

Proverbs: how to be wise

discussion guide

based on **Proverbs 1.1-7** etc and Dan's talk on 24/9/23

This sermon was the introductory talk in our new series on Proverbs, 'Wisdom for life'. All our Proverbs-related material is being posted at www.stjamesbythepark.org/proverbs

Intro: What proverbial sayings did you learn from your parents, or from other people?

Watch one (or both) videos from the Bible project available on the proverbs page on our website.

What stood out to you from the video?

Read Proverbs 1.1-7

V7 says that 'the fear of the LORD' is the beginning of wisdom. This means kneeling in awe before our promise-keeping, loving heavenly Father who loves to rescue and help us. Why is this 'fear of the LORD' so foundational to wisdom?

Pick 2 or 3 of the 10 (!) points that Dan made, and chew them over in more detail.

1. There is a prayer that's always answered.

Look at the background to Proverbs – read 1 Kings 3.5-28; 4.29-34

Look at a NT promise about wisdom – James 1.5-6

Which aspect of this promise encourages you most?

2. Don't make the mistake of being an intelligent fool; don't worry if you're a school drop-out.

In the Bible, wisdom isn't measured in IQ. Wisdom is doing what's right in the right way. Folly is ignoring God's wisdom.

Think of examples of intelligent fools.

Think of examples of wise people who aren't academically clever.

3. Even the poorest person can be rich; even the richest person can be poor

Read Prov 2.12-19; 3.13-15, 21-26; 8.10-11

Think of your family and friends. Who values wealth more than wisdom? Who values wisdom more than wealth?

What are some of the other benefits of wisdom not mentioned in these verses?

4. Wisdom doesn't call from the temple

Read Prov 1.20-21. This is 'woman wisdom' (ie godly wisdom) calling out to people in all walks of life.

How would you re-write verses 20-21 for today's society?

Why is it important not to compartmentalise faith from other areas of our lives (eg work, family, social life etc)?

In what areas of your life would you appreciate wisdom at the moment?

5. You can teach an old dog new tricks

Read Prov 1.4

Can you think of examples of people who have turned from foolish paths to wise paths?

How does this verse encourage you?

6. Wisdom is a path not a gate

Read Prov 4.10-19, 26-27

Why do you think wisdom is consistently pictured as a path rather than a gate?

7. Proverbs aren't promises

Read Prov 3.5-6

Do you think this is a promise (always true) or a proverb (generally true)? Why?

Read Prov 26.4-5

How do these two proverbs relate to each other?

If most of the book of Proverbs aren't promises, how should we read, understand and apply them?

8. If you think you're wise, you're a fool

Read Prov 1.20-33

Can you think of times when you've thought yourself too wise to listen to other people's advice?

Can you think of times when you've tried to give wise advice to others, and they've ignored it? What's the best way to respond in those situations?

9. Don't sit at a desk to learn wisdom; kneel in awe

Read Prov 2.6; 3.11-12; 9.10

What would help you remember to 'kneel in awe' as we work through Proverbs over the coming months – even when so many Proverbs don't mention God at all?

Can you think of examples of 'worldly wisdom' which are good, and agree with biblical wisdom?

Can you think of examples of 'worldly wisdom' which runs counter to biblical wisdom?

10. Ultimately, we are all fools; but Jesus is our wisdom

Read 1 Kings 11.1-11

Can you think of others who have been wise for most of their life, but then made foolish decisions later on?

Read Prov 8.22-31 and compare with John 1.1-4; Colossians 1.15-17

Is it fair to call 'woman wisdom' a pseudonym for Jesus?

Read Matthew 7.24-29

What strikes you about these verses, having been thinking about Proverbs so far?

Spend some time **praying** that as a whole church community we'd grow in wisdom this term.