

Seek Wisdom as a Life or Death Matter

by Jeremy Utley

This sermon emphasizes the importance of valuing wisdom as a matter of life and death, encouraging believers to seek wisdom from God by bothering Him through prayer. It highlights the significance of not only crying out for wisdom but also understanding that wisdom is essential in our lives, just like God's command to love. The sermon challenges the misconception that wisdom is optional and stresses the need to prioritize seeking wisdom from Jesus Christ daily, as He is the way, truth, and life.

Scripture: Proverbs 2:2, Ephesians 5:15, Luke 18:5, Proverbs 9:4, John 14:6

Topics: "The Value of Wisdom", "Seeking God through Prayer"

Description

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Transcript

I was blessed by something that when I said as we were singing, he said, nobody here, the only person who's important here is Jesus Christ. And it's good to remember as we share that the words, hopefully that each of us share, we're sharing as the words that God has given us. Hopefully we can say with Jesus, each brother who stands up and sister who stands up to speak or pray or anything.

I'm only saying what God's given me. And so I pray that the Lord would get all the glory. I really appreciated that reminder when I thank you.

If you want to turn to Ephesians chapter five, I wanted to ask you a question. If you, especially children, you can think about this question for a second. Is it okay? I want to see kids eyes.

Can you look at me? If you're a child, if you're under 12, you got to look at me. I want to see is it, here's your simple question. Is it okay? And if you're, if you're over 12, you don't have to look at me.

Okay. Is it okay to not be loving? Is that okay, David? What do you think? No. Why not? Why must we be loving? Yeah.

God tells us to, and why does God tell us to, why does God tell us to be loving? Yeah. David, he is loving. Okay.

So God commands us to love and it's not okay to not be loving because God is loving. And that's, there's so much truth right there. It's never okay to not be loving because it's who God is.

And even before there was anything, before he ever created anything, he was love. He was loving and he existed in perfect love in fellowship with himself. He was perfectly loving before he made any of us.

So we know it's never okay to not be loving. Now let me ask you children, can I see your eyes again? Let me ask you a different question. Is it okay to not be wise? All of us hang on, hands down, please.

I can say that to my own child. Okay. I, which I appreciate.

We'll talk later. But the point is if you're like me, you go, well, that one's not so straightforward. Loving.

No, there's no exception. I must be loving, but wise. I mean, I'm still growing.

I'm still learning. Wisdom is a matter of experience, right? And we can think it's not, there's things like love that I must be. And they're automatically, they're wrong if I'm not.

But then there are things like wisdom. I go, that's for later. That's for older people.

That's for elders. That's for teachers. But me, I'm not wise.

It's, I can give myself a pass, right? But look with me at Ephesians chapter five and verse 15. See what the Lord says here. He's not speaking to older people.

He says, therefore be careful, verse 15, Ephesians 5, 15. Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Is it okay at any time to not be wise? I read that and all of a sudden I go, it's a little bit more straightforward than I thought it was. For a second, I thought it's okay perhaps to not be wise. But now I read the Holy Spirit's command, do not be unwise.

Old people, do not be unwise. Experienced people, no. To every Christian, the Lord's command is be wise.

And for me, the message that I wanted to share, the message I feel the Lord's been putting on my heart for me, is I can't treat wisdom as an optional thing. Wisdom is essential. And I believe that the Lord wants us to seek wisdom as absolutely vital and necessary to our lives.

Not as a nice to have, not as a someday I might, but today I must have the wisdom of Jesus Christ. Today, I must. I believe it's true for every single born again believer.

And I will confess, I'll be the first one I confess, I don't always feel I must be wise. Sometimes I think I hope to be wise, but there's a world of difference between those two statements. And I want to encourage you, what the Lord's been encouraging me, stop saying someday.

Start saying now, I have to be wise today. Why? Because God has commanded me to be wise. He says, don't be unwise.

Do I take wisdom that seriously? If someone were, if you were to hire KPMG or Ernst & Young to come and audit my life, that'd be a scary thought. They see everything. Do they walk away going, you know what? That guy really wants wisdom.

