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SENIOR PASTOR

DECEMBER
2019

COMMUNITY

IT'S TIME



ADULT CONNECT
CLASS CURRICULUM



The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

Before the Messiah stepped into time and on the stage of humanity, there were prophecies to be fulfilled with specific details to be met. One that comes to mind this time of year is that which was spoken by the prophet in Micah 5:2 that there would be one who would come forth: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.” We know this refers to the Messiah and that He would be born in Bethlehem. This is confirmed by Matthew 2:5. Many other prophecies were fulfilled through coming of Jesus Christ who is Messiah. Therefore, we can celebrate the birth of our Lord with confidence that He is the foretold Savior of the world.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

In closing, I am reminded of Simeon’s story who was told he would not see death until he saw “the Lord’s Christ.” Luke records this in chapter two when Mary and Joseph brought the child Jesus to him and he declared, “My eyes have seen Your salvation.” Jesus was born so that through His life, death, and resurrection we could be born again. We have reason to rejoice. We know He is the reason for the season.

Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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Persist in Ministry

2 Timothy 4:9-22

Focal Verse:

"Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry."

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2 Timothy 4:11

Introduce

As a young teenager, Alan G. Wright went by the local sporting goods store every day on his way home from school to admire the newest and most-advanced surfboards on the market. He had already spent hours researching the best surfboard to use as a beginner, so he could learn the fundamentals of the sport. One day, a shiny, sleek board caught his eye as it glistened in the florescent light of the store; it met every requirement the article in consumer magazine had listed and it even had one of the most-beautiful paint jobs he'd ever seen. Excitedly, he ran to tell his friends and even convinced some of



them to come and see it for themselves. That day he made a pact with his friend, Mark Danby, that they would both save and get surfboards, so they could learn together. For a few years, Alan saved his allowance, birthday presents, and Christmas gifts to purchase this board.

Finally, after he had enough money to buy the board, he fulfilled his dream. Mark, however, didn't fulfill his end of the pact; he had abandoned the idea years prior because he wanted to focus on other pursuits that caught his attention. Nonetheless, Alan bought the board and began to get it ready to use by waxing and polishing it. Early the next morning, he loaded it on top of his car and went to the beach. He had invited all his friends to come for the inaugural lesson and many did! Several lined the beach to watch him with great anticipation.

As many watched, Alan swam into the crashing waves and attempted to stand on the board. Time after time, however, he failed and violently plunged into the water as the board skipped from under his feet. He would then swim to retrieve the board as the waves continued to carry it further and further away. This continued for hours! One by one, his friends deserted him until only one was left. Onlookers from a little way down the beach began to assemble to watch the spectacle and even offer advice. From the beach, one yelled, "Why don't you give up? Just watch the others and see what they're doing!" Alan paused and thoughtfully replied, "I got this board so I could learn how to

Introduce

surf—not give up!” That day everyone who remained on the beach learned a valuable lesson in persistence.

In many ways, ministry can be much more challenging than learning to use a surfboard. Paul, as we have seen throughout 2 Timothy, had to circumnavigate discouragement, disappointment, and dysfunction. Yet, at every turn, he persisted in ministry because the Lord Himself preserved and strengthened him. While others pursued worldly pleasures or abandoned him when circumstances became too tough, Paul persisted so that the gospel could be preached in all the world. As a community, consequently, we must follow Paul’s pattern and persist in ministry by receiving strength from the Lord and partnering with others to spread the gospel throughout the entire world!

Key
Question

What discouragements have you faced in ministry or service to the Lord? How has the Lord helped you to overcome them?

2 Timothy 4:9-13

PERSIST IN MINISTRY:

While awaiting his trial and pending execution, Paul asks Timothy to **be diligent** and **come quickly** to visit him in prison (v. 9). He explains why he has this urgent need in the next few verses because some had abandoned him while others continued their missionary work in various parts of the empire. As a result, **only Luke** remains by his side (v. 11). Paul begins by revealing the abandonment of one of his coworkers—**Demas** (see [Col 4:14](#); [Phlm 1:24](#)). Therefore, he laments that **Demas has forsaken** him because he loved **this present world** more than he desired to continue in ministry because the circumstances of life had become too strenuous and taxing (v. 10). Technically, we don't know the exact reasons for Demas' departure, but that he simply **loved** the comforts and conveniences that **this world** has to offer. Overall, it seems that **Demas** desired to live an easy and comfortable life with few problems, but Paul and his missionary team constantly faced persecution on all fronts; so, **Demas** simply had enough and quit.

The text doesn't specify that Demas participated in explicitly sinful activities, but that he simply left and **departed for Thessalonica**. He had allowed this worldly perspective to influence his service to the Lord, thereby he became self-centered and self-seeking in which he sought to please himself rather than the Lord. In adapting this selfish attitude, it seems to have caused him to sin and encounter more problems in life because he shirked his God-given responsibilities. Consequently, John warns us against this type of attitude in his first letter: "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). **Demas** hasn't "lost" his salvation, but the worldly perspective he now holds has sidetracked him from investing in eternal things by serving the Lord faithfully in every area of his life ([Matt 6:19-21](#)).



How does having a worldly perspective influence our service to the Lord?

Question
1

Instruct

Despite all the lofty promises of pleasure and contentment that the **world** may make, a worldly perspective always throws us off course and causes dysfunction, dissatisfaction, disappointment, and discouragement. Unlike **Demas**, Paul persisted in ministry because his perspective wasn't based upon the **world**, but it was firmly rooted and grounded in Christ. First, a worldly perspective causes dysfunction because people look to their own interests rather than have a common goal. The **world** is concerned about "number one": themselves! People will often do anything to get what they want at any cost regardless of what may happen to others. In Christ, however, we must share a common goal and imitate Him, so that we can look to the interests of others in a way that we can point them into a relationship with Him ([Phil 2:1-4](#)); therefore, we should concern ourselves more with serving the Lord by serving others!

Second, a worldly perspective causes dissatisfaction. People are never satisfied with what they have; it always leads to a spirit of competition and coveting. The **world** looks at what others have and is never content with what God has graciously and sufficiently given them. Several years ago, the James Bond series had a feature filmed titled *The World is not Enough*. This title best captures how the **world** ultimately perceives their needs! People can have all the money, possessions, power, and friends that the **world** can offer, but in reality it's never enough. Even if people had the whole **world**, it still would leave them feeling empty inside because they lack a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Finally, the **world** experiences disappointment and discouragement because they put their trust in other people, possessions, and institutions that can and often will fail. It may be a moral failure in which a "great" person falls and tarnishes his or her reputation and then the "followers" become distraught and fall away. On the other hand, it could even be a failure to meet their expectations since the **world** judges from a purely selfish perspective. When we place our trust fully in Christ, however, we look beyond our



circumstances and see the bigger picture in which He has called us to participate. No longer do we look to our own selfish needs and experience disappointment, but rather we see the victory in Him by living righteously according to the principles which He has outlined for us to follow.

How have you seen a worldly perspective cause dissatisfaction and disappointment either in your own life or the lives of others?

Question
2

Although **Demas** had deserted Paul and the ministry, others remained faithful and continued to do the work to which the Lord had specifically called them. Paul, therefore, notes that **Crescens**, who we only know from this text, left **for Galatia** while **Titus** left the island of Crete where Paul had written a letter to him previously and traveled to **Dalmatia** in modern Croatia (v. 10). Paul also dispatched **Tychicus to Ephesus** perhaps to relieve Timothy so he could join him and bring the requested items (a **cloak, books, and parchments**) to the prison (vv. 12-13); Paul may have even tasked him with carrying this very letter to Timothy there ([Eph 6:21; 4:7](#)). Each of these men could have thrown in the towel like **Demas** because they had witnessed first-hand the difficulty of ministry. Yet, they persisted. They weighed the cost and found that honoring Christ and serving Him was much more fulfilling and rewarding. They saw the bigger picture and the value of making an eternal impact on the world more than momentary relief from persecution or a “content” life with all the perceived comforts of **this world**.

How can we avoid having a worldly perspective like Demas?

Question
3

After giving the travel plans of some of his fellow co-workers, Paul bids Timothy to **get John Mark and bring him** when he comes because **he is useful for ministry** (v. 11). On Paul’s second missionary journey, John **Mark** decided to leave and return to Jerusalem for an unspecified reason ([Acts 13:13](#)). At that time, this caused great contention between others on the mission team, particularly Barnabas who wanted to invite **Mark** to come with them, but Paul steadfastly refused and the two groups parted ways ([Acts 15:36-41](#)). We can’t speculate about why John **Mark** left, but it doesn’t appear to have been for theological or worldly reasons like **Demas**. Conversely, it seems to be merely a matter of personal preference or methodological differences rather than something sinful.

Instruct

In ministry, we must put aside personal preferences, perspectives, and perceptions in order to view others through the eyes of Christ. We must get out of the habit of talking about “our ministry” and seeing it as God’s gracious gift which He empowers us to do on His behalf. Therefore, ministry and service should never center around getting our way, but rather they should always focus on doing it God’s way! When we do it God’s way, everyone will find a place of service because the Lord regards everyone as **useful**—a lesson which Paul had come to learn over years of ministry.

In ministry, the worst thing we could ever do is make service about us and require people to do things “our way.” Unless God specifies something as wrong in Scripture, there is no right or wrong way to serve when we seek His will and allow the Spirit to



guide us. Moreover, we should always make a way for people to have a place to serve even if we perceive all the jobs are filled. Several years ago, I overheard a conversation in which someone volunteered to help in a particular area of ministry, but those already serving there told the person they had enough help and weren’t needed. A statement like this

should never cross our lips! To God, everyone is **useful** and has a place of service; we need to help them discover where and allow God to work mightily through them as we all serve together—even if this means creating space for them to serve in the ministry in which we participate!

Why is it important to help everyone find his or her place of service through the local church?

Question
4

2 Timothy 4:14-16

PERSEVERE IN OPPOSITION

Next, Paul describes how he persevered in the midst of great opposition by describing two particular cases. First, he warns Timothy to **beware of Alexander the**

coppersmith who **did** him **much harm** and **greatly resisted** their teaching or **words** (vv. 14-15). **Alexander** could be one of the ringleaders who taught heresy about the resurrection in Ephesus ([1 Tim 1:20](#); [2 Tim 2:17-18](#)); therefore, resisting their **words** could mean that he rejected both their teaching and correction. Consequently, he could have sought to retaliate and ruin Paul by bringing disgrace upon his name and attacking his character. Thus, the phrase **did me much harm** could refer to some personal vendetta he had against Paul, so he sought some type of revenge by slandering or bringing false charges against him.

Whatever the case, Paul doesn't delve into specifics about the confrontation. Instead, he gives us insight into how we should handle opposition. Rather than retaliating and responding in kind to **Alexander**, Paul turns the situation over to the Lord. He exclaims, "**May the Lord repay him according to his works.**" Paul here follows his own inspired advice found in [Romans 12:17-19](#): "Repay no one evil for evil . . . Do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." Paul doesn't have a malicious spirit against those who oppose him and the gospel; on the contrary, he desires that they repent and have a relationship with Christ just as he himself had come to understand. At the same time, Paul knows that those who reject Christ and refuse to repent will face judgment for

their sins. Rather than worry about their response, he will continue to serve the Lord and preach the gospel faithfully; he will leave the ultimate outcome to the Lord while continuing to do what He had called him to do.



Why should we leave ultimate judgment up to the Lord rather than worrying about how people respond to us or the gospel?

Question
5

The world, however, teaches that we should retaliate in kind to those who wrong us or oppose us; we've all probably heard the expression: "Don't get mad; get even." Scripture, however, forbids us from taking this approach because we put ourselves

in the place of God as judge. We can learn three principles from Paul's approach to opposition here in 2 Timothy. First, we should continue to conduct our lives consistently. We should continue to walk and serve faithfully according to the Word of the Lord in every area of our lives. We shouldn't alter our lives or service to avoid the person or conflict, but we should continue to live faithfully for the Lord to set a good example for all to see and follow. Paul didn't change his message or go out of his way to seek revenge; he continued to live for the Lord at all times in every situation and circumstance.

