

Sermon or Lesson: Pursue Wisdom - Part 1: Definitions And Sources For Wisdom And For Foolishness (NIV based)

[Lesson Questions included]

INTRODUCTION:

-- From extensive observations, a sad reality is that most true believers in churches do not substantially nor even adequately use or implement wisdom in their lives. This deficiency in using wisdom contributes greatly to their ongoing failure to produce substantial excellent fruit for the Kingdom of God. Therefore, the goal of this series on 'pursuing wisdom' is to provide believers with a thorough exposition from the Scriptures about the various dynamics that compose this topic, so that they will be motivated and equipped to acquire more wisdom and put it effectively into action in their lives.

-- For the limited scope of this series on 'pursuing wisdom', the subject material will draw mainly on select Scripture verses that address aspects of 'wisdom', and likewise verses about 'foolishness', that are contained in the Books of Proverbs, Psalms, and various books in the New Testament. For indeed, **"the proverbs"** are designed by God **"for attaining wisdom"** (Proverbs 1:1-2); **"the statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple"** (Psalms 19:7); and the New Testament Scriptures present the information **"that [we] may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"** (Colossians 2:2-3).

[Lesson Question: Discuss and compile a definition for the word 'wisdom'. Then identify who are the sources of wisdom.]

SECTION POINT: Wisdom is a composite of several virtues that exert influence on a person's thinking and actions, with the nature of its influence depending on which of 3 sources it comes from.

DEFINITION OF WISE / WISDOM:

-- For this study from the Scriptures of the word 'wisdom', it can be generally defined and summarized as a composite of 2 distinct elements:

-- -- (1.) correct intelligent understanding, insight, and good judgment; and
-- -- (2.) skillful practical management and application of acquired knowledge. (from Zodiates #4678, p.1300; *AHD* - 'wisdom')

-- Notice that these 2 elements of this definition furthermore indicate a distinct process that is occurring for each element:

-- -- the first (1.) element relates to mental processes - the presence of wisdom in the mind, interacting with and influencing the thinking that is occurring, which sorts through generated options and progresses to the formation of a wise plan, or course of action, or guideline for conduct, and etcetera;

-- -- the second (2.) element relates to implementation processes - managing and implementing the wise "plan, or course of action", or guideline for conduct that was decided upon by those mental processes that were influenced by wisdom. (*AHD* - 'wisdom')

- - So, wisdom is comprehensively active and involved in both the thinking and the actions of that person. This dual dynamic needs to occur in order for wisdom to be fully utilized, and not hindered, diminished, or negated.

- - As will become evident in this study of wisdom, in the Scriptures there exist numerous nuances (subtle shades of meaning) in the definition of the word 'wisdom'.

- - For examples, in the literary personification usage of 'wisdom' in Proverbs chapter 8, wisdom is linked to, and/or accompanied by, and/or equated to other related words of virtue, such as in verse 12, **"I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion"**, and in verse 14, **"Counsel and sound judgment are mine; I have understanding and power."**

SOURCES OF WISDOM:

- - In that same chapter 8 of Proverbs is declared the originating source of wisdom, **"22. The Lord brought me [wisdom] forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; 23. I [wisdom] was appointed from eternity, from the beginning,... 26. before he made the earth..."**, and **"27. I [wisdom] was there when he set the heavens in place..."**.

- - The Lord "brought forth" wisdom as the very first activity in His creating of the universe, for wisdom to play a predominate role within all of His creation activities (v.22).

- - An interesting correlation here is that within His creation activities, the Lord modeled how we believers are to use wisdom comprehensively and predominately throughout the entirety of our living and our functioning as a disciple of Jesus.

- - The Lord grants natural wisdom to humans, as stated in Proverbs 8:15-16, **"By me [wisdom], kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and all nobles who rule on earth."**

- - The Lord also grants spiritual wisdom to true believers in Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:9,2)

- - But humans can generate their own wisdom, apart from the Lord, that is humanistic and/or corrupted, as stated in James 3:13-17 regarding believers who supposedly **"are wise"** (v.13) but yet **"harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in [their] hearts"** (v.14), **"Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil."**(v.15).

- - So from verse 15, apparently also "the devil" or the Kingdom of Darkness can generate a form of wisdom, which may appear to be benign and compatible with wisdom from God but in reality is by nature usually a disguised attempt to somehow oppose God.

[Lesson Question: Discuss and compile a definition for the word 'foolishness'. Then identify who are the sources of foolishness.]

SECTION POINT: Foolishness is composed of 4 distinct general afflicting conditions, which are produced by humans and by the Kingdom of Darkness.