It's a challenging thought to me. If you look with me at Proverbs chapter eight, I was reading this passage earlier this week and this first really, or actually a little passage really struck me. It says at the end of it, 8.32, it says, now therefore, O sons, wisdom is speaking here.

Listen to me. How blessed are they who keep my ways? Listen to me. But it says, therefore, what's it therefore? Why should we listen to wisdom? And if you look with me, starting in verse 22, look at this.

Did you know this about wisdom? I knew it about love. Did you know it about wisdom? The Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way. Just like love was before God created anything, so was wisdom.

Before his works of old, from everlasting, I was established. From the beginning, from the earliest times of earth, verse 24, when there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no springs abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth.

While he had not yet made the earth and the fields nor the first dust of the world, when he established the heavens, I was there. When he inscribed a circle on the face of the deep, when he made firm the skies above, when the springs became fixed, when he set the sea its boundary, look at verse 30. I was beside him, a master workman.

I, wisdom, was daily God's delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in the world, his earth, having my delight in the sons of men. Now, for this reason, why? Because I have always been, long before the world was created, for this reason, listen to me. You value love because God is love? Do you value wisdom because God is wise? That question came to me and I go, I do value love, but I don't hold wisdom in the same regard as absolute necessity, as a must have, as a can't live without it, as a not someday, but today kind of proposition.

And the Lord has been correcting me. I don't cherish wisdom sufficiently. So what is wisdom? When I think about wisdom, when I ask for wisdom, you know what I'm asking? When I say, Lord, give me wisdom.

You know what I want to know? I don't know about you, but examine your own heart. The last time you asked for wisdom, what did you want? For me, it could be defined as which one, where, or what? That's what I'm asking the Lord for. When I say I want wisdom, I am saying, which one should I choose Lord? Or where am I supposed to go? Or what should I do? Right? That's what I mean when I say wisdom.

And you know who I was reminded of, if you want to turn to John chapter 14, I feel the Lord really showed me in his correction of Thomas, how I've been thinking about wisdom wrongly. Wisdom is not a where or a what or a which one. Wisdom is a how.

Look with me at John chapter 14. Jesus says in verse three, if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself that where I am there, you may also be. And you know the way where I'm going.

And Thomas says, Lord, and how many times have you said this? We don't know where you are going. How can we know the way? If I don't know where, how can I know the way? Right? That's what Thomas is saying. If we don't know where we're going, how can we know what to do? Haven't you felt that way? You know the reason I don't know what to do right now? Because I don't know where I'm going.

You know, I feel stuck because I don't know what the answer is. I'm looking for the answer. I'm looking for the path.

I'm looking for the tell me which one and then I'll know what to do. And you know what Jesus says to Thomas? I'm the way. Thomas says, I can't know the way unless I know where.

And Jesus says, you don't need to know where, you know me. I'm the way and the truth and the life. And I want to say something here.

This is illuminating because when you say, what is the way to do something? What do you mean? This is the way you wash the dishes. What are you saying to your children? This is, this is the path that you should walk in. No, this is how Jesus said, I am the way he's how, how he lives is wisdom.

And I don't need to know the job I'm going to take in the future or the house I'm going to have, or the decision about my kid's college or the retirement plan or whatever, which I'm wondering about what Jesus says, you don't need to know where to know how the question is, how am I behaving? Jesus is saying to me, you're concerned about which one you should choose. I want you to be concerned about my life. Are you living as I'm living? Thomas's and my question is always, if I don't know where, then what will I do? And Jesus says, you don't need to know where to know what to do.

You need to look to me and you need to emulate my life. The life of Jesus Christ is wisdom. And if I seek to know the conduct and will and character of Jesus Christ in any situation, I have wisdom, even if I don't know the way.

And I was convicted as I thought about Jesus' response to Thomas, which I thank Arnaldo for pointing us to this passage on Tuesday night, because I hadn't thought about this passage like that till Arnaldo shared it. Jesus' way is wisdom. And the question for me and the challenge to me is when I ask the Lord for wisdom, rarely do I want to know more of Jesus Christ.

