**Wisdom And Understanding Our Emotions**

Wisdom. Who does not want to be wise, to have answers to life’s issues and the questions that we may have? We do believe the Bible offers answers. Wisdom, simply defined, is the practical application of God’s Word to everyday life.

There is much to wisdom, and more than we can cover in our series that we are starting today. Today we are beginning a series in the Book of Proverbs. We will cover several topics, allowing Proverbs to teach us. As we go, we will explain what the passage says that we are looking at.

The reason for studying Proverbs is found in **Pro. 1:2-6** which gives us various thoughts on why we should learn the Proverbs. They teach wisdom, discipline, give insights, knowledge, and discernment, to name a few.

The Proverbs are not ironclad guarantees that when followed everything will be perfect. From observation, if followed, the results for the most part will come about but this is not to say that what is said is destined to happen but, when followed, the results of following will in the majority come to pass.

**Author:** The Book of Proverbs was for the most part composed and compiled by Solomon. The thought is that Solomon put the **first 24 chapters** together and King Hezekiah’s scribes copied the materials in **chapters 25-29** out of Solomon’s many other Proverbs that he gave. **Chapters 30 and 31** were written by Agur and Lemuel, about whom we basically know nothing apart from their names.

As we begin our study, would you look with me at **Pro. 1:7-9**. From there we are going to dive into a look today at what Proverbs says about our emotions. It has some good advice for us to consider. Let’s note a few things from these verses and then we will dive into our main topic this morning.

**First, knowledge and wisdom require us having respect for Who God is (vs. 7).**  That is what is behind the word **“fear.”** **It means to be in reverence, or awe, of God**. **Pro. 9:10** tells us that wisdom, the ability to apply God’s Word to life situations, begins with our view of God.

Take a moment to think about Who God is and what He is like. He is All-Knowing, Almighty, loving, gracious, kind, a promise keeping God, merciful, just, righteous, and holy. These are just a handful of His character traits. We did a study on God’s attributes and how they apply to us here on a Sunday morning.

When I do not have the respect for God that I need, the Word of God and the wisdom it imparts does not reach to me like it should or I would like it to. There is a submission to His will seen in our showing respect to Him.

Note that respect for the Lord is the **“beginning”** of knowledge and wisdom. The word **“beginning”** as noted by the NET could have one of two meanings. Here is what we read in the NET,

So, based on what the NET says, fearing the Lord is either the first step to acquiring knowledge of how to live or it is the most important thing when it comes to knowledge. Both, we could say, are true. **I believe the first step is what is meant here, that for us to acquire wisdom (Pro. 1:2-6) and knowledge we need to have total respect for God and Who He is, so that He can teach us**.

The **“knowledge”** that is noted here, some believe, has to do with moral knowledge, knowing good from evil. That makes sense. The Bible helps us to discern what is good and what is not, what is right and what is wrong.

As an example, if we are raising children, there are so many things culture throws at us, that it is important to be grounded in God’s Word, and to teach those truths to our children **(Deut. 6)**. The starting point to all of this is respect and awe for God and Who He is.

Life requires us having knowledge of God. Note that **vs. 7** also tells us that it is foolish to despise wisdom and instruction. We see that in society today. We are subjectively driven in our world, and it is seen in how people respond when you disagree with them or hold a different viewpoint than theirs.

The idea of **“despising”** wisdom means that there are those who simply ridicule or belittle what God has to say and offer. It is easy to mock and question, for it keeps us at arm’s length from God and we don’t have to put in the time to know and learn from Him. **The word “fools” describes a person who is “thickheaded, stubborn and has a closed mind.”** **(BKC)** Sadly, there are Christians like this.

Fools are proud, because they think they have all the answers, whether it be in the area of parenting, moral decisions, finances, the words that come out of their mouth (usually they are outspoken and speak before thinking). The list could be much longer.

**Second, wisdom does indeed begin at home.** Now, **vs. 8** seems to be separate from **vs. 7**, which too many, should go with **vss. 2-6**. But I think **vs. 8** and **vs. 9** are good reminders of the need to listen to people of wisdom. Yes, true wisdom and knowledge comes as we show God the respect He deserves.

He also uses people in our life to teach us as well. **Vs. 8** states that. The father and mother here are people who have learned about God’s wisdom and want to pass it on to their kids. That is why we are encouraged to **“hear”** and **“not forsake”** what others with wisdom have to say.

The idea of hearing in **vs. 8** I think has to do with paying attention. Some people tell us they heard us, but they simply listened to words being spoken but did not really tune in to what we were saying. The idea of hearing here is more than simply nodding our head and acting as if we heard what was said. It is focused on listening and doing, paying attention.

Scripture without application just builds knowledge but God’s knowledge, His Word, His wisdom that He gives us, is to be applied.

Our culture is not teaching moral values or knowledge that will help us in the long run when it comes to life in general. That is why, if you are a parent, you have a great opportunity to invest in the lives of your kids. Both parents are mentioned in Proverbs as having a great impact, or potential impact, on their kids.

