

Walking With Wise Ancestors
Making Life Work Week 6
July 1, 2018

Welcome/intro/vision

This is the last week 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

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

And sometimes if we’re honest with ourselves the reason why and how we got to that place is because of not-so-wise decisions that we have made

So we’re mining some wisdom from 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

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

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

Today as we close this series, I want to send us out of this series with a couple of bullet-points and then a question.

- **GIVEN that we all want to make life work**—most of us I think would prefer a life that worked to one that didn’t work, a life that worked both for us AND for the people around us
- **Therefore we’re going to need to arrange our lives around the ongoing pursuit of wisdom**—because life is always changing, the seasons of our lives are always changing, our station and experiences and challenges are always changing, and we’re always going to need to develop new skills to make life work in each of our seasons of our lives
- So the question is: **So where will you go for the wisdom you’ll need in an ongoing basis to make life work?**

Part of what's tricky about this question is this: going after wisdom doesn't feel urgent when life feels like it's working fine

When life is humming along and you're feeling good about things, looking for wisdom doesn't feel especially urgent or needful

But if we don't go to work cultivating a habit of acquiring wisdom in the off-season and if we don't go to work cultivating wise character, a wise core, then when we need wisdom, we won't have it

At some point in your life and my life in the next 6 hours to the next 16 days, life is going to throw something at us that's going to demand wisdom from us

And if we haven't habituated wisdom and cultivated wisdom in the off-season, in the in-between times, then we won't have the wisdom that we need

And we see the consequences of that all around us, don't we? Look around and you'll see people all around you who did not habituate wisdom in the off-season

And so when it was demanded of them they did not have to offer it in the moment and for some people that moment has become the defining moment of their lives

Today the invitation to all of us as we close this series is to go put patterns in place that are cultivating wisdom in our hearts and minds at the core of our character so that we might live wise lives that work

Solomon knows when we don't feel the crisis, it's hard to be motivated to go looking for wisdom. But this is why he's writing the book of Proverbs. He's writing the book of proverbs as a wise and wonderful king

To his sons who will be king one day. They're in their teens or twenties, they're not making king-level decisions yet, but they will one day

And when they are making those decisions they'll need to have practiced wisdom and gathered wisdom and grown up into wisdom

And so Solomon opens this book with this plea that's very similar to the one we looked at back on Father's day because it's a repeated plea all throughout Proverbs, this is Proverbs 1:

***⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.***

***⁹ They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.***

Solomon knows two competing things are true:

1. that his son is going to need wisdom some day to rule wisely
2. that his son doesn't feel the urgent need for wisdom yet, so he's prone to tune out

But if he'll be willing to attend and listen and engage and file all this away, it will be a garland of grace to crown his head and a chain around his neck

It'll do what all good jewelry does—it'll make your natural features and gifts shine, sparkle, come alive

We're all prone to doing this, and so this morning as I ask you to think about where you might go for the wisdom you'll need in an ongoing basis to make life work

I want to encourage you to walk with wise ancestors, to learn from them. To listen to an ancient father's and mother's instructions and teaching

That there is wisdom here in these Scriptures that will help you to make life work

Let's get a short-hand definition of ***Wisdom is knowledge rightly applied.***

Wisdom requires some knowledge.

Some people lack wisdom just because they don't know stuff. Just don't understand how something works.

I lack wisdom in helping physicists understand the problems of physicists just because I don't have any understanding or knowledge about how physics works!

So wisdom to some degree requires knowledge as the raw materials, the resources that get turned into wisdom

But wisdom is more than knowledge.

There are all kinds of really smart people in the world who severely lack wisdom, they don't make wise decisions in their marriages or home or businesses and disaster or disarray follows them everywhere they go—they can't integrate that smarts in real-time, real life

Meanwhile there are people who have little to no FORMAL education, no advanced degrees, who run circles around the people with Ph. D's when it comes to actually living a wise and flourishing life

Wisdom is knowledge rightly integrated and applied, matching pitch and bringing good information and understanding to bear in real-time to a real situation.