Second, we shouldn't ignore the problem, but confront people in love; we must understand that we can't force them to change, but we need to point them to the truth so that they have the knowledge to be able to change as the Lord convicts and works



in their lives. Paul, for instance, didn't ignore doctrinal errors, sinful activities, and personal attacks; on the contrary, he confronted them in love. He showed them the truth and prayed that they would come to reason and allow Christ to transform their thinking ([Phil 3:15](#)). Finally, we must consign the problem or conflict to the Lord. Ultimately, God is sovereign and in control, so we don't have to stress or worry. In the end, justice will be served! If a person repents and trusts Christ, rejoice together! If a person stubbornly

refuses, then allow God to be the Judge; allow Him to work according to His timetable since He is patient and loving, desiring all people to come repentance and salvation through His Son.

Why should we not ignore blatant sin, but confront people in love even if it's unpopular with our culture today?

Question
6

Second, Paul notes that at his **first defense**, or perhaps trial, **no one stood with him**, but they **all forsook** or abandoned him (v. 16). Paul doesn't reveal exactly what he means by **first defense**, but it could refer to the first part of the trial for which he now faces imprisonment or even an earlier one. However, the most important principle we

can glean from this text is his attitude. He forgives them just as Jesus forgave those mocking Him at His crucifixion ([Luke 23:34](#)); Paul declares, “**May it not be charged against them.**” Likewise, we shouldn’t harbor grudges or perpetuate bitterness against those who wrong us or don’t come to our aid as we think they should. When we have animosity toward someone or seek revenge, it always has more negative consequences on our lives than on the other person. It can cause depression, health-related problems from stress, and a multitude of broken and dysfunctional relationships with people not even associated with the problem! Therefore, let us practice forgiveness as Christ and Paul did, moving forward when we think that another has wronged us in some way.

How can harboring animosity and bitterness be worse for us than the person with whom we are angry?

Question
7

2 Timothy 4:17-18

PRESERVED IN THE LORD:

The reason Paul can persevere in opposition and even forgive his opponents and those who have wronged him is because **the Lord** has **stood with** him and **strengthened** him (v. 17). Paul can’t overcome these obstacles on his own and fulfill the task to which God has called him. God empowers, strengthens, and works through him to accomplish it! As a result, he can preach the gospel (i.e. **message**) **fully** so **that all the Gentiles might hear**. Paul, therefore, has confidence that **the Lord will deliver** him **from every evil work** and **preserve** him **for His heavenly kingdom** (v. 18). For this reason, Paul can burst forth in spontaneous praise and give **God the glory forever**. Paul can have this confidence because he has repeatedly seen God’s faithfulness. In fact, God has already **delivered** him from **the mouth of the lion**.

In-Depth Information



The phrase **delivered out of the mouth of the lion** shouldn’t necessarily be taken literally as if Paul had been rescued from the wild beast at the barbaric Gladiatorial games that the ancient Romans loved. It mostly likely refers to Psalm 22:21: “Save Me from the lion’s mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen!” Like the Psalmist, David, God had **delivered** Paul through many tumultuous and even life-threatening situations (see [2 Cor 1:18; 11:23-28](#)). Thus, Paul is simply referring to all the times which he had seen God deliver him over the course of his life and ministry.

Instruct

Just as **the Lord strengthened** Paul to continue serving, so also will He strengthen us. In our lives, every one of us will go through trying times in which we may want to withdraw and quit serving the Lord—or perhaps even question or run from Him. As you read this, some of you have already recalled those times in your lives—which may have involved problems in marriage or other relationships, wayward or difficult children, financial problems, business or work-related problems, health problems for you or a loved one, physical, mental, or sexual abuse, or persecution and mockery. Still others of you may face trials like this to come in your life. Yet, we must remain faithful to the Lord and continue to serve Him. As believers, we should not condone sinful acts or intentionally put ourselves in a harmful or life-threatening situations, but we must always remember from where our source of strength comes. Because we live in a fallen world, bad things will happen to us—many times not by our own fault. When these things happen, however, we must draw closer to the Lord for strength and trust in Him for deliverance.

Through what circumstances or situations has God delivered you? How has this deliverance given you the strength to continue to minister for the Lord?

Question
8

2 Timothy 4:19-22

PARTNER IN SERVICE:

Paul ends his last letter by sending greetings from fellow believers and wishing Timothy



PARTNERSHIP

well. Some of these names, like **Prisca** and **Aquila**, we may recognize while most of the others we may not. Probably, if you're like I have been in the past, you simply read over them without much thought. Perhaps, you've even asked, "Why are these names here? Why are they important?" They're important because it shows a network of partners! God

hasn't created us and saved us in isolation, but rather He has placed us in a community to work with each other, serve with each other, encourage one another, and help each other. We need the Lord and we need each other in His body just as God has designed it.

We may not know names like **Pudens**, **Linus**, and **Claudia**, or even what they did or how they served in the early church, but God knows (v. 21)! Their names are only mentioned this one time in Scripture. Yet, they formed an alliance and network of believers in the early church who served the Lord. In our communities, people experience a lack of connection and feel isolated because they have a fierce spirit of independence in which they seek to go through life alone or they don't want to become burdened by involving themselves in the problems of others. God, however, has granted us the gift of community through which we can walk through life together. Indeed, as we learned in the previous section, God is the One who strengthens us, but He often uses other believers to assist in the process by encouraging us and spurring us on to good works in Him.

When we understand our role in the community, we will work together in unity to finish the task to which Christ has called us. While some ministries and people who serve in them, like Paul, **Aquila**, and **Prisca**, are more visible and well-known than others, every area of service is important and indispensable! God has chosen to use us all to serve Him; therefore, whether we receive recognition or not, let us do everything to the glory of the Lord; let us serve Him wholeheartedly with complete devotion! Let us not compete for recognition or to get our way, but let us serve as God has gifted us, so that the gospel may be made known in all the world. As John the Baptist once said, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). We must let others see Christ in us and we must allow Him to work through us as a community to reach a hurting world with a life-changing message. Let's not get in the Lord's way with our own egos and perspectives, but let Him shine brightly through us because He Himself is "the light of the world" ([John 8:12](#)).

How do you partner with others at FBCFW to serve the Lord? What is the benefit of partnering with others rather than going it alone?

Question
9

In the introduction, we met Alan G. Wright who persisted in learning to surf despite facing many challenges and encountering opposition from his friends. He persisted despite his lack of training and the negativity of his friends as well as strangers passing by on the beach. As believers, we face challenges on every front just like Paul did—whether internally from the perpetuation of false teaching, a spirit of competition, or a difference in perspectives as well as externally from opposition and persecution for the gospel. Regardless of the circumstances we may encounter, we must persist in ministry and service dedicated to our Lord. Christ has placed us in a community, the church, so that we can surround ourselves with like-minded people whom He can equip and strengthen to serve Him.

Christ empowers us to persist in service because He helps us persevere in opposition and preserves us through salvation. Because we can know with certainty the final victory in Christ has already been won, we need to see things through His eyes and see solutions rather than problems. Living in a fallen world, we will all encounter various kinds of trials, but God has promised to walk step-by-step with us through them; therefore, we have nothing to fear! Although ministry can be difficult and stressful at times, it is ultimately rewarding when we rightly glorify Christ. Therefore, let us not look to our own personal preferences for guidance or rely on our own power, for we have no power to change others on our own. Let's not become frustrated and quit when things don't go our way or people don't respond as we think they should; instead, let us persist in service to the end, serving the Lord with each breath He gives us.

Incorporate

What are some of the challenges we face in ministry or service? How does the church help us to persist in ministry and service despite these challenges?

What type of opposition do we face to the gospel here in the US? How should we as a church deal with such opposition to make the most positive impact?

How has the Lord strengthened us as a community to continue faithfully in ministry and service? How can we partner with each other as a church to encourage each other, but also reach the secular community around us?

December 8, 2019



The Presence of the King

Isaiah 7:1-17

Focal Verse:

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

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Isaiah 7:14

Introduce

For years, Rebecca N. Dependent suffered from symptoms of a chronic health problem common to many people. Although she did not recognize the signs herself, one person did and he constantly urged her to turn to a doctor for help. During these years, she frequently felt tired, often experienced headaches and dizziness, had rosy, red cheeks after meals, and was always thirsty which caused other problems later in the day and at night. Stubbornly, she continued to refuse to ask for help even though people rightly advised her. She



defiantly believed that she could deal with these issues and overcome them on her own. She didn't need help from others or the Lord, she thought! She ignored all the signs and advice she had received.

As time passed, the symptoms grew worse and become more pronounced. Still, she refused to seek any help! Finally, it began crippling her daily life and she could no longer do many of the routine, ordinary tasks she once completed with ease, so she began to blame the Lord for her problems. In frustration, Rebecca cried out and asked the Lord why He had afflicted her with these problems and then abandoned her. She had become so distraught that she no longer thought logically or reasonably!

Once again, the person who had originally advised her to seek help from a doctor crossed paths with Rebecca and gave her more sound, godly wisdom. He began by telling her that God had not abandoned her as she had perceived, but she had refused to listen to Him and the warning signs that He had given her! All along, the Lord had been right there with her, but she refused to seek Him even when others had pointed her to Him! Moreover, the man warned her that the symptoms she experienced were a sign of a much larger problem—in her case likely diabetes; however, she needed the help of an expert to diagnose it correctly. Sure enough, when Rebecca finally got help she was diagnosed with diabetes! Yet, all the years that past, she felt isolated and alone because she had refused to turn to the right source for help.

In Isaiah 7, we see a similar instance with King Ahaz who refused to turn to the Lord for

Introduce

help even though the prophet had clearly pointed him to the right source! Instead, he sought to go it alone. Like Rebecca N. Dependent, Israel's symptoms indicated a much larger problem—sin and disobedience to the Lord. Fortunately, God has provided a cure if only people would repent and surrender to Him! God hadn't abandoned Israel as many would suppose, but He was right there with them—Immanuel.

Even though the Lord spoke to Ahaz through Isaiah, this passage also foreshadows a much bigger "cure" for the sin of the whole world. God would become flesh through a virgin birth and literally dwell right here among His people. At Christmas, therefore, we celebrate the presence of our King among us! He would grow up and die on the cross in our place to remove the guilt of sin, so that we might have eternal life in Him. Praise God we have a Savior who loves us so much that He came to seek and save us personally! Therefore, let us recognize the signs that God has given us through Christ Jesus and trust Him for deliverance and salvation.

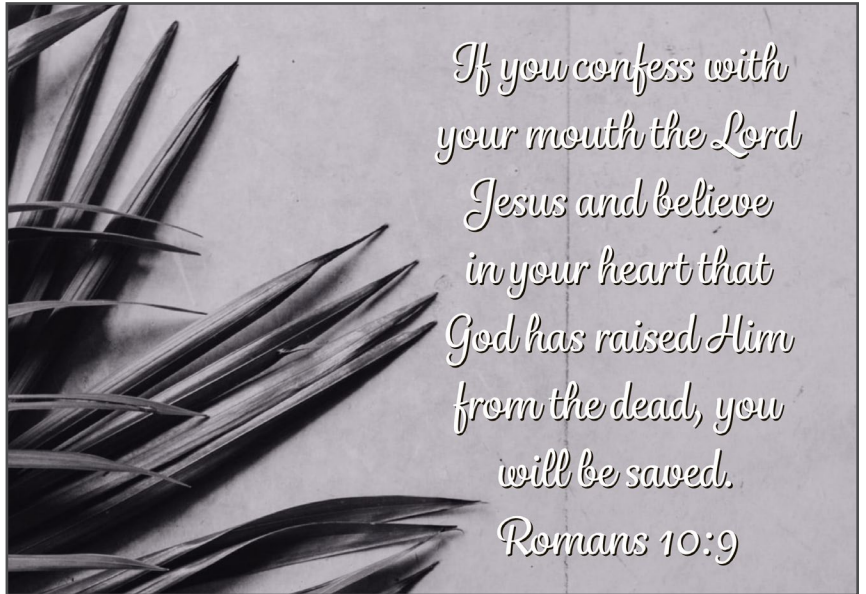
Key
Question

How has responding to the "sign" of Christ from the Lord changed your life?

Isaiah 7:1-9

THE SOURCE OF THEIR PERIL:

Approximately 700 years before the birth of Christ, **the king of Judah, Ahaz**, needed to make a monumental decision that would affect his entire nation and the course of history: "Do I trust the Lord to deliver us from Assyria or do I make an alliance or pact with other human nations to help us fend off the aggressor?" This very conundrum that Ahaz faced would once again become center stage with even greater implications for all humanity because it would involve a decision that has eternal consequences. With Christmas day



rapidly approaching, we must all ask ourselves one primary question: Do we trust in the life-changing plan of the Lord through the Messiah, Jesus, or do we trust in human means for our deliverance and salvation? As Ahaz would discover, trusting in anyone or anything other than the Lord Almighty would lead to destruction. Only God alone can fulfill His promises and deliver us; everyone else will fail!

