

Henry Ow
 Prov 1:1-33
 HCC Sermon

INTRODUCTION

1. Image: The aged crusader advised Indiana Jones: "Choose wisely"
 - a. The film Indiana Jones puts Indiana Jones on a quest to find the holy grail.
 - b. Indy stands in a room filled various chalices and cups
 - c. Indy chooses wisely
2. Need: We face choices each day where we need wisdom
3. Subject: How do we become wise according to the Bible?
4. Text: Proverbs 1:1-33
5. Preview: Solomon shares with us four requirements to becoming wise

BODY

- I. Becoming wise requires training (1:1-6)
 - A. Solomon teaches his son that training to be wise has a few aspects
 1. Wisdom requires training to perceive options (1:2)
 2. Wisdom requires training to grow in character (1:3)
 3. Wisdom requires training to weigh options (1:4)
 - B. When you are trained in wisdom, you will learn what to do in different life situations.
 1. These situations could be moral.
 2. These situations could be amoral.
 - C. Train yourself to understand wisdom/Commit yourself to lifelong training in wisdom
 1. Join a community group
 2. Read through Proverbs
 3. Read through Proverbs with a devotion help: God's Wisdom for Navigating Life by Tim Keller
- II. Becoming wise requires the right teachers (1:8-19)
 - A. Solomon teaches his son to listen to the teaching of his parents rather than sinners (1:8-19).
 1. The teaching of his parents leads to honor (1:8-9)
 2. The teaching of sinners leads to destruction (1:10, 14, 15, 17).
 - a. Sinners will tempt his son with the opportunity to get what he wants without cost (1:10).
 - b. The sinners will share their profits with the son (1:14)
 - c. Solomon reiterates his warning (1:15)
 - d. Solomon compares the fate of these sinners to birds (1:17)
 - B. Find the right teachers.
 1. These teachers may be your family members.
 2. These teachers may be members of the church.
- III. Becoming wise requires knowing the consequences of ignoring wisdom (1:20-33)

- A. Solomon describes to his son the consequences of those who ignore wisdom.
 - 1. Wisdom cries out to us but we may not be listening (1:20-21)
 - 2. When the simple ignore wisdom, it leads to disaster (1:24-27)
 - a. The word: simple occurs in four places (1:4, 22, 32). It refers to do those who are naïve.
 - b. The simple would rather listen to the opinion of others rather than to wisdom (1:24-25).
 - c. The simple experience disaster via calamity and terror (1:26, 27)
 - d. Young people are susceptible to what people think.
 - e. Wisdom laughs (1:26)
 - 3. When the foolish ignore wisdom, they will experience wisdom's silence while receiving their just deserts (1:28-31)
 - a. The word fool occurs regularly throughout the book of proverbs (1:7, 22)
 - b. The fool thinks that he's always right.
 - c. Wisdom will not answer the fool in trouble (1:28)
 - d. Solomon says that the fool will receive their just desert (1:31)
- B. Learn from the mistakes of others.
 - 1. Jesus provides many examples for us to avoid.
 - 2. Ask what others would do differently.
- IV. Becoming wise requires a fear of the Lord (1:7)
 - A. Solomon teaches his son that wisdom begins with a fear of the Lord
 - B. Fear produces either selfishness or reverence.
 - 1. Fear causes us to protect ourselves
 - 2. Fear causes us to revere.
 - C. Develop a fear of the Lord.
 - 1. Seeker: Understand the gap that exists between God and man.
 - 2. Believer: Develop a reverence for God because God has closed the gap between God and man in Christ.

CONCLUSION

- 1. Summary: Becoming wise requires training. Becoming wise requires the right teachers. Becoming wise requires knowing the consequences of ignoring wisdom. Becoming wise requires a fear of the Lord
- 2. Closing Image: Fear of God will give you wisdom that may save your life.

MANUSCRIPT

The film: Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade puts Indiana Jones, an archaeology professor by day and tomb raider by night, on quest for the Holy Grail. The Holy Grail refers to the cup from which Jesus drank on the night he was betrayed. For it is believed that the Holy Grail is able to grant eternal life to those who drink from it. Indy and his friends race against the Nazis to recover the lost grail.

In one of the final scenes, Indy has one last challenge to overcome to find the grail. Indy stands in a room filled with various chalices and cups. From these many cups, Indy must choose the correct cup. If he chooses the wrong cup, then it will lead to a horrible death. If he chooses the right cup, then it will lead to life. **This prompts the aged crusader who oversees the challenge to advise Indiana Jones: "Choose wisely."**

Indy's adversary lacks wisdom and chooses a gold cup covered with jewels. Promptly after drinking from the cup, he dies. The aged crusader comments: "He chose poorly." It's Indy's turn. Indiana Jones knows that Jesus is a carpenter. He searches for a cup fit for a carpenter. The only way to find out if he had chose the right cup is to drink from it. He gulps down some water and he's alive. The crusader comments: "You chose wisely."

