

Live In the Fear of the Lord

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June 2, 2024
Graduation Sunday

Proverbs 9:10-12 ¹⁰ "The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding. ¹¹ For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you. ¹² If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And *if* you scoff, you will bear *it* alone."

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

I saw a YouTube clip a few weeks ago where six people were asked to rank themselves according to IQ, then they were given a quick little test. Among them was a lady with a couple PhDs. Although she put herself near the top, the test put her dead last. A two-minute IQ probably isn't accurate, but it is true that an accumulation of knowledge is not the same as wisdom.

Our graduates have accumulated a certain amount of knowledge; therefore, we send them on to the next stage of education, but we hope and pray that they have not only learned knowledge but have also learned wisdom. Our text reminds us wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord.

What is wisdom?

The bible has a lot to say about wisdom.

In the parable of the ten virgins, the Lord calls them wise who take the simple step of making sure their lamps are ready before going to bed. Wisdom means using your time wisely to prepare for what is coming. This is especially true when we talk about being prepared for our Lord's coming.

In the parable of the talents, the first two men who make use of the talents given to them are considered wise and given praise from their master. The one who buries his talents is not. Therefore, wisdom is using faithfully whatever gifts we have from the Lord. Knowing yourself is a difficult thing but it leads to wise decisions.

One of the more interesting biblical references to wisdom is found in Exodus.

Exodus 28:3 "all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom"

Here the bible uses the term wisdom, where we would probably use the term "creative." When building the tabernacle in the wilderness God tells Moses to gather those who are wise artisans. Making good use of paints, wood, metal and other materials to build a beautiful and well made temple is also a form of wisdom.

Although these are all different examples of wisdom the one thing that they have in common is the ability to make decisions which result in successful outcomes. Jesus himself implies this definition of wisdom in the gospel of Luke.

Luke 7:35 "wisdom is justified by all her children."

That is to say when the result of our decisions lead to a successful outcome those decisions are proven wise.

This is indeed what we want for these young people. We want them to be able to make good decisions which will result in a successful life. We wish them to be wise.

In some instances, wisdom is an obvious thing. It is wise not to get into arguments, especially with your spouse. You may or may not win the argument, but you are never going to have a successful outcome. Other times wisdom is a daunting thing because there are so many decisions and who can say which of them will lead to success. Many people are paralyzed with indecision because who can tell what the right decision is.

We, however, have a cheat code. The Fear of the Lord is the path of wisdom. That is to say rather than charging ahead because I think I can handle it myself, stop and listen to the word of the Lord. Humble your heart before the Lord, hold your tongue and hear what he has to say to you.

Our text makes it clear that the first step towards successful decisions in life is the fear of the Lord. When we stop thinking I know what I'm doing and take them time to listen to the word of the Lord.

Last year the oil on our Subaru needed to be changed. I thought to myself no problem I'll just change it quick. It's not that hard. I used to do it on my old car all the time. I went under the car. I found the oil pan. I unscrewed the plug. I drained the oil. After I was done my car wouldn't drive anywhere. Turns out I drained the transmission fluid not the oil. It would have been wise to double check a diagram or watch a short video.

No matter how much you think you know it pays to stop and listen. This is what the Lord is trying to teach us in our text. Take the time to listen to the Lord before charging ahead.

The fear of the Lord means among other things that we stop assuming, I know what I am doing and listen to what the Lord is telling us. Following his direction leads to wisdom and a successful outcome.

Luke 11:28 blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it

That means that they listen to what God has to say and follow his directions. When you stop and listen to the Lord, not only does he give you direction, but you also hear how your sins and failure are forgiven through Jesus Christ who died for you.

Our text makes it clear that those who listen to the Lord and follow his directions will have a successful outcome.

11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you.

This is a promise the Lord repeats many times in scripture.

Matthew 6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Mat 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Those who hunger for earthly things may or may not find satisfaction, but those who hunger for spiritual gifts and look to Jesus will receive all that they desire.

Hos 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness; Reap in mercy; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD, Till He comes and rains righteousness on you.

Although this verse has implications for our life on this earth it is more fully fulfilled through Jesus Christ and the life he promises us. By his death and righteousness our lives are lengthened into eternity.

It is the Lord who will bless you and guide you everywhere that you go. He will watch over you and keep you. The fear of the Lord is to listen to his directions and his promises. This is wisdom. The fear of the Lord is to trust in his forgiveness, this also is wisdom. Amen.