Let's drill down even further and talk more specifically, there are a couple different types of wisdom:

Big Wisdom and Situational Wisdom

Big wisdom transcends a single generation or single situation or a single culture and has multiple applications in multiple different situations

these are the truths or principles that stand the test of time, that have been proven outside just one situation or one generation or one culture that apply almost universally

So one piece of Big Wisdom in Proverbs is that a teachable heart that is willing to learn is better than a heart that is stubborn and refuses to learn anything

That's Big Wisdom! That's true across every culture, across thousands and thousands of years, all types of people

Life just works better if you're willing to learn from others and willing to learn from your own mistakes--if you're willing to learn, you make life work better than if you refuse to learn anything

Situational wisdom is a little more specific and a little more narrow

you might have wisdom in how to build a fiber-optic cable network that's more efficient and more powerful

or how an organization that you volunteer at might be run more effectively using some new piece of scheduling software

Proverbs can't help you with any of those specifics.

But what you find is that situational wisdom most often is built on big wisdom. **Big wisdom often becomes the building blocks for situational wisdom [BW Building Blocks for SW]**

So Proverbs can't give you wisdom about how to build a fiber optic network

but it can give you wisdom about making learning a priority, so that if you take that piece of wisdom seriously and apply it to your field of fiber optics, you can then become situationally wise in the world of fiber optics

Big wisdom often is the building block for situational wisdom, but the thing about Big Wisdom is it requires the test of time to KNOW if it's truly big wisdom or not

How do you know if you've running on Big Wisdom? If it's stood the test of time and crossed lots of cultures and situations, then it's BW and you can bank on it!

And so while our culture is a little bit obsessed with the latest technology or the latest gadget or the latest diet or the latest trends

The Scripture calls us not to completely ignore those things but to put a primacy on building our lives on Big Wisdom

to cultivate a heart that is open to learning the bedrock principles that transcend time and that situate us to have a higher level of both Big Wisdom and Situational Wisdom

Let's take a more concrete example of how Big Wisdom from Proverbs might help us in a couple of very specific and very 21st century issue that most of us face

Here's a passage we looked at a couple weeks ago in Proverbs 4, Steve talked about this with y'all:

***23 Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from it.***

So Solomon is talking to his sons, maybe they're still young, maybe early teens, maybe a little older in their 20's

And he's giving them some BIG WISDOM!

Because they have so many decades of life ahead and perhaps they've only had limited opportunities for toxic stuff to get in there, he can say to them:

"Above all else, guard your hearts! Don't put any toxic stuff in there! Because everything you're going to do for the rest of your life will flow from what you put in your heart

INSTEAD, stock it up with GREAT stuff! Put great stuff in your heart and watch how it will bear great fruit in your life!"

Because Solomon is talking with his teenagers or twenty-somethings, I want to start with you all there, too—teens and twenty-somethings, let's have a little friendly chat, shall we?

If you're a student, middle school, high school, out of school recently, this is ESPECIALLY BIG WISDOM: a fantastic verse to print out, draw up, make as your wallpaper or background on your computer:

guard your heart! Keep destructive stuff OUT and put GREAT stuff IN. Everything you do will flow from that source!

If that's one of your most important jobs as a teenager, then you're going to work hard to put great stuff INTO your heart:

great songs and great Scriptures and great conversations, great people stored up in your heart, so that you've got good things stored up there

And then you're going to have to fight to keep some stuff OUT:

For example, here's some Situational Wisdom built on Big Wisdom

Because you're guarding your heart because everything you do for the rest of your life will flow from there

you're going to be very careful about how you relate to social media, no matter how hooked into it everyone else around you is.

Every study ever done on social media says that the more you do it, the more discontent and unhappy you are

Social media is going to make you discontent with your life if you let it. It'll suck you into the feeling that your life is boring and miserable while everyone else's life is awesome because all you're seeing is everyone else's highlight reel

So if you start to notice that every time you step away from your time on social media you feel angry or jealous or miserable or like your life is boring and lame

Then you need to put firm boundaries around it.

WHY? Because you need to guard your heart, because every single thing you do will flow from it.

And if you are feeding your heart more and more and more DIScontent, you will bring that discontent to every relationship and every job and you'll be a miserable human being, not a wise one

And then ain't nobody gonna want to hang out with you!

Big wisdom from Proverbs 4 is guard your heart!