I think the crusader's advice: "Choose wisely" applies to us as well. Now many of the decisions that we face will not be life or death. Our decisions may be between good and better. Life bombards us with decisions. When you get into the office in the morning, which project should you work on? You have two job offers before you, which should you choose? You receive admission letters to three different universities, which do you choose? Your child refuses to eat the food before her, what do you do? Your child breaks curfew, what do you do

when he gets home? When a person asks you out on a date, what do you say? **We face choices each day where we need wisdom.**

We desire to be wise people, who make wise choices. Yet how do we become wise people? **How do we become wise according to the Bible?**

To answer this question, we have begun a series through the book of proverbs. While the book of proverbs is a compilation of Israelite wisdom literature, most of the content was written by one of the wisest people who ever lived. His name is Solomon. The book of Proverbs begins with nine speeches about the topic of wisdom. We'll be looking this morning at the first speech, which is found in Proverbs chapter 1. In the opening verse, we discover that Solomon was a son of David and king over Israel. As we learned last week, God had granted Solomon wisdom beyond his years. This equipped him to write many of the proverbs we find in the book of proverbs including this opening chapter. If you haven't turned there already, then please turn with me to Proverbs, chapter 1. Proverbs, chapter 1.

From this initial chapter of proverbs, Solomon shares with us four requirements to becoming wise. He highlights four qualifications to become wise. Four requirements.

Let's look at the first requirement. **Becoming wise requires training.** To be wise, one needs to be coached. One requires guidance. To be wise, one needs to be disciplined.

Becoming wise requires training.

In this chapter, note how Solomon addresses the reader. He says: "my son" in two places verse 8 and verse 15. Solomon is most likely talking with his son possibly Rehoboam to provide him instruction on how to be wise.

Where do I get this idea of training? Look with me at verse 2: *“To know wisdom and instruction”*. The word for instruction carries the idea of discipline. One isn’t naturally inclined toward wisdom and needs discipline or training in order to learn it.

Solomon teaches his son that training to be wise has a few aspects. First, **wisdom requires training to perceive options.** In the latter half of verse two, Solomon writes: *“to understand words of insight”*. The word: insight carries the meaning of perception. To become wise requires training to see with things with a trained eye. To be wise, requires training to see the many options are available when faced with a choice. One person will look at two jobs and ask the question: which job offers the highest salary? Another person would ask a series of questions: *“Will this job require me to move? What kind of work life balance would each job provide? Is the company ethical in its practices? Will there be a local church community that I can join in if I work there? Will this job help me develop skills I lack?”* **Wisdom requires training to perceive the options.**

Let’s move on to another aspect of training to be wise. **Wisdom requires training to grow in character.** Look with me at verse 3: *“to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, and equity.”* Wisdom isn’t just about the decisions you make, but it begins to shape who you are. When you act wisely, you begin to develop a character that is righteous, just, and fair. Your character then forms a lens by which you see the choices that you face.

Let’s talk about the last aspect of training to be wise. **Wisdom requires training to weigh options.** Not only do you need to see the options, but you also need to see which options are important and which are less important. We see this through the use of the word:

“prudence” in verse 4. Verse 4 says: “*to give prudence to the simple, knowledge, and discretion to the youth.*” What is prudence? Prudence refers to strategic mind. When you learn to weigh options, you begin to act wisely. If you need to get project A done by the end of the business day, then someone calls and says they need project B ASAP. Weighing options will cause you think: “Which impacts the company more if it’s not done? Can I push off project B to tomorrow because Project A if undone will result possibly in the loss of a client?” Prudence causes a person to weigh the options so that they can accomplish their goals.

What happens when you train in wisdom? **When you are trained in wisdom, you will learn what to do in different life situations.** It’s not simply enough to know what to do. You need to be able to practice what you know at the right moment. Different situations will require different responses.

These situations could be moral. For instance, you may be asked to turn in a reading report to your teacher stating how much of a book you have read. But you weren’t able to read all of the book. Do you put down the actual percentage of what you read? Or do you put down a hundred percent because you promise God that you will read the rest of it after you turn in the report? In this situation, it is wrong for you to lie. To put down any percentage other than what you have actually read would be wrong. There could be other choices that you face that are similar to this one. The Bible clearly gives you instruction in these moral situations.