The first nine verses of this chapter give us the historical context of Ahaz's decision and his confrontation with the prophet Isaiah. During the reign of **King Ahaz, Rezin king of Syria** and **Pekah king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel**, these nations attempted **to make war against Jerusalem** in order to convince Judah to unite forces in an alliance against Assyria, but they were unsuccessful in their plan (v. 1). As we learned from the book of Hosea during our study this summer, Israel had already abandoned the Lord and sought help from the nations ([Hosea 12:1-2](#)). For the time being, however, Ahaz had not yet made up his mind if he would forsake God and follow the nations or trust wholly in Him. Although we should never rush to make a decision, we should always resolve to consult God immediately and allow Him alone to guide us!

Too many times, we allow the advice of others around us or even our own subconscious preferences to drown out the voice of the Lord rather than earnestly seeking Him.

Instruct

Today, people gather advice and opinions just like a trip to the store for groceries where they fill their carts with what looks good at the time. After returning home, they then discover that not only aren't most of the products healthy, but some of them also don't taste good! In life, one after another, people ask others what *they* think, how *they* would respond, and what *they* would do. They never bother to consult Scripture or pray to determine if the advice is even godly! Yet, they simply pick the advice which sounds best to them at the time and they ignore the voice of the Lord completely. Usually, they quickly learn that they didn't receive the best advice because they didn't heed the voice of the Lord! Overall, it doesn't matter what others think or do, but it matters what the Lord says and how He leads!

What times in your life have you listened to the advice of others? How did it turn out?

Question
1

Ahaz played a dangerous game as he wavered in his faith because he allowed doubt and **fear** to cloud his judgment and influence his decision. **The house of David**, that is the government of Judah, received word that Syrian forces had already occupied **Ephraim**, or Israel, so the whole nation became utterly afraid (v. 2). Isaiah describes



both the king and the **people** as shaking with **fear** like **the trees in the wind**. Yet, they had no reason to **fear** if only they would turn to the Lord and trust completely in Him! **Fear**, however, often causes us to make quick, brash decisions without thinking; we become reactionary rather than proactive and we attempt to take matters into our own hands. With God who knows the future and

assures the ultimate outcome, we don't have to **fear** and innately react, but we can be proactive as He leads us! We don't have to jump to conclusions or formulate all the possible scenarios, but we can trust Him and allow Him to prepare us and walk with us so that we can withstand any onslaught which may come our way.

To allay any **fear**, God sends Isaiah along with his **son Shear-Jashub** to **meet Ahaz** who was inspecting the city's water supply at an **aqueduct** on the road **to the Fuller's field** (v. 3). This inspection shows the extent of Ahaz's **fear** because if the water supply could be cut off by the enemy, then the city would fall or surrender in a matter of days. So, Isaiah commands the king to listen quietly and **not to fear** or **be fainthearted** because the assault by these two nations won't amount to anything if he would only trust the Lord. They are only like the remnants of a fire which has burned the sticks to ashes with only tiny glowing embers at the end. Today, we would say that their bark is worse than their bite! Moreover, Isaiah continues to reveal **the evil** that **Syria** and Israel **have plotted against Judah** will not **come to pass** (vv. 5-7). He describes the alliance's nefarious plan to cause **trouble** for **Judah** by breaching their walls, so that the city will fall and they can set a puppet **king** on the throne—**the son of Tabel**.

In what ways does fear cause us to react negatively? If we trust in the Lord, how does He enable us to be proactive and fearless?

Question
2

In verse 7, the Lord gives reassurance to Ahaz by affirming His commitment to the king. The alliance of Syria and Israel will **not stand** or **come to pass**! Therefore, Ahaz should also not seek to join forces with Assyria to stave off an attack by this two-member alliance which Isaiah will now explain in verses 8-9. He emphatically states that the seat of government power (i.e. **head of**) in **Syria** in **Damascus** under the leadership of **Rezin** will collapse **within sixty-five years** (v. 8). Likewise, the same goes for **Ephraim** or Israel whose power is centered in **Samaria** under the leadership of **Remaliah's son**, Pekah (v. 9). Because Ahaz continues to waver in his faith, Isaiah warns that **if** he won't **believe**, then his nation will be taken captive and no longer **be established**. He must learn to trust the Lord and not appeal to Assyria for help or join forces with the Syro-Israel alliance either!

How does the Lord show His commitment to us today? Why should we trust Him and not other people or resources?

Question
3

After reading this historical account, this may seem a far cry from the traditional Christmas story; we may even think it doesn't have anything to do with it at all. However, the very themes of trusting the Lord fully and recognizing His commitment to us through the fulfillment of His promises are the very underpinnings of the Christmas

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story. We can trust the Lord because He has shown His commitment to us by fulfilling His long-declared promise in Christ Jesus! Just like God required Ahaz to **believe** in



How have you trusted the Messiah, the Son of God?

verse 9, it still requires faith to **believe** that God could make Himself flesh, be conceived of a virgin, and grow up to deliver us from our sins. We can never explain how this could happen scientifically, but it did! This miraculous event confounds and confuses many well-educated people, but it happened! All we must do is trust in Him, follow His plan for us, and allow Jesus

the Christ to deliver us. Let's not be stubborn like Ahaz and follow a path straight to destruction, but let us **believe** in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior today!

Isaiah 7:10-11

THE SIGN OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE:

Knowing the king's heart and unbelief, **the Lord** Himself directly **spoke** to Ahaz to offer him even more reassurance and guide his thinking (v. 10). God not only wants to demonstrate His commitment to Judah in a tangible way, but He also uses this as a way to test Ahaz's faithfulness to see if the king will indeed trust Him and do what He says! Hence, He instructs him to **ask** for a **sign**—any **sign** at all whether **in the depth or heights above** and the Lord will do it! Ahaz is now confronted with a choice head-on: Does he listen and obey the voice of the Lord or does he continue to go down the path he has already chosen in his mind?

Although God doesn't want us to put Him to the test in defiance or disbelief, He always desires to provide evidence of His Word, so that we can *know* with certainty that He has committed Himself to us ([Deut 6:16](#)). In this context, therefore, Ahaz isn't "testing" the Lord at all, but rather God is freely providing him with evidence and reassurance. God, after all, initiated the conversation! God requires us to exercise faith in Him, but He never asks us to do something without evidence as substantiated by His Word. Thus,

He doesn't expect "blind" faith as the world defines it, but rather He gives us evidence that we can logically follow!

For example, God expects us to trust in His Son and for many years prior He had given signs that pointed to His birth and confirmed His identity. The Old Testament gives evidence for His birth, death, and resurrection! We must indeed believe in Him, but we have evidence upon which we can base our beliefs! God has provided a way that we can *know* with certainty who the Messiah is! Born of a virgin ([Isa 7:14](#)), the Messiah would come through the lineage of David ([Isa 11:1-5](#)) and be born in Bethlehem ([Micah 5:2](#)); although

He would come in the likeness of human flesh, He is eternal ([Psalm 110:4](#); [Isa 9:7](#)) and divine—He's God Himself in the flesh ([Isa 9:7](#)). We could continue listing a multitude of references that point to the true Messiah and only one person who has ever walked the face of this earth has ever fulfilled this description: Jesus. God has given us all the evidence we need to believe in Him! We don't have to ask for a sign as Ahaz did, but God has freely given us the ultimate **sign** of His commitment to us; therefore, we are without excuse if we reject Him and don't believe!



What other evidence does Scripture give which shows Jesus as the Messiah and only way to have a relationship with the Father?

Question
4

Isaiah 7:12-13

THE STUBBORNNESS OF THE PEOPLE:

Even though God Himself had given Ahaz a clear directive, the king stubbornly and defiantly refused. Thinking himself to be religious, Ahaz retorted, "**I will not ask, nor will I test the Lord**" (v. 12). In this very statement, however, he does indeed put the Lord to the test because he refused to obey a direct command from Him! Ironically, Ahaz is doing the very thing that he claims he doesn't want to do! As a result, Isaiah chastises him in an ominous pronouncement: **Hear now, O house of David, is it a small thing for you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?** Perhaps, in

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more modern terms, we could phrase Isaiah's question in this way: "Isn't it bad enough that your indecisiveness frustrates other men, but now your disobedience frustrates God even more?"

Despite all the evidence God has given us in the Old Testament about Christ and all



the evidence that Jesus Himself offers during His earthly ministry, people still stubbornly and disobediently reject Him! At one point, the scribes and Pharisees came to Jesus to ask for a sign ([Matt 12:38-42](#)). Jesus, however, answered, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah" in reference to the resurrection. Ironically, the Pharisees who were experts in the Law had plenty of "signs" from the Scriptures, but they refused to believe them! They put God to the test by ignoring all the clear evidence He had already given them in favor of following their own foolish desire for power.

In what ways do people demonstrate their stubbornness toward Christ today?

Question
5

Isaiah 7:14-17

THE SON OF PROMISE:

Since Ahaz refused to **ask** for a **sign** as he had been commanded, the Lord announces that He **Himself will give** the king a **sign** (v. 14). God says the **sign** will be that **the virgin will conceive** and **bear a Son** who **shall** be called **Immanuel**. Before we get into the overarching implications for this **sign** for the entire world, we must understand that it meant something to Ahaz and applied to his day first. When it refers to Christ in the New Testament, it has the fullest sense of the meaning and fulfillment in this context here in Isaiah. Thus, God uses this **sign** as a warning to Ahaz that his lack of belief would lead to the utter destruction of his nation. Consequently, the birth of this child during Ahaz's time would signal the captivity of Judah and the fall of Jerusalem.

As a result, Isaiah explains that two things will happen to Judah before the boy is old enough to **refuse the evil and choose the good** (vv. 15-16). First, the nations that Ahaz fears, namely **Syria** and Israel, **will be forsaken by both their kings**; they will be destroyed just as the Lord had already alluded (see vv. 7-9). Second, God will allow **Assyria** to defeat Judah—**the people** and his **father's house** (v. 17). There will be such turmoil and despair that the nation hasn't seen since a civil war divided it into two kingdoms: **Ephraim** (Israel) and **Judah**. Ahaz could have averted all this and God would have delivered him if only he had trusted and obeyed Him!

Just as God would have delivered Ahaz if he would have turned to Him, He has promised to deliver us if we trust in the Messiah whom He sent. Ultimately, therefore, the greatest fulfillment of this

sign comes through the birth of Christ which transcends Ahaz and his time and applies to the whole world! Nearly 730 years later after Isaiah spoke these words, sometime between 6-4 BC, the Lord revealed the greatest fulfillment of this promise when He announced to Mary that she would have a Son in a most miraculous



way ([Luke 1:26-38](#)). Never having had relations with any man, including her fiancé Joseph, Mary would **conceive** as a **virgin** and give birth to a Son ([Matt 1:18, 21-23](#)). The New Testament is clear that Jesus was born of a **virgin** not only from the Greek word used in Matthew and Luke, but also from the response of the individuals involved. Both Matthew and Luke demonstrate the supernatural conception of Jesus as a work of the Holy Spirit ([Matt 1:18, 20](#); [Luke 1:35](#)). After Joseph learned of her pregnancy, he sought to end the engagement quietly so as not to embarrass her, but in a dream he learned that his fiancé had been faithful to him and the child was supernaturally conceived ([Matt 1:20](#)); therefore, until after the birth of Christ, Mary and Joseph did not consummate their marriage with physical relations ([Matt 1:25](#)). In addition, when Mary received the announcement from Gabriel, she did not doubt, but had a serious question: "How can this be, since I do not know a man" ([Luke 1:34](#)). Clearly, Christ's birth was unlike anything that had happened ever before or since that time!

We often focus on the miracle of the **virgin** birth, but we miss an even more important

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principle in the name of the child: **Immanuel**. If Ahaz would have trusted the Lord, God would have been with Him every step of the way and he would have had nothing to fear. Although Isaiah doesn't define the **name, Immanuel** means "God with us." What a loving God He is who offers to walk with us through troublesome and stressful times. Just as God was with Ahaz, He is with us in an even greater way through Christ! God became flesh and physically dwelt among His wayward creation! He came so that we might have eternal life through His once-and-for-all sacrifice. For those of us who have trusted Him, He is still with us today through His Spirit ([John 14:18, 26](#)). We have nothing to fear because He walks before us and carries us through difficult times; therefore, let us surrender our lives to Him and allow Him to guide us in everything we do! What a gracious gift is our Lord and Savior who promises to be with us forever in the most intimate way!

