

The Pre-Requisite and Fruit of Wisdom

Making Life Work Series Week 4

June 17, 2018

Welcome/intro/vision—glad to be back after a couple of Sunday's away! Want to say a particular thank you to Jeff Morris who wonderfully filled in for me these past two Sundays

Happy Father's Day! Dads, whether your kids are little or all grown up or somewhere in between, I hope and pray that you're celebrated today

And from one dad to another, let me encourage us both to freshly commit to helping our kids know that even though we aren't perfect, Jesus tells us and them that we've all got a perfect Father in heaven

Today's a special day for us in the life of our church community. We've been in the process of looking for a new staff person whose primary responsibilities will be to serve as our Pittsboro campus teaching pastor

If you're new here with us, we're one church in two locations, one here at Woods Charter in Northern Chatham and another site down in Pittsboro

our vision really is to connect people to God and to each other all across Chatham County and maybe eventually beyond

And we've been looking for someone to take over teaching and pastoral responsibilities down in Pittsboro

so that Steve Tamayo, our executive pastor, can get back to doing what we hired him for and what he loves, which is thinking about our next campus and continuing to help us to work with our systems and structures

This new person will be the regular Sunday morning speaker in Pittsboro with likely some regular occasional forays up here to be with us

And he'll also have some church-wide responsibilities that we'll work out as they arrive, something like missions or outreach or small groups.

So today we'll get to meet Jaime Castaner—many of you got a chance to meet Jaime yesterday as he did a whirlwind of events both here in Briar Chapel at the clubhouse as well as down in PBO

We're going to have Jaime come up for about 15 minutes and do a little get-to-know-you interview and then I'll do a very short message—I promise very short message!--on the other side of our conversation together

Welcome up if you would Jaime Castaner!

- **Tell us a little about yourself—give us the short version of the Jaime story**

- **Tell us a little about your family**
- **What do you like to do for fun?**
- **Can you tell us about some of your spiritually meaningful experiences?**
- **Who are some of your big influences in life?**
- **What gets you excited or makes your heart beat fast?**
- **Where's your favorite place you've ever traveled?**
- **What are some ways you've had to trust the Lord in your life? (<--- ties in with the message / devotional for the day)**
- **If someone emailed you and said "Let's get coffee and talk about _____" what are some ways to fill in the blank you'd be particularly excited to hear?**

PRAY for Jaime

This is week 4 of a series called "Making Life Work"

As we've started summer 2018 we've been looking at some principles from the Scripture that are there to help us to make life work and to live wisely

This is pretty critical for all of us, whether you're a Jesus person or not

because all of us at points in our lives have made decisions that led us to places where our lives weren't working well any more

Not always, but sometimes, if we're honest about how we got to that place, the reason was that we made decisions that got us there—one big decision maybe, or maybe dozens and dozens of bad ones

So we're mining some wisdom nuggets for all of us in a book of the Bible called Proverbs so that we might more consistently make life work

If you're new to the Bible so glad that you're here, Proverbs is an ancient book written a couple thousand years before Jesus—so really old

It's a collection of wisdom sayings mostly written by a man who is described to be the wisest man who ever lived, his name was Solomon

And Solomon was the king of ancient Israel during its ancient heyday, probably the time in Israel's ancient history when it had the most influence and was the most prosperous

And at one point God asks Solomon early in his kingship what do you want? God essentially gives Solomon a blank check and says he can ask for anything—can you imagine?

You know what Solomon says in response, “Please give me wisdom.”

And God was so pleased with Solomon’s request, he essentially says, “You could have asked for anything that you wanted but since you asked for wisdom, I’ll give you that PLUS everything else you could have asked for: riches, fame, power, all of it”

And that’s exactly what happens.

And people from all over the ancient middle east and Africa hear of Solomon’s wisdom and people come from far and wide to ask him questions and seek his counsel and get advice

Eventually Solomon has kids and he knows that his oldest son is going to be king some day. So he starts writing down his wisdom as a dad to his son, from the man who was King to his son who was GOING to be king so that he might be a good and wise king

And today on Father’s day, I want us to look at a plea that Solomon makes to his kids that every father and mother has felt and likely said to their kids

A repeated plea over and over and over again throughout Proverbs proof that some of the core parenting challenges have been UNIVERSAL throughout the centuries, here’s Proverbs 4:1

***Listen, my sons, to a father’s instruction;
pay attention and gain understanding.***

Dads and moms, have you ever felt like your kids just weren’t listening.

