
WISDOM – 2011

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We are now two days into the New Year what's gone is gone. Last year at this time some of us were saying, "This year things are going to be different! First I'm going to lose weight, I'm going to spend more time reading my Bible, praying, serving others etc. Just by a simple show of hands, who has stuck to their new years resolutions? Do you know what was listed as the most five popular resolutions made most every year? The 5th was to take up a new hobby; 4th was to make more money, the 3rd was to improve relationships, 2nd was to stop smoking and the most popular New Years resolution, you guessed it was to lose weight.

Often this time of year, after the overindulgence of the holidays we make resolutions to change our habits and our way of life. The New Year gives us an opportunity to start fresh and better ourselves. Doesn't even take a month, come about the middle of January we somehow forget our resolutions and go back to our old ways. Can any of us remember last year's resolutions?

Talk about forgetting, I heard about a man who moved into a retirement community to spend the rest of his life there. It wasn't long until he had made a number of friends among the other residents. There was one lady he was especially attracted to and she was attached to him. They spend so much time together and finally one evening he proposed, asking her to marry him.

The next morning he woke up remembering his proposal, but he couldn't remember her answer. So he went to her and said, "I'm really embarrassed, I proposed to you last night but I can't remember if you said "yes" or "no". "Oh thank goodness," she replied. "I remembered saying "Yes" but I couldn't remember who asked me." My new year's resolutions are like that...

How does the Bible help us with New Year's resolutions? They are not called resolutions but if we look in Proverbs 3 it says is "Advice to the Young". Sounds to me teaching that could be called resolutions to live by. Solomon starts off this 3rd chapter with a very matter of fact statement, "My child, don't forget what I teach you. Always remember what I tell you to do. My teaching will give you a long and prosperous life." He then gives very specific details of the 10 principles that we should live by in order to have long life, prosperity and peace.

1. Verse 3 never let go of loyalty and faithfulness. I like the new NIV Study Bible were it says love and faithfulness as these are two qualities that should be a guiding light in our lives. What is love? Is it a fateful glance across a crowded room? I define it as a man with nails in his hands. Love is something we could define forever. What is faithfulness? It is keeping faith, maintaining allegiance, and constant, loyal, conscientious, accurate, reliable, showing a strong sense of duty or responsibility.

2. Verses 5 & 6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on what you think you know. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and he will show you the right way. What is trust? It is a firm belief in or confidence in, the honesty, integrity, reliability, justice of another person or thing.

3. Verse 7 & 8 "Never let yourself think that you are wiser than you are; simply obey the Lord and refuse to do wrong. If you do, it will be like good medicine, healing your wounds and easing your pains". Do we ask God for guidance about what we are to work on?

4 Verse 9 & 10 "Honor the Lord by making him an offering from the best of all that your land produces." This starts with tithing. Part of what we have belongs to God.

5 Verses 11 & 12 "My child, when the Lord corrects you, pay close attention and take it as a warning." God corrects those he loves. Will we work on the changes we need to make?

6 Verses 13 – 24 ¹³ “Happy is anyone who becomes wise and who comes to have understanding”. ¹⁴ There is more profit in it than there is in silver; it is worth more to you than gold. ¹⁵ Wisdom is more valuable than jewels; nothing you could want can compare with it. ¹⁶ Wisdom offers you long life, as well as wealth and honor. ¹⁷ Wisdom can make your life pleasant and lead you safely through it. ¹⁸ Those who become wise are happy; wisdom will give them life. ¹⁹ The Lord created the earth by his wisdom; by his knowledge he set the sky in place. ²⁰ His wisdom caused the rivers to flow and the clouds to give rain to the earth. ²¹ My child, hold on to your wisdom and insight. Never let them get away from you. ²² They will provide you with life – a pleasant and happy life. ²³ You can go safely on your way and never even stumble. ²⁴ You will not be afraid when you go to bed, and you will sleep soundly through the night.”

What is wisdom? It is information and know-how. All of us know a farmer or two. Take this instance a farmer with a tractor was plowing a field. He must have the right equipment and materials, gas, oil, etc. But he still must know what to do and what not to do with it. If the farmer is going to have a successful crop he needs to know about planting the fields, harvesting and taking his crop to market.

If we look at verses 13-20 they talk about those characteristics of wisdom which deal with knowledge, learning, information, intelligence, data, facts, intellect, and experience. Verses 21-24 talk about those characteristics of wisdom which deal with perception, discernment, judgment, reason, insight, prudence, discretion and just plain ol’ common sense.

7. Verses 25 & 26 “You do not have to worry about sudden disasters, such as come on the wicked like a storm. The Lord will keep you safe. He will not let you fall into a trap”. God will be with us and take care of us.

8. Verses 27 & 28 “Whenever you possibly can, do good to those who need it. Never tell your neighbors to wait until tomorrow if you can help them now.” Have you ever

said, if you need something do not hesitate to call? Do we really mean it? Have you ever got a call from someone saying you told me to call if I need anything?

9 Verses 29 & 30 “Don’t plan anything that will hurt your neighbors; they live beside you, trusting you. Don’t argue with others for no reason when they have never done you any harm.” Hopefully all of us have good relationships with our neighbors.

10 Verses 31 -32 “Don’t be jealous of violent people or decide to act as they do, because the Lord hates people who do evil, but he takes righteous people into his confidence. The Lord puts a curse on the homes of the wicked, but blesses the homes of the righteous.” We must watch what we watch on TV because there is much violence.

Proverbs has a lot of practical applications for every one of those verses. As individuals and as a congregation we are moving from our past into a new beginning. Jeremiah 31:9 speaks very poetic language the promise that is given to God’s people, “will walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble.” God continues to invite us home to that place where we celebrate new beginnings, anticipating all that is yet to come as we experience and respond to God’s grace and goodness. A blessed New Year to all.

PRAYER

Such good advice you give us God, right at our finger lips. We value and cherish, and will try to live by it. Amen