

# WISDOM FOR KINGS & QUEENS

TRUTH FOR LIFE FROM  
THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

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Jared Longshore, *Wisdom for Kings and Queens: Truth for Life from the Book of Proverbs*

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## INTRODUCTION

“**B**e doers of the word, and not hearers only” (James 1:22). The apostle James said that, and he was right. God did not give us truth so we could leave it on the shelf. He gave it to us that we might live.

God told our race from the beginning to “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion” (Gen. 1:28). The apostle Peter calls Christians a “royal priesthood” tasked with proclaiming the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). So when Christians live the truth, they cannot help but fill the earth with the knowledge of the Lord. They proclaim the glories of God as they live wisely.

Much of the book of Proverbs contains Solomon’s counsel. He was a king, speaking often to his sons, “Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching” (Prov. 1:8). So the book is full of royal training. Kings and queens who would rule well should look

regularly to this book. And that is precisely what followers of Jesus Christ are, kings and queens.

If we would live well, then we must live in the fear of God. We cannot even get started with a life well lived without reverence for our Creator—"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10). Genuine fear of God cannot be accessed apart from Jesus Christ. He is the King of Kings. He is wisdom. In him are found all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). My hope is that he is exalted and you are edified by this work.

The book you hold in your hands is devotional in nature. The book of Proverbs contains deep wisdom. But it does not provide that great wisdom with pomp and circumstance. Rather it provides that wisdom like meat and potatoes, like a sergeant to a soldier in training, like a father to a son. Proverbs provides wisdom like an afternoon at the shooting range, tightening your skills, round after round. I have sought to keep that ethos of training in this book. You will find straight forward expositions and applications of the wisdom of Solomon. It will be best read with the heart, a chapter at a time, with a view to personal and familial application.

May it aid you as you look to God's wisdom for kings and queens.

# THE BEGINNING OF THE GOOD LIFE

**W**e cannot know anything as we ought to know it if we don't know God. We cannot deal wisely in this world without remembering this world's creator. We cannot avoid sin as we ought to if we have no reverence for God. We cannot listen to truth the way we should without respecting the true God. Without the fear of the Lord, marriages crumble or limp along, education leads to swollen conceit, money leads to evil, work leads to frustration, loss results in depression, gain results in pride, and the list goes on. God really is the glue that holds the good life together.

## THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE

To make a start in the good life, we must come to see that a body of knowledge is out there for us to know. Solomon states the reason for his book of wisdom up front—“To know wisdom and instruction, to understand words

of insight” (Prov. 1:2). Knowledge is a thing, the kind of thing that some people get and others don’t. Many people have been tripped up by their disbelief in objective truth. “To each their own,” they say. “I just need to be true to myself,” they say. But then they stick a screwdriver in a light socket. Truth bites back. Worldly philosophers and teachers have deconstructed and dismissed objective truth. In so doing, they have produced aimless people wandering about unsure of what to do or where to go. But there is a creator who has made all that has been made. He unites all things. He is *the truth*. We are to know Him and know all revealed things (be they seen or unseen) in relation to Him. All things include lily pads, hummingbirds, sexuality, death, the human soul, angels, cheeseburgers, algebra, indoor plumbing, and anything in between.

Not only is there a body of knowledge but there is knowledge concerning wise living. God is not merely interested in filling our heads with facts. He wants us to walk in knowledge. He desires that we live well (Prov. 1:3). God is the one who made both the world and you, and like a good chef, He knows how these two things mix to taste delightful. He knows the bad combinations too. His instruction is not only the right way, it is the best way. When people run after other gods, they end up sad. When we disregard God’s teaching for our own ideas, we’re left with a sour taste in our mouths. Psalm 19 says the law of the Lord revives the soul, rejoices the heart, and enlightens the eyes.

This body of knowledge we are to live by concerns our relationship to God, man, and self. Scripture speaks of righteousness, justice, and equity. Righteousness concerns



# WISDOM WILL DELIVER YOU

**N**o one wants to be a sitting duck. No one wishes to be a soft target. The bad guys look for that kind of thing. They keep an eye out for old grandmother going into the store after dark. The bad guys would be quite surprised when some of our grannies greeted them with a right hook. Granny has lived long enough to know there is trouble in the world.

Like granny, we need to wise up. Jesus tells us to be sheep who are as “wise as serpents.” We must be prepared for a fight because Jesus has sent us out “in the midst of wolves” (Matt. 10:16). Jesus has not called us to be declawed house cats. They don’t do so well among wolves. Jesus has not called us to be aloof llamas chowing down unconcernedly in the open field. He has told us to be wise as serpents. Becoming this takes work. But if you do, you’ll do well amid wolves.

