**SERMON**WEEK1

**Street Smarts: Wisdom From the Book of Proverbs**

**Week 1:** **Beginning with Wisdom**

**Scripture**: Proverbs 1:7 // Proverbs 3:14-24 // Proverbs 28:13

**Write Up:** Before anything else makes sense in life, you must first have a holy reverence for God. To fear Him is to properly see your position before Him, and His position before you. When we live our lives without the awe and wonder of God, we run the risk of making everything harder than it should be.

**Think:** Maybe my life does not have to be so hard. Maybe applying wisdom would put me in a better position to thrive.

**Feel:** God is infinitely more powerful and wiser than I am, and I should live my life in submission to Him. To do anything else is foolish.

**Do:** Repent for trying to do life on your own and commit to following the way of God.

**Sermon:**

Today we begin a brand-new series that I believe can have an incredible impact on the lives of each person here today. There has never been a greater need for a series like this than now, because far too many people are living day in and day out by making foolish decisions without thinking about them. It is not that our world is unintelligent; quite the opposite. Most people I know are highly educated and bright, but those kinds of “smarts” are different than what we are addressing in this series. We are not talking about book smarts; we are talking about street smarts. Common sense that can come from God.

Our world is bankrupt in wisdom, and without it, we will experience the pain of unnecessary mistakes. God desires for us to live in line with the way He has created the world to work. He wants us to live a full and blessed life, but those intentions are greatly threatened when we live carelessly.

**Story**: *Tell a funny story that introduces a foolish decision that may have been different had wisdom been involved.*

My family’s favorite vacation spot is a place called Pirate Land. It is a campground in Myrtle Beach, S.C., with campers as far as the eye can see. At the campground site there is an arcade that has all kinds of quarter machine games. A few years ago, my son went with five dollars in quarters burning a hole in his pocket. So, we were playing games and pinball when we saw in the corner a machine that had quarters all lying flat on a ledge with a bumper going back and forth. You could drop a quarter in, and if it landed right, it would be hit by the bumper and knock other quarters over the ledge. So, he decided, why not? He put a couple of quarters in. After spending 75 cents, he had two dollars in quarters that had fallen to him. He was hooked. And so was I, honestly. But it was all a gamble. I am certain these machines are not built to just give away money, but it was going so well.

Before too long, my son had amassed an 18-dollar stash. In all of my fatherly wisdom, I said… “You know what son, it’s best to quit while you are ahead. Better not push your luck. Let’s just walk away.” But the allure of just a few more quarters and the taste of victory was too much. Within five minutes all 18 dollars were gone. All we were left with was some empty pockets and regret.

I am afraid I have just described the way some of us have chosen to live our lives. We make decisions without much thought. We are so concerned with the immediate, we forget to think about the consequences. We surround ourselves with people who convince us wrong is right and right is wrong. We over-estimate our ability to say, “No.” I believe with all that is in me that if we are going to make the most of the life God has given to us, we are going to have to exercise wisdom.

**POINT #1 – WISDOM IS NOT OPTIONAL**

God has created us to experience the fullness of life. He wants us to live a life that makes a difference and that has deep meaning. If we are honest, that is what most of us want for ourselves too. But there is a fundamental truth that we all need to understand. God may have a will for our lives, but so do we, and that is a place of friction.

In the Old Testament, there are five books known as the Books of Wisdom: Job, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, Song of Solomon and Proverbs. These are all considered writings that communicate insights and understandings about how the world works and how we are to live in light of their truths. Much like modern day philosophical writings, they address everything from the problem of evil to mundane activities like navigating friendships or handling money. The uniqueness of the biblical accounts, however, is that the writers insisted that God was the source of all wisdom. Aside from Him, the world is utterly lost.

The book of Proverbs actually begins with this very idea.

