

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

## Subject: Thorns that produce Wisdom: Ecclesiastes 8:1-8

Solomon described an officer in the royal court, a man who had to carry out the orders of a despotic ruler. The officer had wisdom; in fact, it showed on his face (v. 1, and see Nehemiah 2:1 and Proverbs 15:13). Suppose the king commanded the servant to do something evil, something that the servant did not want to do? What should the servant do? Here is where wisdom comes to his aid. His wisdom told him that there were four possible approaches he could take to this problem.

Disobedience. Desertion, Defiance, or Discernment

Ecclesiastes 8:5-6

The wise servant understands that "time and judgment [procedure, NASB]" must be considered in everything we do, because it takes discernment to know the right procedure for the right time. The impulsive person who overreacts and storms out of the room (v. 3) is probably only making the problem worse. Wisdom helps us understand people and situations and to figure out the right thing to do at the right time. "The wise heart will know the proper time and procedure" (v. 5 b, NIV).

This is illustrated beautifully in the lives of several Old Testament believers. Joseph didn't impulsively reveal to his brothers who he was, because he wanted to be sure their hearts were right with their father and their God. Once he heard them confess their sins, Joseph knew it was the right time to identify himself. His handling of this delicate matter was a masterpiece of wisdom

### True Wisdom

If we are wise with the true wisdom of souls, our first need of patience sends us to God to ask for it. We seek a refuge from disquietude in His peace: our haunting weakness drives us back upon His strength, till presently we find that our incapacity, with God's help, is stronger far than our most complete energy without it, and that, with the thorn still fretting the flesh, we can do all things through Him that strength .

### Evil Communications

Forsake dangerous associations. Health is not contagious, but sickness is. We quarantine yellow fever to keep it out of the country, but we do not bring in health or quarantine it. Sin is catching; holiness is not. Be very careful to whom you give the key of your heart. Look out! This association, with us imitative creatures, has a tremendous influence on a man's or a woman's Christian character. Lot bought real estate down near Sodom; pitched his tent over against Sodom. Then he moved into Sodom, and pretty soon Sodom moved into him. The angel put a hand on his shoulder, and said, "Escape for thy life . . . lest thou be consumed" (Genesis 19:17). That is the only way for anyone to get out of dangerous associations in business, in politics, or anything else. Christians, the moment you find that you are in any associations that harm and

poison your piety, escape out of that place as quickly as Lot deserted Sodom, for there is no safety in remaining there.

### **Put On Christ**

You never can drive out the uncleanness of evil thoughts except by pouring in the clean wholesomeness of the thoughts of Christ. Have you made Christ for any length of time the one object of your thoughts? Try it, you people who want to break loose from the shackles that you know are keeping you away from the great blessing of God and from the pure sweetness of His free and holy life. What else is there to think about that is worth anything, compared with Him? All treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Him. How it must grieve Him, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, to see us filling our minds with passing things, worthless things, dying after the fashion of the world, while Christ is crowded away into some bare and paltry place in our lives!

### **WISDOM**

WHAT IS WISDOM, AND HOW DO WE BECOME WISE?

KEY BIBLE VERSE: Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours? (1 Kings 3:9)

### **WISDOM BEGINS WHEN WE ASK GOD TO BE OUR SUPPLY.**

When given a chance to have anything in the world, Solomon asked for wisdom-"an understanding mind"-in order to lead well and to make right decisions. We can ask God for this same wisdom (James 1:5). Notice that Solomon asked for discernment to carry out his job; he did not ask God to do the job for him. We should not ask God to do for us what he wants to do through us. Instead we should ask God to give us the wisdom to know what to do and the courage to follow through on it.

### **WISDOM IS THINKING AND LIVING AS GOD DESIGNED US TO LIVE.**

Solomon asked for wisdom, not wealth, but God gave him riches and long life as well. While God does not promise riches to those who follow him, he gives us what we need if we put his kingdom, his interests, and his principles first (Matthew 6:31-33). Setting your heart on riches will only leave you dissatisfied because even if you get the riches you crave, you will still want something more. But if you put God and his work first, he will satisfy your deepest needs.

### **WISDOM IS THE ABILITY TO APPLY KNOWLEDGE TO EVERYDAY LIFE.**

Solomon received wisdom from God, but it was up to Solomon to apply that wisdom to all areas of his life. Solomon was obviously wise in governing the nation, but he was foolish in running his household. Wisdom is both the ability to discern what is best and the strength of character to act upon that knowledge. While Solomon remained wise all his life, he did not always act upon his wisdom (11:6).

