**New Hope Sermon 10 27 21 Finding wisdom**

**Introduction**

In the lives of almost everyone in our church, making wise decisions is a critical issue. So, our sermon this week is on “Finding Wisdom.” Since a picture is worth a thousand words., let me start with a few graphics on wisdom – that will make you smile and get us started on this topic together.

  

  

Several key points we will consider: 1. There is a difference between wisdom and knowledge. 2. Wisdom comes from God, so we need to seek it in His Word and dig and sift for it. 3. We gain wisdom as we listen to wise counselors. 4. Wisdom is not living a perfect life. It is applying God’s discernment to reality and approaching people and life’s circumstances with God’s understanding, grace and compassion.

1. **The Difference Between Wisdom and Knowledge**

The difference between wisdom and knowledge is wonderfully illustrated in the story of Solomon and the two prostitutes in I Kings 3. Two prostitutes who worked in the same brothel each birthed a baby within 3 days of each other. One night the baby of one of the women died as its mother rolled over onto it, so she crept in to the other’s woman’s room and replaced her dead baby for the live baby of the other woman. In the morning the second woman awoke and discovered the dead baby, but knew it was not her child. So they went to King Solomon for his arbitration:

17“Please, my lord,” one of them began, “this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was with me in the house. 18Three days later this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there were only two of us in the house. 19“But her baby died during the night when she rolled over on it. 20Then she got up in the night and took my son from beside me while I was asleep. She laid her dead child in my arms and took mine to sleep beside her. 21And in the morning when I tried to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn’t my son at all.”

22Then the other woman interrupted, “It certainly was your son, and the living child is mine.”

“No,” the first woman said, “the living child is mine, and the dead one is yours.” And so they argued back and forth before the king.

23Then the king said, “Let’s get the facts straight. Both of you claim the living child is yours, and each says that the dead one belongs to the other. 24 All right, bring me a sword.” So a sword was brought to the king.

25Then he said, “Cut the living child in two, and give half to one woman and half to the other!”

2 6Then the woman who was the real mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, “Oh no, my lord! Give her the child—please do not kill him!” But the other woman said, “All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!” 27Then the king said, “Do not kill the child, but give him to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!” NLT

Two things to note in this ruling. First, it happened soon after the Lord gave Solomon His wisdom, in answer to Solomon’s request (I Kings 3:5-6).. And second, this incident happened centuries before there was any use of DNA and other forensic testing in cases to get the facts straight. So, Solomon only had limited knowledge of what was the truth presented to him. His wisdom was in finding a way to discern the real mother through her natural emotional attachment to her son. Wisdom goes beyond facts to bring justice and grace to situations.

The Biblical writer James describes this kind of wisdom in daily living. He says:

13If you are wise and understand God’s ways, prove it by living an honorable life, doing good works with the humility that comes from wisdom. …17 The wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. James 3: 13-17, NLT

Passion adds, in v. 17:

 But the wisdom from above is always pure,[[f](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-11622f)] filled with peace, considerate and teachable.[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-11622g)] It is filled with love[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-11622h)] and never displays prejudice or hypocrisy[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT" \l "fen-TPT-11622i" \o "See footnote i)] in any form 18and it always bears the beautiful harvest of righteousness! Good seeds of wisdom’s fruit will be planted with peaceful acts by those who cherish making peace.

 Unfortunately, knowledge alone does not usually abound in these godly qualities. Wisdom includes these qualities as it teaches us how to use our knowledge in appropriate and redemptive ways. – as in how to use the tomato as a fruit!

But there is another key distinction between knowledge and wisdom. The factor of revelation. When Paul prays for the Ephesian believers, he asks for the Spirit-gifts “of wisdom and revelation from God to know Him better” (Eph.1:17). I expect God’s revelation of the sword may be in play in Solomon’s story. Often His revelation will be what we need in our studies, job choices, money management and relationships as well. Revelation will help us get beyond the presenting facts and go deeper into motivations, real truth, and pertinent research that applies to our particular knowledge quest – in research, in writing papers, in understanding people in conflictual situations, in areas of spiritual warfare, etc.

Don McCurry tells this story of how revelation brought healing to a Christian Indian boy in Costa Rica.

“The summer before we came to live with her, Benjani and her son chose to visit India. After her return home, her son, who had been such a healthy little five-year-old, was now a chronically sick six-year-old. The doctors tried everything under the sun to find out what was wrong but all of their diagnostic techniques had not yielded a clue. It was now a year later and the mom was getting more and more depressed. This was her one and only child. She asked us to pray for her boy. We did but in the prayer we also asked the Lord to show us [revelation] the cause of this chronic illness. Nothing happened until. . . One day it suddenly dawned on me (revelation) that every time we entered Bejani’s living room, our eyes were drawn repeatedly to the shiny elephant on her central mantelpiece. It sparkled with a patina of uncountable tiny mirrors. It seemed to draw every eye to itself.

[When I asked her where she had bought it, she told me it was in a shop in India filled with every size and shape and color of elephants.]