**READ Proverbs 1:7**

For any person to develop street smarts, to be marked by deep knowledge or to exercise true wisdom, they must first have a “fear” of God. This introduces a bit of a quandary. Most people have a hard time with the thought of fearing God. Many would say, “But I thought God was loving,” or, “I have always been told God is kind.” He certainly is those things, but He is also all powerful and just.

**STORY**: *Share a story that demonstrates what a deep respect and reverence looks like*.

In some ways, as a father, I want my children to fear me as well. Not in the sense that I would hurt them or threaten them. Rather, I want them to recognize my authority so that I am able to tell them to avoid the hot stove and they do, or warn them to steer clear of speeding when they first get their license and they obey. They respect my instruction and trust that I love them.

This is where wisdom begins: the fear of the Lord. Some translations read “knowledge begins with respect for the Lord.”

A fear of God is the right understanding of our position before Him and His position before us. He is the God of the universe, and we are one of seven billion people on the earth. He is immortal and we are mortal. He is all-powerful and we are restricted. He is all-knowing and we are limited. When we begin here, with a deep honor and reverence for God, we perhaps begin to make different decisions than we might otherwise make. If I know God is in charge, I will be more mindful of my sinful actions. If I know God is in control, I will be more eager to obey His word.

When we fear God, we also live in awe and wonder of who He is. We begin to live more and more in line with God’s intention for the world when we recognize how beautiful His design is. Wisdom will lead us to generous living because it is a part of God’s design. Wisdom will lead us to faithful living because it is a part of God’s intention. Wisdom will lead us to honest living because it is a part of God’s purpose for our lives. It certainly does not ensure a flawless or easy life, but it does increase the potential of experiencing a full life in Christ.

**POINT #2 – WISDOM IS THE MOST VALUABLE THING WE CAN OWN**

I don’t really own many truly valuable things. Sure, I have some electronics that are costly and a vehicle in my driveway, but that is about it.

**STORY**: *Tell a story about something that has immense value. Whatever you mention, compare it to the value of having wisdom*.

I recently visited a church member to pray with them before an upcoming surgery. After we had visited for a few minutes and I prayed for a positive outcome for his procedure, he invited me to come to his office so he could show me something. He opened his drawer and pulled out a little velvet bag. He told me about a recent scuba diving trip he had taken off the coast of Florida and out of the bag fell two gold medallions. I had never seen anything like them before. I asked him how much they were worth, and he look at me and said, “Priceless.” To him, no amount of money could buy them because of how valuable he believed them to be.

The author of the book of Proverbs knows the value of street smarts and wisdom. He expresses it in a very powerful way.

**READ Proverbs 3:14-24 NLT**

The author compares wisdom to some of the most valuable metals and stones in the world. Most people would do anything to line their pockets with silver, gold, rubies, or jewels, but most people won’t lift a finger to be filled with godly wisdom and knowledge. What if we have exerted so much energy and time and attention for things that in the end don’t really matter? What if all along we should have been striving to live in awe and wonder of God and allow the wisdom that comes from viewing Him in this way to lead us in our day-to-day decision making? It’s like gold. It’s like silver. It’s like rubies.

**POINT #3 – HUMILITY IS THE KEY TO HAVING STREET SMARTS**

The hard work that goes into mining for such a valuable item as wisdom is developing a humble spirit. It is being willing to acknowledge that we are wrong.

An old Spanish proverb says, “*A wise man changes his mind, a fool never will.*”

The telltale sign of a humble person is when they are willing to admit they are wrong. In biblical terms, this is called repentance. There is something powerful that happens when we are willing to repent of our old ways of living and turn to live in line with God’s way of living. We become new people. We begin to look more and more like Jesus Christ.

The book of Proverbs speaks of this as a way of finding mercy and grace as well.

**READ Proverbs 28:13**

Wisdom begins with a fear of the Lord. In order for us to fully experience any other way of wisdom during this series, we must first repent. We must confess the ways we have gotten it wrong and renounce our sin. This is the way to the life God wants for us.

**Illustration**: *Give an illustration of getting lost and by humility being found*.

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