Mostly I want to know which, is it A or B? And what the Lord is saying is, when you come to me for wisdom, I want you to come to me for me and say, Jesus, what, who are you? What do you do? How do you think about this? What do you care about? What do you value? Not which one, which is a function of knowing him. And I realized, I think about wisdom wrong and I ask for wisdom wrongly. And I don't need a where, I need a how.

And Jesus says to Thomas here, I'm not going to give you a where, I'm going to give you myself. And that's enough. So what keeps us from being wise? You know what I learned this week? I just, this is something that's helped me.

The opposite of wisdom is not foolishness. I think what keeps me from being wise is foolishness. But we've learned, you know, there are two masters, children, question here.

Z, question. There are two masters, God and what's the other one in the back, Sammy? Money, right? Not the devil. Sammy, how old are you? 10, 11, 10.

We've emphasized that enough that a 10 year old knows it, right? That's the right answer. The devil is not one of two masters. Money is the other master.

So you can say the opposite of God is money. A love of money is opposite the love of God. In the same way, the scriptures, if you want to turn with me to Proverbs chapter nine, the scriptures tell us about a surprising opposite to wisdom.

And this has really opened my eyes to see the thing that keeps me from wisdom, just like the thing that will keep me from the love of God is not Satan, but loving money and money being my master. Similarly, what keeps me from being wise? It's interesting here, and it's a short proverb. You can, it just doesn't even fill a full page for me, but I want you to look with me.

There's two calls, wisdom calls and someone else calls, and the call is identical, literally verbatim, word for word. It's the same thing. Look at it with me.

Proverbs chapter nine, verse four, whoever's naive, let him turn in here. Who to him who lacks understanding wisdom says, come eat my food, drink of the wine that I've mixed. So that's one call.

The other call is not the call of foolishness. That's the thing that surprised me. I think wisdom calls with this call and the other call, the other voice that's calling out in the street is foolishness, but you know what it is.

Look with me at verse 16. Someone else says, whoever's naive, let him turn in here. Same thing as verse four, right? To him who lacks understanding, someone says stolen water is sweet.

Bread eaten in secret is pleasant. You know what the opposite of wisdom is? Lust. This is the harlot speaking, and it rocked me to realize the thing that keeps me from being wise is not foolishness, it's lust, and if I want to be wise, you know what I need to do? I don't need to fight foolishness.

I need to fight lust because lust and wisdom make the same call. Whoever's naive, let him turn in here, and the reason that I don't get to wisdom's door is because I turn in at the doorway of lust, and before we think, because it's really easy, myself, I'm not pointing fingers. I can't imagine for what sisters think.

I think it's easy for a guy to go, man, this is a man's problem now. All right, men, let's think about lust because that's why the men aren't wise, but let me ask you a question. Look at how it describes verse 13, the harlot.

The woman of folly is boisterous. She's naive, and she knows nothing. Look with me, if you will, at Proverbs chapter seven for a second.

You can hold your finger there. Just go over a page. Proverbs 7, verse seven.

This is the opposite call of wisdom. I saw among the naive and discerned among the youths a young man lacking sense. Passing through the street near her corner, he takes the way to her house.

The way, by the way, Jesus said, I'm the way. We see here, this man takes the way, but it's not the way of wisdom, it's the way of lust. He takes the way to her house, and in the twilight, in the evening, in the middle of the night, and in the darkness, behold, a woman comes out to meet him, dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.

She's boisterous, same word from Proverbs nine, and rebellious. Her feet do not remain at home. She's now in the streets, now in the squares, and lurks by every corner.

I believe with all my heart that lust is keeping both men and women from the wisdom of the knowledge of Christ's ways. It's so easy for us to think lust is a guy's problem, right? But sisters, look at your social media, for example. Who do you follow? Do you follow boisterous women? This is, I'm not pointing the finger, I'm just saying how it's relevant to all of us, right? Look at entertainment.

