

**Victory of the Lamb**  
**January 5,2020**  
**Sermon series: Seeing 2020**  
**Sermon theme: The Beginning of Wisdom**  
**Preacher: Ben Sadler**

All we have to say is, “Hello Google” and instantly we can access all sort of information. But just because we have access to information doesn’t mean we know how to make wise decisions. We have access to an unlimited amount of information, but we lack wisdom. We lack the ability to make good, wise decisions. Making good decisions comes with experience and wisdom. It is doing the right thing and the right time. And that is one thing you can’t find on Google. To find true wisdom we need to seek God. That’s we are beginning this new series called *Seeing 2020*. In this series we will focus on the book of the Bible that is dedicated to God’s wisdom: the book of Proverbs.

So let’s open to the first page of the book of Proverbs and see what it is all about. The book of Proverbs begins by telling us who the primary author is, **The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel (Proverbs 1:1)**.

Solomon was the third king of Israel. He was David’s son. And he ruled about 900 years before Jesus. There is an interesting story in 1 Kings 3 where the Lord comes to Solomon in a vision. The Lord invites Solomon to make a request from the Lord. And Solomon asks for wisdom. The Lord grants Solomon’s prayer. This book that we have in front of us is written by the wisest man who ever lived. Unfortunately, Solomon himself did not live by his own advice.

The next verses explain the main purposes of this book:

**for gaining wisdom and instruction;**  
**for understanding words of insight;**  
**for receiving instruction in prudent behavior,**  
**doing what is right and just and fair (Proverbs 1:2-3)**

Solomon says that he wrote this book so that people would gain *wisdom* and *instruction*, literally *discipline*. Wisdom has to do with gaining knowledge and insight so that a person makes the right decisions. Instruction is about learning from your failures. It is about welcoming discipline and correction.

Solomon says that if you learn wisdom and welcome correction, then you will begin to do what is *right, just, and fair*. You will learn to make wise decisions and live an upright and godly life.

Then Solomon goes on to explain his primary audience, for whom he is writing this book:

**for giving prudence to those who are simple,**  
**knowledge and discretion to the young—**  
**let the wise listen and add to their learning,**  
**and let the discerning get guidance— (Proverbs 1:4-5)**

Solomon says that he is writing this book for the *simple*. These are people who might not have had a good parent, teacher, or role model to teach them how to live a wise life. These people, through no fault of their own, are ignorant of how to make prudent decisions.

He also wants the young to read this. In fact, the first 9 chapters of Proverbs is Solomon speaking to his son. It is as if Solomon wants to make sure that his sons don't repeat his foolish decisions. If you are a young person, Solomon wants you to listen and learn wisdom before it's too late.

Finally, he says that he is writing this for *the wise to add to their learning*. According to the book of Proverbs, wise people are not necessarily the most intelligent. Wise people are those who are humble and open to instruction. They recognize that they can also learn more and improve.

Notice, that there is one type of person of whom Solomon is not writing. He is not writing this book for the foolish. According to the book of Proverbs, fools think they don't need help. Fools are full of pride. They think they know everything. They are not open to correction and discipline and help. Solomon says that he is not going to waste his time trying to convince a fool.

Then Solomon explains the method he will use in this book:

**for understanding proverbs and parables,  
the sayings and riddles of the wise.**

Proverbs are wise sayings that are tweetable. Like "Pride comes before the fall."

Parables make comparisons with real life situations to teach wisdom. For example, "As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."

Finally, the book of Proverbs is filled with riddles. For example, Proverbs 26:4 says,

***Do not answer a fool according to his folly,  
or you yourself will be just like him.***

Then the next verse says,

***Answer a fool according to his folly,  
or he will be wise in his own eyes.***

These two verses contradict each other. And they are supposed to. It is a riddle. It is supposed to make us think. There are sometimes when I shouldn't waste my time with a fool. If I do I will be just like him. Then there are times I need to stand up to a fool or he will continue in his foolishness. I need wisdom, help and wise counselors to help me know when to speak and when to move on.

And now we get to Solomon's summary statement. This next verse is the theme of the book of Proverbs. This next verse is what sets the book of Proverbs apart from every other self-help book on the market.

Solomon says,

**The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge,  
but fools despise wisdom and instruction. (Proverbs 1:7)**

This is a strange phrase. What does “the fear of the Lord” mean? And why is “fearing God” the beginning of wisdom and knowledge? A while back I heard a teacher compare it to Star Wars.

