

You Are What You Love: Week 3

Week: 3 What is Wisdom?

Ecclesiastes 2:12-17, *You are What you Love* by James Smith, Chapter 3-4

Opening:

- Welcome the online people.
- Bad Dad Joke: Lot's wife was the salt of the earth and a pillar in her community.

Opening:

There are three main voices in the Wisdom literature sections of scripture. Think of them as **three voices**. Proverbs is a wise young counselor; Ecclesiastes is a middle-aged brilliant cynic and Job is an older experienced man.

They are all working to answer two questions:

What is a good life?

How do I get it?

Each “voice” gets a chance to answer this.

We are spending this series looking at the slightly cynical voice of Ecclesiastes. He will work to show what is really in the heart and what it will really do.

Today we look at the pursuit of wisdom.

Before we get into it I need to make two statements: (Keep these up through the golf illustration.)

- Knowing a truth and embodying it are two very different things.
- Values and priorities are two different things.

Values are what you want to be. Priorities are what you actually do.

I have a confession. I am not very good at golf. A few years ago, I decided to figure it out. I watched a bunch of instructional videos, read many articles by professional golf coaches and even memorized best practices for approaching the ball. Let me tell you what happened. The next time I stepped up to the ball, I actually hit it. I was still awful. I finally went to an actual coach. His instructions to me were to continually go over right approaches, evaluate your swing and do it 10 thousand times...until it's second nature.

I learned two simple truths.

1. Good golf knowledge does not necessarily mean a good golfer.
2. Moreover, to achieve ten thousand swings of a golf club it would require a reprioritizing of my life.

Knowing a truth and embodying it are two very different things.

Values and priorities are two different things.

Scripture:

Ecclesiastes 2:12-17

12 So I turned to consider wisdom and madness and folly. For what can the man do who comes after the king? Only what has already been done. 13 Then I saw that there is more gain in wisdom than in folly, as there is more gain in light than in darkness. 14 The wise person has his eyes in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I perceived that the same event happens to all of them. 15 Then I said in my heart, "What happens to the fool will happen to me also. Why then have I been so very wise?" And I said in my heart that this also is vanity. 16 For of the wise as of the fool there is no enduring remembrance, seeing that in the days to come all will have been long forgotten. How the wise dies just like the fool! 17 So I hated life, because what is done under the sun was grievous to me, for all is vanity and a striving after wind.

Observation:

- He acknowledges that even earthly wisdom is better than foolish living but earthly wisdom still leaves man in want. So, this begs a great question. What is beyond wisdom?
- Notice the literary intentional hyperbole in verse 17. The implication is simply this: Does your version of wisdom actually lead to what truly fulfills? Moreover, death is the great unifier of man. Does your version of a wise life have eternal lasting power?
- Ecclesiastes is intense and extremely harsh towards the pursuits of man. Yet, it actually is very encouraging. The reality is the teacher is creating a path to what can actually fill the human heart. Sometimes correction is truly care. Sometimes confrontation is truly out of compassion.

Illustration:

Years ago one of the young adult women I was working with told Leslie and I that she had visited church after church and finally landed at the church we served in for one reason. The senior pastor told her the truth about her actions. Deep down she knew all her pursuits weren't working but no other pastor would come out and say it. Pastor Cameron did. He literally said, what you are doing is sin and it will wreck your life. It took someone pointing out the truth for her to let go of what was holding her back and pursue it. This is Ecclesiastes. It isn't meant to be easy, it's meant to be truly loving.

- Think of the acquiring of information in four ways:
 - Ignorance – "I don't know."
 - Knowledge – "I have heard the information."
 - Wisdom – "I embody the information and apply it in life."
 - Spiritual wisdom – "I embody knowledge that has true eternal value."
- The teacher is really clear. It isn't only wisdom (embodied knowledge) that's crucial, it's the pursuit of spiritual wisdom.

Final Thoughts: (Invite worship arts team up)

(Have a picture of a movie theater chair, a stool and a workout bench.)

When you look at each of these what activity do you plan on doing?

Spiritual wisdom requires that you must embody, practice and prioritize the truth of Christ.

I want to make a bold statement. Let's stop thinking of church as an "idea" center or "entertainment" center and start seeing it as a life shaping gym where spiritual wisdom is embodied and practiced.

The book of James is the wisdom literature of the New Testament. Here is the way he says it. James 2:14-17 "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is poorly clothed and lacking in daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled,' without giving them the things needed for the body, what good is that? 17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."

Back to the opening statements:

Knowing a truth and embodying it are two very different things.

Values and priorities are two different things.

Values are what you want to be. Priorities are what you actually do.

Next Steps:

As you fill out the next steps card I want you to pause and reflect on this question:

What value do you need to prioritize to grow in spiritual wisdom?

Close out the online service.

References:

The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Smith, James K. A. You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, a Division of Baker Group, 2016. Print.

Understanding the Wisdom Literature: <https://thebibleproject.com/explore/wisdom-series/>

Understanding the literature types and postures of Wisdom Literature: Bartholomew, C. G. (2012, 2016). Wisdom Literature. In Faithlife Study Bible. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

The word used here, hebel, means “vapor” or “breath” and is used in Isa 57:13 parallel with “wind” and in Prov 21:6 for “a fleeting vapor.”

Garrett, D. A. (1993). Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of songs (Vol. 14, p. 282). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Ecclesiastes is a book of wisdom sayings that examines the meaning of life’s endeavors, the value of common wisdom, and the problem of injustice. The opening verse presents the speaker as a member of David’s royal family, but his name is not mentioned.

Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). Faithlife Study Bible (Ec 1:1). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.