In what ways has Christ been present with you in your life?

Question
6

As we have learned, Rebecca N. Dependent failed to recognize the signs of diabetes for years and she refused to seek expert help which would have guided her down the right path. Unfortunately, many people do the same thing with Christ; they fail to recognize the evidence and sign God has clearly given them or they simply ignore them! This choice, however, has eternal consequences! Therefore, we must examine the evidence and look for the sign that God has clearly given us in Scripture. God hasn't hidden or obscured His plan for us, but He has openly declared it! He came to seek us and has made it plainly known to us by coming in the flesh Himself to save us!

This Christmas let us praise the Lord for the presence of our King. Certainly, God has blessed us as individuals and a church in many ways, but the greatest gift He has ever given us is His presence. By leaving heaven, being born in the likeness of human flesh, and obediently dying upon the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, Christ has given us a gift that no money could ever buy nor anyone on earth could ever deserve. As a community, let us worship the King and celebrate His name as Immanuel: "God with us." Therefore, let us surrender our lives to Him and trust Him in everything as He leads us daily.

Incorporate

What is the source of much of the unbelief in Christ today? Why don't most people really trust Him and give their lives to Him?

How do you see the Lord's presence here at FBCFW? How do you experience His presence in your life?

How has Christ been faithful to fulfill His promises to you? How can you use them as a testimony to tell others about Jesus?

Journal: Document God's Work

December 15, 2019



The Promise of a Savior Micah 5:1-15

Focal Verse:

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

Micah 5:2

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Introduce

For several years, it had become popular or fashionable for a gentleman to give a significant lady in his life a “promise ring” which indicated that a relationship has advanced from something more than friendship to something more exclusive with the intention to progress toward marriage at some point hopefully. A ring, when we truly think about it, symbolizes permanence and eternity. As a complete circle, the ring has no “end”; indeed, God envisioned marriage to function this way between one man and one woman for their respective lifetimes ([Matt 19:6](#)). Because of the hard-heartedness and sinfulness of people, however, such covenants of promise and marriage are often broken with impunity ([Matt 19:8-9](#)).



Theoretically, like all rings, the “promise ring” too symbolizes commitment and permanence, but in reality it demonstrates much less binding commitment than even an engagement ring—which on its own can also be broken off without repercussions or consequences. As a result, these so-called “promise rings” have no lasting value because people frequently break their promises. Sometimes, perhaps, some keep their promises and fulfill their intentions, but this seems to be rare. Even with such a ring, most promises don’t last because neither person is ultimately committed to the other. The couple may drift apart, have conflicting goals or interests as time reveals, or simply lose interest. The promise and the ring then become meaningless and worthless. In the end, they have no value because the word of the person and the commitment behind it meant nothing at all!

Unfortunately, we see broken promises, commitments, and contracts everywhere in our world today. We probably don’t have to think very long before we remember someone who has broken his promise to us. In Micah 5, however, we see a promise made by the Lord to send a Messiah through the insignificant town of Bethlehem to establish His kingdom and reign forever. This is a promise not just to Israel, but one that would radically change the entire world! Unlike man, God always honors His

Introduce

commitments and fulfills His promises. He has never broken one! In this promise, God sent His Messiah, Jesus, into the world to establish a permanent covenant whereby he would establish peace and restore a people by removing their perversity or sinfulness. Praise God that He remains faithful even when we are unfaithful! He sent His Son into the world to restore all who would accept His gift, repent of their sins, and surrender their lives to Him.

Key
Question

In what ways have you seen God faithfully keep His promises to you this week?

Micah 5:1-2

A PERMANENT RULER:

Writing at the same time as Isaiah, the prophet Micah opens with an ominous scene with Israel surrounded and besieged from every direction. Sounding the alarm with a cry to ready arms for battle, he calls Israel to **gather the troops now** and prepare for imminent war (v. 1). The nation of Assyria **has laid siege against** Israel and **they will strike the judge with a rod on the cheek**. Israel and her rulers should have dispensed justice among the nations; she should have represented the Lord and pointed other nations into a relationship with Him. However, she is the one being judged **now** because she has forsaken the Lord and devoted herself to wickedness. With such a bleak picture to open this chapter, it would appear that the Lord has abandoned them and they have no hope. Yet, the very next verse declares a magnificent promise that the Lord remains heavily invested and working among them.

In contrast to the preparatory battle cry, verse two announces the birth of a **Ruler** who would liberate and restore Israel. From the small, insignificant town of **Bethlehem**

in the district of **Ephrathah** will **come forth** to the Lord **One to be Ruler in Israel**. Out of all the potential **thousands of** candidates from among those eligible in **Judah**, the **Ruler** wouldn't outwardly look like the best choice ([Isa 53:2](#))! When God selected the small, red-headed shepherd by the name of David, for instance, He warned Samuel not to look



upon the outward appearance and choose a king based upon his looks alone—just as Saul appeared outwardly like an effective king, but in reality he proved unstable and ineffective ([1 Sam 16:7](#)). Now, **One** even greater than David will come to free the entire world from the grip of sin; nevertheless, people will continue to despise and reject Him even though He is King of kings and Lord of lords ([Rev 19:16](#); [Deut 10:17](#)).

When most people think of Jesus' birth, it doesn't seem to them as befitting of a King

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because royalty would never have been born in such humble circumstances. A true King, they surmise, would be born with tremendous pomp and circumstance with a grand announcement to the entire world! After journeying to their ancestral home in **Bethlehem** for a required census, Joseph and Mary couldn't find any lodging, so they took shelter in the only available place they could find: a stable ([Luke 2:1-5, 7](#)). There Mary gave birth, wrapped the Son in swaddling cloths as any other baby would have been at that time, and laid Him in a feeding trough for His crib ([Luke 2:7](#)). Upon His birth, the heavens came alive with the sound of angels rejoicing and proclaiming that night. Yet, they didn't announce the Baby's birth to the aristocratic or ruling class, but to common, ordinary shepherds keeping watch in the fields ([Luke 2:8-14](#)). This birth, however, was not ordinary at all. From the little town of **Bethlehem** came the only Savior who could deliver the entire world from our sin and fulfill God's promise to reconcile all who believe with Him!

How would you explain the significance of Jesus' birth to someone this Christmas who doesn't have a relationship with Him?

Question
1

Furthermore, the birth of this **Ruler** would differ from any other king or leader who had ever reigned previously because His **goings forth are from old and everlasting**. In other words, this **Ruler** is eternal; He has no beginning or end nor was He created, but through Him creation itself came into existence ([John 1:1-3](#)). Only **One** person fits this description: the Lord Himself who became flesh and dwelt among us ([John 1:14](#))! Because He exists outside of time and space without beginning or end, His reign and kingdom will never come to an end. Therefore, nearly 200 years later, Daniel can announce that "to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed" ([Dan 7:14](#)). Even in the midst of calamity and national turmoil with Assyria surrounding Israel, the Lord still offers hope. This hope, however, promises not just a national restoration for the people of Israel, but a world-wide transformation through the Messiah who would extend salvation to all!

In the Old Testament, how do we see God extending salvation to everyone, not just Israel?

Question
2

A PEACE ESTABLISHED:

With the birth of this **Ruler** who will reign forever, He will establish a **peace** not only for Israel, but also for the entire world. Even so, the Lord **shall give them up until the time she who is in labor has given birth** (v. 3). To **give up** in this context means to allow Israel to be taken into captivity and exile by Assyria because they have sinned against the Lord and refused to repent from their wicked ways. Moreover, the reference to the woman **in labor** refers to a specific or appointed time at which the Lord would free Israel from exile and allow them to return to their land and reunite with their kinsmen. Thus, the Lord reveals that at the appointed time **the remnant** of the **brethren** carried into exile in Assyria would return to reunite with the rest of **the children of Israel** in the Promised Land which God had given them.

Just as the Lord promises the physical restoration of Israel to their land, He also promises spiritual restoration through the Messiah—Jesus. In Christ, therefore, we have two monumental events that describe the ultimate restoration He offers: one event on which we can look back and one event to which we can look forward. First, at the appointed time, Christ became flesh so that He might sacrificially take our place upon the cross and pay the penalty for our sins that we might be reconciled through Him to the Father ([2 Cor 5:17-19](#)). Through this reconciliation, we receive an eternal inheritance for which we all await that gives us access to dwell in the presence of the Father in a renewed and restored heaven and earth! Therefore, second, we still await the appointed time in which Jesus will return to gather all those who have a relationship with Him—Jew and Gentile—as one community who will be reunited with Him forever in His kingdom, remembering that we reside as foreigners here on earth while we wait for our return to our heavenly home with Christ ([Phil 3:20-21](#)).

Upon the people's return to the land, the Lord Himself will make provision for them as their great Shepherd. Therefore, Micah announces that the Lord will **stand and**



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feed His flock (v. 4). Similarly, Isaiah borrows this same picture of God's provision and states, "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and gently lead those who are with young" ([Isa 40:11](#)). Through both these prophets, we can observe how God provides, protects, and guides. Specifically, we should acknowledge and thank the Lord for His gracious provision in giving us the staples which we need to live daily, granting us security and stability in a tumultuous world, dispensing strength to face challenges in life, conveying structure in the boundaries He sets for living successfully, and finally offering salvation through the sacrificial death of His Son! As the Good Shepherd, the Lord constantly provides to meet our needs and sustain us—sometimes in ways that we may not see or ever fully know.

How has God provided for you after having reconciled and restored you? How has God provided for you this week and even today?

Question
3

Having described the provision that the Lord makes for Israel and by extension us, Micah identifies five traits that will characterize this coming **Ruler**. First, He will derive His strength from the Lord; in other words, the Father will empower Him to finish the

Therefore God has highly exalted him
and bestowed on him
the name ^{every} **above** ^{name,}
that is **above** every name,
so that at the name of
Jesus every knee
should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue
confess that **Jesus Christ is Lord ...**
Philippians 2:9-11

work He has commanded Him to do on His behalf ([Luke 22:41-44](#)). Second, He receives His authority from the Lord according to the majesty of His name; thus, the **Ruler** doesn't do things on His own, but He seeks to do the will of the Father who sent Him ([Matt 7:29](#); [John 5:19](#); [8:28](#)). Third, the **Ruler** establishes security for the people, so they can

abide safely in Him and He can make them productive according to His divine plan ([John 15:4-5](#)). Fourth, His kingdom will expand to include the whole earth; hence, He will **be great to the ends of the earth!** Christ came to unite the Jew and Gentile into one community through His sacrificial death and resurrection, so that all might have eternal life in Him in one glorious, world-wide kingdom ([Phil 2:11](#)).

Finally, Micah asserts that **this One shall be peace** (v. 5a). Historically, this **peace** refers

to the political re-establishment of Israel after the exile when the Lord subdues their enemies and external threats. However, the **peace** of **this One** refers to something grander and on a much larger scale! Through the coming **Ruler**, we have **peace** and forgiveness for our sins, allowing us to be reconciled with God! Consequently, Paul emphatically interjects, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:1-2). This Baby born of humble means in **Bethlehem** is the Savior of the world! Only through Him can we have forgiveness of our sins and be made in right standing with the Lord because He paid the price through His perfect sacrifice.

How does Jesus specifically fulfill these five character traits of the Ruler in the New Testament?

Question
4

Micah 5:5b-9

A PEOPLE RESTORED:

With the interjection of hope about the coming King, Micah returns to detail the people’s current situation with destruction by the Assyrians looming. On Israel’s doorstep, the Assyrians have come **into** the **land** to destroy it by treading upon the **palaces** (v. 5a). Even though they would **raise** many leaders to fight them (**seven shepherds and eight princely men**), none of them could effectively stop the foreign invaders from advancing. In fact, the Assyrians would lay **waste with the sword** to Israel because they have surrounded all the **entrances** and cut off the people (v. 6)! Nevertheless, the coming **Ruler** will **deliver** Israel, restoring **the remnant of Jacob** and prospering them to **be like dew** and **showers from the Lord in the midst of many people** (v. 7). Not only will God grant Israel life, but through His restored people He will bring life to the rest of the world!

