

PROVERBS SERIES ONE
ABOVE ALL GET WISDOM
Dr. Roger Barrier
Prov. 1:1-7;13:20; 22:7; 3:9-11

Have you ever cut someone off in traffic? And it was all your fault? And the other driver pulled up along side of you and gave you—a piece of his mind?

Seminary driving from Dallas to Ft. Worth four days a week. Always late and always tired.

In a hurry and pulled out in front of this other driver. He was angry. I was wrong. Pulled up to red light. I stopped 30 feet back so we would not face each other on the line. He stopped 30 feet back. He reached over and rolled down the window to yell at me. I did not want an altercation.

What to say?

Fortunately I was street smart. I knew the book of Proverbs:

•SLIDE: Proverb 15:1: “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

As our windows rolled down, I spoke first: “I am sorry. I was wrong to cut you off. I was in a hurry and what I did was rude and selfish. Will you forgive me for what I did?”

He was startled. Took him off guard. “Uh, well, O.K. Just don’t do it again.”

One of our counselors came to me with a problem. Two individuals in our church families were fighting and it was messy. They had not asked for his help; but, he was wondering if he should intervene. He really did not want to get involved. But wondered if he might should?

Fortunately, I was street smart. I knew Proverbs.

•SLIDE: Proverb 26:17: “Like one who seizes a mad dog by the ears is a passer-by who meddles in a quarrel not his own.”

I was sitting in a leadership meeting when one rose to speak against me. He didn’t like my plans for relocation. He was disappointed in direction of my leadership.

Arose, and walked behind me, saying some rather nasty things about me and my leadership. My cheeks turned red. What to do? Fortunately, I learned street smarts from the book of the wise.

•SLIDE: Proverb 19:11: “A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”

Steve Dowdle, head of our Pastoral Care Department came to my office once and said, “Roger, you have done something wrong. I need to rebuke you—in the Biblical sense of the word.” Fortunately, I was street smart.

•SLIDE: Proverb 17:10: “A word of rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into the back of a fool.”

“O.K. Steve, I am ready.”

Glenn and I—new series on Proverbs—Street Smarts.

Proverbs is more than clever little sayings, little hints about how to run your life. The book of proverbs is all about the pursuit of wisdom.

Wisdom, in Proverbs 1-9 (a little different from the rest of the book), becomes a person. Wisdom is personified.

Read Proverbs 1:1-7.

•SLIDE: Proverb 1:7: “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,

but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

READ PROVERBS 1:20-23.

READ PROVERBS 4:5-7.

●SLIDE: THE PAYOFF IS HUGE WHEN WE ARRANGE OUR LIVES AROUND ACQUIRING WISDOM.

READ PROVERBS 3:13-18.

Let’s think about this by scrolling through some people we know. Do you know any wise ones?

Do you know any wise dads? Dads who have their lives in order and raise their sons to have their lives in order? Know when to encourage? Know when to come along side tenderly? And when to correct forcefully? When to listen, when to teach and when to let the consequences of life be the teacher.

Let’s put a value on wise dads. How much are wise dads worth?

Let me let you in on a Secret. I know a lot of guys for whom life is not working very well. It is not that they aren’t smart. It is not that they aren’t trying hard. Life just isn’t working because they had a foolish dad. A foolish dad makes life very hard.

On the other hand, I know a lot of men who are doing really well. Life is just working. What is the common denominator? They will say, “I grew up in the home with a great dad.”

●SLIDE: Proverb 17:6: Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.

What is a good dad worth? He is worth a ton. Ask anybody.

The same thing can be said about wise mothers.

●SLIDE: Proverb 31:28: “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her:

What is the value of a wise mom and dad? Ask children who have grown up with wise parents and they will tell you, they are better than gold.

Now, let’s turn this around. How do parents feel about their children when they walk in paths of wisdom.

●SLIDE: Proverb 15:20: “A wise son brings joy to his father,

Parents, what is better than that? What beats that?