All of us can learn from wise people, regardless of how old we are, and pass it on to others, including our children, while at the same time, choosing to live it out.

Proverbs, as we are about to see, is not just a book about tips on how to live. It is God’s Word, rooted in the wisdom that comes from God and is to be lived out under the power and control of the Holy Spirit in our lives. These verses, and others that we will see in one of our Sunday discussions, will show the importance and influence parents have on their kids according to Proverbs.

Now, to the main topic of today. The first couple of Sundays we are going to talk about our emotions, and then move on to other areas worth noting from the Book of Proverbs.

**Note:** We have seen the necessity to respect God, to listen to wisdom and instruction, and to pay attention to those who give good advice. And that is the key - giving and getting good advice.

Now to continue our discussion. Let it be noted that emotions are not a bad thing. They are God-given. The issue is not the emotions themselves. The issue is how we handle our emotions, and **Proverbs** has much to say on this topic. Ranging from anger to discouragement, to being joyful, this book covers this area of our life. Let’s dive in and hang with me if you will.

**We must begin by building a foundation.** Look with me if you will at **Pro. 4:23**. The chapter in the ESV is titled **“A Father’s Wise Instruction.”** There is encouragement to listen and gain wisdom, to watch out for who influences us and to stay away from evil.

**Pro. 4:23** tells us to **“keep”** our **“heart”** with, as the writer puts it, **“with all vigilance.”** The word **“heart”** is used as an all-encompassing word. What I mean is that it is descriptive of our conscience, will, emotions, thoughts, intellect, our inner man. It sums up who we are and from the deepest part of us come words and actions. Jesus mentioned this in **Mark 7**. From out of the heart comes wickedness. This also encompasses our values, things that are very important to us.

We are to **“keep” (protect, watch over, guard)** our inner being. We do this by what we allow to influence us, or how we respond to situations that occur. We need to guard our inner person from being influenced negatively or by our emotions. Emotions, as we said, are God given and are not necessarily bad.

But we must have them under control, to not be ruled by them. Our minds are the same way. What we allow to control our thoughts, controls our actions unless we get a grip on what we are thinking. It requires God’s help to do so.

Solomon tells us to guard our hearts but the importance of it is seen in the word **“vigilance.”** This word has the idea of a **“place of confinement, guard, watch.”** It is like setting a guard over our heart, which takes work and our involvement. We are to guard our hearts, protect our emotions, thoughts, our actions.

We can do this with the Lord’s help. He can help us to keep our lives in check and to respond properly. The end of this verse is so true, for, as noted, out of our heart, **Pro. 4:23** tells us, **“flow the springs of life.”** Like a fountain, from our heart comes our thoughts, words, and actions.

So just keep in mind the need to guard our hearts. How do we do that. Well, we make choices. **One**, we ask God and allow Him to control our words and ask Him to help us guard our minds. The more we know the Lord, the easier it becomes to think as we should and say what we should. It is a growing experience.

**Two**, we must take responsibility for our actions and the words we speak. The next verse, **Pro. 4:24**, tells us to “put away crooked speech.” We choose to say what we do. No one can pass the buck on this. I am responsible for the words that come out of my mouth. Think before speaking.

**Three**, keep our focus on the right things, the things of God **(Pro. 4:25)**. **Fourth**, be careful what we allow to influence us **(Pro. 4:26-27)**. That includes people, what and who we also watch and listen to.

These decisions affect our emotions. Guilt, bitterness, joy, caring, kindness, fear, hope, all are displayed with emotions. Whoever or whatever controls our inner person controls our emotions.

Today let’s talk about the emotion of **“joy” or “happiness**.” Now, technically, these are not the same thing, and some people would say that joy is not an emotion but a state of mind. The idea behind joy is that it is not based on circumstances. It means **“gladness, rejoicing.”** But I do think that joy can have an emotional side to it, and in fact does.

As we discuss emotions, obviously we cannot cover them all. So, we will pick a positive and negative one, because in the negative ones we need to learn how to overcome them, to turn them around and make them positive. Some people are never happy or do not look happy. Laughter, clean humor, and being joyful and showing it, is not a bad thing.

One verse before we dive into the practical side of joy, of happiness, gladness, is found in **Pro. 15:13**. A **“glad”** heart, we read here, is seen in our face. This does not mean we go around with a fake smile or just wanting to show off our pearly whites. The word **“glad” means “joyful”**, and it is seen in our countenance. A joyful person does not look like they hate the world.

The flipside seen in this verse is the fact that a heart of grief, or pain, crushes our spirit. But, even in the midst of pain, we can have a joyful heart, and our life will reflect that. Joy deals with our state of mind.

**Pro. 17:22** tells us that a joyful heart is good medicine. Our attitude, our relationship with God, is important when it comes to the emotion of joy. The word for **“joyful”** in this verse is the same word that we find in **Pro. 15:13** that we just looked at. Joy is not only good for our emotional and spiritual life, but it will also be seen by others. We will have a friendly face shall we say.