In such a dry, arid region, **dew** would be the lifeblood and salvation for every living thing! Without divine assistance and intervention, **dew** and rain don’t **tarry for any man** nor do they come upon his command. It requires an act of the Lord! Similarly, the Messiah delivers us from sin by offering living water in which we can drink and never thirst again (John 4:14)! No matter how hard we try, we can’t attain this deliverance on our own; we need divine help from the Lord! Therefore, He sent Christ to offer this deliverance to the entire world! Furthermore, we need to share this hope and life with

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the rest of the world, demonstrating God's transformative power by living righteously **in the midst of many people!**

How did God use Israel to bring life to the world? How does He use us today?

Question
5

Just as God had used the nations to judge Israel, He will use a restored Israel now to bring judgment upon the nations. Micah contends that **the remnant of Jacob would be like a lion among the Gentiles** (v. 8). As **a young lion passes among the flocks of sheep**, he **treads** and **tears in pieces** such as **none can deliver!** Therefore, the Lord will **cut off** their **enemies** and allow them to get the upper hand **against** their **adversaries** (v. 9). Through Israel, the Messiah will judge the nations because He has graciously provided a way for all to have life by removing the stain of guilt if only they would accept it! In the same way, as the previous verses have indicated, God had already judged unbelieving and wayward Israel by sending them into exile in Assyria. No one escapes judgment unless they have a restored relationship with the coming **Ruler**—the Messiah!

With the birth of this Baby, we don't have to fear this impending judgment for sin if we confess, repent, and surrender to Him. As the lion of the tribe of Judah, Jesus is our staunchest defender and protector ([Rev 5:5](#)); He not only rescues us from the grip of sin, but He also guards and protects us like a pride of young lions! At the same time, the lion is a ferocious predator which pounces upon his prey as alluded to in the imagery of verse 8 when He **treads down** and **tears in pieces**. For those who reject the Messiah's gift of restoration and life, they will find themselves in the throes of destruction—not because the Lord doesn't love them, but because they have chosen this path by refusing Him! Therefore, we have a clear choice: Do we trust in the Lord as our Deliverer and Savior or do we continue down a destructive path where He becomes our Judge who sentences us based on our own actions and choices? As a community, let us seek life and security in the lion of the tribe of Judah, so that we can dwell with Him forever in His house rather than rejecting His gracious offer and choosing our own path!

As a lion, how does Christ both protect and judge?

Question
6

PERVERSY REMOVED:

Upon the restoration of His people on **that day**, the Lord will remove any obstacle that causes them to stumble and place their trust in anything or anyone but Him. Consequently, He **will cut off** their **horses** and **destroy** their **chariots** (v. 10). No longer will they trust in their own military might, but they will wholly trust in the Lord for deliverance and protection. Moreover, He **will cut off** their **cities** and **throw down all** their **strongholds** (v. 11). No longer will they find security and strength in their own resources and abilities, but they will completely depend upon the Lord.

Likewise, God will also remove every temptation and rid the land of sin on **that day!** He **will cut off** any sorcery from among them and cast out the **soothsayers** or so-called psychics (v. 12). No longer will the people be tempted by idolatry because the Lord **will cut off carved images** and remove **sacred pillars from** their **midst**, so they will no longer **worship the work of** their **hands** (v. 13). Hence, He will tear down their **wooden images** and **destroy** their **cities** (v. 14). Above all, God will pour out His wrath and **execute vengeance** upon **the nations** who **have not** listened and responded to His call to repent (v. 15). Thus, God will restore Israel by removing perversity and wickedness from among the people as well as judge those who have rejected a relationship with Him!

The **Ruler** foretold in this chapter has already been born in **Bethlehem** and fulfilled this age-old promise. However, one promise still remains: just as He has already come once, so will He return and come again ([John 14:3](#))! He has already come to defeat sin and death, giving life to all those who ask. When He comes again, He will gather His restored people together and establish His kingdom in full. His kingdom will be perfect! He will restore the heavens and earth to perfect order as they were before man's disobedience destroyed them. No longer will there be any sorrow, suffering, separation, or sin! Those who have a relationship with Christ will dwell with Him in perfect righteousness forever. On the other hand, those who have refused to heed His warning and repent will be judged and sentenced to eternal destruction ([Rev 21:7-8](#)). Let's praise the Lord as a community we don't have to endure that destruction, but we can trust in Him for deliverance!

Why can we count on Jesus to fulfill His promise to come again? How should this make us live now?

Question
7

Humans break their promises all the time. Although some may remain faithful and keep their promises from time to time, every one of us have either broken a promise or had someone who has broken his promise to us. Frequently, those who have given “promise” rings have ended up breaking their promise for one reason or another. God, however, has never broken a single promise He’s made to us! He’s always faithfully fulfilled His Word on His own timetable. Sometimes God takes years, decades, or centuries to fulfill His promises, but He’s never slow; He’s always exactly on time! In Micah 5, the Lord promises the birth of a Ruler who will reign forever, restore a people who repent, and remove wickedness from the land. Although the Messiah came 700 years later, He fulfilled every promise He had made from the foundation of the earth! From our perspective, Jesus, born over 2000 years ago, is the greatest gift promised to us that we could have ever received. We can look back over centuries of God’s promises and see how He has fulfilled them. One promise, however, remains: Christ will come again to gather those who have a relationship with Him. Just as Micah and Isaiah looked forward to the Messiah’s coming, we look forward to His return. Like Micah and Isaiah, we need to wait expectantly to receive our Savior! As a community, therefore, let us be found living righteously, fulfilling God’s will and call upon our lives, and serving Him faithfully when He returns. Praise the Lord for faithfully fulfilling His promises, so we can have confidence and security in Him in an unstable and ever-changing world!

Incorporate

If Jesus is a permanent Ruler whose reign never ends, how should we relate to Him now? What does this mean in terms of how we are to order our lives?

As a community, what does it mean to have peace with God?

As a people restored in Christ, how should we relate to the secular world around us according to verses 5b-9? In what ways can we point others to Christ?

December 22, 2019



The Present of Life

Proverbs 8:22-36

Focal Verse:

“For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord.”

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Proverbs 8:35

Introduce

Undoubtedly, we all search for Christmas gifts in different ways, but we each ultimately have the same goal unless we're Ebenezer Scrooge. Some of us braved being mauled and trampled on Black Friday way back in November while others of us point and click online to avoid the hassle of the crowds! Nonetheless, our goal remains the same: to find the perfect gift for each member of our family and friends. If you waited until this week to start, you're probably not alone, but the chance of finding the perfect gift has most likely



dwindled as the stores have already been ransacked and time is fleeting. As a result, some of us may have already resigned ourselves to the fact that we'll buy last-minute gift cards, thinking that nothing could go wrong or disappoint with such an impersonal and generic item. After all, the person who receives the gift card can buy anything he or she wants! It's better than a one-size-fits-all gift!

Many people, on the other hand, begin searching for the perfect gift months in advance, taking into consideration the personality, interests, and the needs of the one for whom they're buying it. They scour advertisements for sales and spend countless hours searching online for gifts they think they'll love. Then, they purchase the items or charge them on credit and store them via lay-away. After they purchase the gifts, they go to great lengths to hide them from their loved one, so they won't find them and ruin the surprise. As Christmas nears, they gather them together and wrap them nicely, placing them under the tree to wait for the time in which they will exchange gifts. Finally, the day has arrived and the wrapping paper begins to fly as people excitedly tear into their presents to see what they have received. The giver also watches with great anticipation to see how the other person liked the gift they purchased. Sometimes it brings utter joy and jubilation as they absolutely love and cherish the gift; at other times, disappointment visibly comes through their facial expressions even though they may never criticize the gift in front of the person. Although the gift may have surprised them, it's not really what they wanted or expected, so it leaves them

Introduce

unimpressed.

In Christ, the Father has given us the greatest gift we could ever receive and He will never leave us disappointed. Unlike Christmas presents, God hasn't hidden this gift from us, but He has made it plainly evident. He announced it to the entire world! Consequently, His gift is available to anyone who will receive it! As God's living Word and embodiment of wisdom, Christ gives us eternal life. Therefore, Solomon attests, "For whoever finds me finds life, and obtains favor from the Lord" (Prov 8:35). As we celebrate Christmas, let's not overlook the most-obvious gift in Christ Jesus which demonstrates the depths of God's love toward us!

Key
Question

What is the best Christmas gift that you have ever received?
How does it compare with the gift that Christ has given us?

Proverbs 8:22-31

WISDOM RECOGNIZES GOD'S WORK:

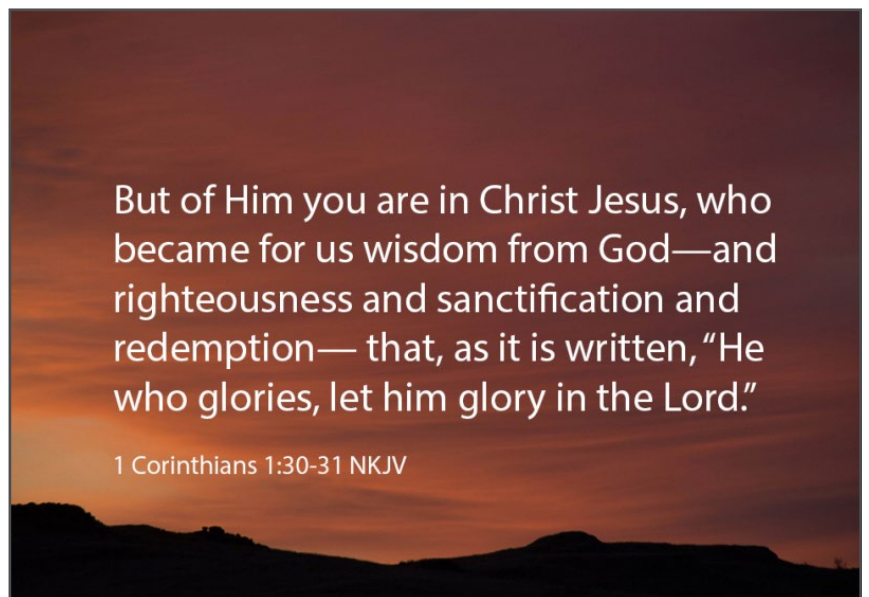
Last week, we learned that a Ruler born in the small hamlet of Bethlehem would come to establish an everlasting kingdom based upon strength and authority from the Lord (Micah 5:2-5a). Furthermore, Micah describes Him as One whose “goings forth [are] from of old, from everlasting” ([Micah 5:2](#)); hence, the Ruler would not only come to establish a kingdom without end, but He Himself is also eternal! Over the course of our study in Micah 5, we saw how Jesus fulfilled all these promises made by the Lord in the eighth century BC. This week we will also observe how an **everlasting** figure identified as the wisdom of God brings life to all. This may seem like an unusual Christmas story—and indeed it is. Yet, the characteristics of wisdom from Proverbs 8 perfectly relate why Jesus was born and what He was sent into this world to do!

Similar to the prophet Micah, Solomon asserts in [Proverbs 8](#) that **the Lord possessed wisdom at the beginning before the works of old** (v. 22). Moreover, he notes that wisdom had **been established from everlasting**—from the **beginning, before there was ever an earth** (v.

23). Hence, wisdom is divine; it wasn't created because it is who God is! As a result, through Solomon, we can observe how wisdom recognizes God's work amongst creation, originates from His Word, and reveals His ways. Consequently, we must recognize God's work through Christ ([John 1:3-4](#)), understand how the living

Word gives wisdom ([1 Cor 1:30-31](#)), and comprehend how He reveals God's way unto salvation through a relationship with Him ([John 14:6](#)).

