You showed great and faithful love to your servant my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued to show this great and faithful love to him today by giving him a son to sit on his throne.

7 "Now, O Lord my God, you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. 8 And here I am in the midst of your own chosen people, a nation so great and numerous they cannot be counted! 9 Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great people of yours?"

10 The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom. 11 So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people with justice and have not asked for a long life or wealth or the death of your enemies— 12 I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding heart such as no one else has had or ever will have! (1 Kings 3:6-12 NLT)

I find Solomon's request so profound. How often do we see or hear stories of people who do have a vast amount of material wealth continually claw and fight their way to acquire more. More money, more time, more power… Like when billionaire John D Rockefeller was once asked how much money is enough, he answered, "just a little bit more".

Solomon could have easily requested any of those things, asking for just a little bit more… yet he didn't. He was instead humble enough to ask for the one thing that he could never acquire without God's help… Wisdom.

Because of this display of humility, God graciously provides Solomon with this wise and understanding heart, and later on in 1 Kings we find this description of Solomon's wisdom…

[29] God gave Solomon very great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore. [30] In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt. [31] He was wiser than anyone else… (1 Kings 4:29-31a)

The question now is… What is Solomon going to do with that wisdom? Well, thankfully for us, he shared it with the world.

[32] He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. [34] And kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:32, 34)

Of those 3,000 or so Proverbs Solomon composed, we find a portion of them contained right here towards the middle of our Bibles, sitting in what we call the book of Proverbs.

So that is our author is the book of Proverbs: King Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived. The next thing I'd now like for us to consider as we look at the background of Proverbs is…

B. What's the Purpose of Proverbs?

Found in the Creation Story of Genesis 1-2, there is a phrase that is continuously repeated throughout the process… **"It was good."** Creation in the beginning was exactly as God had intended, and everything was in perfect harmony between God, His world, and His people. It was good!

But then, "The Fall" happened in Genesis 3 as Adam and Eve disobeyed God, trying to seek knowledge and wisdom that was apart from God. **(Pic)** Immediately the "vertical" relationship between God and man got all out of whack, and when that happened, the horizontal relationships that humanity shared with each other also went into disarray. Why do you think so soon after The Fall came the story of the first ever murder in Genesis 4?

You see, because of sin there are now **barriers and brokenness**.
Barriers and brokenness **between us and God**.
Barriers and brokenness **between us and others**.
Barriers and brokenness **between us and the world**.

Proverbs is all about restoring the harmony God initially created by relying on His wisdom and obeying it. It's about removing the barriers and fixing the brokenness as we follow through living in God's wisdom.

Just listen to what Solomon wrote in Proverbs 2,

6 For the Lord grants wisdom! From his mouth come knowledge and understanding. 7 He grants a treasure of common sense to the honest. He is a shield to those who walk with integrity. 8 He guards the paths of the just and protects those who are faithful to him.

9 Then you will understand what is right, just, and fair, and you will find the right way to go. 10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will fill you with joy. 11 Wise choices will watch over you. Understanding will keep you safe. 12 Wisdom will save you from evil people, those whose words are twisted.

20 So follow the steps of the good, and stay on the paths of the righteous. (Proverbs 2:6-12, 20)

Proverbs is about us becoming filled with the wisdom of God through a relationship with Him, so that we can live as He originally intended.

As author Jon Akin once put it, **"When our vertical relationship with God is right through Jesus, we can be right with others and the world around us."**

To help make sure our vertical relationship is right with God, we need the help of His wisdom!
To help make sure our horizontal relationships with each other are right, we need the help of God's wisdom!

The very wisdom that He first provided to Solomon, which Solomon then shared and wrote in the book of Proverbs. Let's take a quick look now at…

C. The Layout of Proverbs

As I mentioned at the start, Proverbs is broken into 2 main sections. **The first nine chapters**, which is what we will be focusing on during this series, is essentially **"The Introduction"** to the rest of the book.

It's during this first section that Solomon is speaking directly to his son, which Biblical Scholars presume to be the crown prince, Rehoboam. Solomon provides him with all kinds of great Fatherly Wisdom on topics like money, sexual purity, and more. Some topics that we will be looking into ourselves later on throughout this series.

However, what Solomon does during these first nine chapters is so much more than providing wisdom on certain topics. Throughout this "introduction" and display of fatherly wisdom to his son, Solomon also provided answers to these two key questions…

What is Wisdom?
How Do You Get Wisdom?

You see, Proverbs 1-9 is all about preparing us to be able to properly use the wisdom found throughout the remainder of the book in Chapters 10-31, the portion of the book that most people are familiar with.

We, ourselves, must be prepared, so with our new understanding of the background of the book of Proverbs, let us now begin that preparation process and answer that first key question…

II. What is Wisdom?

Back in the year 2000, the Clay Mathematics Institute launched a challenge to get people to solve 7 different math problems deemed as "unsolvable". For each question answered, a $1 million reward is on the table.