The point of this chapter is you need to get wisdom from the Lord for it will deliver you. Let me emphasize *from the Lord*. It comes from Him. And let me emphasize the *get*, too. You have to work, strive, and fight to get wisdom. Be slack in this, and you won't get wisdom. Be slack in this, and you won't be delivered. Be diligent in this, and you will be guarded. You will be protected from the way of the wicked that will soon be cut off.

### **GET WISDOM FROM THE LORD**

If you pursue wisdom from the Lord, you will get it. Christians ought to receive God's instruction as children from a loving father. He tells us to get to work. There is, of course, a lie run amuck today that fathers shouldn't tell their children to get to work. But that's silliness. "Work hard" is exactly what loving fathers tell their children. So, in Christ, we receive these exhortations as what we are—God's children.

First, the father says you must receive commandments: "My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you" (Prov. 2:1). The requirement is not to "follow your heart." The requirement is not to "look within yourself." The instruction is to receive from another. Look outside yourself to the wise Father. What are you to receive from Him? Commandments. Not advice. Not suggestions or recommendations. We are to welcome being told what to do. If we would pursue wisdom, we must be "Sir, yes, sir" kind of people. David said, "Oh, how I love your law." He said he had more understanding than his teachers because he meditated on God's law (Ps. 119:97, 99).

## GET SERIOUS ABOUT GETTING WISDOM

**W**e will be significantly helped in life when we realize that the devil is a liar. He has been calling sweet bitter and bitter sweet from the beginning. He got our first parents to believe his lies. No man has evaded the impact of that deception. From Dan to Beersheba, people are now muddled about what is good and what is not. Such confusion is a terrible curse. You pursue what you think is good, but on payday, you get garbage. Death is what sin pays its employees on the first and the fifteenth—“The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23).

The point of this chapter is to tell the truth about what is good and to encourage you to get it. Put simply, wisdom is a priceless treasure, so get serious about getting it. This exhortation could not be more fitting for us today. Let’s be honest—the train has gone off the tracks. We have manifestly entered Crazy Town. We have officials shutting

down a school's father-daughter dance because it excludes other genders, and college professors unsure which gender pronoun to use when addressing students. Leaders at the highest levels of public office are unwilling to protect life. We do not know up from down or right from left. And insanity is never a good long-term strategy.

What are Christians to do in such foolish and evil days? Get wisdom fast, quickly, and in a hurry.

### **WISDOM IS GOOD AND HARD TO GET**

It is one thing to know something is good. It is another to know it is hard to get. When these combine, the race is on. Consider the goodness of wisdom.

First, wisdom enriches. The wise father says to his son, "I give you good precepts" (Prov. 4:2). If the father gave imprudent precepts, then the son would have reason not to listen. But the wise instruction of the father is valuable. We hear of the richness of wisdom in Proverbs 3:13–14: "Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold." No man in his right mind would turn down a bag full of silver and gold. Likewise, we ought not turn away from a bag of wisdom. If the two bags were before you, which would you choose? The text says that one who chooses the latter gains the most. The gain is not primarily monetary. The wise are enriched comprehensively—"My son, eat honey, for it is good, and the drippings of the honeycomb are sweet to your taste. Know that wisdom is such to your soul" (Prov. 24:13–14).

## SEXUAL SIN KILLS

**W**e can get ourselves into a whole heap of trouble if we listen to the wrong people. That is what happened to a little wooden boy in Carlo Collodi's classic book, *The Adventures of Pinocchio*. At one point in the story, Pinocchio has just nearly escaped being roasted on a fire. He's heading back to his home and father with five gold coins. But on his way, he meets a sneaky fox who pretends he cannot walk and a devious cat who pretends he cannot see.

They try to get their victim to turn aside, but Pinocchio really wants to be getting home. "The worse for you!" says the fox. "Yes, the worse for you," echoes the cat. "You're throwing away a golden opportunity," they say. The fox proceeds to tell the wooden boy of Dodo Land where he can grow a beautiful tree clustered with thousands of coins. All he has to do is bury his five gold coins in the Field of Miracles, water the ground where they lay, and sprinkle a pinch of salt over the spot. Pinocchio goes with this sly pair only

to find himself alone one night on a dark road. Despite his self-confidence, two cloaked assassins (with tails) assault him for his money.

You, Christian, are like Pinocchio. You are on a journey to your Father. You will meet with sneaky thieves who desire to turn you off the path of life. One particular bill of goods the sly fox sells us is the promise of pleasure through sexual sin. The devil promises riches in the Dodo Land of sexual immorality. “Come aside,” he says, “and I’ll turn your five-coin pleasure into a thousand.” The truth is he is going to mug you in the dark.