Circumstances cannot wreck us, for if we allow them to, we never experience joy. As the **Handbook of Bible Application** puts it, **“Ultimate joy comes from Christ dwelling within us.”**

**Point:** Emotional growth is a lifelong journey. We get to a point in our life when things seem to be good, and then we struggle with some emotion. Then we get past that hill and there is another challenge for us. But the more we master our emotions with God’s help, to where we are controlled, not by them, but by God, it makes all the difference in the world.

So how do we experience the “good” side of joy. Again, sticking to Proverbs, let’s see what we can discover that hopefully will help us to be joyful.

**1) Working to live at peace with others can help us.** In some cases, no matter what we do, some people make it difficult to experience joy. They are mean, rude, unkind. And those people can mess up our day. Conflict can eat us up. They bring a dark cloud over us whenever they are around. One of the challenges is for us to rise above the people who make life difficult.

If we focus too much on them, it drags us down. **Pro. 12:20** tells us that those who plan peace have joy. Sometimes no matter how hard we try to make things work with others; they simply refuse to put in the effort. **Rom. 12:18** is a good equivalent to this person. Paul tells us that as much as we can do, live peaceably with all people. Some people are simply not going to respond in the right way.

There are people who devise and think about not doing the right thing or treating people the right way. They are deceivers, not only of themselves but, when possible, they deceive others, and their intentions are not good. We have probably worked with or gone to school with people like this or met them along life’s journey.

But those of us who **“plan”** for peace have joy. We do not allow these types of people to control our lives or steal our joy, our happiness. The word for **“plan” can mean “advice, counsel” and here “counsellor, adviser.”** The person who works to help others be at peace and walk through certain situations will also themselves experience peace as well. Helping others brings joy.

When we are not in conflict with others, it just makes us feel better. The point is that when we do our part to get along with others, there is joy, an emotional feeling that we can come to the place where we say to ourselves, “I have done what I was supposed to” and we leave the results and the situation with God.

**Point:** When we help others to have joy by encouraging them, or working with them to not let situations get to them, we feel a certain amount of joy. We need to let them know that we do not have to be controlled by what is going on around us. We want to help them know that their emotion of joy is based on their relationship with God, and the situations that they are facing do not have to have a grip on them. They need to constantly give it to the Lord and learn to trust in Him.

Jump down to **Pro. 15:23**. Here is a second point.

**2) Words spoken or received can emotionally affect us regarding joy.** I have been caught off-guard before by things said, and it bothered me. Maybe I was having a good day and then somebody said something that I did not need to hear or was not prepared for and unfortunately, I allowed it to ruin my day.

Let’s look at **Pro. 15:23** and see what it has to say to us. The **NET** has this, **“A person has joy in giving an appropriate answer...”** When we speak words that are fitting for a situation, and we are not talking about being caustic in our words, the hearer and ourselves experience positive things.

Most people in our country, or at least many of the most vocal ones, come across as angry and bitter. There is no joy in their lives though they may tell us there is. Their actions and words say different.

When we give an appropriate response to a situation, we experience joy as well, knowing that we have said the right thing to the situation at hand. That does not mean everything we say will be easy, and we do not relish “putting others in line.” Our goal is to help others to grow as well as ourselves, and to give wisdom and guidance in situations.

The second part of this verse says, **“a word in season - how good it is.”** How true that is? The word for **“in season” means what is “suitable, proper time”**, and I and most likely you, have been encouraged and, yes, happy, when someone said something at just the time we needed it. God used them to help us. We can do the same thing in the lives of others.

It really takes us outside of ourselves when we think of the influence we can have on others in a positive way, even when it comes to emotions.

**3) Living with integrity brings joy.** Look with me at **Pro. 21:15** if you would. When we see things handled in the right way, it does affect us emotionally just as things handled poorly affect us. The word for “justice” has to do with legal judgment, or a court situation where judgment is decided. The context here is more in line with justice for those doing wrong but I can see the practical side of this for us as Christ followers.

**Point:** It is also a word that describes God as a just God. That means He handles things fairly and right. On a personal level, when we live with integrity, handling things correctly, treating people right, and not always having to look over our shoulder if we thought we did something wrong, there is the emotional side of joy, peace, contentment because we have done right.

**4) Family and friends can bring joy.** It is true they can also bring pain and sorrow, and sorrow is an emotion. But we want to see how they bring joy and happiness. Look with me at **Pro. 23:24-25**. In **vs. 23** we see that when children are living a moral life and hopefully loving God, there is joy in the family.

There is also joy when we see decisions being made that are good decisions, that are wise, whether financial, or regarding health, job, etc. The father of a wise child takes pleasure, rejoices, and is glad. And it will be seen in our countenance because we are not, as parents, weighed down by decisions our kids make, no matter their age. We love them through it all, but certain things bring joy. That is a fact. And note that moms rejoice as well.

As parents, we are concerned for our children no matter their age, but we raise them to release them. We, who are grandparents, are not the parents. Now, there are times when grandparents end up, because of circumstances, taking their grandkids in as their children but in most situations, grandparents need to be careful not to infringe on our kids and their families. These are just some thoughts on the emotion of joy.