All your wisdom and knowledge was just bouncing off their foreheads, not getting through at all??

Every parent has some experiences with their kids like this, maybe the toddler years, maybe parts or all of the teenage years

but for some kids it’s not just a phase or part of the teenage years, for some kids it’s hard-wired into their personalities—and then those kids who didn’t listen become adults who don’t either.

Let me just suggest to you that while Solomon repeatedly pleads with his sons to listen to himself and their mother’s wisdom, it’s not just kids who struggle to really listen, is it?

ALL of us from time to time and SOME of us all of the time resist anyone telling us anything—especially if it’s CORRECTIVE or challenging us in some way

All throughout Proverbs Solomon warns us that when we do that, we’re stupid.

Proverbs 12:1:

***Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
but whoever hates correction is stupid.***

Proverbs 9: points out some practical differences in how WISE people respond to feedback in contrast to how other types of people respond to feedback

***⁷Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse;
whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt.***

***⁸A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you;
the wise, when rebuked, will love you.***

***⁹Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still;
teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.***

Wise people respond wisely to great feedback, even when it's hard. They. Are. Teachable.

One of my favorite authors is named Henry Cloud, he's a Christian psychologist, wrote this book *Boundaries* that I recommend all the time, he's brilliant

If you want to grow in wisdom this summer, get his book *Boundaries*—on our book table, chock full of so much wisdom

He points out that Proverbs consistently talks about 3 different types of people: **wise, foolish, evil**

All of us have all of these parts in us, just some of us make a career out of it! For the next 3 minutes or so, I'm going to flat-out steal Henry Cloud's description of these characters, **ESPECIALLY AS IT PERTAINS TO HOW WE PROCESS FEEDBACK or correction**

The wise person: sees the light and adjusts, they change

They are willing to engage with reality and adjust themselves and their behaviors to match reality, to embrace truths that are larger than their own perspectives or experience

When confronted, they appreciate it, they welcome and receive it—**talking and confronting and teaching works here!** You want to talk to these people!

If we're going to make life work, we need to grow in wisdom. One sign of your willingness to grow in wisdom is your willingness to adjust yourself when the truth comes to you

The foolish person and demands that the light and truth and reality adjust to them

Excuse, minimize, rationalize, externalize—the problem is never them! The problem is always out there!

OR they shoot the messenger: when a foolish person gets challenged or corrected, they hate the person who shines that light, they get angry

Any of you know people like this? Any of you ever DO this?

And when you try to correct the fool, it never goes well. You have the same conversation over and over and over again

Proverbs 9 says don't try to confront or correct the fool, you'll just get insults, they'll shoot the messenger, they'll hate you—that's the externalizing work

So you know what you do? **Stop talking about the problem!** It's not working! *Their allergy to reality is now in charge!*

"you know how we've talked about this same thing over and over and over again? We're done talking about the problem. I want to talk about the problem that talking about problems with you doesn't help, doesn't solve the problem."

Getting out of the weeds and take it up to the pattern: I can't give you feedback in a way that changes anything. But I've got to protect our vision, our work, our family, our team or situation."

We're going to do something different: **boundaries, limits:** How can we talk about stuff in such a way that you can hear it?

And if I do that and you can't hear it, here's what's going to happen, going to be clear consequences

Fools do not change with truth coming to them that they can then distort or avoid;

fools only change when truth comes to them in such a way that they can't run from it, have to sit with it because they're being pressured by some external force

Good news: all of us are foolish to some degree, in some area of our lives! And the good news is that Jesus loves fools! We're all recovering fools in some area of our lives!

God is patient with fools, but when we ARE fools, it does damage to us and to the people and relationships and work around us, it cuts us off from reality, and ultimately from God

The **evil person intends to destroy**

This is their goal. This is why they engage in relationships or go to work.

Many of us are nice people who don't want to believe that these people exist, but they do!

There are people whose goal in life is to ruin relationships, use people, exploit situations, undermine communities

there are people waking up today to get to work, and their only job in life is to try to develop scams to steal money or ruin something around them, that's all they're doing.

There are people that you can't talk to

And here, the only thing you can do is **lawyer, cops, and courts.** Protect! Put resources into keeping evil people away, get safe

You wouldn't think that evil people would come to church, but they do. They come sometimes looking for gullible people to exploit, looking for a community or a group that they can be in charge or prop themselves up by bullying everyone around them

evil people will use religion just like they'll use any other sort of cover or prop or weapon to bully other people.

