

Ten Internalized Values of a Wise Person

*The wise will inherit honor,
But fools display dishonor. Prov.3:35*

We finish our series on Proverbs today. It's an appropriate time to ask the question, how do we know if we learned anything? Should we take a final exam?

Is Proverbs like a school education? Schools tend to test what you know. You study hard for exams, cramming in the data, but then you realize not too long after the exam you have forgotten what you were supposed to learn.

Proverbs is about education, in the truest sense of the word. To educate comes from Latin *educare*, which means to lead out. If the purpose of education is to lead you out of ignorance, from what does wisdom lead us out? Hopefully you know that by now or I have failed in my preaching!

Wisdom leads us out of foolishness. It leads us out of thinking we have the answers within ourselves, to placing all our confidence in God. If schools test what you know, wisdom tests what you are becoming. The goal of Proverbs is not to make you a person who can rattle off a bunch of spiritual facts – the demons can do that- but to make you a wise person. Wisdom is what you become, you become a wise person. Wisdom is internalized, shaping your being or character. It isn't a matter of making a wise decision when the opportunity presents itself, but living, thinking, processing life wisely.

So, what does a person who has assimilated wisdom's values look like? If Proverbs is a parent instructing a son, what should you see in your child at the endpoint of your parenting?

What core values should be pulsating through your heart if wisdom has impacted you?

Let's review ten.

1. Absolutes

All values come from God.

Proverbs 3:5-6

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

Proverbs 9:10

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy one is understanding.

This is the lens through which you see the world. It is inescapable that everyone has some lens. The Biblical lens makes perfectly good sense. Life began with God, therefore, life is only understood on God's terms. Since He is the moral king and judge of the universe, all values come from him. If He says something is good, then it is, and will always be. If

He says something is wrong, then it is wrong, and always will be, unless he changes it. Teach your children that we don't live by feelings, impressions, or man-made opinions, but by truth. Truth is in the word of God, and everything in God's creation can only ultimately be understood in relation to His self-revelation in the Bible.

Life has a wonderful designer. We enjoy life only to the degree that we live and move in conformity to the designer's plan.

How would we apply that to culture? We teach our children not to bury their heads from it, nor to be absorbed by it, but to observe it from God's perspective so they can be agents of renewal in it.

2. Stewardship

All possessions come from God

Proverbs 3:9

Honor the Lord from your wealth, from the first of all your produce

There is nothing you have- health, intelligence, good experiences- that isn't a gift from the hand of God. It's all on loan from a gracious provider who wants us to always enjoy what we have, but never to be possessed by it.

That means you will learn to challenge yourself:

Do you love all good things God gives, or the Giver of all good things?

Wisdom also instructs us that the first question asked about stewardship is not, How much should I give? But rather, What does God own? Then secondly, How do I live as a faithful steward-caring for what belongs to God that has been entrusted to my care- in a world with enormous survival and spiritual needs?

Once you ask the right questions:

You will be intentional, serious, and sacrificial in your giving to the kingdom of Christ.

You will pray for opportunities to give.

You will be marked by humble gratitude.

You will be fooled less by American consumerism, which says you deserve the best and the newest. You don't think you're fooled?

How many of you pray for the gift of giving?

When did you last confess greed to another person?

We don't confess it because we don't see it in ourselves.

3. Motives

All activity is to be done for God's glory.

Proverbs 8:13

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogance and the evil way, and the perverted mouth, I hate.

The fear of the Lord is the operational principle of everything a wise person does; his motive is the glory of God.

Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God. 1 Cor.6:20

Two motives which especially snag us are pride and fear. Fear of doing wrong, pride of doing right.

Nothing in life is pointless. Because we were made by God for His glory, His pleasure should be the motive for all we do.

4. Dependence

All of life is dependent upon God.

Proverbs 1:23

Turn to my reproof. Behold, I pour out my spirit on you; I will make my words known to you.

God is the source of every breath we take. He is the giver of life. God delights when we express our dependence upon him in prayer. How and why and when you pray is the sure measure of your sense of dependence upon God.

5. Humility

All of our worth is borrowed from God.

Proverbs 11:2

When pride comes, then comes dishonor, but with the humble is wisdom.

Teach your children to think of God before themselves. Humility is not thinking less of yourself, but thinking of yourself less. The humble know they are self-centered, and lean hard against it.

Humility can be measured by the way someone speaks. Are they too often giving their own opinions? Are they needing to prove something? Are they combative and argumentative? Do they use words as a commodity to promote the welfare of others?

6. Praise

We were created to worship God.

Teach your children why worship is vital to all of life. We offer personal acts of worship six days a week so we can bring our worship collateral with us to corporate worship.

What core truth primes the pump of heart worship?

Nothing you desire compares with me. (3:15, 8:11)

Ps.145:4

One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts.

That means those of us who have lived longer than the youth have a privilege and responsibility to tell them how worthy God is of our devotion, and that it is worth everything to follow Jesus.

7. Conviction

We are sinner in need of a savior

Proverbs 20:9

Who can say, I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from sin?

Notice how this talks about sin as a heart issue, not simply behaviors. Sin is an attitude of self-centeredness which expresses itself in behavior.

Conviction means taking responsibility for sin. This week's paper had an article about a new disorder: intermittent explosive disorder. It's a new term for road rage. The bible calls it losing self-control, anger, sin.

The evidence you take sin seriously is your willingness to receive correction or reproof. 12:1 *Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.*

8. Inquiry

We are called to think God's thoughts.

Proverbs 4:5-8

Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding...the beginning of wisdom is, acquire wisdom; and with all your acquiring, get understanding.

We don't do inquiry for its own sake, but toward the goal of understanding the majesty of God in how he's wired the universe.

We do inquiry using the precious tool of asking questions.

I developed a friendship with a retiree in Texas named Fred. He had been an elder in the PCA and chose to attend our church. He loved theology and church history. Even toward the end of his life, when he was confined to a wheelchair, he had in front of him articles and books.

9. Fruitfulness

We are to produce for God.

Proverbs 12:11,12, 27

He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who pursues vain things lacks sense.

The wicked desires the booty of the evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

A slothful man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man is diligence.

Is the main direction of your life self-centered?

Before we come to the last one, we must point out that none of these things qualifies you for heaven. These are marks of a changed heart, not a restrained heart. Without a new heart they will merely be like decorations on a cut Christmas tree...in June!

Even with a new heart you'll never do any of these perfectly this side of heaven. Our best efforts are tainted with sin. That's why the most important value is our last...

10. Grace

God loves us in spite of our performance.

Proverbs 3:34

Though He scoffs at the scoffers, yet He gives grace to the afflicted.

Sometimes you find out if these things have been internalized when all other things are stripped away.

My friend Jim Jackson went to heaven at a pre-mature 48 years old with a heart infused with these values. How do I know? I watched him die...for ten years.

Jim contracted ALS shortly after we started the church plant in Texas.

But through all his suffering, shortly arriving at the place where he could move no part of his body, except his eyelids by which he communicated, he remained, by the grace of God, steadfast in life because these values pulsated through him by God's grace.