

*Lesson 3 – Do You Want Wisdom?
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I'm learning that simply wanting something is not enough to change me. I want to be kind, sweet and gentle. I want a quiet spirit. I want to trust the Lord. I want to be a good wife and mom. I want to be an encourager to others. Who of us doesn't? But I find that wanting it, is not enough. And simply desiring to be wise will not make me wise.

I'm taking this counseling course and one of the main things I'm learning from it is that change happens when we turn from something and turn to something else. For example, I want to learn to not be anxious but rest in God, like Ps 131 says, "Like a weaned child." But I'm finding that I cannot simply will myself to rest in Him. In order to rest in Him, I have to STOP resting in everything else. I have to stop looking to what others say about me as my resting place. I have to STOP looking to accomplishments as my resting place. I have to STOP seeking to control my life. And until I see that I am embracing all of these awful "rejections" of God and truly repent of them, I won't turn to Him to be my place of rest. He'll just be one of many places of rest.

The same is true of wisdom. We all want to be wise. To have wisdom to know what to do with work; how to raise our children; how to reach out to others. I think all of us would say that we know we are not wise but want to be. But in order to TURN to the Lord for this wisdom that he generously offers, we have to first TURN FROM our foolishness.

That's why I really liked where this study began. What is the opposite of wisdom? FOOLISHNESS. I read a book by Paul Tripp not too long ago where he talked about wisdom and foolishness. He said,

"Sin reduces all of us to fools." And that foolishness can be seen throughout the Proverbs in 4 basic categories:

1. **The foolishness of self-centeredness;** Our living often has no greater purpose than to self-satisfaction and self-fulfillment. I have seen this more clearly than ever in my own life. I think sometimes that even my pursuit of holiness is driven by self love. It would make my life easier if I didn't have to fight these sin issues. Wouldn't it? Most of my sinful choices are driven out of a heart that is seeking to love myself. Self-defense when I'm criticized. Unable to stand it when I'm misunderstood. Discouragement when things haven't turned out like I want them to. Sadly, much of my life is marked out by the foolishness of self-centeredness
2. **The foolishness of self-deception:** We're all really good at taking what God says is bad and making ourselves feel good about it. I wasn't gossiping, I was really concerned about my friend and trying to figure out how to help her. I wasn't angry; I was just disappointed. I'm not trying to control my children; I'm just trying to give them some direction. We are so quick to deceive ourselves, aren't we?
3. **The foolishness of self-sufficiency:** "I can do it myself!" That's the first full sentence of most children. I can remember when I went to Boston after college, one of my main motivations was to succeed on my own. And none of us likes someone else telling us

what to do or how to do it. Yet we're fighting the way God made us. We were made to live humbly dependent on God and in loving, humble interdependency on others. This is SO hard! (ROMANIA) We were designed for community, but the foolishness of self-sufficiency tells us that I've got all I need within myself. Or I can handle my spiritual growth just between me and God. This creates pretty superficial relationships with other people; it keeps us from being open, honest, and vulnerable in relationships. We keep all of our battles inside the four walls of our heart or home, living a pretty self-sufficient life. The lie of A/E was that they could be like God, independent and self-sufficient. We still tend to buy into that lie..

4. **The foolishness of self-righteousness:** I don't like to put myself in the same category as the Pharisees. We read about them and are horrified by their self-righteousness. We're horrified by the self-righteousness that we see in others: judging, people who never seem to see that they are wrong... Yet when I look honestly at my life, I see that I am self-righteous. I don't see myself as the deep, needy sinner that I truly am. That's why I'm defensive. It's why I can't take criticism. It's why I criticize others. It's why I'm not grateful, but instead grumble and complain. I feel like I deserve better. Often, it isn't my sin that keeps me from coming to God, it is my damned self-righteousness. I don't come to him because I don't think I need the grace that can be only found in him.

Wow! What a mess I am. What a fool I am! As the hymn says, "My sin would reduce me to utter despair."

But there's good news for foolish, sinners such as I. When I finally see what a mess I am, I'm a perfect candidate to receive the grace, beauty, and WISDOM of God.

PART 2: What is wisdom?

Tripp writes, "Wisdom, in its purest form, is not an outline, it's not a theology, it's not a book, it's not a system of logic. Wisdom is a person. You don't get wisdom by experience, research, or logical deduction. You don't get wisdom by education and experimentation. You get wisdom by means of a relationship to the One who is the source of everything that's wise, good and true."

"The radical claim of the bible is that wisdom isn't first a book or a system or a set of commands or principles. No, wisdom is a person, and his name is Jesus Christ."

We see this in these wonderful passages in the New Testament that we looked at in our study that paralleled the passage in Proverbs, connecting Jesus as not just the source of wisdom, but Wisdom itself.

Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom of knowledge. You want wisdom? You get it only in relationship with Christ.

Part 3: How do I get wisdom? What do I do with this?

The great thing about wisdom is that while we do search for it as silver (Proverbs 2:4), it doesn't keep itself hidden.

Shouts aloud, cries out. Everywhere we are, wisdom is there inviting us, offering herself to us.

Isn't this the gospel? God doesn't sit far off, offering us a distant relationship with a distant God. He became one of us in Christ. He came near. And he seeks us. Jesus said, "The Son of man came to SEEK and save the lost."

When I recognize that I need HIM (not just what I get from him); When I see how horribly lost and foolish I truly am; When I see that he seeks me! (WOW!); I'm on the path towards wisdom.

Back to where we started:

We all want wisdom. Wanting it, isn't enough. Adding a little knowledge, more rules, more theology to my mind won't change me into a wise woman.

Change comes when I turn from something to something.

I turn from my foolish self-centeredness, my foolish self-deception, my foolish self-sufficiency, and my foolish self-righteousness.

And I turn to Jesus who offers me himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I listen for HIS voice; hear the truth of HIS word; and Follow HIM in obedience, believing that only in HIM will I find what my heart is truly longing for.

"Blessed is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For whoever finds me finds life." (Proverbs 8:34-35a)