Are we taking the way to her house, or the way of Jesus Christ? If so, men and women alike, we are lacking sense, just like the young man in Proverbs chapter seven. For sure, lust keeps both men and women from the wisdom of the knowledge of Christ. So look at the exhortation here, both men and women, Proverbs seven, verse 24.

Proverbs seven, verse 24. Now, therefore, my sons, and we could also say daughters. There's a movement right now, by the way, sorry, just brief aside.

There's a movement right now. If you get the new NASB, I've got the 1990 version. If you get the new NASB, every time, I haven't looked, by the way, so you can check me on this, but I think every time it says brothers, it now says brothers and sisters, which I think generally is a great thing, right? I want my daughters to think that all the things that say brothers flee from immorality, right? I want them to go, I don't want them to think that's not for me, it says brothers.

No, I want them to say, no, it's brothers and sisters, that's good. I wonder, I don't know if the new NASB here says my son and my daughter. I don't know whether the new NASB thinks lust is relevant to women too, but I think that we all should see that it does, but look at verse 24.

Therefore, my sons and my daughters, listen to me. Pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways.

Do not stray into her paths. There's a way here too, right? Don't let her, don't let your heart turn aside to her ways. Jesus said, I am the way.

Solomon said, how do I know where? I'm asking for wisdom, and Jesus said, I'm the way, and the opposite here is don't turn into the ways of lust. Don't stray into her paths. For me, what it spoke to me clearly was if I want to know why I am lacking in wisdom, here may be the reason.

I'm not watchful over the paths I'm straying into, and I think wisdom, I'll get it someday, and the Lord says, no, no, no, the reason you're not wise is because you're not watching the paths you're walking down. You're turning in at the gate, at the wrong gates. You want to be wise? Stop turning in at these gates.

Stop following these things. It's interesting to me that it says it's late, it's twilight. I know even social media, right? It's like, when do we find ourselves doom scrolling? It's not in the middle of the day when there's plenty of work to do.

It's when we should probably be going to bed. All of a sudden, oh, I'm just going to check a little bit more. Are we turning to her ways there? It's keeping us from wisdom.

So where do we begin? To me, as I thought about my own longing for wisdom, how I haven't valued it highly enough, how I haven't properly defined it, how I haven't seen what its opposite even is, what I've felt

is a tendency to be discouraged, and what the Lord has spoken clearly to me, and what I want to encourage all of you with is, forget the past. What the apostle Paul says is, forget the things that lie behind. Press forward to what lies ahead, to the upward call of God.

Forget how you've wasted time doom scrolling last night. Forget how you aren't as wise as you could be. It's easy to go, man, if I had known, I could be so much wiser.

That is a worthless speculation. Don't do it. Just say, today's the day of salvation.

I never knew I could be wise today. I thought it was something like when I was 40, when I got old. I just turned 40.

Yeah, it's not about being old. I can have wisdom today. Today is a day of salvation.

I can know the ways of Jesus Christ today. I can refuse the ways of lust today. And I can be victorious now by choosing to glorify God, and praise Him, and thank Him.

You know, it brings glory to the devil if I wallow in discouragement. And if you think about all the wasted time in the past, you're only going to glorify the devil. You know how to glorify the Lord? When you feel you've wasted your past, here's how to do it.

Praise the Lord and say, thank you, you've brought me to the point that I realize I've wasted my past. Thank you. I praise your name, Lord.

And I reject the temptation to be discouraged. I'm going to hold on to your promise. I'm ashamed of the devil.

And the devil might have been glorified before by my wallowing in discouragement. He's not going to be glorified today. But you go, but I don't know the way.

I don't know where. No, you know how. Praise the Lord.

As we heard, praise is the red carpet for the Lord. You want to roll out the red carpet for the Lord today? Say, I praise you, Lord. You've let me know I've been unwise.

I praise you, Lord, that you've shown me I've defined wisdom wrongly. I praise you, Lord, that I've been deceived about what the opposite of wisdom is. Whatever it is, today you can praise the Lord and thus glorify him.

