

Life, Love, and Other Mysteries

A Study of Proverbs: Proverbs 10-31

Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers. – Alfred Lord Tennyson

Did you realize that anyone can get knowledge?

Everyone has the opportunity to think, rationalize, and process. Education is one way of gaining knowledge, but walking outside and observing is another way.

Children are great in the school of observation. One of my sons will be intently watching a bee flying through the air. A little later, he comes running to me to explain that the bee is trying to find a place to live. He tells me that the bee wants to find a place that he can crawl into to keep safe and that the space in the light might be a good place because it is up and away from the ground.

All this he learned by observation.

Think back to the last few days. How have you grown in your knowledge about anything?

The first nine chapters of Proverbs have been an explanation of the differences between two worlds of thought. Why take so much time to discuss the differences?

If you did not understand the differences between the two, how might it affect the rest of the book?

Take two individuals that have received the same knowledge. They have learned the same things in high school and college. They score very similar in assessment testing and even have the same responses to questions. Is it possible that one would act foolishly, while one would act wisely? Explain.

“Knowledge does come and sometimes fairly easily, but wisdom is what needs to linger.”

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.”

~2 Peter 1:3-4

Tennyson was right. Knowledge does come and sometimes fairly easily, but wisdom is what needs to linger. Knowledge says the bee is finding a home and will protect it. Wisdom says to keep a safe distance from the bee's home.

Satan loves to imitate the real thing. He enjoys making things look exactly like the original. Someone could read the last part of Proverbs and recognize that there are some great pieces of advice, but it is wisdom that takes those pieces of advice and unfolds the principle which can be applied throughout the different areas of a person's life.

It comes down to a matter of perspective.

Having a better perspective helps us to make better decisions. Parenting is a perfect example of this. Often times, my older son will step into the role of being a parent to his younger brother, who is five years younger. There have been times when I have caught him doing something that I perceive to be something bad, when in reality he is trying to help his brother. It may not be in the best way, but his intention is good. With the new perspective, I have to adjust how I handle the situation.

How has having a different perspective helped you in a situation?

All of us are tempted to jump to conclusions. We may even be applying what may be a good principle to a situation, but when we take a moment to pause and reflect, we might realize that there is a wiser way to handle it. That is the difference between the two.

A fool rushes to Proverbs and finds a verse to fit the situation.

A wise person reads through the Proverbs and sees the situation through the Proverbs.

So often, we are working through problems in life and challenges that creep up and hit us. We ask ourselves, “What does the Bible have to say about . . . ?” I know I have done this before. It is tempting to look through Scripture and find a verse.

Share a time when you have done this.

"...boundaries are often seen to keep things out, but they are also used to give freedom within them..."

It is easy to do, isn't it?

Why do you think we do this?

It is easy. It is a question of motivation. Sometimes I may want to really know what God says on a matter, but then other times I am looking to find an excuse. It may be because I just haven't spent enough time in the Word or maybe I am trying to rush a quick answer, but it comes down to motivation.

Often, when we are searching the Scriptures for an answer, we are missing the point. The Scriptures does not answer every question, but they do answer *how* to answer every question.

I know we are in Proverbs, but permit me to jump ahead to Peter. In 2 Peter 1:3-4, Peter starts the book off with an amazing statement. God has given us everything we need for life. In order to get this, we have to get to know Him. It sounds so simplistic, but it comes through knowing Christ. Peter says this is how we "participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world."

Did you see it? WE ESCAPE THE CORRUPTION OF THE WORLD!
We grow in wisdom and do not act foolishly.

Now, summarize the next four verse (5-8).

Peter doesn't go into rules and regulations. He doesn't try to address everything that we are supposed to do. He doesn't try to answer all of life's questions. He does answer *HOW* to answer every question.

BE LIKE CHRIST.

It is a matter of perspective.

Consider the subject of marriage. It is easy to ask, "Lord, whom should I marry?", but that is not as good of a question as "Lord, what type of person should I marry?" God lays out what a godly spouse should be as

well as how to be a godly spouse.

Here is another one. Parenting. The question is often asked, "How should I discipline my children?" A better question might be, "What should my attitude be when disciplining my children?"

There are guidelines and rules that God has laid out in Scripture. He explains the importance of purity and the need to act with integrity. Yes, there are rules laid out, but these are for our protection and are the boundary markers.

A good friend explained it this way. She mentioned that boundaries are often seen to keep things out, but they are also used to give freedom within them, much like a fence around a yard. A child can roam anywhere within the fence. It is for his protection.

The child can sit and pout about being in the fence, or he can enjoy the freedom inside the fence. It is a matter of perspective.

Now back to Proverbs. The first nine chapters are a plea to switch perspectives and seek after knowing God. The rest of the book then is read through either a motivation to know and understand God or a motivation to find the loopholes.

I know in some ways this does not seem to help. We want answers. We want to know what we need to do. What decision do we need to make.

But it is a trap.

Much of the Old Testament is seen as things that a person must do, in order to get close to God, but that is completely off base. God never wanted us to do, he wanted us to be.

Micah 6:6-8 are very revealing verses about the Old Testament. Micah explains that God is not impressed with sacrifices – you know, those things that seem to be at the very center of the Israelites' faith. God desires us to be just and love mercy and live in relationship to God.

This is how Proverbs is intended to be read. "God, does not tell me what to DO, but what to BE."

In the end, your faith is not something you do, but it is something you are.

So, what are you?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