Situational wisdom takes that wisdom and says okay, so I'm going to dial back some of my social media consumption so I don't sow seeds of discontent into my heart that flows out into every single other thing I do

Big wisdom is guard your heart, because everything you do is going to flow from it

So situational wisdom: you're not going to view pornography, even if everyone else around you is. Why? Because once you put that in your heart it's really hard to get it out and everything else you do/how you relate to the people around you will flow from it—we start to view ALL bodies as sexually-charged commodities for your own consumption

Big wisdom is guard your heart, everything you're going to do will flow from it

Situational wisdom takes that principle and applies it to friendships and dating relationships:

You're going to look for wise and wonderful people to hang out with and invite into your heart and your life!

Find great mentors and wise friends, people who don't get sucked into stupid drama and petty conversations but have a settledness about them, a wisdom about them, that enjoy life and love God and do what they do well

AND You're not going to GIVE your heart away recklessly and foolishly to the first cute girl or cute guy that pays attention to you

You're going to GUARD your heart, be careful, be WISE

because if you rush to give your heart away you often get reckless with this valuable and precious possession and when you give your heart away to someone you give them TREMENDOUS ACCESS to your most prized and precious possession: your heart.

And if they're not wise, if they're not full of great character, if they're not a wonderful human being; if instead they're selfish or proud or smug or petty or gossipy or rude, then what are they going to deposit into YOUR heart that you give them?

Look: Big Wisdom reminds us and teaches us that every single thing you do for the rest of your life is going to flow from this one precious, wonderful resource

So take that principle and apply it with situational wisdom: handle it with care! PUT GREAT stuff in there, stock up the storeroom of your heart with great things and Don't just give it away to any loser that comes along AND don't put anything in there that will come back to undermine you and your life and your actions later!

That's Big Wisdom's application to Situational Wisdom in a variety of situations for those of you who are students or just out of school into your mid-20's or so.

Now the call is different to those of us who are older.

We still need to learn how to wisely and with faith, hope, and love guard our hearts—some of us never learned that along the way and our lives and our hearts are scarred because of it

So yes, by all means, if you haven't learned how to guard your heart, then do so.

But some of us, because we got burned along the way, aren't just guarding our hearts, our hearts are on total lockdown mode. Nobody gets in, we don't ever let ourselves really come out--because of the pain we've experienced and because we know the possibility of future hurt

Big wisdom says to GUARD your heart NOT put your heart on lock-down mode: there's a huge difference

Lock-down mode is all fear-based, all protective, and totally isolating. You can't have real friendships, you can't have a real marriage, you can't have a real life if your heart is on lock-down mode

Lock-down mode isn't motivated out of faith, hope, and love, it's just fear and pain and therefore it can only lead you into the land of regret

When you're guarding your heart it leads you to wisdom because you aren't locking up your heart and throwing away the key

When someone or something comes along that is worth sharing your heart with or even giving your heart to, if you're GUARDING your heart you can always LOWER YOUR GUARD and let someone or something that is worthwhile, wise, and wonderful IN

Big wisdom says guard your heart, taking that and applying it to situational wisdom

The other complexity for those of us who are a little bit older is that the admonition to guard our hearts TODAY doesn't cover the toxic stuff we let in YESTERDAY

Or last week. Or last month. Or a year ago. Or a decade ago. Or three or four decades ago.

We didn't guard our hearts during the divorce, we let bitterness set in, and we're still carrying it.

We didn't guard our hearts when we lost that job and we let fear and anxiety set in, and we're still perpetually anxious about what might happen next

We gave our hearts away too quickly, too easily, to someone who wasn't trustworthy, who wasn't wise, who didn't have good in their hearts

And when we gave our hearts over to that person we gave them power to deposit THEIR toxic stuff into OUR hearts, and that voice still kicks up sometimes, we still do battle against their influence in our lives

Or we've already gotten sucked into pornography. Or the social media discontent age.

And it's already at work in our hearts, touching and coloring all sorts of relationships and our own struggles with contentedness.

