

## ***THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE***

### **Proverbs 1:1-7**

**Intro:** Common sense says that you should not place a Styrofoam cup of scalding coffee between your legs as you drive. But McDonalds found out nearly 30 years ago that not putting a warning on their coffee cups would cost them \$3 million dollars. That is why there is a warning now.

Common sense says that you should not use a lawn mower to trim hedges but the many warnings that come with a lawn mower include that. Along with a warning to not put your fingers under that mower.

Common sense says you shouldn't need the warning found on every step ladder manufactured these days. I know from personal experience that warning is not heeded, but McDonalds will tell ladder makers it is a good idea. And besides, sometimes you are actually standing on the top step . . . technically.

Ligonier Ministries defines practical theology as “*Practical theology is an academic discipline involving the theological examination of the practices of the church in its worship, pastoral ministry, fellowship, outreach, Christian education, and counseling. Practical theology highlights the fact that all theology is fundamentally practical in nature. It is the process by which theological truth informs and is integrated into every aspect of the life and worship of the church.*”

The basic meaning of theology is the study of God. Practical theology then is the practical study of God and everything about him. The book of Proverbs is, for the most part, a collection of very practical teaching, mostly attributed to King Solomon. Over the next several weeks we're going to do a study of just a few of those Proverbs. Our text today is the first seven verses of Proverbs, and they are full of common sense. In a way they are warning labels for wise living for the people of God. Let's start by reading them: **(Read Proverbs 1:1-7)**

Verse 1 makes a point I mentioned earlier – these proverbs are from Solomon, Son of David. The Message paraphrase says it this way, *These are the wise sayings of Solomon*, (v. 1 The Message). They are wise sayings from history's wisest man. We do well to learn from them. Let's do that.

In my English Standard Version, which I just read to you, verses 2 – 6 are one single sentence that points to one powerful truth found in verse 7: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge*; (v 7a). If you want knowledge and wisdom, start with God. Where do you find that? In his Word.

#### **In God's word we find wisdom and instruction**

- The Bible is infinitely practical. What we need for living life is here and we don't have to make it harder than it is.
- The Bible is also infinitely godly. This seems like a no-brainer, but to see the way his Word is ignored or worse, impugned, you'd think otherwise.
- The Bible is infinitely wise. After all it comes from the mind of God via his Holy Spirit. It's no wonder the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

#### **In God's word we find words of insight**

- How many times have you've been reading the Bible or listening to it being read and you have an “Ahaa!” moment? And from it you've gathered a new insight for living life more effectively. or you hear a very familiar passage read and you hear it differently than ever before. This is the result of going into your study knowing where scripture originates – from God himself. Peterson says it helps to know *how to live well and right*. (v. 2 The Message).
- If you haven't before, be mindful of that next time you open your Bible or your Bible app and read, or when you hear the Bible read here in worship or during this talk. That's why you will often hear us say, after we read the Word, something like, THIS is the Word of God. BECAUSE IT IS! And that is why the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

#### **In God's Word we find instruction in righteousness, just and equity**

- Peterson puts it this way, *A manual for living, for learning what's right and just and fair*; (v. 3 The Message). Too often the people of God have fallen flat in area of justice, fairness, and equity. Too often we have carried out the letter of the law and forgotten to err of the side of grace.
- Don't get me wrong, we must be on the side of right, always, but we must have the same sense of justice of the one who, in the words of the song, *looked beyond our fault and saw our need*. That is justice and

that is mercy. And that is what is expected of the people of God in an unjust and unfair world. This is why the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

### **In God's word we learn good judgment and common sense**

- There we go again with those two words “common sense”! Peterson renders it, *To teach the inexperienced the ropes and give our young people a grasp on reality.* (v. 4 The Message). In a world where right is called wrong and wrong is called right, we need a grasp on reality. Just a little exposure to the news is a lesson in incongruity.
- The relentless push by the LGBTQ+ and specifically the transgender movement is a picture of the incredible confusion that is being promulgated as normal. The medical/psychological term for transgenderism is called gender dysphoria and is described as “*clinically significant distress or impairment related to a strong desire to be of another gender,*” (DSM-5). The very name and certainly the definition shows disorientation. For anyone who is truly afflicted with such confusion the response from the people of God must be compassion and a resulting loving response. But accepting it as normal is not part of that loving response. This is just one of the confusing things our kids are exposed to that we need to carefully and lovingly teach a Biblical, and therefore, loving response. BUT, it's not the only thing by a long shot!
- The Bible teaches good judgment and common sense. If something seems out of whack it is most likely because it IS out of whack. Help your kids develop common sense and good judgment. Kindly and lovingly assist people who are prone to naiveté and poor judgment to learn of the wise counsel of God's word.
- Good judgment and common sense is a sign a person knows the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

### **The Bible teaches the wise to be wiser**

- The Message puts it this way: *There's something here also for seasoned men and women, still a thing or two for the experienced to learn* (v. 5). A sure characteristic of a wise person is the fact they never miss an opportunity to grow wiser. Conversely, a sure characteristic of an unwise person is they think they have all the answers already.
- I don't know much more that I can say about this other than the fact that a truly wise person KNOWS the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.
- Finally . . .

### **The Bible teaches us to think**

- Our text puts it this way,  
*Let the wise hear and increase in learning,  
and the one who understands obtain guidance,  
to understand a proverb and a saying,  
the words of the wise and their riddles.* Proverbs 1:5-6 (ESV)  
The Message says, *still a thing or two for the experienced to learn—Fresh wisdom to probe and penetrate,  
the rhymes and reasons of wise men and women.* (v.5-6).  
And the Amplified Bible says, *And the person of understanding will acquire wise counsel and the skill [to  
steer his course wisely and lead others to the truth], to understand a proverb and a figure [of speech] or  
an enigma with its interpretation, and the words of the wise and their riddles [that require reflection].*  
Proverbs 1:5b-6 (AMP).
- This is close to my previous two points, but it still bears pointing out – we need to think! Part of the issue I pointed out a bit ago on the issue of transgenderism is the fact that people don't think. It's easier to just throw our hands up in frustration and not deal with it. No matter who we are, young or old, new or experienced, we need to apply the brain God gave us. The riddles we find in the Bible are there for us to exercise our brains and to seek the direction of the Holy Spirit. Muscles are built by increasing resistance – so are souls. The people of God are not quitters, we are contenders.
- Thinkers know the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge.

**Conclusion:** The title of this talk is *The Beginning of Knowledge*. I've been repeating the fear of God is the beginning of knowledge. What does that word translated as “Beginning” actually mean? How about this?

*How firm a foundation, you saints of the Lord,  
is laid for your faith in his excellent Word!*

*What more can he say than to you he has said,  
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?*

Yes, “the beginning” is the foundation of everything else and it is laid out in his most excellent Word. Fearing God does not mean to be frightened of him. Instead it means to love him, honor him, hold him in awe, and to strive to know him more and more and for who he really is. That fear is the very foundation of knowledge. Once we have that down, we are on the way to a life of godliness, righteousness, peace and joy.

That is what we will learn more and more as we look at Proverbs. BTW – if you read a proverb each day this month you will not only familiarize yourself with what we will be looking at, but you will finish on the last day of this month.

Next week we will look at Proverbs 31 as we celebrate Mother’s Day.

Amen.