‘Ganesh, Ganesh,’ I cried out. ‘You have brought an idol representing the Hindu elephant god, Ganesh, into your home!’. . .After explaining to Benji of the evil spirits that were now residing in this ceramic elephant, she took it outside and smashed it to smithereens and commanded any spirit attached to it to “depart in Jesus’ name and not come back”. . .And her son? He became well from that moment on.” (Don McCurry, *Tales That Teach*, Ministries to Muslims, 2009, ppg. 385-387).

God responded to Don’s prayers for wisdom and added revelation to bring His healing in a spiritual battle with evil.

1. **Wisdom comes from God so we need to Dig and Sift**

When God gives wisdom and revelation as a gift, it is like an aha – an unexpected but blessed new understanding – an enlightenment. But other times to gain His wisdom, we have to dig and sift for it. Pastor Tony Evans quotes the Proverbs 2:4 passage “Seek for wisdom as silver and search for her as for hidden treasure.” He says:

Silver and hidden treasure are located underneath the ground. They require digging The fact that the treasures are hidden implies that it is not on top of the ground, obvious to the casual eye. Why would God not make wisdom available for anyone to pick it up easily? It is too valuable. He doesn’t want folks to pick it up who don’t intend on using it. He has placed wisdom as a hidden treasure underneath the ground for those who really want it. Just like people who truly desire to find gold don’t mind digging and working to find it, wisdom is only to be found by people who value it enough to search for it.” (Tony Evans, *Tony Evan’s Book of Illustrations,* Moody Publishers, 2009, p. 340.)

Then, you can take the ‘search for gold’ analogy even farther. Panhandlers for gold, who look for it in streams and shallower places, have to sift through a lot of water, dirt and stones to find it. This seems to be particularly relevant in our contemporary world where conspiracy theories, fake news, gossip, distortions of truth and even gerrymandering of congressional maps to favor voters from a certain party abound! All these efforts by special interest groups have to be discarded to find the gold treasures of wisdom. It requires a resistance to naivete and group think and may feel like a laborious job. But it is worth it if one is to represent the truth of God or even integrity as a secular person in every realm of research. And God promises to reward this kind of search for wisdom:

If you train your heart to listen when I speak and open your spirit wide to expand your discernment. . . 9Then you will discover all that is just, proper, and fair, and be empowered to make the right decisions as you walk into your destiny. 10When wisdom wins your heart and revelation breaks in, true pleasure enters your soul.
11If you choose to follow good counsel, divine design will watch over you and understanding will protect you from making poor choices. 12It will rescue you from evil in disguise and from those who speak duplicities. 13For they have left the paths of righteousness and walk in the ways of darkness. 14They take pleasure when evil prospers and thoroughly enjoy a lifestyle of sin. 15But they’re walking on a path to nowhere, wandering away into deeper deception (Proverbs 2: 2, 9-15, Passion).

“Training one’s heart to listen to the Spirit speak” through the scriptures and “keeping one’s spirit open wide” to God’s directives are part of work required in searching and finding.

1. **Wisdom comes from listening to wise counsel from others**

Solomon, again in his wisdom😊, says “There is safety in a multitude of counselors.” (Prov. 15:22). New International Readers’ version says: “Plans fail without good advice. But they succeed when there are many advisers.” Passion translates that as: ”Your plans will fall apart right in front of you if you fail to get good advice. But if you first seek out multiple counselors, you’ll watch your plans succeed.” This is also a discipline, beloved, and cuts across the individualistic tendencies of pride that believes our own ways are right. In fact, this is especially wise advice for those who work outside of a team and are on their own in their work. Living alone or working alone can skew our thinking. We need the accountability and guidance of godly people outside our circle or thinking process who can see things we can’t and challenge our preconceived thoughts – even the fake news and justifications we build in our own defense and planning.

But, if we have turned our issues over to the Lord and sought His counsel and revelation in scripture as well as gotten godly counsel that points in a unified direction, then we can be confident to act and watch God work out our situation according to His good purposes - an important safeguard against internal doubt and the insecure questioning of our decisions. The value of seeking God’s wisdom and the wisdom of others.

1. **Wisdom is exceedingly practical**

Finally, wisdom is not living a perfect life and never being wrong. It is applying God’s discernment to reality and approaching people and life’s circumstances with God’s understanding, grace and forgiveness. It is knowing what to say and when to say it or not to say it. It is bringing God’s perspective to difficult situations. And relationships. It is having the understanding and discernment of all the factors that may be involved in any decision – culture, personality, doctrine, mood, temperament, failures and successes. Wisdom from God, therefore, is encased in love and is “filled with peace, (peace-making) considerate and teachable.[[g](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-11622g)] It is filled with love[[h](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT#fen-TPT-11622h)] and never displays prejudice or hypocrisy[[i](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=James+3%3A13-18&version=TPT" \l "fen-TPT-11622i" \o "See footnote i)] in any form 18and it always bears the beautiful harvest of righteousness!” (James 3”17 Passion).

In the multitude of issues we each face in this coming year - with all its known and unknown changes - godly wisdom is what we need. And it is available to us from the fullness of God’s grace and the person of Jesus Himself, “in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Beloved, listen to Him and to godly counselors, and read His Word seeking Spirit-understanding with a heart wide open, and He will guide you safely through these next months. I’m counting on this in my life and in all of our lives! Amen.

 Dr. Mary Lou Codman-Wilson, Pastor New Hope Global Fellowship 10/27/21