Solomon's settlement of the dispute described in 1 Kings 3:16-28 was a classic example of his wisdom. This wise ruling was verification that God had answered Solomon's prayer and given him a discerning heart. Discernment is the capacity to recognize truth and issues deeper than the surface appearance. We have God's wisdom available to us as we pray and request it. But, like Solomon, we must put it into action.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** Oh, how I love your law! I think about it all day long. Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for your commands are my constant guide. (Psalm 119:97-98)

### **WE BECOME WISE BY STUDYING AND APPLYING GOD'S WORD.**

God's Word makes us wise-wiser than our enemies and wiser than any teachers who ignore it. True wisdom goes beyond amassing knowledge; it is applying knowledge in a life-changing way. Intelligent or experienced people are not necessarily wise. Wisdom comes from applying God's Word to our life.

### **THE WISDOM GOD OFFERS IN HIS WORD IS PRACTICAL AND MUST BE APPLIED TO LIFE.**

To walk safely in the woods at night, we need a light so we don't trip over tree roots or fall into holes. In this life, we walk through a dark forest of evil. But the Bible can be our light to show us the way ahead so we won't stumble as we walk. It reveals the entangling roots of false values and philosophies. Study the Bible, so you will be able to see your way clearly enough to stay on the right path.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** Fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge. Only fools despise wisdom and discipline. (Proverbs 1:7)

### **TRUST IN GOD-HE WILL MAKE YOU TRULY WISE.**

In this age of information, knowledge is plentiful, but wisdom is scarce. Wisdom means far more than simply knowing a lot. It is a basic attitude that affects every aspect of life. The foundation of knowledge is to fear the Lord-to honor and respect God, to live in awe of his power, and to obey his Word. Faith in God should be the controlling principle for your understanding of the world, your attitudes, and your actions.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** How wonderful to be wise, to be able to analyze and interpret things. Wisdom lights up a person's face, softening its hardness. (Ecclesiastes 8:1)

### **WISDOM IS THE ABILITY TO SEE LIFE FROM GOD'S PERSPECTIVE AND THEN TO KNOW THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION TO TAKE.**

Most people would agree that wisdom is a valuable asset, but how can we acquire it? Proverbs 9:10 teaches that the reverence and fear of the Lord (respect and honor) are basic to all wisdom. Wisdom comes from knowing and trusting God; it is not merely the way to find God. Knowing God will lead to understanding and then to sharing this knowledge with others.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom beyond his years, and God placed his special favor upon him. (Luke 2:40)

### **WE BECOME WISER AS WE BECOME MORE LIKE CHRIST.**

Jesus was filled with wisdom, which is not surprising because he stayed in close contact with his heavenly Father. James 1:5 says God gives wisdom generously to all who ask. Even our children

need to be encouraged to seek and develop wisdom. Like Jesus, we can grow in wisdom by walking with God.

**KEY BIBLE VERSE:** If you need wisdom-if you want to know what God wants you to do-ask him, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent you're asking. (James 1:5)

### **WE CAN ASK FOR GOD'S WISDOM TO GUIDE OUR CHOICES.**

By wisdom, James is talking not only about knowledge, but about the ability to make wise decisions in difficult circumstances. Whenever we need wisdom, we can pray to God, and he will generously supply what we need. Christians don't have to grope around in the dark, hoping to stumble upon answers.

### **WISDOM MEANS PRACTICAL DISCERNMENT.**

It begins with respect for God, leads to right living, and results in increased ability to tell right from wrong. God is willing to give us this wisdom, but we will be unable to receive it if our goals are self-centered instead of God-centered. To learn God's will, we need to read his Word and ask him to show us how to obey it. Then we must do what he tells us.

Solving a complex problem in trigonometry and writing a computer program that will guide a nuclear submarine both require great intelligence. But such intelligence does not guarantee a fulfilling, balanced, and productive life. Success in relationships, raising children, and spiritual maturity are dependent not on intellect, but rather on wisdom. The Bible, which devotes the whole book of Proverbs to the subject, teaches that the wisdom to master life's challenges and to understand spiritual truth is found only in God.

### **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING WISDOM?**

Ecclesiastes 10:10 . . . Since a dull ax requires great strength, sharpen the blade. That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.

Wisdom will help you to succeed in what you do.

Ephesians 5:15-17 . . . Be careful how you live, not as fools but as those who are wise.

Wisdom helps you know how to live.

1 Kings 3:9-10 . . . Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong.

The more responsibility you have, the more of God's wisdom you need in order to do what is right.

Proverbs 3:21-26 . . . My child, don't lose sight of good planning and insight. Hang on to them, for they fill you with life and bring you honor and respect. They keep you safe on your way and keep your feet from stumbling. You can lie down without fear and enjoy pleasant dreams. You need not be afraid of disaster or the destruction that comes upon the wicked, for the Lord is your security. He will keep your foot from being caught in a trap.

Wisdom will help preserve you from trouble and disaster.

Proverbs 9:11-12 . . . Wisdom will multiply your days and add years to your life. If you become wise, you will be the one to benefit. If you scorn wisdom, you will be the one to suffer.

Wisdom will give you a richer, fuller life.