

Reframing Life: A Faith Perspective
Reframing Wisdom
Proverbs 1:1-7

Intro: I was sitting in the Cracker Barrel Restaurant in Gonzales, waiting on my turnip greens and fried okra, when I noticed an old sign promoting a new soda, "The 'soft' drink that 'turneth away wrath.'" I had to think about it for awhile before I realized that the "soft" of the drink was intentionally parallel to a "soft answer turneth away wrath," a reference to Proverbs 15:1 in the King James Version of the Bible.

Think about a time in America, decades ago, when the Book of Proverbs was known broadly enough that this kind of advertisement would stir widespread recognition.

Complete these proverbs:

Pride goes...before a fall (Prov 16:18)

Trust in the Lord....with all your heart

A penny saved...is a penny earned

To err ... is human, to forgive...divine

The road to hell is paved...with good intentions.

Let patience have...her perfect work (James 1:4).

A proverb is not a promise. The Book of Proverbs is a collection of truths that will generally work out in our lives. A soft answer will generally result in a decrease in the anger level. Diligent planting will likely bring a bountiful harvest.

In the first few verses we discover the underpinnings of all that is to follow. Many fools are well-acquainted with our modern "information highway." Wisdom is more than knowing how to "google." The matters at hand are life and death. Get wisdom or die. That is the message. The job of reframing here is all about correctly identifying the goal and finding a strategy of pursuit that really works.

A proverb is a pithy sentence, concisely expressing some well-established truth which may be illustrated or applied in a practical way. The word is of Latin derivation, literally meaning *for a word, speech, or discourse*; that is, one expression for many.

The *Hebrew* word for "proverb" (*masha*) means a "comparison." The form or content of the proverb, or both, often involves the idea of *comparison*. Most of the proverbs are in couplets or triplets, or some modifications of them, the members of which correspond in structure and length, as if arranged to be compared one with another. They illustrate the varieties of parallelism, a distinguishing feature of *Hebrew* poetry.

"Wisdom" is "the use of the best means for the best ends."

Perhaps you have wished that you could spend some time with an elderly person who lived life successfully and happily. You really wanted to know what they thought from their long perspective of many years. This is what you are doing as you read the Book of Proverbs. You are enjoying the candid counsel of wise people who lived successfully.

I. TRUE WISDOM IS GOD-FEARING: *The fear of the Lord...*

Have you ever really been afraid? Think about it for a moment. You wake up in the middle of night thinking that you heard a noise in the house. You lie there for a moment, straining to hear. The clock is ticking and the refrigerator is purring. Finally, you get up, put on your robe, and walk to the end of

the house, listening intently. Suddenly someone steps out of the shadows, and you jump out of your skin. It is only your daughter, getting a drink, but you were terrified of an intruder. That fear—and many of our fears—have to do with our own physical safety. This is the fear that surges over us when we have a close call on the highway. We are engineered for self-preservation. The fear makes us run, jump and hide from danger.

- A. Solomon tells us the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (1:7). That word for knowledge means “perception, skill, cunning.” It is a little surprise. It’s Proverbs 9:10 that says the “fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. It is where life begins because it is the acknowledgment of who God is and who we are. A person who does not fear God has yet to understand who God is.

- B. Jesus talked about the fear of the Lord in this way. “I tell you, friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him” (Luke 12:4-5). Jesus is talking about the fear of God. The writer of Hebrews warned us in a similar way, “It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

The fear that you feel when you imagine that your life is about to be snuffed out is no real fear at all. Instead of worrying about robbers in the night, you should be much more fearful of the one who is able to end your life here and throw you into hell. If you knew how absolutely powerful and holy God is, you would tremble at the very thought of him.

At one point Pilate asked Jesus, “Don’t you know that I have the power to take your life?” Jesus said, “You have no power except what has been given you.” He was demonstrating his own teaching that the real fear and awe we reserve for Judge of All.

- C. One day you will stand before God to give an account for your life. “It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this, the judgment.” Those who have no fear of God in this life will experience a most horrible confrontation with the Judge of all.

Your presence at this worship service is a very important acknowledgment of God. This hour of worship puts your week in perspective and clears your head and your heart.

II. TRUE WISDOM IS GOD-HEARING *Let the wise listen* v5. “Wisdom calls aloud in the street...” Proverbs 1:20. “*Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm*” (Proverbs 1:33)

- A. Hearing God is a consistent theme of Scripture. “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” We should be listening for God to speak to us.

- B. Hearing often implies obedience. The Bible uses the word “hear” to mean obey just as we often do with our children. “You are not listening, Johnny. Pick up your toys.” By listening we mean obeying.

The Bible finds us to be much more guilty of practical, heart atheism or agnosticism than intellectual atheism. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Psalm 14:1). It then

goes on to talk about the corruption and evil in his heart. The defiance of God is on the moral level, in the heart. It is a refusal to hear, heed.

It is not so much the intellect but the will that rises up against the knowledge of God. This defiance of God is the very heart of folly. It is the delusion that you yourself are the king of your universe. Such delusion skews your world and makes you unable to operate wisely in any venue. You have stumbled at the first premise of wisdom—God is to be feared. This defiance of God may never be vocal or spoken. It is in the heart. It may be a secret contention of the inner self—“there is no God.” And the habits and words and deeds of this fool slide downward.

C. Hearing God takes time and intention.

1. Turning your ear—a deliberate effort to turn to God (Proverbs 2:2: *turning your ear to wisdom*). It takes time to really listen to anyone, including God.

2. Tuning your ear—a deliberate effort to get on God’s frequency. You must change the way you hear and listen if you are going to hear the voice of God. He will not be heard by your eardrum so much as by your heart.

III. TRUE WISDOM IS GOD-ADHERING—In each case I have talked about God: God-fearing, God-hearing, and now God-adhering. I am doing this because true wisdom is all about God.

***We broke up three slabs of concrete this week at the new Crossroads office. It was grueling work. We learned about concrete. Some of it adheres well. Some of it crumbles easily. When you are trying to break it up, you like the crumbly stuff.

We must adhere to God like the concrete adheres to the reinforcement steel. We do so in a number of ways:

A. LOVE: *Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart (3:3).*

B. TRUST: *Trust in the Lord with all your heart... 3:5*

C. HONOR: *Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops (Proverbs 3:9)*

D. PERFORMANCE: *Wisdom is DOING what is right, just and fair (1:3).*

Conclusion: “a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.” We pray for such knowledge in the lives of those we love. You don’t want to stand before God having said in your heart “No God.” And you don’t want to stand before him having turned away from the greatest gift that he could give you—the gift of his One and Only Son. Many people who think they are religious and wise have not accepted the Word of God, which is His Son. You must do this if you are ever to see heaven.