God loves us and does not want us to be fooled by the schemes of the devil. He gives us a sober warning, a warning that flows out of His desire that we be rich. What is that warning? Sexual sin kills. If you give yourself to sexual sin, you won’t get happiness and life. You will get sorrow and death. Consider four words of counsel: Pay attention. Avoid the strange woman. Embrace your wife. Fear God.

## **PAY ATTENTION**

Sexual sin kills, so pay attention. Particularly, pay attention to wisdom. “My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding” (Prov. 5:1). We live in a distracted age. The enemy works hard to keep people going from one thing to the next. He does not want us to stop and consider the path we are on. He does not want us to look up to the heavens and ponder why we are here. If you’re going to pay attention to wisdom, then you’re going to be out of step with much of modern culture. You’ve been born into a society that couldn’t find wisdom if it smacked

# A ROD FOR THE BACK OF FOOLS

**R**ight thoughts about God are essential. If we think wrong thoughts about Him, we not only dishonor Him but harm ourselves. How many have suffered in this life and the life to come by embracing false notions about God? It is not easy to maintain true thoughts about our Creator today. He is often misrepresented. Many stagger in the dark, unable to come to a knowledge of the truth. Even those who have come to know the truth about God can drift ever so slowly from it if they fail to keep watch.

An often-neglected fundamental truth about God is that God hates. Modern man struggles with such a notion. But that is an indictment against us, not God. We have come to see love as a universal positive and hate as a universal negative. But what if you love harming others and hate when poor children are clothed? We need to recover the goodness of appropriate hate.

God displays His hatred of the wicked by judging them swiftly. God not only has anger but He has demonstrated that anger in the operation of His world.

## **GOD HATES THE WICKED**

God hates the wicked. Many people are uncomfortable with this truth, but God teaches this plainly in many places. His wrath should sober us, but we should not despise Him for His righteous anger. Instead, we should stand in awe of how perfect, right, and beautiful God is in His wrath. The wise father says to his son, “There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him” (Prov. 6:16). Then he goes on to list wicked deeds the Lord despises.

First, the Lord hates pride. He hates “haughty eyes” (Prov. 6:17). Man has had haughty eyes ever since Adam and Eve sinned against God. It is no surprise that there, at sin’s inception, the Serpent tempted Adam and Eve with being “like God.” Eve saw that the tree was “a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). We are prideful when we think higher of ourselves than we ought. We are prideful when we claim that there is nothing we are not worthy of. When, truly, there are innumerable things we are not worthy of. We are dust, and to dust we shall return. Pride is so pervasive among us that we have simply become accustomed to this sin. What a danger it is to us since it blends into our daily experience. Why is it such a great evil? Jonathan Edwards has said that pride “is God’s most stubborn enemy!”<sup>1</sup>

1. Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards: The Great Awakening* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 4:415.



## EMBRACE WISDOM, NOT THE SEDUCTRESS

**W**e live amid rampant sexual immorality. Surely sexual immorality has been around since sin entered the world. But we live in an uptick, in cataclysmic sexually perverse times. This point really does not need proving.

The sexual revolution was a social movement from the 1960s to the 1980s that eradicated traditional sexual behavior. This so-called sexual liberation—which is actually sexual slavery—included the acceptance of sex outside of marriage. Several things came in the wake of this sexual revolution: the normalization of contraception, public nudity, pornography, premarital sex, homosexuality, alternative forms of sexuality, no-fault divorce, and the legalization of abortion.

We are now fifty years on the far side of that sexual revolution. We have same-sex marriage as the law of our land and seventy-one gender options on Facebook. We have

judges removing a young girl from her parents' custody because they would not let her undergo hormone treatments to make her more manlike.<sup>1</sup>

What's the point in identifying our sexual corruption? It is to see how easily we can succumb to this sexual perversion. We don't get to look at these outlandish abominations and say, "I've really got my sexual ethic in shape." No, we need to see that from the moment we were born we have been breathing in these toxins. If there is a flood out there, you are more likely to have water in your house. In times like these, even good people get seduced by the seductress, often unknowingly. Our cultural norms, accepted by almost everyone, are patterns built on sexual corruption.

To put it bluntly, sexual suicide is in the streets, so board up your windows and bar the door. A sexual plague of death is among us, so run for your life. In this chapter, we are going to see just how to do that—how to live amid deadly sexual corruption. We will hear the wise words of a loving father to his son, as he admonishes his son to get wisdom and get away from the seductress.