DEFINITION OF FOOLISH / FOOLISHNESS:

-- For this study from the Scriptures about 'wisdom', its opposite, 'foolish / foolishness', can be generally defined and summarized as a composite of 4 distinct types or categories of character:

--- (1.) senselessness, recklessness, rashness, unreasonableness, poor judgment;
--- (2.) vain, futile, profitless, empty of value;
--- (3.) dull, unintelligent, stupid, ignorant, unmindful, thoughtless;
--- (4.) silliness, ridiculousness, absurdity, irresponsible, frivolous, insignificant, trivial, lacking seriousness. (from Strong's Greek [in the New Testament] #0877, #0878, #3152, #3472, #3474 with *AHD* 'heedless', #0453; *AHD* - 'foolish')

-- Notice the 4 distinct general afflicting conditions in this definition of foolish / foolishness:

--- the afflicting condition of the first (1.) category relates to having a seriously deficient, defective, and flawed process of evaluation and decision-making when encountering various kinds of situations in life;
--- the afflicting condition of the second (2.) category relates to the useless results that are produced by that defective process of evaluation and decision-making in situations in life;
--- the afflicting condition of the third (3.) category relates to the lack of uncorrupted analytical and intelligent thinking when engaged in the process of evaluation and decision-making;
--- the afflicting condition of the fourth (4.) category relates to the extreme extent that the thinking deviates from what is healthy, balanced, reasonable, and appropriate.
-- In essence, for foolishness there exists a warped or distorted perspective and view of situations in life.
-- And there exists a warped, distorted, or vacancy of anticipation and expectation of results and consequences that will be produced by the defective process of evaluation and decision-making in situations in life.
-- Consequently, these deficiencies in perspective and in expectation of results produce foolish, risky, and potentially harmful actions that are usually coupled with insufficient safety precautions.

SOURCES OF FOOLISHNESS:

-- The descriptions in Ezekiel 28:11-17 and Isaiah 14:12-15 identify Satan as the originating source of foolishness, the highest-ranking archangel of God (at the time), whose "**heart became proud on account of [his] beauty, and [he] corrupted [his] wisdom because of [his] splendor**". (Ezekiel 28:17)
-- In regard to humans, the description in Genesis 3:1-6 reveals that Satan beguiled Eve in the Garden Of Eden, cunningly enticing her into thinking that eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree was, in part, "**desirable for gaining wisdom**" (v.6). Consequently, Eve "ate it" and "also gave some [of the fruit] to her husband", Adam, who "ate it" (v.6), and therein foolishness, together with sin, entered the entire human race (Romans 5:12).
-- Even though clearly God is **not** the originating source of foolishness, the description in Romans 1:18-32 reveals that God does respond to "**foolish and futile thinking**" (vv.21-22), sinfulness, and refusal "**to retain the knowledge of God**", by "giving [those persons] over to a depraved mind" (v.28).

- - Consequently and subsequently, those persons "become filled with every kind of wickedness... and depravity" (v.29), which of course is accompanied by even more foolishness.
 - - So the sinful or depraved thinking of humans contributes to and is a source of foolishness.
 - - And also of course, "the devil" and his Kingdom of Darkness gleefully jump at every opportunity to "take [sinning humans] captive to do [the devil's] will", taking advantage of their sinfulness and accompanying foolishness to inject even more sinfulness and accompanying foolishness in their lives. (2 Timothy 2:26)
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BIG IDEA: Wisdom exerts positive and beneficial influence on our thinking and actions, whereas foolishness exerts negative and afflicting influence and conditions on us.

APPLICATIONS:

- - What is your opinion of wisdom? What is wisdom to you? Before studying wisdom in this message, how did you define wisdom?
 - - Now having studied wisdom in this message, what is your regard of wisdom?
 - - Do you regard wisdom as a valuable virtue - valuable to you personally?
 - - Or instead, do you regard wisdom as a so-so virtue, that it is nice to get wisdom but it is no big concern for you if you do not get wisdom or more of it?

 - - While considering the definitions of foolishness in this message, did you take the time and make the effort to contemplate each defining word individually?
 - - Or instead, did you lightly breeze through the defining words of foolishness, not considering them seriously? Perhaps because you do not want to face those definitions of foolishness? If so, ask yourself why you do not want to face those definitions of foolishness?
 - - If you are not repulsed by the definitions of foolishness, do you think you would be open to possibly changing your opinion about foolishness, to the extent of abhorring the presence of those definitions of foolishness in your life?
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[Additional Lesson Questions to ponder (optional, if time allows):

- - Theorize as to how much, or what is the maximum amount of wisdom a person can acquire in his/her life?
 - - Is it possible to reach a level of possessed wisdom that gets close to the amount that God gave Solomon, as recorded in the Old Testament (vv.10-12 in 1 Kings 3:3-15,28). Or perhaps a level higher than that of people you know or people in history that you heard about? Why or why not? Explain your reasoning.]
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