



TAKEAWAY THOUGHT: We must learn to trust God more than we trust ourselves.

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 17:9, Proverbs 3:5-8, Proverbs 14:16

[Teacher Note: I talk about my friend from high school who always had the “best relationship advice,” even though he wasn’t really able to make relationships work. Insert your own story, since we all know someone like that, or use the example generally.]

INTRO

Have you ever had a friend who loved to give advice, but really wasn’t qualified to offer any? I had a friend in high school like this. We went to youth group together, and we’re actually still good friends. I just don’t take advice from him. He loved giving dating advice, but he couldn’t make a relationship work for himself. I remember when I was dating Sarah, he’d always give me this weird advice. He would offer things like, “Don’t be too nice too often, or she will always expect you to be that way.” Ladies and gentlemen, it’s fair to expect people to be nice to you consistently. He’d tell me how he only took his girlfriends on cheap dates, so they didn’t know he had more money. If you took them somewhere nice once, they’d know you could afford to do it more often. He also recommended not complimenting your girlfriend, because you may convince her that she’s out of your league.

He was full of bad advice. He thought he was sharing wisdom, but what he was sharing was really wis-dumb. While his examples are hopefully glaringly dumb to you, he’s not alone. I think we’re all guilty of this. We not only listen to advice that is wis-dumb, but we also tend to give it to other people. The trickiest part is when you’re saying something really dumb, but it is widely accepted as wise in culture. You’ll get a lot of affirmation that will convince you that you’ve stumbled upon wisdom, but when you compare it to what God says, you’ll sometimes find that it’s not so wise after all.

I guess we should explain what wisdom is first. Wisdom isn’t just being smart. There are plenty of people who are very smart but live unwisely.

Wisdom is living smart. It's knowing how to live. From a Biblical standpoint, it's knowing how to live in a way that honors God. The reason it's important to make that clarification is that there's a tension between what God calls wise and what the world calls wise.

1 Corinthians 1 tells us that God's not interested in impressing people with worldly wisdom. On the contrary, He has acted in a way that the world would consider foolish. Just look at what He did with His plan to rescue us. Jesus, who is God, came to earth to save us. He could have come as a king, but He didn't. He could have come and torn down worldly systems of government, but He didn't. He arrived, lived, and died humbly, ultimately dying on the cross. It was a humiliation. To think that God would do this is foolish, but that's what He did. To further complicate matters, when He set out to call people to be apostles, disciples, and pastors, He didn't choose all that many wise people, at least according to worldly standards. God does things His way, the right way, the wise way, and sometimes the world just thinks it's wild.

Over the next few weeks, we're going to look at God's way. **Proverbs 23:23** instructs us to get real wisdom and never let it go. Never walk away from it. It's important, then, that we can tell the difference between real wisdom and imitation. So, we're going to contrast God's wisdom with wis-dumb. We're going to see where God calls us to do the exact opposite of what others would encourage us to do. Each week, we'll look at a different book of wisdom in the Bible. Today, we'll be in Proverbs.

TENSION

Unlike many books of the Bible, Proverbs doesn't present a single narrative. Instead, it's a collection of wise sayings from Solomon, whom the Bible says was the wisest man to have ever lived. Sometimes it's wisdom Solomon is giving; sometimes, he's relaying wisdom he has collected from other wise people throughout time. All of the time, it's wisdom from God. If you had to summarize Proverbs, it comes down to giving you the greatest probability of winning at life. If you make these wise decisions now, you will likely see these outcomes later. While the topics are wide-ranging, the wisdom of Proverbs boils down to a main theme: fear the Lord. That doesn't mean to live in fear of God, rather to be in awe of Him. If you are in awe of God, you will do _____, and your life will be better for it.

When I fear the Lord, I put aside what the world thinks is best and even what I might think is best. I want to talk about one specific area where this tension exists – where I have to set aside what I think and what the world commonly tells me, for what God tells me – though there are many. I will give you the wis-dumb and then the wisdom. Ready?

Wis-dumb: follow your heart.

Wisdom: follow God.

Follow your heart. Trust your heart. Do what makes your heart happy. This wis-dumb comes in many variations, but it's terrible advice in all its flavors. First of all, the Bible already informs us on the state of a heart that's not in alignment with God.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT)

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

This isn't a glowing review of the heart, is it? Its number one attribute is that it is deceitful. I can tell you from personal experience that this is true. You know what my heart wants more than anything most of the time? More food. Really sad? Comfort food. Really happy? Celebrate with food. Bored? Kill time with food. My heart always yearns for food, and sometimes I follow it every calorie-laden step of the way. Do you know where that gets me? Sick to my stomach. My heart doesn't care one bit about my stomach. It's willing to let me get sick. It just wants what it wants. Unfortunately, there are more serious offenses the heart might lead you into with bigger consequences than an upset stomach; and even more unfortunately, we tend to follow those impulses every step of the way, too.

TRUTH

The advice to follow your tricky, deceitful heart is so common, and God's answer is so powerful, that I actually would look at this next passage as the main passage for this entire series. The first two verses are widely quoted and for good reason. But I wouldn't want you to miss the next two. Let's read it as one but then look at each section separately.

Proverbs 3:5-8 (NLT)



TAKEAWAY THOUGHT: Truth is absolute and comes from God.

SCRIPTURE: Job 38:1-2, 4-7, Job 40:8-9, 1 Peter 3:12a, Psalm 25:8, 1 John 1:9, Romans 8:35, 37

Small Group Questions

1. Can you share a time when you were hit with the reality that the world wasn't revolving around you?
2. What is something that you know deep down is just your opinion, but you treat it as if it's a fact?
3. Read 1 Peter 3:12. How does this make you feel?
4. Read Romans 8:35-37. How does knowing this about God's love feel? What does it make you think?

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