

Devotion 23:

Our Father Is Wisdom

Proverbs 1—31

The book of Proverbs is part of that section of Scripture known as “wisdom literature.” If you ask the average believer what the book is about, I venture to guess that over 90% of the answers would be “wisdom.” However, as I read the book in one sitting, the word “righteousness” keeps coming to my eyes and mind. For our Father, to be wise is to live a righteous life, doing what is right and just. And He is the embodiment of wisdom and righteousness.

Luther seemed to understand this as well when he wrote: *“Anyone who intends to become righteous might well take this as a handbook or prayerbook for his daily use, read it often, and ponder his own life in it.”* (Luther’s Works, vol. 35, p. 258)

Like all good fathers, our heavenly Father wants to pass along this wisdom to His children. Hence, Proverbs is largely two stories going on at once: Solomon is passing along wisdom to his son, and our Father is passing along His wisdom to us. Essentially, the book is an elucidation of Ephesians 5:1-2:

“Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us.”

Therefore, to pursue wisdom is to pursue God. Paul says as much in Colossians 2:2-3:

“My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

As we look at Proverbs 15:9, we will see that wisdom, righteousness, and God are basically synonymous:

“The Lord detests the way of the wicked but he loves those who pursue righteousness.”

The book of Proverbs is an extended contrast between the wise and the foolish, the wicked and the righteous. The wicked, *“the proud and arrogant man—‘mocker’ is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.”* (21:24) But the wise man follows Proverbs 3:5:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”

Hence, *‘the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.’* (1:7)

So, do you want wisdom? Then you really want our Father. This makes sense when other virtues are put in the same light. Do you want love? Then you really want our Father who is love. Do you want peace? Then you really want our Father who is peace. Do you want righteousness? Then you really want our Father who is the Righteous One. And, praise God, we have wisdom. Consider what Paul says in I Corinthians 1:30:

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.”

Now just as we seldom feel loving, or peaceful, or righteous, I suspect the average Christian doesn’t often feel wise. Especially when the world around us considers us to be fools. But make no mistake. If you are in Christ, you are wise and have wisdom. And this wisdom will bring humility with it. For to be wise, to know our Father, is also to realize how little we know and how small we are in comparison.

James 3:13-18 summarizes Proverbs quite well:

“Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.”

Sounds like a pretty tall order, doesn’t it? Here is the good news: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”* (James 1:5) Like all the other virtues and attributes of our Father, He doesn’t wish to hoard them, but to share them with us, His kids.