With similar language to both Micah and Proverbs, John's Gospel begins by heralding Christ as the **everlasting** and divine Word through whom all life was created. Not only was He the divine Agent who created the universe, but He is also God in the flesh who appeared among us to save the world from sin! For this reason, John states, “In the

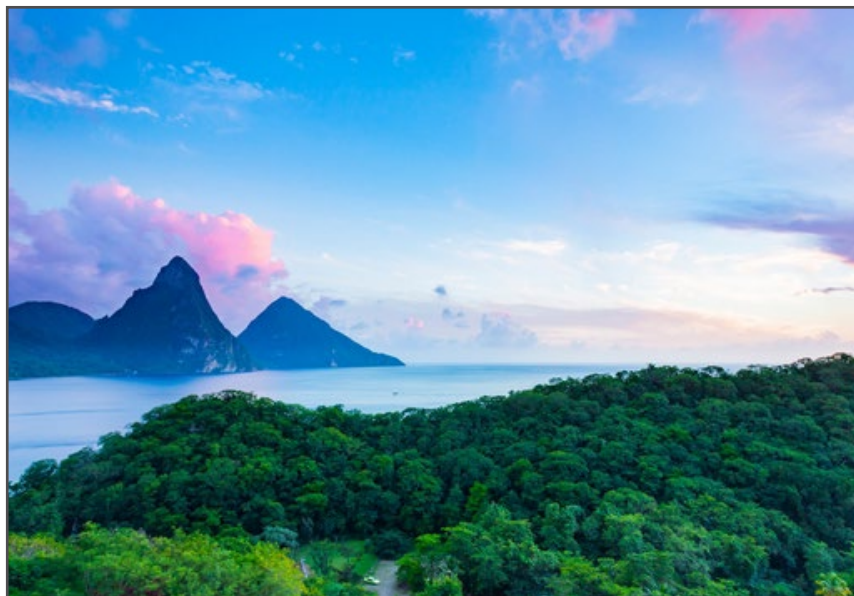


beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” ([John 1:1-2](#)). Praise the Lord that He is our Immanuel—God with us in the flesh who came to save us ([John 1:14](#); [Isa 7:14](#))! From both the Old and New Testaments, therefore, we can observe that Christ didn’t begin to exist at His birth in Bethlehem, but He existed prior to the foundation of the world; in other words, Jesus wasn’t created, but He always existed because He is the Lord Himself!

How would you defend Christ’s deity against cults like the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses who claim He was an ordinary man?

Question
1

When God created the heavens and the earth, He spoke everything into existence from nothing. Before anything came to exist, however, God was there; thus, He is the uncreated cause of the universe—the sovereign Creator. In [Genesis 1:2](#), the Lord reveals that “the earth was without form, and void,” yet His Spirit hovered over the face of the waters. In [Proverbs 8](#), Solomon affirms the same about the existence of wisdom!



In slightly different language still reminiscent of the Genesis account, he asserts that wisdom was there before anything else existed. Solomon points out that **when there were no depths or fountains abounding with water** wisdom was there (v. 24). Before God created any of the oceans, rivers, and other bodies of waters from nothing, wisdom existed with

Him. Similarly, **before the mountains and hills** were raised (v. 25) and prior to the separation of the waters from the dry ground (i.e. **the earth**) and the formation **fields** and **primal dust of the world**, wisdom was present (v. 26).

Not only was wisdom there with God in the beginning, but He created the world through Him. Solomon points out that wisdom existed when the Lord **prepared the heavens** and separated the firmament from the water and land—that is He **drew a circle on the deep** (v. 27). Through wisdom, He **established the clouds** and formed

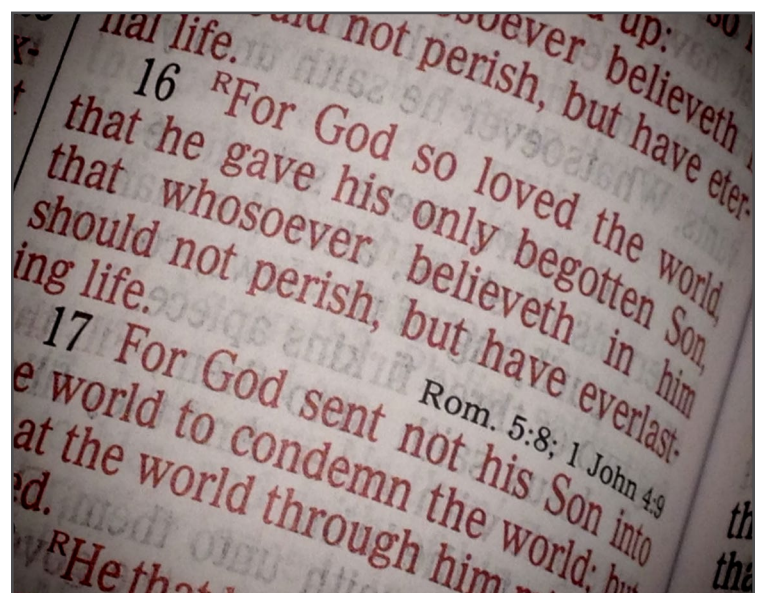
subterranean springs or sources of water (i.e. **strengthened the fountains**) in aquifers under the land (v. 28). At the point God **assigned limit to the sea** and separated dry land by marking **out the foundations of the earth** so that the **waters** would not go beyond their bounds, wisdom existed as the agent of creation (v. 29). Therefore, Solomon demonstrates that wisdom **was beside Him as a Master Craftsmen** in which He received **daily His delight** and rejoiced (v. 30). God rejoiced in His creation (i.e. **inhabited world**) and took **delight** in **the sons of men** (v. 31). In Genesis, God expressed His pleasure in both areas of creation by stating that it was good and mankind was very good!

In what way can we see the wisdom of God through creation?

Question
2

Just as Solomon portrayed wisdom as the agent of physical creation, so also does the New Testament regard Jesus as the Agent of both physical and spiritual life! Although the New Testament never specifically calls Jesus a **Master Craftsman**, it does clearly assign Him the role of eternal Creator. In 1 Corinthians 8:6, Paul identifies Jesus as the eternal Creator, co-equal with God the Father: "Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live." Again, in Colossians 1:16-17, Paul exclaims, "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist."

John makes the same point in the introduction to his Gospel when he points out that "all things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made. That which was made in Him was life, and life was the light of man" (John 1:3-4).^{*} Through these verses as developed throughout the rest of his Gospel, John ties together the theme of physical creation to spiritual life found only in Christ Jesus. Jesus came into



the world to deliver mankind from death and offer eternal life through His restorative work on the cross and His own bodily resurrection from the grave! We need only recall one verse to see this purpose explicitly made: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Thus, we owe to Christ our physical existence in the world as well as our spiritual life. In no one or nothing else can we have this life!

In-Depth Information



This reflects the translation of the author based upon the Greek text. In the original manuscripts, there were no verses, no punctuation, and no space between any of the words. Therefore, this seems to most accurately represent what John meant in the text.

Many years ago, my parents gave me an electric, remote-controlled racecar set for Christmas. Although not extremely large in size, the plastic track with magnetic electrified strip in the center to hold the cars in place and provide the necessary power for them to zip around the course took up more than half of the dining room table. For a few hours, my dad and I had a blast racing around the track, laughing occasionally because we had gone so fast that the cars flew off as they rounded a corner. However, we'd set them back on the track and continue. Soon, we learned to navigate the course expeditiously without any accidents! After a period of constant racing, however, the faint smell of electrical wires burning became stronger and finally produced a visible column of smoke from the diminutive racecars. As they sped around the track, they suddenly stopped and refused to move no matter what we tried! The same day that I had received the gift it broke and was useless!

Whereas my dad and I began with a gift that worked and functioned properly in every way, it broke in only a matter of hours. Christ, on the other hand, came into the world to restore something that was already broken and corrupt. In the beginning, God created a perfect universe and saw that mankind was very good ([Gen 1:31](#)); however, mankind, because of our poor and disobedient choices, destroyed God's perfect creation and we had no way of fixing it on our own! Like my experience with the broken racecar set we couldn't repair, we need help to restore our dysfunctional lives—and God provided that help by sending His Son as the greatest gift that we could ever receive! Through Christ, God offered a permanent solution to the problem of sin

through a once-and-for-all sacrifice which graciously gives eternal life to all who accept it. Hence, Paul can exclaim, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom 6:23).

Why is the gift of salvation so simple, yet so hard for many people to grasp?

Question
3

Proverbs 8:32-36

WISDOM REVEALS GOD’S WAY:

Through the creation of the physical world around us, we can find evidence of intelligent design which points to God’s wisdom and demonstrates His way or plan by which He has ordained us to live. God did not haphazardly throw

things together, but each element in the universe was intricately designed to work together. If one element were missing or ceased to function properly, it would cause a chain reaction and disrupt the ordered processes needed to produce and sustain life. Think of some of the complex processes which enable plant and animal life to even exist. The sun, for instance, enables the process of photosynthesis to occur in plants so that they can produce the necessary nutrients which cause growth; yet, the sun



also provides vitamin D in humans which helps control the right level of calcium in the blood! Plants, in addition, consume carbon dioxide and expel oxygen which helps to keep the right balance of gases in the atmosphere and allow humans to breathe!

We could continue to list how the laws of physics and the principles of biology work together to produce a complex and ordered world that functions properly; however, these few examples will suffice to show God’s manifold wisdom that infinitely exceeds our own. In the same way, God has designed an effective plan for the foundation of the world to rescue mankind from sin and save him from the penalty of death ([Eph 1:4-13](#)). To the world, it seems as foolish, but, to those who believe, it reveals the wisdom of the Lord ([1 Cor 1:18-31](#)). God’s plan for eternal life is simple enough for a child to understand! Out of His abundant and infinite love, God reached down to mankind

Instruct

and took his place in death by sending His Son to die upon the cross. The plan was ingenious because it eliminated the boasting of man and the placing of confidence in himself. Instead, it required complete trust and dependence upon the Lord to provide this free gift of grace free from any human work ([Eph 2:8-9](#)).

vv. 32-34

WISDOM REQUIRES US TO LISTEN:

Because God is the sovereign Creator of the universe and everything in it, we must adhere to His **ways** and **listen** to His plan for our lives. Hence, Solomon draws the conclusion based upon God's creative acts that we must **now listen to** Him as His **children** because we will be **blessed** when we **keep** His **ways** (v. 32). **Therefore**, he bids us to **hear** this **instruction** and **be wise, not disdain it** or reject it (v. 33). Just as God has laid out an ordered plan for the physical function of the universe to ensure it functions properly, He has also specified the boundaries by which we ought to order our lives.

For emphasis, Solomon repeats his call for us to **listen**; he reminds us that **blessed is the man who listens** to the wisdom of the Lord (v. 34). Consequently, we should seek the Lord's wisdom by **watching daily at His gates** and **waiting at the posts of His doors**. Through this metaphor, Solomon illustrates our need to be watchful and seek wisdom from the right source. In other words, we are to be on a constant stakeout outside the dwelling place of **wisdom**—that is Scripture—watching for it **daily**. As we read Scripture and seek Christ, we must be open to the Spirit's leadership and guidance and follow the example that He has set for us!

Why is it important to read Scripture daily?
What happens if we continually miss the opportunity to read Scripture and fail to pray?

Question
4

Think of wisdom in this way. The person who designed and created the most-recent computer was scheduled to give a presentation on how to most effectively and efficiently use it and get the most productivity from it. He knows everything about it; after all, he designed it! He knows all the features and capabilities; he knows all the commands and calculations it can perform; he even knows all the pitfalls of user error! On the other side of town, a man from a local computer help call center attempted

to give a similar presentation. He has read somewhat about the computer, taken a basic class, and his superiors had given him a script by which to troubleshoot potential problems. To which person would you **listen**: the one who created the computer or the self-proclaimed expert?

Commonsense tells us that we should **listen** to the one who designed and created the computer. Likewise, we should **listen** to the One who designed and created us when it comes to the way we should live, so that we can have the most successful and **blessed** life. As the perfect, omniscient Creator, God infinitely knows everything about us. He knows what He has designed us to be and do; He knows what pitfalls we will encounter and has given us a way of escape ([1 Cor](#)



[10:13](#)). Therefore, we need to trust Him implicitly. We need to **listen** to His advice and apply it in our lives! Let's not settle for inferior human wisdom and philosophy, but let us seek the very best from our Creator who loves us so much that He has made His way and plan plainly known unto us!

As your Creator, how do you submit to the Lord and order your steps by His Word?

Question
5

vv. 35-36

WISDOM LEADS TO LIFE:

Whenever we seek the Lord and follow His plan, it always leads to **life** (v. 35). Thus, Solomon points out that **he who finds** wisdom **finds life** and **obtains favor from the Lord**. The same can be said of Christ who came to live, walk, and minister among us over 2000 years ago. He who **finds** Christ and has a relationship with Him has **life!** [1 John 5:11-12](#) makes this abundantly clear when John asserts "And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." Through Christ's obedient sacrifice on the cross, we can receive forgiveness for our sins and have eternal **life**. God, with His infinite knowledge, knew that mankind would sin and need a Savior; it didn't catch Him by surprise. In His great love for us according to His grace and mercy, God revealed the way in which we can have **life**. Even before the creation of the world, God

set this plan in motion and established the only way that man could truly have **life** because we couldn't save ourselves.