But a majority of situations would be in another category. **These situations could be amoral.** A lot of life situations don’t have moral dimension to it. Yet you need to exercise competency to make the wise decisions. For instance, let’s say after church you go to the grocery store to meal prep for the week. Now the Bible doesn’t say many pounds of vegetables

you should buy or the amount of meat you should purchase. If you fail to account for your food allergies, your current health, and what dietary needs you have, then choosing the wrong types of food could be disastrous to your health. In these situations, the moral rules and instruction of the Bible don't apply directly.

What do we need to do? **Commit yourself to lifelong training in wisdom.** Training in wisdom doesn't happen over a day, or a week, or even a month. It takes a lifetime to discern what to do in the right situation at the right time. It will involve mistakes, but it will also involve successes.

What are some of the training practices that we can adopt? First, I think a helpful practice is to be plugged into a community group where you will be able to discuss our study in Proverbs. Learning through dialogue will help you hear of different situations in how you might be able to apply wisdom. **Join a community group.**

Second, I would consider reading through the book of proverbs. Some of you may already have a Bible reading plan, so you guys will eventually cover the book of proverbs. But if you don't have a reading plan, then consider reading through the book of proverbs. There are thirty-one chapters enough for the days in the month. If you read a proverb a day, then you'll finish it in a month. **Read through the book of proverbs.**

Lastly, I would **read through proverbs with a devotional help.** A devotion I found helpful for reading through the book of proverbs this past year is Tim Keller's God's Wisdom for Navigating Life. He provides a short section of proverbs followed by a devotional and a prayer.

We talked about the first requirement to being wise which is training. Let's move onto another requirement. **Becoming wise requires the right teachers.** To become wise requires the

correct mentors or instructors. We need teachers to teach us the ways of wisdom. **Becoming wise requires the right teachers.**

Solomon teaches his son to listen to the teachings of his parents rather than sinners.

Why? **The teaching of his parents leads to honor.** Look with me at verse 8: *“Hear, my son, your father’s instruction and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.”*

Note that both father and mother are responsible for teaching or instructing the child in what the child should do. The family serves as the context where a child first begins to learn about wisdom. Moses instructs the parents to teach their children to love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength (Deut 6:4). If Israel would uphold the commands of God, then the nations would praise Israel for its wisdom (Deut 4:6). After all, our parents taught us when to say: “welcome” or “please”. They teach us the importance of wearing a jacket when it’s cold outside. They remind us the importance of eating our vegetables. [Parents knowing the difference between a need and want]

If a child heeded the instruction of their parents, then Solomon describes their wisdom as garland and pendant. A garland would be awarded to a victor for their achievement. By wearing this wreath, everyone would know that this victor had accomplished something great. A pendant would serve a similar purpose. They both bestow honor upon the wearer. Wisdom likewise will bring positive recognition upon the one who practices it.

Solomon contrasts the teaching of the parents with the teaching of sinners. **The teaching of sinners leads to destruction.** He writes in verse in verse 10: “My son, if sinners entice you do not consent.” The sinners, those who habitually do wrong, will tempt his son with

the opportunity to get what he wants without apparent cost. Solomon then paints a picture of what these sinners may entice his son to do the following verses. These sinners lay in ambush for an innocent person, kill him, and take all of their possessions. Once they gain this person's possessions then they'll share it with the son. Read with me in verse 14: *"throw in your lot among us; we will all have one purse."* Now I'm not sure about you, but I wonder: "How can Solomon's son be sure that they'll share the spoils? After all, they just killed a man to get his stuff." This is why Solomon reiterates his warning in verse 15: *"My son, do not walk in the way with them, hold back your foot from their paths, for their feet run to evil and they make haste to shed blood."*

Solomon then compares the fate of these sinners to birds. For a bird when it sees a net will avoid it. But these sinners even though they see the net they walk right into it and it leads to their destruction. Read with me in verse 17: *"For in vain is a net spread in the sight of any bird, but these men lie in wait for their own blood; they set an ambush for their own lives."*

It reminds of an attempted robbery at a Lowes Home Improvement store that went awry. Milton J Hodges fled across the street and jumped a fence... right into the Cypress Cove Nudist Resort and Spa. The Orlando Sentinel points out, "As one of the only folks wearing clothing," Hodges was easily spotted by the police. Crime does not pay.

What does this mean for us? **We need to find the right teachers.** We should avoid those who will lead us down a path to destruction, to shame, and to dishonor. Instead we ought to find teachers who will help us develop wisdom.