The essential point is this: If you want to live, embrace wisdom, not the seductress. It is impossible to embrace both wisdom and the seductress. Wisdom and the seductress are like oil and water. They don't mix. They are like hot and cold. You cannot get them together. The fool and the seductress go hand in hand. They are best buds. On

1. Jen Christensen, "Judge gives grandparents custody of Ohio transgender teen," CNN, February 16, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/16/health/ohio-transgender-teen-hearing-judge-decision/index.html>.

# WISDOM: A BLESSED LADY

**R**omans 11:33 says, “Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!” God’s wisdom, the apostle Paul says, is beyond finding out. His wisdom is an infinitely deep well of riches. His wisdom is invaluable.

The fantastic thing then, the breathtaking good news, is that He would rain down His wisdom upon us. He will graciously extend His wisdom to us that we might live an abundant life in this world.

Why do we need to remember the richness of God’s wisdom and His gracious extension of that wisdom to us? Two reasons come to mind. First, we are ridiculously foolish. Without Christ, we are all a bunch of boneheads. Romans 3:11 backs me up on that. It says, “No one understands.” Jesus, too, in John 15:5 says, “Apart from me you can do

nothing.” So, we’re just a bunch of blockheaded simpletons without Jesus.

But on top of that, too often we are as enthusiastic about getting wisdom as grade-school kids are about getting broccoli for dinner. We are all too comfortable in our ignorance. It’s like we enjoy groping around in the dark banging our knees on unseen objects. Our ignorance and indifference get us into all sorts of trouble. We’re contented fools and the worse off for it.

But God is gracious, and He helps us in our trouble. He extends His Word to us with precious promises. He motivates us by showing us just how invaluable His wisdom is.

In this chapter, I want to highlight that the wisdom of God—which in reality is Christ—is metaphorically spoken of as a blessed lady crying out to mankind. As she speaks, we see just what a wonderful blessing God’s wisdom is so that we might embrace this precious treasure.

Find wisdom, for she is a very blessed lady. That’s the main idea before us. These are words that can woo us off the couch to the gates of wisdom. We see four different blessings of lady wisdom. Each one stirs us to find her. First, there are wisdom’s blessed words. Second, wisdom’s blessed possessions. Third, wisdom’s blessed history. And finally, wisdom’s blessed necessity.

## **WISDOM’S WORDS**

God displays the glory of His wise words that we might pay attention to them.

Lady wisdom cries out to the children of man (Prov. 8:1–5). “Does not wisdom call? Does not understanding

## WILL YOU BE WISE OR FOOLISH?

One of the really bad ideas among us today is that of neutrality. Many have been duped into thinking they can be a mere spectator. Masses of people believe that when it comes to the big questions of morality, truth, and religion, they can check the box marked “undecided.”

But life is not a spectator sport. God has put everyone in the game. The idea of neutrality on these matters is a myth. We cannot say, “Oh, that conversation is not for me. I don’t want to fight that battle.” By our very existence, we are in the conversation, we are on the battlefield, and bullets are flying.

In other words, it is not *whether* but *which*. It is not whether we will make a decision but which decision we will make. It is not whether we will serve God but which god we will serve. It is not whether we will submit to

authority but which authority it will be. It is not whether we will learn lessons but which lessons we will learn.

When it comes to wisdom, we are in a not-whether-but-which situation. Two ladies call out for us. One is lady wisdom, the other lady folly. It is not whether we will embrace one of these ladies but which lady we will embrace. These ladies are complete opposites. You cannot have them both. You cannot dine with both. You cannot enter both of their homes. Yet, both are pressing their invitations on you. Each person must decide and bear the consequences of his or her decision. Indecision is a decision. Video games have pause buttons, and sporting events include time-outs. But life has no pause button or time-outs. You did not necessarily ask to be on this road with these two ladies crying out to you from the heights. But that's where you are. God has made the world this way. You are at the decision point. Which lady is it going to be?

I have three exhortations for you in this chapter. Each one encourages us to make the good and right decision. The first is decide in favor of lady wisdom. Next, decide to be a wise man, not a scoffer. And finally, decide not in favor of lady folly.

## **DECIDE IN FAVOR OF LADY WISDOM**

We are given a picture of lady wisdom, a picture that gives us many reasons to embrace her (Prov. 9:1–6).

Right at the outset we see that *she labors*. She's a lady who works. If you embrace this lady, she's going to be a great help to you. Notice all the verbs going on in the first three verses of Proverbs 9. She has *built*, *hewn*, *slaughtered*,