As Mary held that newborn baby in the stable in Bethlehem, she peered into the divine face of the Lord. In that face, she saw "the life and light of men" ([John 1:4](#)) who would save the world from the darkness of sin and lead them to salvation in Him, "the bread



of life" who would satisfy man's eternal longing for purpose and fulfillment ([John 6:35, 48](#)), and "the resurrection and the life" who gives eternal **life** to those who believe in Him even though they may perish physically. Above all, through Christ, we see the wisdom and plan of the Lord to have a relationship with us; in fact, it's the only way that we can have a relationship with Him

through what Jesus accomplished on the cross. Therefore, Jesus tells His disciples just before His crucifixion: "I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes unto the father except by Me" ([John 14:6](#)).

On the other hand, Solomon declares that those who reject wisdom will experience **death** (v. 36). In fact, speaking of wisdom in relation to the Lord, he states that the one **who sins against** the Lord **wrongs his own soul** and those **who hate** Him **love death**. Throughout the New Testament, we see that those who reject Christ will not only die physically, but they will experience a second eternal **death** through which they will be separated from Him and His people ([Rev 21:8](#)). Fortunately, we don't have to choose this fate; we can choose **life** by surrendering our lives to Christ. Let us, therefore, receive the best present that anyone could have ever given us this Christmas season and choose **life** in Christ! When we have a relationship with Christ, let us live in a way that utilizes the knowledge and wisdom that He has given us to keep ourselves unstained from worldly influences, so that we may continue to honor and glorify Him in everything we do!

According to the New Testament, what does life in Christ look like?

Question
6

In the introduction, we were reminded about how difficult it can be to search for the perfect gift and find it. God, however, made it very easy to find the best gift that we could ever receive in life because He brought it down to us! He has revealed this gift in His Word over many centuries and to many different people. He has spoken about it in various ways and at different times ([Heb 1:1-2](#)). Yet, in the grandest way, He put on flesh and came to live among us; He met with us face to face! Eyewitnesses heard Him teach, saw Him live, and observed Him ministering! He continues to reveal Himself today through the convicting power of His Spirit through Scripture. He still offers salvation and transformation to all who receive Him!

As we search for the perfect gift this Christmas season, let us not overlook the most-obvious one: the gift of life in Christ Jesus. Let us commit as a community to tell others daily about this gift and share with them how they can receive it. It's not hard or complicated! The Lord has given us everything we need in Scripture. At the birth of the Savior, the Lord announced this gift to the world by telling shepherds watching their flocks in the fields. When the shepherds saw everything as they had been told, they told everyone they met ([Luke 2:8-20](#))! Let us be like these shepherds; let us announce this wonderful gift to the world!

Incorporate

When we look around us at the natural world, how do we see God's handiwork?

Why is it always best to choose God's way? What times in your life have you tried to do things your way? How did they turn out?

As a community, how can we be intentional about sharing life this Christmas season with the world around us?

Journal: Document God's Work

December 29, 2019



*The Prudence
of Godly Wisdom
Proverbs 8:1-14*

Focal Verse:

"I, wisdom, dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge and discretion."

Proverbs 8:12

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Introduce

During the summers while in college, I returned home to find gainful employment at my local church as a Minister of Preparatory Services—otherwise known as a custodian. I had come up with that title to impress my friends when I returned to school in the Fall. Indeed, with a title like Minister of Preparatory Services, they thought I had an important job—which in reality I did! However, they surmised that I helped to plan Sunday services, create announcements, or put together the bulletins. After the summer ended and they began asking me about what I had done, so I boldly declared, “I did something even more important than planning Sunday services; I scrubbed the floors and cleaned the bathrooms.” Yet, even with such a routine job as this, it always required knowledge and wisdom to do things safely and correctly.



I worked for a gentleman who had several years of practical experience and had risen through the ranks in the custodial department to become the supervisor of a team of four people. Despite all his experience, I frequently found him lacking in commonsense and wisdom; he often endangered not only his own life, but also the lives of others. One day, he embarked upon a project to change some of the ballasts in the florescent lighting that had gone out. Going to the maintenance closet, he drug out a sturdy metal ladder and put it into place under the first light. He had assembled all the tools he would need for the task: wire cutters and a screwdriver. Before ascending the ladder, he flipped on the light switch, so that he could see while working!

About the time he placed the wire cutters flush against the first connection, I walked around the corner of the hallway. Suddenly, I heard a buzzing sound followed by a yelping sound, “Uhhh, uhhh, uhhh!” As sparks cascaded down, the ladder began to tremble a bit, so he asked me to come and hold it! Although I’m no electrician, I knew that live wires with electricity flowing through them in contact with a metal ladder wouldn’t feel good! I began to question the directive that he gave me. I asked, “Why didn’t you at the very least shutoff the light switch?” He responded, “I needed to see.”

Introduce

So, I went to the maintenance room and retrieved a flashlight. When I returned to make sure there would be no shock, I asked him if he had turned off the breaker. However, he said, "I don't know where it is." Having previously blown the breaker while vacuuming, I went into the nursery and flipped it off and showed him the one that controlled the hallway.

Too many times, we are like this man who lacked wisdom, but failed to ask for any help. In [James 1:5](#), the Lord declares, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." God hasn't obscured or hidden His wisdom from us, but He has made it plainly known. God's wisdom, therefore, "cries out" to us and beckons us to receive it in our lives ([Prov 8:1-3](#)). As a community, we have no excuse for lacking wisdom in our lives because God will give it generously when we ask Him; therefore, let us be a community that seeks God's wisdom and lives prudently by allowing the Spirit to help us apply these principles.

Key
Question

In what way(s) has God made His wisdom plainly known to us?

Proverbs 8:1-4

WISDOM IS VISIBLE:

Solomon begins this chapter by asking a rhetorical question intended to illustrate how God has made wisdom plainly evident to us. He inquires, “**Does not wisdom cry out, and understanding lift up her voice**” (v. 1). In other words, wisdom makes a bunch of commotion and noise to get our attention, so that we can know the right path to take in life! Imagine, for example, walking along a rocky path in the Southwestern United States when you hear a distinctive rattling. Knowing the Western diamondback rattlesnake inhabits this region and the rocky, brushy terrain is prime habitat, most likely you would stop and look around you before taking your next step; the rattlesnake’s distinct warning has gotten your attention! Suddenly, you can see the camouflaged creature, coiled on a rock, and hidden in some brambles. Slowly, you back away to give the snake some space, so it doesn’t feel threatened and strike. Wisdom functions in much the same way. Like the rattlesnake, wisdom wants to be found! God hasn’t hidden wisdom from us, but He has made it evident in His Word. It cries out wanting us to find it and live by its principles. Solomon also emphasizes this point by demonstrating how wisdom **takes her stand on a high hill** and can be found **beside the way** at the junction of two **paths** (v. 2). An object or city set upon a **hill** is visible for miles. Because of the height of **the hill**, it’s difficult to conceal anything on it—even Jesus makes this reference in [Matthew 5:14](#) when He suggests, “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” Likewise, at most junctions, directional sign-posts provide wisdom about the way a person should go, so that they don’t deviate from their prescribed route and take the wrong path!



How does wisdom get your attention? What evidence does God give that something is wise?

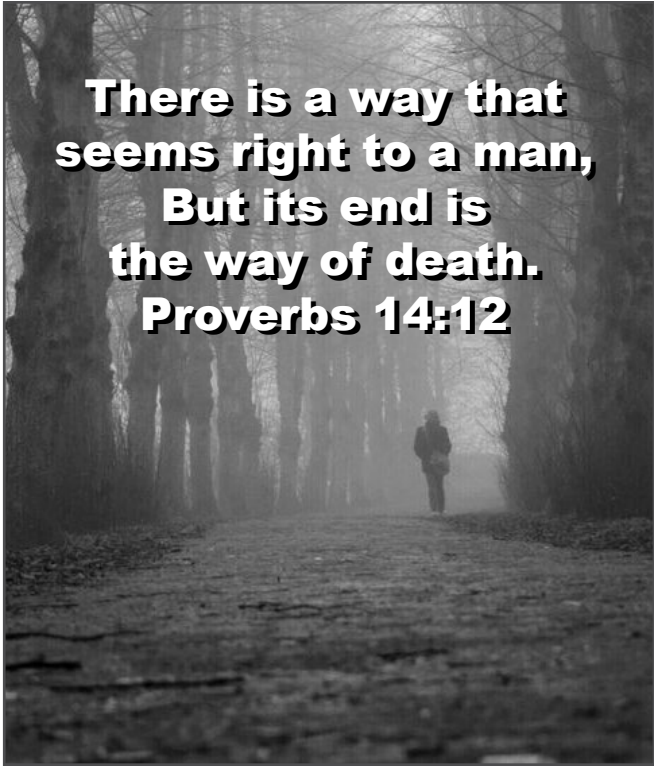
Question
1

Instruct

In addition, wisdom **cries out by the city gates** and crouches by the **entrance of the doors** (v. 3). Here, the **gates** represent the place where leaders and officials gathered to order the affairs of the city and adjudicate or settle disputes among the citizens. Thus, the Lord gives wisdom to govern, just as He gives wisdom in conducting business. The **gates** and **entrances of the doors** are where the people had their markets and conducted their business of trading goods. In summary, Solomon reiterates that wisdom calls to men and lifts her **voice to the sons of men** (v. 4). Wisdom, therefore, is visible and available to anyone who takes time to listen and seek it ([Prov 8:32](#)). From these four verses, we can learn three principles about wisdom which we must utilize in our lives. First, God has given us a *conscience* which the Spirit can use to guide us and give us a sense of right and wrong (v. 1). If we're not careful, however, our conscience can become corrupted by worldly influences, so we must consume the Word daily, guard our minds, and rid ourselves of ungodly influences ([1 Tim 4:1-3](#)). Still, God has innately imprinted these moral principles on our lives, so that we are without excuse ([Rom 1:18-21](#)). We can absolutely know right from wrong!

How does God use our consciences to keep us on the right path? How do our consciences sometimes become seared and influenced by the world?

Question
2



**There is a way that
seems right to a man,
But its end is
the way of death.
Proverbs 14:12**

Second, God has given us a *choice* to make—which Solomon illustrates in verse 2 by describing a fork in the road. Sometimes, we must differentiate between the better of two choices in which neither one is morally wrong; however the choice between right and wrong is always crystal clear! When faced with a moral dilemma, it never requires us to debate. For example, we don't have to debate helping or getting help for someone injured in a car accident; we know it's the right thing to do. On the contrary, debate comes into the picture when we entertain the thought of not helping because we know it's not the right way.

Even though the decision between right and wrong is clear, people often defiantly and deliberately make the wrong choices—and if left unchecked and unrepentant, these choices will lead to destruction ([Prov 14:12](#)). The wisdom of the Lord, however, must prevail and we must carefully weigh the consequences of our choices, so that we always seek to please the Lord and bring honor and glory to His name.

Finally, God has given us a tool for every *circumstance*. First, He has given us an effective tool for resolving disputes if we seek Him and apply His Word. Solomon, for instance, used wisdom to settle a dispute between two women who claimed the same baby. To determine the real mother who would never want any harm to come to the child, Solomon proposed cutting the baby in half. The true mother responded with love, declaring that the other woman could have the child. In our own lives, we can use this same godly wisdom in settling disputes and coming to an agreeable conclusion between parties. Second, God has given us a tool for making wise decisions in business—at the **doors** (v. 3). Godly wisdom helps us act with integrity and make ethical business decisions, including selecting the right partners and hiring the right employees. Wisdom is also born out in how we relate to customers and advertise or promote our businesses. As consumers, wisdom enables us to do our due diligence in checking out the companies with whom we are doing business. In every circumstance, therefore, wisdom gives us insight for conducting ourselves wisely according to God’s plan.

How does godly wisdom give us insight for living in every area of our lives? What instance can you think in which the Lord gave you wisdom? How did things turn out?