I decided long ago that whether my children are well known or live in big houses or have big salaries doesn’t really matter to me—but that they walk in wisdom—that they understand God’s ways and pursue them is everything to me.

What is that worth, parents, when your children walk in the wisdom of God? It is better than gold. It is priceless.

Let's switch gears—but press the same point.
Do you know any one who works wisely?

- **SLIDE:** Proverb 22:29: “Do you see a man skilled in his work?
He will serve before kings;
he will not serve before obscure men

Generally, people who work skillfully and wisely will eventually be esteemed highly and rewarded richly. We all know people who have risen in the market place who did not have the best intellect, or resources or skill but they worked wisely while others all around them fell by the wayside.

“So many of my sales people just act weird.”
“What does weird mean?”
They just self destruct; shoot themselves in the foot.
What would you like them to do?

- **SLIDE:** “If they would just show up on time, call the people they are supposed to call, charge the people they are supposed to charge, treat people the way they are supposed to be treated, admit mistakes when they make them, they could have a nice career, afford to care for their family, plan for retirement and live happily ever after.”

What was he saying? “I wish employees in my company would act wisely.”

- **SLIDE:** This is what Proverbs says: the Pay Off Is Huge When We Arrange Our Lives Around Wisdom.
- **SLIDE:** Whether it is about parenting, marriage, working, finances, treat your body, spiritual life—wisdom pays. Wisdom pays dividends!
Go after wisdom, it is better than gold.

- **SLIDE:** THE CONSEQUENCES ARE HUGE WHEN WE ARRANGE OUR LIVES AROUND FOOLISHNESS.

- **SLIDE:** Proverb 4:18-19: “The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day.
But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;
they do not know what makes them stumble.”

This book minces no words on this subject. Proverbs refers to the lack of wisdom as Foolishness. The wise takes this path; but the fool takes this path.

SLIDE: Proverbs often mentions several classes of people who desperately need wisdom: the fool, the simple, and the scorner, the lazy, the wicked.

Unfortunately, we are all born with a case of the follies.

- **SLIDE:** Proverb 22:15: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child,
but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”

This has far reaching implications: we are not just born with a blank slate so that we can unbiasedly choose the path of foolish or wisdom. We are all born with a bent toward foolishness.

This foolishness has to be driven out step-by-step, day-by-day, month-by-month, and the foolishness must be replaced by wisdom, or we are going to be dangerous people.

Think of a baby. All a baby knows to do is act on its impulses—rather foolishly sometimes.
Sand box, feels hunger pain, sand for lunch. Sate hunger impulse.
In the back yard, grass for lunch.
Impulse, want something, lunge for it.
Toy in neighbor's hand, wrestle it away.
Childish impulses.

Proverbs says that we have to outgrow gratifying our impulses and build in wise skills.
We have to grow out of infant folly and become mature people who discern right and do that.

We see grown adults indulging their sexual impulses and it results in abuse, rape, adultery, stds, aids,
impulse gratification = consequences.

See people taking what does not belong to them. Fraud, embezzlement, cheating in school= consequences.

See normal people go through shopping malls, buy, can't afford it. Bills come, consequences.

See people making impulsive commitments they don't keep which wrecks relationships.

We see people saying words they don't mean which ruins trust.

Proverbs says, this is sheer, infant like folly and it is time to grow up and take the path of wisdom.

Man spitting mad at God for what he considered to be an inordinate amount of pain come into his life. Self pitying saga.

You saying that your former wife was an evil person, before she turned evil did you treat her well. Were you faithful to her? Or maybe did you do some stupid things that added a little to the demise of the relationship?

Well, he admitted he'd done a few things stupid.

You had debt backed up and tax problems with the government because you did not pay. Did you ever let your spending get out of hand? Did you ever spend more than you earned? Did you ever buy anything foolishly or impulsively?

Well, in fact, yes.