These teachers may be your family members. They could be your parents. If they give advice that accords to Biblical wisdom then it would be wise to follow their advice. For often it's

easy for us to dismiss our parental advice in favor of our friends because our friends tell us what we want to hear. But in a few years, our friends may move away for college. But our parents will still be there when we come home for school breaks. They could be extended family. For myself, I learned a lot from my cousin who taught me about the gospel. They answered questions like: “What is the difference between murder and killing someone in war?” My cousin encouraged me to seek out Christian fellowship when I went to college.

These teachers may be members of the church. If you’re looking for counsel concerning dating, then look for those who are married and have a marriage that you respect. Take them out for coffee and ask them your dating questions. If you’re looking to go into a certain career: medicine, engineering, law, design, teaching, social work, or ministry, then look for counsel from those who have experience in those careers. Learn from them what kind of work is necessary to pursue such careers and see if it might be a wise stewardship of your giftings to pursue such a vocation. For the church provides a vast number of individuals from whom we can all learn from.

Let’s move on to the next requirement for becoming wise. We’ve talked about training and finding the right teachers. **Becoming wise requires knowing the consequences of ignoring wisdom.**

Wisdom cries out to us, but we may not be listening. Solomon writes in verses 20 to 21: *“Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the market she raises her voice, at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.”* Not where wisdom speaks. She speaks in three locations: the street, the market, and the city gates. These are all places

where there be loads of people. One would think that with all the hustle and bustle, wisdom would get the attention of someone. Instead people ignore her cries.

We need to learn what happens when someone ignores wisdom. There are two types that Solomon highlights in this proverbs. The first are the simple. The second are the foolish. Let's look at each of these in turn.

When the simple ignore wisdom, it leads to disaster. Who are the simple? The simple are mentioned throughout the book of proverbs and even in this passage. It occurs in verse 4, 22, and 32. The simple refer to those who are naïve. They don't really know quite what to do in a situation. They're hesitant. The simpler a person is the more they care about the opinions of others rather than what the smart decision is.

When a simple persists in listening to the opinions of others, they ignore wisdom. Wisdom calls to the simple person in verse 24: "Because I have called to you". The simple responds by ignoring her cry. Verse 24 says: "You have refused to listen; no one has heeded." Verse 25 says: "and would have none of my reproof."

What happens when the simple ignore wisdom? They experience disaster. Solomon uses these words: calamity and terror. They occur both in verse 26 and 27. They strike like a whirlwind and a storm.

Often times, young people are more susceptible to what people think. For they tend to care about the latest fashions, the newest places to eat, or the newest product on the market. When you look back at things that you purchased or did because of peer pressure, you wonder: "Why did I ever do that? Why did I spend so much money on clothing that I don't even wear anymore? Why did I ever think I was ready to date? Why did I ever decide to try out for the

sports team? Why did I think I could perform a stunt on a dare that resulted in a broken bone?" Our simple mindedness led to us making some unwise decisions.

What does wisdom do at this moment? Wisdom laughs. Now this could sound cruel as though wisdom is cackling at our expense. Her laughter may sound like mocking. Instead of such cruelty, we should hear wisdom laughing to convey the silliness of our simplicity. It's like a child shaking an empty cup to get another drop of juice thinking that there's more juice to be had. Or it is a child thinking he's superman jumps off his bed and fails to defy gravity. Wisdom laughs at our silly simplicity.

The second time type of person that ignores wisdom are fools. The word: "fool" also occurs regularly throughout the book of Proverbs. The word: fool occurs in verse 22: *"Fools hate knowledge."* The fool refers to someone who think that they're too smart to need wisdom. They don't care what other people think because they believe that they're always right.

When the foolish ignore wisdom, they will experience wisdom's silence while receiving their just deserts. When fools are knee deep in trouble of their own making and cry out for help, wisdom will not answer them. They realize that they're in trouble and that they need help, but no help comes. Look with me at verse 28: *"then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof."* A fool believes in their self-sufficiency. They may have sacrificed relationships for the sake of wealth. But when the market crashes and their millions becomes pennies, no one shows them any sympathy. A fool believes that if they work hard enough to learn something, then

they feel miserable when no matter how hard they work they can't seem to make sense of it. At that point, it's too late to seek help. For wisdom will not answer.

Solomon then says fools will receive exactly what they desired. They will receive their just deserts. For verse 31 says: "*therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices.*" Their pursuit for wealth results in loneliness. Their belief in their self-sufficiency will lead to misery. Fools will reap what they sow.

What does that mean for us? We certainly don't want to be simple or a fool. What should we do? **Learn from the mistake of others.** Solomon included the stories of the simple and the fool as examples for his son to avoid. These are not people to imitate. Likewise, we would be wise to learn to not follow their examples. We would also be wise to learn to avoid mistakes that others have made in the past.