That's what the Lord said to me. That's really encouraging because then I don't have to lose heart. I don't have to despair.

I've been encouraged to know God's glory is not contingent upon my knowing what to do, but choosing to honor him, even when I don't know what to do. And right now, as I think about wisdom, I go, Lord, I don't know the first thing about how to grow. Then the question is, what next? Am I discouraged? Am I disappointed? Or I say, praise the Lord.

He'll show me. I believe the Lord is glorified by my emptiness, by my helplessness. He has no problem with that.

Just praise the Lord. Okay, what next, Lord? He'll show me the pathways of life. The last thing I want to say, how do I know if I have come to value wisdom? We saw earlier, we might have, I don't know if I read it, but there's a proverb that says wisdom cries out in the street.

If you want to turn to Proverbs 2. Wisdom cries out in the streets. Oh yeah, we saw that. And so does the harlot.

So does lust. Here's what encouraged me. I can prove that I value wisdom if I don't let wisdom be the only one crying out in the streets.

Wisdom's not supposed to be the only one crying out. You look at Proverbs 2, verse 2, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding. How do you do it? If you cry for discernment, lift your voice for understanding.

If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will discern the fear of the Lord and you'll discover the knowledge of God. What an incredible promise. Wisdom is crying out in the streets and the Lord's saying, will you cry too? Will you cry out too? If you will, then you'll discern the fear of the Lord.

It's an amazing promise. I can know that I value wisdom if I'm crying out too. That's the easy way.

Do you value wisdom? Just look, are you crying out for wisdom? I was blessed to remember the story of the widow. If you want to turn to Luke 18, Jesus is telling us how to pray here. And you can think about this as a parable for how to cry out for wisdom, among other things.

In verse 1, it says, he was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray. So Jesus is teaching us how to pray here. And look at verse 5. This unrighteous judge says, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection.

Otherwise, but continually coming to me, she'll wear me out. And it blessed me to see Jesus is teaching us to pray. You know, he's teaching us to pray.

What is he saying? Bother me. Bother me for wisdom. One incredibly encouraging thing to realize.

Again, I mean, James also says he gives generously without reproach. We know that, right? This, I feel what Jesus says even one step farther. Not only do we know that God will give without reproach, meaning he's not going to say, you should already have that.

But he's actually saying, bother me. I cannot say, I have to be honest. I cannot say I'll be first in line to confess my need.

I cannot say that the way I would characterize my pursuit of wisdom is, you know what? I've been bothering God about this. That's not how I describe my pursuit of wisdom. I don't value it highly enough, or I still think someday.

And the Lord's saying, start bothering me today. See it as a matter of life and death. And then, you know, the picture I got of a baby that wants milk.

If you ever, we don't know the mind of a child, but you can't think a baby's going, I was going to cry, but I don't want to bother my mom right now, right? No baby thinks that I don't want to bother mom. And by the

way, and no mother is bothered by the baby's crying. You know why? A baby needs food and a mother loves to give it.

And why does a mother love to give it? It's a matter of life or death. Why does God say, bother me for wisdom? It's a matter of life or death. I want to start taking wisdom that seriously.

It's not a nice to have. It's a matter of life or death. And just like a baby cries out without going, oh, should I? I don't know if I need milk right now.

I need to have that same attitude towards wisdom. And I can trust that God has the attitude of a loving mother towards me. I long to give it.

I was just hoping you'd ask. I want to give you more wisdom. I'll end again with that same verse that we started with.

I'll just read it again. Ephesians chapter five, verse 15 through 17. May the Lord help us to do this.

Therefore, NCCF, therefore Jeremy, be careful how you walk. No longer as an unwise man, but as a wise man, not in a year, not in five years, not in 10 years. Today, make the most of your time because the days are evil.

No longer be foolish, but understand this is God's will. Pray that the Lord would help me and he'd help us all to long for wisdom as the Lord loves and longs to give it. Amen.

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