

Today's message is time to slow down, and a reflection on wisdom.

What is biblical wisdom? Well in the immortal words of Ricky Baker, it's 'the knack'. It's understanding how things really are and how they work. Wisdom is 'nous', knowledge plus real world application. Wisdom is to be able to see how things really are, and how they work. Wisdom is Godly insight without supernatural revelation. Wisdom is not God letting us in on a secret that other can't see, wisdom is public, but you do need to be attuned to see it. Wisdom is like God coloured glasses.

The apostle Paul says that '*knowledge puffs up but love builds up*' (1 Cor 1:8), wisdom doesn't puff up. Wisdom is knowing the facts and how to apply them. It is not academic knowledge, it applied knowledge.

Wisdom can see, that while I believe that God is calling me into a new space, there are antecedents. My mother was a teacher, my grandfather a teacher; as a minister I am a teaching elder and I have spent my career teaching in the pulpit, in courses, in small groups, in one on one situations. So, yes I am taking a step of faith, but wisdom sees that I am not entirely heading off into the unknown.

A friend told me a story about when they were a young minister providing comfort to a couple of older widows; it all went well and then as they were walking out he could hear them through the window. They said to each other 'he's OK, he'll be better once he's known some suffering'. Wisdom isn't necessarily about age, but wisdom has known suffering.

To finish the beginning; in so many areas we are coming to see knowledge as a human construction. I'm not totally rejecting that idea, but I see knowledge as like the software that goes into a computer, it has to be constructed, not just downloaded we can write new applications as we go. However wisdom says there are some boundaries in the universe's hardware. At the extreme, constructivism rejects traditional truth and suggests that we construct all meaning. I would suggest that wisdom says that there is some hardware that God has provided, there are laws written into the fabric of the universe that aren't up for reconstruction. However, on top of this foundation, I believe that we can and do create meaning and memory and culture. For example, I don't think God necessarily created languages, he allowed us to co-create them, but he did create the building blocks for language. I think that because human beings are 'made in the image of God', there are some thing we do create; but I believe that the building blocks have still been created by God. I won't get into it today, but some of the discussions we can have around gender and biology are part of this discernment. There are some things that are laid down by God in his wisdom and we definitely have some freedom to construct as well. Some gender roles can be considered examples of cultural constructions. As Christians we need to understand that believers in materialism may have a different view, but we can disagree because wisdom is public truth. In fact that's where Proverbs 8 starts. Biblical wisdom exists in the public square the world of intellectual discussion, it is not just a private preference, or personal belief, wisdom calls out in the marketplace of ideas.

So Proverbs 8.

Wisdom is not hidden, she is not secret, she is not a Dan Brown conspiracy, she is there in the public place, on the road, I imagine the high point of the temple, the cross roads of life. She needs to be sought but she is public truth available to all who seek her. She is the foundation necessary for all scientific enquiry. She is not like the adulteress of chapter seven who hides in the shadows.

God's truth calls out to us, it presents itself – remember we are not talking about a supernatural revelation, but natural revelation. And here is great news, it is available to the simple. You don't need a PhD to be wise.

Wisdom is not anti-intellectual, but it rejects academic arrogance. All levels of IQ can partake of wisdom. Children and the simple can be wise.

Wisdom tells us that dishonest ways lead to death, that whenever we are tempted to lie, Don't! We should have nothing to do with anything that is corrupt. And while there is a place for clever debate, wisdom doesn't set traps for people. I've read a good lawyer never asks a question they don't know the answer to. In this way they will often trip up the criminal. But wisdom is not trying to trip up people. Wisdom exists in sunlight.

Wisdom recommends an education in wisdom itself is better than wealth, this is not quite the same as 'get a degree before a job', wisdom knows that there is a time and place for a degree and not everybody is suited to academic study of the same sort. Wisdom is referring to God and knowledge of his ways. I like the idea of wisdom being about knowing where to place the ladder before starting to climb it. Who is God, who am I and what has God got for me.

Prudence is caution, it is not jumping into a Ponzi scheme, or a new venture without thought and consideration. Discretion is not sharing private information with just anyone – it is guarding your heart and being wise as to who you share with. It is knowing that sometimes it is better not to have your say. Hate Evil! That is deliciously strong, do you hate evil when you see it? I guess we might particularly apply this when we see it in ourselves. Pride and arrogance – do we recognise these imposters? For when we miss recognising pride then we are condemned to spending time undoing its damage. Counsel and wise judgement mean that wisdom is 'forked' into creation it is everywhere important

Let us chose wise leaders, leaders who seek to understand. Leaders who see consequences for future generations. Whether you lean right or left wing, ask of your leaders do they think of long term consequences, are they wise?

I remember when Prince Charles used to talk about the environment, in his own words '*They thought I was potty*', then it turned out he was right all along. I'm too young to remember 6 o'clock closing, but it was meant to moderate drinking it did the opposite, it fed the culture of binge drinking and violence that is part of the nasty under-belly of New Zealand. When you vote in the referendums seek wisdom by thinking of long term consequences.

Why is wisdom better than a fat bank balance? Because it lasts and affects your ability to be productive. Wisdom as an investment in your productive capacity. But life is not about wealth, it is about faithfulness and significance. Wisdom teaches us to be a legend to our children. That is the most important inheritance. When I think of legacy I think of Jimmy Carter, probably one of the most unsuccessful Presidents; he must be one of the greatest ex-presidents through his investment in Habitat for Humanity. President Carter spent his fame on justice for the poor, Jimmy has left an amazing legacy. Wisdom knows when there is a new page.

In the Old Testament wisdom is surely one of the ideas John had in mind when he wrote about the word, the logos, the organising principle of life in John 1. Wisdom is personal – it is personified as a wise woman, and it is impersonal it is like the calculus that God invented before he created the world, the math necessary before he could build the universe.

Will was down at Beca with some students last week and he was telling me that he was talking to some structural engineers about how they take architects plans and make them work in the real world. It's like God did the opposite he created the engineering so that we can paint our creations on it.

Then God created soil science before soil, agriculture before the dust and gravity before the heavens I had a friend in Auckland who had his PhD in fluid dynamics and it was incredible hearing about the forces and tensions without a flow of a liquid and the way it behaves and affects other things. Wisdom is God working all that out before he created. THIS is the key to wisdom, it is not a clip-on to creation, wisdom is an understanding of the way that God has made the world and everything in it. Wisdom is understanding the

laws of physics and the laws of human relationships, spiritual laws and physical laws. Wisdom proclaims that there are set patterns in the universe which it is our task to unearth and discover.

In the next stanza we uncover climate science, God created a world that would be self-sustaining and as the writer of Genesis records – he called it Good. Wisdom is realising that we cannot keep exploiting the natural world indefinitely without there being consequences. Wisdom tells us that we should not build on the sea shore as sea levels are rising. When Mike Ellis is out observing the seas encroach on the land, he is observing processes that God thought of before the beginning of the world. Behind all that, we discover a physics, a math, a dynamic that is intelligible and remarkably consistent. One of the great wonders of creation is that so much is observable by human beings, we have been created able to observe and marvel at God's creation. Johan Kepler voiced what many scientists have thought when he talked about 'thinking God's thoughts after him'.

Then this really interesting at the end, wisdom is delighting. True wisdom is to delight and rejoice more and more. Wisdom is not cold and calculating, it rejoices in God's goodness. 'I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him'.

Then this chapter finishes with an appeal to keep listening, with an injunction not just to listen but to follow. And finally we can make connections between wisdom, God's Spirit, God's Word and Jesus for they are all life giving. They are the way to life.