Question
3

Proverbs 8:5-9

WISDOM IS VIRTUOUS:

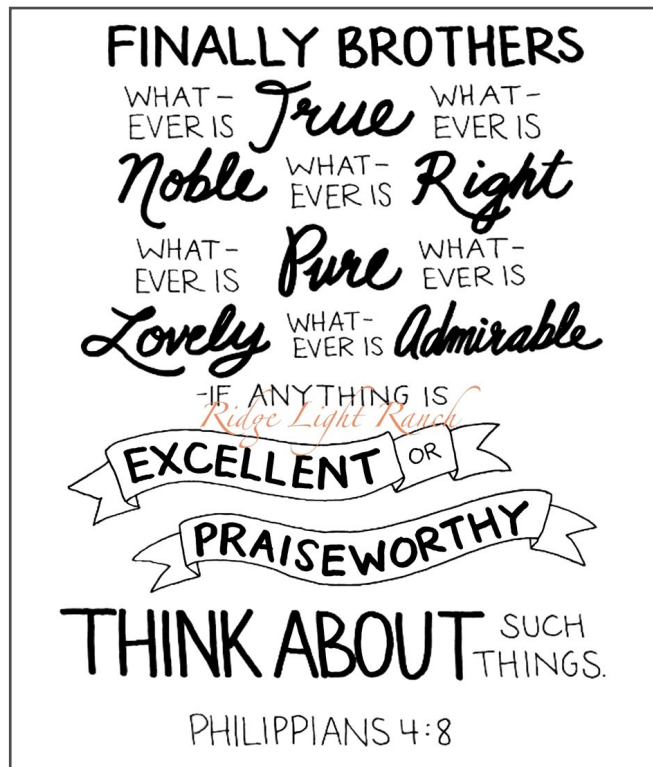
Solomon next instructs us to **understand prudence** and **be of an understanding heart** (v. 5). Wisdom leads to virtue because it comes from the Lord Himself, so Solomon calls upon the **simple ones** and **fools** to **understand** the will of the Lord and rely upon the wisdom He has communicated to us! People, however, aren’t foolish simply because they lack intelligence, rather they become foolish when they intentionally reject the wisdom the Lord offers. Solomon rightly implores everyone to **understand prudence** which entails commonsense. Therefore, we ought to have commonsense that we can’t solve problems on our own; we need the Lord! Wisdom

always points us to the Lord rather than mere human philosophy or opinion. Foolish people who reject God’s wisdom will repeatedly make the same mistakes and never learn from them. Although we may change for a short time, we generally fall back into the same old habits when we don’t seek wisdom from the Lord!

How does seeking the Lord’s wisdom transform us and keep us from making the same mistakes?

Question # 4

As a community whose wisdom comes from the Lord, we should act virtuously just



as God has directed us. Solomon notes that wisdom speaks **of excellent things** and **from the opening of its lips come right things** because it speaks **the truth** and finds **wickedness** detestable (vv. 6-7). Therefore, we ought to imitate wisdom and display it in our lives in these three ways. First, we ought to **speak of excellent things** (v. 6). We should choose our words wisely; rather than complaining or criticizing, we should be constructive and seek to build the community and point others to Christ. This doesn’t mean that we can’t correct or speak against sin as the Lord has revealed in His Word. However,

we need to point others to a better way of life; instead of responding negatively all the time, show others how Christ transforms us to live a more abundant life!

Second, Solomon asserts that the **right things will come** from our **lips** when we **speak** the wisdom of the Lord. Wisdom enables us to say the **right things** at the right time and in the right way. When we submit to godly wisdom, we will never **speak** abruptly on the spur of the moment, but we will always have a reasoned response based squarely upon Scripture. Through godly wisdom, we will see things from the Lord’s perspective rather than our own. As a result, we will never give our own personal opinion, but we will always urge people to consult with the Lord who will never mislead them. Rather than risk giving bad advice, we need to **speak the truth** which comes from Scripture and allow God to **speak** and direct! We will never go wrong when we

point people to **the truth** of Scripture; however, the same cannot be said when we venture to give advice on our own—that indeed is the epitome of foolishness!

In what situation(s) have you not known what to say, but God has given you wisdom from Scripture to speak?

Question
5

Finally, we should always **speak** the **truth** and view **wickedness** as an **abomination to our lips** (v. 7). Certainly, we ought to avoid wicked speech, such as lying, slandering, gossiping, coarse joking, innuendo, or any other perverse type of talk, but what Solomon is saying communicates so much more than this. With this verse, Solomon warns us not to speak malicious or hurtful words while at the same time not condoning any form of **wickedness**! In other words, we should **speak** the **truth** in a loving and diplomatic way that edifies the hearer and inspires them to change by correcting any misunderstanding or iniquity in their lives ([Eph 4:15](#)). We don't have to condemn with our words because the world already stands condemned by its own choice ([John 3:17](#)). We are merely called to **speak** the **truth** and allow God to convict and transform; we are simply agents whom He has chosen to use to communicate the principles of His Word with others ([Rom 10:14](#)).

How has does God use us as agents to communicate His Word? What personal examples can you give where He has used you?

Question
6

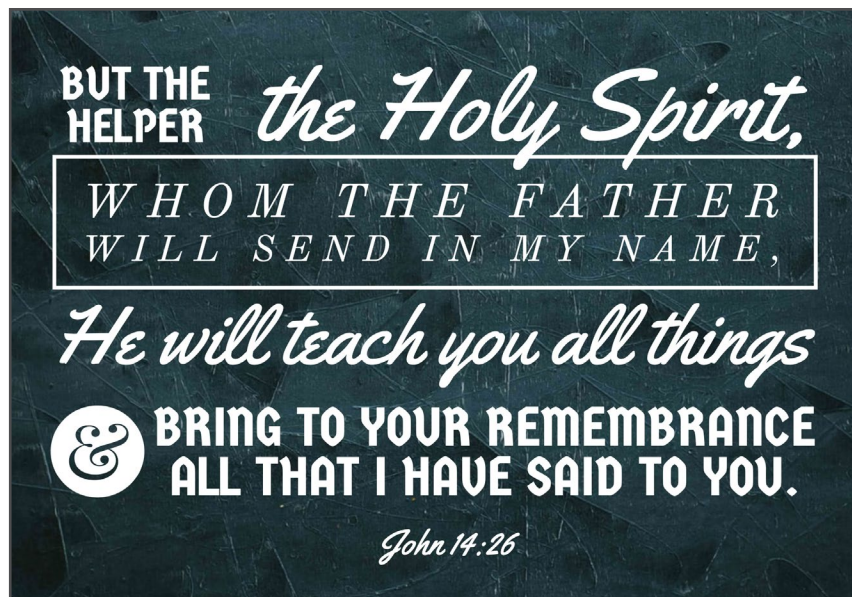
Proverbs 8:10-11

WISDOM IS VALUABLE:

Next, Solomon describes the value of wisdom when he commands us to **receive** his **instruction** rather than **silver** and **knowledge rather than** the finest, purest **gold** (v. 10). He continues by asserting that **wisdom is better than rubies** and nothing else is comparable to its value (v. 11). Solomon urges us to **receive** wisdom because it's a valuable commodity, worth more than any earthly possession. To **receive**, in this context, means to apply wisdom and put it into action. When we "receive" money, for example, we do one of two things: we spend it or invest it; rarely, if ever, do we leave it in our wallets and purses. We put it to some form of use. Truly, wisdom is greater than **silver** or **gold** and **rubies** because earthly wealth has its limitations. Money can run out; when we spend it, it's gone. We can try to earn more, but most of us don't have

unlimited time and resources!

However, we can “spend” wisdom by applying it in our lives, but it will never run out. When we invest the wisdom God has given us, the investments last forever. Wisdom,



unlike money and possessions, can never be taken from us. Books may be banned; assets can be seized by the government, but no one at any time can take another person’s God-given wisdom. When we study His Word and commit it to memory, it will always remain with us and Christ has promised to remind us of the things that He has indeed taught ([John 14:26](#)).

Moreover, we can find wisdom valuable in two other ways. First, it points us to the Lord and keeps us focused on Him! Scripture clearly tells us that all wisdom comes from the Lord. Proverbs 2:6-7 affirms, “For the Lord gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding; He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly.” Consequently, wisdom brings blessings and produces contentment because it allows us to have the proper perspective about life—the perspective that the Lord gives!

Second, wisdom helps us to invest in the eternal; rather than storing up treasures here on earth where moth and rust destroy, we can store up treasures in heaven ([Matt 6:19-20](#)). We can invest by knowing God and having a relationship with Him—the epitome of wisdom. Many times, we allow the busyness of life to overwhelm us and we forsake our relationship with the Lord. We shouldn’t go around as a hyper-spiritual person that shows off, but one who exhibits a genuine spirit and truly seeks to know God; we ought to abide by what He says and go where He leads according to His wisdom. We can’t know God, however, if we do all the talking and refuse to listen ([Prov 8:6](#))! We have to hear Him speak; we have to spend time intentionally with Him. When we truly know God and have a relationship with Him, we want to tell others about Him! We want others to know Him in the way that we do so we share our testimony of what God has done for us! We share the gospel with them and let them know how they can have

eternal life. What better investment can we make in someone's life than to show them how to find eternal contentment in Christ?

In what other ways is wisdom valuable?

Question
7

Proverbs 8:12-14

WISDOM ABHORS EVERY VICE:

In the last section we will study this week, we will learn how wisdom abhors every vice or form of wickedness. Solomon, therefore, declares wisdom dwells with **prudence** and finds **knowledge and discretion** (v. 12). Because sound wisdom and counsel come from the Lord, it should cause us **to hate evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way of life, and a perverse mouth** (vv. 13-14). Although we can't discuss each of these forms of wickedness in detail, we can still gain an overview of how wisdom leads us to hate any vice! **Prudence**, as we learned earlier, refers to commonsense in which we exercise **discretion** and wise judgment about the way in which we choose to live our lives. Hence, it refers to the ability to make good choices!

When making a choice, the world usually asks one primary question: "Does it benefit me in any way?" The world weighs the cost of their decisions based upon how it affects them. If the consequences for making a decision are too high, they won't engage in it. That's still a form of self-centeredness. In reality, it may look as if they care about the morality of the decision, but the consequences for being caught outweigh any of the benefits for them! In Christ, however, we must ask: "Does it glorify the Lord?" Certainly, we must weigh other options, but this is the primary question we must ask ourselves. We could ask it this way: "Does what I am doing represent the Lord rightly?" We don't want to bring shame and ill-repute upon His character; we don't want to do anything that can cause others to blaspheme His name. If it doesn't glorify the Lord, we shouldn't do it!

How does the Lord use wisdom to help us make the right choices in life? What specific examples from your own life can you cite where God helped you to apply wisdom?

Question
8

Moreover, just because we can do something doesn't mean that we should do it; we should use **discretion**. The counterpart to **prudence**—making right decisions—is **discretion**—proper judgment. Growing up with Evel Knievel, he often didn't use

Instruct

discretion in his daredevil stunts; just because he thought that he could do something



doesn't mean that he should have ever attempted it! Consequently, we must use discretion about where we go, what we do, and with whom we associate. We should always live above reproach with integrity, so that no one can accuse us of anything and we always bring glory and honor to the Lord rather than cause people to curse and blaspheme His name. Therefore,

let us know the Word and apply it wisely in our lives as God leads.

How should we exercise discretion in our lives as believers?

Question
9

In the introduction, we learned about a man who didn't act wisely when dealing with electricity. Although no permanent harm came to him, it could have very easily cost him his life by the foolish way that he had acted. God has given us a mind with which to think and to act appropriately. He has clearly made His wisdom known and available to us. He hasn't hidden it! He's revealed it in plain sight. In fact, He even instructs us to ask if we lack wisdom and He will give abundantly and generously! The first step in obtaining wisdom, therefore, is having a personal relationship with the Lord and knowing Him through the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, Solomon writes, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" ([Prov 9:10](#)).

As a community, we must seek the Lord and allow Him to direct our paths. We can't rely on our own understanding and perspective, but we must rely wholly upon the Lord. Therefore, wisdom is the cumulative application of God's character in our lives which He has transformed us to imitate. When we have a relationship with Him, we will show it in the way that we live. We will live virtuously and abhor every vice and form of wickedness. Let us not merely "know" what we should do, but let us wisely apply it and live it out daily just as God has made clearly know to us through His Word.

Incorporate

How has the Lord made His wisdom visible or evident to us as a community?

How does wisdom help us to live a virtuous life?

How would you describe the value of godly wisdom?

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