

**WHEN YOU KNOW ENOUGH TO BE DANGEROUS  
AND  
WHEN YOU'RE WISE ENOUGH TO BE USEFUL  
Proverbs 1:20-33 1 Corinthians 1:18-25  
Preached by Dr. Cahill  
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Do you remember the segment in the Disney movie Fantasia with Mickey Mouse playing the Sorcerer's Apprentice? The old sorcerer took off his pointed hat and went to bed leaving his apprentice to sweep up and fetch water from an outside well. After lugging several buckets, Mickey eyed the Sorcerer's magical hat, put it on his head and searched the old man's book of incantations. Finding what he was looking for Mickey cast a spell on a broom which sprouted arms and legs and then ordered it to fetch the water for him. All was well until after falling asleep, Mickey woke up with the room flooded. He tried to stop the broom, but didn't know how. Desperate, he took an axe to the broom and chopped it to pieces. Suddenly the splinters were raised up into an army of brooms and resumed bringing in even more water until the sorcerer suddenly returned and broke the spell.

The moral of the story: you're foolish if you think just because you know how to do something you're wise enough to handle it. Knowledge isn't necessarily wisdom.

The Book of Proverbs is a collection of wise sayings meant to help us avoid the calamities of life. Proverbs is not a book of law codes, it doesn't mention the stories of God calling and saving his chosen people. Instead Proverbs invites us to practice common sense instead of acting like fools. Perhaps if the kings of Israel heeded these words of wisdom Israel's national humiliation could have been avoided.

It is the glory of God to  
conceal things  
but the glory of kings is to  
search things out. (Proverbs 25:2)

That one verse from Proverbs tells everything a king needs to know about being a king: seek out God's will before you act. Listen when the prophet speaks, weigh your decisions prayerfully seek the wisdom that comes from above.

Of course all of the wise sayings in Proverbs speak to everyone, giving sound, practical advice empowering the reader to live wisely. Here are a few of my favorites:  
"Do not say, I will do harm to him just as he has done to me..." (Proverbs 24:29)  
This Old Testament proverb cancels out the Old Testament law, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." Revenge is not an option, but working towards reconciliation is. The Golden Rule prevails.

Another favorite: “Like a thorn bush in a drunkard’s hand is a proverb in a fool’s mouth.” (Proverbs 26:9)

Just because someone can quote scripture doesn’t guarantee its wisdom and truth sinks in. Many a fool has twisted the meaning of scripture to suit his own twisted ends.

How about this one, “As a dog returns to its own vomit, so a fool reverts to his folly.” (Proverbs 26:1)

This is the Old Testament’s version of the modern day definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over expecting to get a different result. How many times does it take before we realize constantly repeating the same mistake only brings frustration and ruin?

Here’s another: “Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so are the lazy to their employers.” (Proverbs 10:26)

There’re also words of wisdom for those who work for a boss: slackers are never appreciated while hard workers are always wanted. Then you find proverbs for the boss, providing the highest ethical standards in dealing with both his workers and customers.

“Do not withhold good from those  
who deserve it  
when it is in your power to  
do it.” (Proverbs 3:27)

If your employee is hard working and trusting, give affirmations and rewards. Treat your people with respect and generosity because it’s the right thing to do. Set an example that creates a healthy atmosphere. At the same time earn a reputation of reliability and integrity. Remember, you provide a service to your customers, so serve them as you would want to be served because “A good name is more desirable than great riches and favor is better than silver and gold.” (Proverbs 22:1)

Don’t forget the proverbs concerning the responsibilities of raising children. All good and healthy parenting begins with knowing God.

“In the fear of the Lord one has  
strong confidence  
and one’s children will have refuge.” (Proverbs 14:26)

A parent acknowledging the Fatherhood of God inherits the wisdom needed to raise children to become healthy and faithful adults. Raise your children with wisdom and they’ll bring you joy.

“The father of the righteous will greatly rejoice; he who begets a wise son will be glad in him.”

Likewise, a mother who seeks wisdom also reaps benefits:

“She opens her mouth with

wisdom,  
and the teaching of kindness  
is on her tongue...  
her children rise up and call  
her blessed;  
her husband too praises her,  
'Many women have done excellently  
but you surpass them all.'"  
(Proverbs 31:26, 28-20)

There are other proverbs advocating readers to be wise and responsible sons and daughters, being a good neighbor and proverbs warning against reckless, selfish living; all important statements about being in right relationships with God, your neighbor and last but not least with yourself, all foreshadowing Christ's great commandment..

Certainly the Book of Proverbs feed and nurture the soul with common sense wisdom, but it's in the New Testament that God reveals the ultimate test determining whether or not you're wise or foolish: your belief in what the Apostle Paul calls "the message of the cross."

"For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... Where is the one who is wise? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1 Corinthians: 18-20)

Even if you take all the wise sayings in the Book of Proverbs and work hard to let them shape your life, it's still not enough to save yourself from the powers of sin and death. Yes, being honest in business, having loving family relationships, being consistent in keeping your commitments, being a good parent, son or daughter are all the result of choosing wisdom instead of playing the fool. Putting the proverbs into practice will impact your character and people will honor you, but as I've said many times before even the nicest, wisest person in the world isn't nice or wise enough to be right with God. Like an Olympic swimmer doubled over with cramps, you need outside help, a life saver, Jesus.

Knowing that truth only comes from knowing the wisdom from above. You may not be all that intelligent, with only a fifth grade education, but if you accept the message of the cross, Jesus suffering and dying to take away the sins of the world, and then in gratitude ask Jesus to be your Lord and Savior, your ultimate boss and life saver, even if your IQ and formal education doesn't match the "smart" people of the world, that doesn't matter.

Still, the likes of Bill Mahr and Richard Dawkins will have their fun, mocking us for believing the cross is the only way to salvation. But wouldn't the Apostle Paul say back to them, something like "You think you're so smart because you're intelligent and highly educated but just because you're a good debater doesn't necessarily mean can see

beyond the cleverness of you.” That’s why in Corinthians, Paul asked the rhetorical question:

“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” (1Corinthians 1:20)

Don’t think for one minute Paul was being proud and snarky asking these questions. Rather he simply stated an undeniable truth: all the smart people who ever lived, put together, could never match the glory of God and the wisdom he gives to those who accept it.

Even so, Christians should never puff themselves up and boast about being “the chosen ones.” Instead, be humbled by God’s grace and never judge people of other faiths or no faith at all. Sure, you get peeved when someone takes pot shots at our beliefs, but remember Paul’s cautionary words,

“God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing the things that are so that no one may boast in the presence of God.” (1 Corinthians 28-29)

What is Paul saying here? Whenever believers humble and lower themselves by becoming Christ-like, whenever you come to the aid of someone in distress, whenever you intentionally chose to be low and despised in the world, through you, God’s Kingdom comes, if only for an instant, giving you and the one you helped a quick peek at what’s waiting for us beyond this earthly world.

Learn from the Sorcerer’s Apprentice: knowledge, by itself, can be a dangerous thing. History and your own experience confirms that. At the same time, knowledge coupled with wisdom not only makes us wise, it makes us useful in Christ’s ministry of reconciliation to the world he loves.

Listen again to these verses from the Book of Proverbs,

My child, if you accept my words  
and treasure up my commandments within you...  
if you indeed cry out for insight...  
...seek it like silver  
and search for it like hidden  
treasures  
then you will understand...  
...righteousness and justice...  
for wisdom will come into your  
heart...  
...it will save you from  
The way of evil.

Let us pray:

*Give your servants, O Lord, an understanding mind, able to discern from good and evil.  
Amen.*