Jesus provides many examples that we should not follow. We should not be like the Pharisees who pray long public prayers. Instead we should pray in private. We should not be like the Pharisees who make it known that they're fasting. Instead we should fast in a way that no one notices. We should not be like the one who just listens to the word because it's like building a house on sand. We should not be like the servant who takes the one talent and buries it in the ground and provides his master no return. Jesus teaches that we should learn from the mistakes of others and avoid them.

How do we do this? **Ask others what they would do differently.** What are mistakes that they would want you to avoid? If you asked married couples what they would have done differently when dating, then they would answer the questions differently. Some may wish that they exercised greater physical purity in their dating. They went physical way too fast. Some

may wish that they pursued the Lord more in their dating relationship to set a model for a future marriage. Some may wish that they had dated a believer rather than an unbeliever. If you're dating long distance, then you'll want to consider talking more than once a week. Ask others what they would do differently.

We've talked about becoming wise requiring training. It requires the right teachers. It requires knowing the consequences of ignoring wisdom. Let's move to the last requirement. It's the most important requirement.

Becoming wise requires a fear of the Lord. It requires an awe of God. To be wise requires an ability to behold God's wonder. It requires a reverence. **Becoming wise requires a fear of the Lord.**

Solomon teaches his son that wisdom begins with a fear of the Lord. Solomon writes this in verse 7: *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge."* Note that Solomon uses the covenant name of God: Yahweh. He doesn't use the generic name: Elohim. It's as though he wants his son to have a reverence to the covenant keeping God who keeps his promises as revealed in the Law. Solomon begins and ends these beginning speeches about wisdom from Proverbs chapter 1 to chapter 9 (9:10) with the fear of the Lord. Wisdom begins and ends with the fear of the Lord.

I said earlier that a fear of the Lord is synonymous to awe, reverence, and wonder. Where do I get that? **Fear produces either selfishness or reverence.** Let's look at this one element of the time.

How does fear produce selfishness? When we feel afraid, we want to do anything that we can do to protect ourselves. If we're afraid of being hit by a ball, we typically try to duck or

dodge the ball. If we feel afraid that someone is going to hurt us, then we'll avoid developing a deep relationship with them. We fear being hurt. Fear produces this selfishness that moves us to preserve ourselves.

How does fear produce reverence? Often times when we're in the presence of someone we fear, it produces some trembling within us. I remember standing in line one time at Urbana to get my copy of a book titled: Radical by its author: David Platt. I stood in a line with a friend. I remember telling her: "I can't believe that David Platt is just standing right there. This is so unreal." She replied: "You do know that he's just a sinner like the rest of us." Although I knew that he was a human being, there was this unexplainable fear in me. It's weird.

We fear certain things because we fear the harm that we might do to it rather than what it could do to me. For instance, whenever I hold my Death Star Lego set consisting of over three thousand Lego Pieces. It scares me to lift the thing because if I drop it, then it will break into thousands of these pieces. But the death star isn't going to hurt me. The fear of the Lord is a positive fear in the sense that it should produce a reverence of God within us that we desire not disappoint us. God means so much to us, then we would hate to do anything to let him down.

What do we need to do? **We need to develop a fear of the Lord.** For those of you who have not trust in Christ as your Lord and Savior, you need to **understand the gap that exists between God and man.** Each of us have inability to meet the standard of conduct that we set for ourselves. It should be no surprise that we break the laws of God as well. This is what we call sin. Sin has separated God and man. There needs to be a fear of what God will do to us for breaking his commands. We need to fear the consequence for our sin, which is eternal

separation from God. For when we die, we will be forever separate from him and suffering eternal punishment for our sin.

But God has closed this gap between us and him through his son Jesus Christ. For if you have placed your faith in Christ as your personal Lord and savior, then you trust that Jesus has experienced the punishment that was meant for us so that we can experience a restored relationship with God. If God has done so much to save us by even sending his one and only Son to pay the price for our sin, then we should such love for him that we would want to do anything that would sadden him or disappoint him.

For those of us who are believers, we need to **develop a reverence for God because God has closed the gap between God and man in Christ.** We need to develop an awe and wonder of who God is. Although we may study the Bible and pray regularly, may we not make knowing God an academic exercise. May we never lose the wonder. When we meditate about the graciousness of God or his holiness, it should make us tremble: “Why God would you save someone like me? I’m such an imperfect person. I have so many flaws. I worry about what people say about it. I think so much about what I’m able to learn or produce. I find my worth in what I can accomplish. Yet you care about none of those things when it comes to my salvation. It seems so foolish to think that all I need is Christ.” But it’s when you get to that point will you begin the path to wisdom.