If you've been on this planet for more than a couple of decades, good chances that something got into your heart that you'd love to or you need to get OUT of your heart

This isn't easy, but one of the greatest promises of the Scriptures is that at one point God says I'm going to GIVE YOU a new heart

To get there, there's an important first step for those of us who know that we've got all kinds of gunk in here is another piece of Big Wisdom that we talked about just last week: trust God, submit to him, surrender to him, open up to him

Let the God who is love come into your heart and give that God full authority and permission to re-arrange and purge and cleanse and deal with whatever you've got in your heart

And that starts with surrender but once you let God's perfect love in, there might be stuff there that you need to deal with not just between you and God

You might need to confess something to someone that you've been carrying around in your heart—Big Wisdom reminds us that when we confess and clean up something that's been lingering between us, it's a relief to us, and good for our souls

You might need to ask your small group leader or a friend to get coffee and just process some of what's surfacing as you surrender to God's love mucking around and surfacing stuff in your heart

Big Wisdom reminds us that finding someone who will stick with us through all the ups and downs in our lives is one of the greatest things you could ever develop in your life.

You might need to go see a professional trained counselor to work through some old baggage that you've been carrying around for years, maybe decades in your heart

Big wisdom tells us that to have someone who is a good listener and can speak wisely into your stuff changes us, grows us, does amazing things for us

And Big Wisdom might call you to make further situationally wise decisions:

you might need to make some new decisions about what you're watching and what you're not watching, what you're reading and what you're not reading, who you're hanging out with and you you're NO LONGER hanging out with because of what they deposit into your heart

No matter how old you are, it's never too late to start to live and act wisely.

And above all else, to guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it

That's Big Wisdom that leads to Situational Wisdom if we'll put a little bit of thought and effort into connecting the dots

***[⁸ Listen, my son, to your father's instruction
and do not forsake your mother's teaching.
⁹ They are a garland to grace your head
and a chain to adorn your neck.]***

Solomon here calls his son who will be king one day to listen

that the instruction he's going to give out, if he receives it and listens to it and walks in it will adorn him—a garland on his head and a chain around his neck

His sons might not have realized it at the time, but what they were about to get from their dad was Big Wisdom—kids NEVER realize how wise their dad is at the time, do you kids? 😊

But Solomon was about to dispense Big Wisdom that was so enduring, that people have studied it for thousands of years

And here we are today, working with Solomon's Big Wisdom and applying it Situationally to social media, dating, and so many other things that Solomon could never have imagined

And so today as we close our series in Proverbs and then move into a time of communion, I want to close with a **Wildly Important Take-Home for you**

I want to encourage you and challenge you to **spend the month of July acquiring the foundational building blocks of Big Wisdom**

Today is July 1st! Hope everyone has a happy and safe and enjoyable 4th.

July has 31 days. Proverbs has 31 chapters. If you start today and **read ONE chapter of Proverbs a day for all of July**, you'll finish up right as July finishes up

And you'd have spent a whole month putting the foundational building blocks of Big Wisdom into your heart, your mind, and your life

And in fact to help spur you on in this endeavor, we're going to give you a little book mark with a little check-box list next to each chapter

Some of you LIVE to check things off the list, I'm married to one of you, so here's your chance to check something off your list

All you have to do is read the chapter and check it off!

So I'm going to ask my ushers if they'd walk around and start passing these great little bookmarks out, thanks to Michelle Stith for designing these book marks for us

Now here's what I'd like to encourage you to do for a little extra **bonus work**.

As you read one Proverb a day each day in July, for bonus work as you're reading each Proverb, capture ONE piece of Big Wisdom and one piece of Situational Wisdom from each chapter

get a piece of paper or do it electronically and write down: **Chapter number, BW** for Big Wisdom and **SW** for how you can apply that Big Wisdom to situations in your life

So for example:

Chapter 1

BW: Listen to ancient wisdom

SW: Read Proverbs this month

There you go, I've already got you started for today, all you have to do now is go home and read it between now and when you go to bed tonight!

Or: **Chapter 4**

BW: Guard your heart for everything you do flows from it

And you know that social media causes you to be a more discontent person just like it does for many of us, and so your situational wisdom is going to be this:

SW: Less time on Facebook

This exercise will help you to practice connecting the dots from Big Wisdom to Situational Wisdom

And if you hit on something that's Big Wisdom and you know it's BW but you're not exactly sure how to connect the dots to SW, drop me an email, I'll be glad to help you to connect those dots!