You are frustrated because no one will give you a job. Were you a model employee? If I called your last three employers would they just glow with reports of your work?

Well, lost his last job because he had lost his temper a few times and had told his boss where to go—eternally, not like down the hall.

Time out. I don't think God has singled you out for special suffering duty. I don't think it is fair to blame God for half the stuff you are blaming Him for.

●SLIDE: Proverb 19:3: "A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the LORD.

It seems to me that you have lived out enough folly that what you are getting in life could have been predicted, Biblically.

My counsel to you is to enroll in the school of wisdom today.

Some of you are saying, “It is no accident that I showed up today. I have hurt myself and others enough! I have damaged enough relationships, squandered enough time and energy, shed enough tears, and drifted far enough from God’s path to say, ‘Enough folly! Enough.’
I have had my fill. I don’t want to pay those consequences any more. I am tired of my life not working!”

- SLIDE: If you are there, you are in perfect position. NOW IS THE TIME TO ENROLL IN THE SCHOOL OF WISDOM and start becoming wise.

Let me give you a few ideas on how to enroll.

- SLIDE: 1. Start With The Fact That There Is A Personal God Who Is Head Over Heels In Love With You, And Has Extended To You The Hand Of Forgiveness Through Jesus Christ And Says, “Take My Hand And I Will Make Your Life Work.”

OVERHEAD: [leaning curve] Proverb 1:7: learning curve begins here: fear of God.

The personification of wisdom reaches its climax in the Person of Jesus Christ who is the Wisdom of God. He is the key to the universe. He is able to fit the pieces of life together.

LXX = Septuagint

Logos = the unrevealed wisdom of God = Jesus put on a body—John 1:1-3, 14.

Some say, “Enough folly, I will get on a self-improvement plan and make better choices.”

Friends, you will make about the same choices you made in the past unless you put your hand in the hand of God and get a new power to go a new way.

Your life is the accumulation of 25 years of folly, but you can make a really good choice right now. Make this one. Fling open the door of your heart to God. This is the only way out of your personal case of the follies.

- SLIDE: 2. Hang Out With Wise People.

Very few of us can run with a bad pack of dogs and not get fleas.

- SLIDE: Proverb 13:20: “He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm.

Hang around with people on path to wisdom. Not folly.

- SLIDE: 3. Apply Wisdom To Your Life.

Read Proverbs every day.

Truth for living is not abstract truth. It means you have to do something; not just know something.

STORY of financial scarcity. Jessie and hospital bills.

Tempted to do two things Bible calls folly
Put living expenses on credit cards for bills we needed.
Tempted to stop tithing to make ends meet

●SLIDE: Proverb 22:7: “The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.”

What is worse than being broke, being in bondage. I will not go down that path of bondage.

●SLIDE: Proverb 3: 9-10: “Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.”

Those two decisions could have ruined our family, ruined the legacy for our children.

Merle Spear: “How short are you?” Wrote me a check for \$1800. “Bills are mine.”

Where are you folly prone?

It is my experience that most fools don't know they are fools. They don't know proverbs so they don't know what right living really is.

Reminds me of the story of the old nomad who awakened in the middle of the night. He lit a candle and began eating dates from a bowl beside his bed.

He took a bite from one and saw a worm in it and ; so he threw it out side the tent. He picked up a second date, took a bite out of it and found another worm. He threw it outside the tent. He picked up a third date, took a bite out of it, and found another worm. He threw it out.

He was very hungry, and realized he would not have any dates left if he continued like this.

So, he blew out the candle and ate the rest of the dates.

Too many of us prefer darkness and denial to the light of reality.

Read Proverbs, find the ones that speak to you. Put them on dashboard and cling to the truth of wisdom and see if God does not honor you taking the path of wisdom.

Sign up, enroll in the school of wisdom.

Pray for folks at brink of folly.

●SLIDE: Remember, “A few people are wise. Most are otherwise.”

WALK OUT: “You Are Holy.”