

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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The Superiority of Wisdom

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

Key verse: “So I said, ‘Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded’” (Ecclesiastes 9:16).

The wisdom of God—God’s directions, instructions, and guidance for living—is one of the most valuable gifts anyone can receive. Yet, in our world, such wisdom is often not valued, not received, and not acted on.

The writer of proverbs illustrates this truth by telling the story of a city besieged by a great and powerful king. In that city lived a “poor wise man” who had wisdom to deliver the city. Yet, “no one remembered” that poor wise man. Either he was forgotten after the city was delivered or, as seems more likely, he was overlooked and ignored when his wisdom could have delivered the city—“his words are not heeded” (vv. 13-16).

This section of Ecclesiastes deals with God’s wisdom as it is revealed through a person, in this case the “poor wise man.” Yet, this text suggests some important *ways that we can open our lives to receive the wisdom of God*, however that wisdom may be revealed:

1. Value God’s wisdom. Although the world might not rightly value God’s wisdom, we must! In this text, we see how valuable God’s wisdom can be:

It can deliver a city (v. 15).

It is better than the world’s might and power (v. 16).

It is better than weapons of war (v. 18).

Receiving God’s wisdom starts by valuing it and seeking it.

2. Listen for God’s wisdom. God’s wisdom—God’s directions, instructions and guidance for living—is often lost and unheard amid the noisy distractions of our lives. God often speaks in a quiet voice: “The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouting of a ruler among fools” (v. 17).

Frederick Faber once said: “There is hardly ever a complete silence in our soul. God is whispering to us well-nigh incessantly. Whenever the sounds of the world die out in the soul, or sink low, then we hear these whisperings of God. He is always whispering to us, only we do not always hear because of the noise, hurry, and distraction which life causes as it rushes on.”

How can we open our lives to receive the wisdom of God? Value God's wisdom. Listen for God's wisdom.

3. Act on God's wisdom. In the story of the poor wise man, wisdom is "despised and his words are not heeded" (v. 16). Whenever God speaks to us, whenever God's wisdom is heard, it is vitally important to act in obedience to the direction God gives us.

Pastor and author Erwin McManus tells a story from his life that illustrates this truth. He writes: *My son, Aaron, was five or six when he began asking me, "What does God's voice sound like?" I didn't know how to answer.*

A few years later, Aaron went off to his first junior high camp. In the middle of the week, I went up with another pastor at Mosaic [McManus' church] to see our kids. Aaron, I learned, had started to assault another kid but had been held back by his friends. He was unrepentant, wanted to leave camp, pulled together his stuff, and shoved it into the car.

I asked him for a last talk with me before we drove away. We sat on two large rocks in the middle of the woods. "Aaron," I asked, "is there a voice inside you telling you what you should do?"

"Yes," he nodded.

"What's the voice telling you?"

"That I should stay and work it out."

"Can you identify that voice?"

"Yes," he said immediately, "It's God." It was the moment I'd waited for.

"Aaron," I said, "do you realize what just happened? You heard God's voice. He spoke to you from within your soul. Forget everything that's happened. God spoke to you, and you were able to recognize Him."

I will never forget Aaron's dug-in response: "Well, I'm still not doing what God said."

I explained to him that that was his choice, but this is what would happen. If he rejected the voice of God coming from deep within and chose to disobey His guidance, his heart would become hardened, and his ears would become dull. If he continued on this path, there would be a day when he would never again hear the voice of God. There would come a day when he would deny that God even speaks or has ever spoken to him.

But if he treasures God's voice, however it comes—through the Scriptures, through his conscience—and responds to God with obedience, then his heart would be softened, and his ears would always be able to hear the whisper of God into his soul.

*I'm grateful to say that Aaron chose to stay. (from *The Barbarian Way* by Erwin McManus)*

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