To this day, no one has yet to solve either of those 7 problems. However, if one day someone were to crack the code and solve one of these problems, I have no

doubt people would say, “Wow, that person must be is incredibly wise to be able to solve that!”

However, I’m not sure “wise” would be the correct word to use here. You see, sometimes I think we get biblical wisdom confused with intelligence and having a high IQ, but it most certainly is not! **Biblical wisdom has nothing to do with having a high IQ!**

Thank goodness for me… ☺

That does raise an obvious question though… What is biblical wisdom all about then? Here is going to be our quick and easy answer: **Biblical wisdom is about making the right choice based on the knowledge we receive from God’s Word.**

Let’s unpack this a little bit more. If you have your Bibles, open them up to Proverbs 1, starting at verse 1, and let’s see what Solomon has to teach us.

As we just went over, Proverbs 1-9 essentially serves as the introduction to the rest of the book. If that’s the case, then what we are going to focus on for the remainder of our sermon is the “Introduction to the introduction” that we find in the first 7 verses to Proverbs.

Before Solomon begins to share his Fatherly Wisdom, he wants to make sure we understand just what exactly wisdom is, and the first thing he makes clear about wisdom is that…

A. Wisdom is Correction and Understanding

As Solomon begins this book of Proverbs, he provides a simple introduction about himself and then he begins to explain what these proverbs are all about starting in verse 2,

[1] These are the proverbs of Solomon, David’s son, king of Israel. [2] Their purpose is to teach people wisdom and discipline, to help them understand the insights of the wise. (Proverbs 1:1-2 NLT)

Now of course the purpose of Proverbs is to teach us wisdom, but what does Solomon mean by that? He'll answer that question over the course of the next few verses, and beginning here in verse 2 he says that another key purpose of the Proverbs is to teach us **discipline**.

At first, that may seem a little confusing … What do discipline and wisdom have in common? Well, in the original Hebrew, the word we translate as discipline is the Hebrew word **musar**, which means **to correct.**

What Solomon is saying here is that **true wisdom begins by embracing humility and recognizing the fact that you DO NOT know everything.**

I remember back when I was in Bible College a student asked our one professor a tricky historical question about the Babylonian empire. My professor paused to think for a moment, then simply said, "I do not know. But I will do some research, and try to get us a proper answer for the next class."

Wisdom is being disciplined to understand and correct your thinking, rather than just assuming whatever you initially think is right 100% of the time. My professor could have just blurted out some random answer and educated guess, but that would have been a lack of discipline and wisdom. We must humble ourselves, or as Solomon himself would later explain in Proverbs 12:15,

Fools think their own way is right, but the wise listen to others. (Proverbs 12:15 NLT)

Musar is all about a discipleship type of mindset where you have those around you who can help correct you and bring a proper understanding. Where you have people that you can go to when you're unsure of what to do next when life throws a curveball your way.

In order to become wise, you need those in your life who can help correct you when you're wrong. Do you have someone like that?

Do you have someone that you respect enough that if they called you and said, "What on earth are you doing? What you did was wrong and you need to be corrected!" Would you be humble enough to receive that well from them?

Solomon explains that wisdom begins with gaining a proper understanding and receiving correction when necessary. Then, in verse 3, he tells us that…

B. Wisdom is the Knowledge of Good and Evil

Listen to this in verse 3,

[3] Their purpose is to teach people to live disciplined and successful lives, to help them do what is right, just, and fair. (Proverbs 1:3)

Solomon says that the purpose of the Proverbs is to help teach people, help teach you, to do what is right, just, and fair. What this means is that…

A biblically wise person is rooted in the righteousness in God, who can tell the difference between right and wrong in all the situations of life, and then choose to do the right thing.

For example, think back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3…

In the Garden, God places the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and then He forbids Adam and Eve from eating of its fruit. Why do you think that is?

Is it because He's trying to create some rule that He knows they'll eventually break so that He later sends His Son to die for sinners and save us? No, I don't think that's the case.

Rather, I believe it was God trying to teach Adam and Eve, trying to teach humanity as a whole, that we must rely on Him and His wisdom of what is right and wrong, rather than deciding for ourselves.

Let me make this 100% clear, **God is the One who determines what is good and evil! It is not for us to decide.**

We must submit to Him, we must submit to His wisdom contained within His Word, rather than giving into the temptation of the serpent who deceived Adam and Eve into thinking that they could decide that truth for themselves.

Solomon understood this when he asked God to provide him with a true wisdom…

[9] "Give me an understanding heart so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong." (1 Kings 3:9a NLT)

Wisdom is having the knowledge of good and evil, and that knowledge must only come from God and God alone, and as disciples of Jesus we must exemplify wisdom in obeying and doing what is good.

Okay, the next aspect of Wisdom that Solomon teaches us is that…

C. Wisdom is Discernment

Moving on to verse 4 in Proverbs 1,

[4] These proverbs will give insight to the simple, knowledge and discernment to the young.

Breaking down this verse I believe we must first answer the question… What is discernment?