So the Take-Home today is to take these bookmarks and read one Proverb a day starting today before you go to bed for the next 31 days, all through July

If you miss a day or two along the way, that's okay, just start again, one a day

and if you're still reading into the first few days of August nobody's going to come hunt you down or shame you in any way

And then, as an additional bonus, if you're really willing and able to dig in and want to grow in this whole making life work thing in a deeper way

keep a running list of one piece of Big Wisdom from each chapter and right alongside that, write down a way that you can take that Big Wisdom and apply it as some Situational Wisdom right here in your everyday life

All of us want to make life work, God made us to want to want to make life work—ultimately he made us that we might love him, love one another, and go to work making this world come more alive

Proverbs helps us with time-tested, Big Wisdom that equips us to live wisely in our everyday situations and everyday lives here in the ups and downs of life on this earth

And so we're going to spend these next 31 days drilling down into that Big Wisdom so that we might live more wisely and make life work—that's a great gift

But the truth of the matter is, all of us at points have missed the mark, have fallen short of the life God made us to live

The Scripture tells us that we're in this self-defeating cycle of sin and all these lesser fears that rob us of life

In fact at a number of points the Scriptures talk about how sin and death and all the fears that come along with sin and death hold us captive

AND how we contribute to it, how we perpetuate these vicious cycles of sin and death in our lives through misplaced fears and misplaced and disordered loves

And the results are obvious and visible and all around us. You and I have both experienced the pain of a broken world and we've perpetuated the pain of a broken world

Full of people made in God's image who are stuck in the cycles of sin and death and who are all perpetuating those cycles of sin and death

And the Scripture describes how God sees this sad state of affairs and he doesn't just watch from a distance

God sees this state of affairs and decides to put on flesh and step into the mess. One passage says that the Logos of the universe put on flesh and dwelled among us

Logos in the ancient Greek means Word, the ancients understood it to mean the Wisdom of the universe, the wise order of all things, the right order of all things

So the Wisdom of the Universe puts on flesh and lives among us to restore wisdom to the world that God in his wisdom created and blessed us with

And what Jesus does is bring that wise ordering everywhere he goes.

Everywhere Jesus goes he's wisely re-ordering human relationships, re-ordering broken bodies, teaching and speaking wisely about God and what it means to live as God's people

And ultimately, Jesus moves towards his own sacrificial death for the sake of the world that God loves

The wisdom of the universe surrenders to the darkness and chaos and sin and death that have been a parasite and corrupted God's very good creation from almost the very beginning

He's going to surrender to that darkness and death so that he might defeat it from the inside out

And so on the night Jesus was betrayed he took some common bread and broke it and gave it to his closest friends and said: "This is my body broken for you. Eat this in remembrance of me."

And then he took the cup and said, "This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins, so that you might not be enslaved to sin and death any more! Drink this in remembrance of me."

Then he went to the cross, and gave himself for you and for me. He died, taking on all the sin and death in all the universe on himself, so that he might conquer it once and for all

Which is what he did when God raised him from the dead on the third day.

And now the invitation goes out all over the globe: who will come and be set free from sin and death and broken fears

So that we might finally live the wise life God made us to live? So that we might be free to live with the fear of the Lord at the center of our lives, reconciled to the God we were made to love and serve all our days

This morning, if you've accepted that offer, if you've embraced what Jesus has done for you in his death and resurrection and if you've proclaimed that to a body of believers somewhere, been publicly baptized and publicly declared your allegiance to Jesus

Then this meal is for you. We welcome you to come and take and eat and drink as he called us to do

If you haven't yet done this, we're so glad that you're here and today could be your day. We've got a couple of people in blue vests from the prayer team in the back. They're there to pray with you.

If you're here and you're ready to trust Christ or if you just know that you need to take some sort of step towards Christ this morning, we invite you to go and get prayer while everyone is moving around to get communion.

They'll just listen to you and pray for you however you'd like for them to

Move to time of communion:

Four stations

Bread gluten free, cup grape juice, everyone's invited

Whenever ready move, leave cups there in baskets

PRAY

BENEDICTION: PRAYER ROOM & BOOK TABLE?