Fortunately, we haven't had many of these people here and when they have come briefly they've left rather quickly

But if you're here today and you're in an evil place, maybe just this season where anger or vengeance or just being nasty is all you're thinking about

There's an invitation today: surrender.

Receive forgiveness for what you've done in the past, give up a life where all you do is destroy and undermine and dominate and control

and join with a life-giving God who speaks and flourishing happens, who touches the sick and they're healed, who breathes new life into old things, hurting things, dead things are made new

If we want to make life work, we're going to have to learn how to deal with all three types of people because they're going to come across our lives at some point

And if we're going to make life work, we're going to have to grow in wisdom

and all throughout Proverbs there's a correlation between a teachable heart and wisdom. The wise person is open to correction, able to receive wisdom from someone else, and integrate it and respond to it in their lives

Teachability, receptivity, and especially openness to correction is **both the pre-requisite to wisdom AND the fruit of wisdom**

To get wise, you have to be teachable, when you're wise, teachability is the result

So you're **Take-WITH Today is this:**

How might you grow in teachable-ness that you might become wise that you might be able to make life work?

A few suggestions:

1. Cultivate a love for the light

The truth of the matter is all of us have some fool in us because all of us in some area, maybe in many areas

We'd rather live in our the darkness of our own making and in our own image than have to conform to some external light or truth

But my friends, ***facts are our friends. The truth is our friend. If we're willing to embrace it, receive it, walk in it, and conform to it, that's what wisdom is, that's what makes life work***

And so we have to learn to love the light

That's why I read the Scriptures just about every day of my life. I've already read it! Multiple times! The plot doesn't change and the ending is the same every time!

But just about every day I need to tune my heart and my eyes and my ears to the light
and I PRACTICE receiving correction and instruction from the Scriptures, responding and conforming my life with the light of Scripture
then I am then open to any other way God would want to shine his light into my life--
Whether that's through one of you or circumstances or another book or article or any other source

We have to cultivate a love for the light because part of our fallenness as human beings is that we have a love for the darkness

we prefer to try to bend reality to fit our own preferences than to surrender to larger realities that require something from us

In some ways, this is the core problem that the Bible says that you and I both have. And so we have to learn to LOVE the light and not run from it.

2. Acknowledge the places where you prefer foolishness to wisdom

At some point if you're paying attention, you should start to learn and know that you fall into the same 4-6 pitfalls over and over and over again

You're not that creative and you ARE that predictable

When I was about 14 I had a part-time summer job at a local hotel, I was doing menial and boring clerical work.

At one point I was taking reams of the old dot-matrix printer paper that was all connected with the perforations on the side, remember those?

I was told to go through and separate the pages and take off the perforated edges so that the documents were all separated and standard sized pages

Now I don't remember how I tackled this rather odious job

but at one point a guest who was passing through the front desk saw me fumbling around as I was doing it

And he said to me, "You're doing that the hard way." And my defenses immediately went up inside my head: What do you mean I'm doing it the hard way? It's fine. What I'm doing and how I'm doing this is fine, thank you very much

But I didn't say those things, I just kind of said, "what do you mean?" And he came over and showed me a better way for me to do this stupid job that was clearly much better and much more efficient and was going to save me all kinds of time!

I grumbly thanked him and after he was gone, I went right back to doing it MY slower, worse way, for a few minutes

before I realized that I was just being stupid and proud and needed to do it his way because it WAS better

I was about 14 years old, but if you zoom out this pattern of not always being open to correction ESPECIALLY when I'm in mid-project, mid-working and instead being defensive or deflective or externalizing, that's the ways that I choose to play the fool instead of the wise person

And so I have to be ready to **pre-decide to love the light instead of the darkness when someone comes to me**

that means fighting for my heart to receive correction even if the timing isn't exactly when I'd like for it to come

You've got the same story. There's some places in your life where you are more likely to be the fool than the wise one through your lack of willingness to receive input or correction

And you do the same thing over and over and over again in that same spot, you're not really all that creative.

Can you begin to do some work first in naming those places, identifying those patterns and then because you're fighting for wisdom to reign in your life not foolishness, can you begin to pray and imagine what it would look like to break one of those patterns this summer?

We gotta cultivate hearts that love the light and make some decisions to stop acting foolish!

Because teachability is both the pre-requisite and the product of wisdom, and wisdom is how we make life work.