Simply put, **discernment is the ability to read a situation correct, and wisdom in discernment is then <u>making the right choice.</u>**

Furthermore, as Solomon is writing Proverbs, his explains that his specific goal is to help those who are young obtain the wisdom of discernment.

Think about it, someone who is young and inexperienced often times lack the knowledge to do what is right in a certain situation. For example, if one of the burners of your stove is on, you will see the heating element becoming a fierce red **(Pic)**. As someone with experienced and knowledge, you know that when you see that color, the stove is on and it is HOT, which means the right decision to make in that scenario is to NOT touch the hot stove.

However, a young child who lacks the experience and knowledge may see a bright, shiny red thing and want to touch it out of curiosity, thus burning their hand in the process.

As Solomon is writing out these Proverbs, his goal is to help teach the young and inexperienced the true wisdom of God so that they may not make the foolish mistake of getting burned. That is often why you see Proverbs addressing the importance of parents teaching their children what is right and wrong, and why Solomon spends the first 9 chapters of Proverbs speaking directly towards his son so that he may come to possess the wisdom of discernment.

Again, wisdom is discernment, but there is one more piece to wisdom that Solomon explains when he says that…

D. Wisdom is Obtaining Guidance

Proverbs 1:5-6, Solomon writes,

5 Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser. Let those with understanding receive guidance 6 by exploring the meaning in these proverbs and parables, the words of the wise and their riddles. (Proverbs 1:1-6 NLT)
Taking a closer look at verse 5, I find something interesting… Just a moment ago in verse 4, Solomon said that his audience the young and inexperienced. Essentially it was for those who lacked wisdom. Now, he is saying that part of the purpose of these Proverbs is actually for those who are already wise?

5 Let the wise listen to these proverbs and become even wiser.

What does he mean by this? Well, I think it's actually quite simple…

Biblical wisdom is about being rooted in continuous growth. There is no clear "finish line" or "target" that you must reach in becoming fully wise. Rather, being fully wise is about constantly reflecting on and pursuing the wisdom of God.

As author Jon Akin put it,

Wisdom is not a goal to attain; it's a pursuit that you spend your whole life on.

And it's this continuous pursuit that becomes your guiding light for how to live like Jesus and be full of his wisdom.

Alright, let's take a quick moment to recap all that Solomon has explained to us here at the start:

Biblical wisdom is about making the right choice based on the knowledge we receive from God's Word. We do this through…

Correction & Understanding
The Knowledge of Good and Evil
Discernment
Obtaining Guidance

Looking at this, I think it's safe to say that this is a pretty tall task. Quite honestly, I read this and feel pretty intimidated. This is a lot to try and achieve, and I think there is a key question that each of us may have after learning about what wisdom is all about. That question is…

III. How Do You Get Wisdom?

Thankfully, Solomon in his wisdom did not leave us without instruction as he conclude his introduction to Proverbs will one more piece of advice in verse 7,

Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:7 NLT)

How can one become wise?
How can one learn to read situations correctly and make wise decisions?
How can one receive this multi-faceted wisdom?

Solomon provides a clear answer: "**Fear of the Lord is the foundation of true knowledge"**

What does the “fear of the Lord” mean? In essence, it’s about having reverence for God. The feeling of deep respect, honor, and sacredness of who God is.

The foundation of true wisdom and the way to retrieve this biblical wisdom is to rely on God in each and every moment and aspect of life. As Solomon famously wrote in Proverbs 3,

[5] Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. [6] Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Seek his will in ALL you do! So often Christians think that doing things like going to church, serving others, reading our Bibles are the “godly” things we do in life. Then everything else is completely separate, like going to work, helping you’re your kid’s soccer team, paying the bills, and more…

Yet here Solomon crushes that idea of thinking. **Every nook and cranny of your life is to be governed by God and His wisdom.** He alone is our guiding light, He alone is the source of our wisdom, He alone is our foundation of true knowledge.

As we close, I’d like you to think on this…
What if wisdom isn’t really about learning a concept or set of ideas to follow?

What if wisdom was really about a person you could know and have a relationship with?

What if wisdom was actually a person you could love and walk with, and by simply knowing, loving, and following that person it could actually make you wise?

What if wisdom was a person who spoke to you, and by listening you could actually grow in wisdom yourself?

What Proverbs teaches us is that Wisdom isn’t just a bunch of “tips and tricks” to a happy life. Instead, **Wisdom is a person, and that person is Jesus. And the way you can achieve wisdom is through a relationship with Jesus so that you can be reconciled with God, reconciled with others, and reconciled with the world around you.**

Through a relationship with Jesus, you can begin to achieve the true wisdom that he shows, the true wisdom found in the book of Proverbs.

Let's pray.

Benediction:

As we close, allow me to read these words from Isaiah 11,

[2] And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. [3] He will delight in obeying the Lord. (Isaiah 11:2-3a)

May the Spirit of the Lord and His wisdom rest on us as we depart.

Have a great week.