Do you know that scene in Empire Strikes Back where Luke Skywalker goes looking for the Master Jedi Yoda? He ends up on this green planet Dagobah. And when he gets there all he finds is this little strange green alien creature that talks funny. Luke doesn’t pay much attention to the strange creature until he realizes that this strange creature is the Master Jedi Yoda. Then he is all ears and wants to learn from him.

I think that is what it means to “fear the Lord”. At first, we might look at the Bible and Christianity and maybe we think, “This is just a strange ancient book that talks funny. How could this possibly give me wisdom for the modern day?” But then we come to see that this is God speaking to us, the one who created the billions of stars and made our bodies and our lives. When we realize that we are speaking with the Master of the Universe, we approach the God of the Bible with reverence and awe and worship. That’s what it means to fear the Lord.

So if you really want to be wise, begin with God. Begin with his Word. Begin with the Bible. Because...

### **1. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.**

This is not just the theme of the book of Proverbs, it is the theme of the whole Bible. You see, the Bible begins with God creating the first two human beings: Adam and Eve. I believe these were real people. Yet, Adam means “human”. And Eve means “life”. Adam and Eve are representatives of all human life. God placed these first two humans in the Garden of Eden. And he told them that they could eat from any tree in the garden except the tree in the middle of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In other words, the tree of wisdom.

That tree was God’s tree. He knows what is good and evil, right and wrong. He knows what’s wise and what’s foolish. And eating from that tree was a way of saying, I want to take the place of God. I want to be wise in my own eyes. I want to define good and evil on my terms.

Do you know what happened? The devil came and tempted Eve. He said that God was holding out on them. He said that they should eat from the tree and then they could become like God. Then the Bible says, **When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. (Genesis 3:6)**

Adam and Eve ate from the tree and they became wise in their own eyes. And so have we. We have tried to define good and evil, right and wrong on our own terms. We have invented our own version of the “wise life” and it has destroyed God’s good world. We brought sin, death, hatred, and destruction in this world.

In fact, you can trace all our bad decisions back to this tree, to this idea: We don’t trust in the Lord and his version of wisdom. We leaned on our own understanding. And it has led to problems in all of our lives. That is why God’s good world has gone dark.

That’s why God had to step into this world in Jesus Christ. That is what we just celebrated at Christmas. Jesus, the light of the world, breaking into the darkness. Jesus lived a completely wise life, always following the ways of the Lord, always submitting to what is truly good and right.

Then God invented a new tree, the tree of the cross, where Jesus went to die. He paid for all our foolishness and sin. He paid for all our selfishness. Then he rose again to prove that we are completely forgiven.

That's why we can start fresh in 2020. We don't need to live in the guilt and shame of the past. 2019 is over and our sin has been redeemed in Jesus. And more than that, we have the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us and a church that is here to support us so that we can begin to make wise decisions as we move forward.

But how do we do that? How do we know the wise decisions we need to make?

## **2. Eat this book.**

In the beginning, God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the garden and said don't eat from it or you will become fools. Now God places before us this book, and he says, Eat from it every day. Chew on the word of God. Meditate on it day and night and you will become wise. All Scripture has been breathed into life by God. And all Scripture is useful for teaching and rebuking, correcting and training us in righteousness so that we are thoroughly equipped for every wise and good work. So eat this book every day.

I remember when I started this habit in my own life about twelve years ago. It was during my internship year as a pastor. I met my boss-pastor. And one of the first things he gave me was a calendar for reading the bible in a year. He told me, "We are going to read the Bible in a year starting July 1. This is the most important thing that you do each day. I will be here to encourage you and check up on you and make sure you are keeping up with this habit." And he did. For a whole year he supported and encouraged me. And the habit stuck. Since then, I have read through the entire Bible each year.

I want to give you the same encouragement. You don't have to read through the whole Bible in a year. But you can read a little each day. And if you want to read through the whole Bible, I will be here to encourage you and help you. This Wednesday night at 6:30, I will be leading a discussion here a church explaining how to read the bible.

Then next Monday, January 13, I will be using the YouVersion Bible app to lead a group through the whole Bible in a year. This app will allow us to interact with each other, answering questions and supporting one another.

You are all welcomed to join. There is a link available for you to get involved at [\*\*votl.life/faith-resources\*\*](https://www.votl.life/faith-resources). In addition, we have assembled a Bible reading team to support and encourage you to keep walking through the Bible for a whole year.

I hope this new year means a fresh start for you. I hope you set some new goals. And with God's help see some improvement and transformation in your life. And now you know where to begin to find the wisdom you need to live a new life. Real wisdom begins with God. It comes from him and his word. So if there is one new habit, one goal that could have the greatest impact on your life, one habit that could be a keystone habit that will affect all the other areas of your life, it is to read your Bible every day. The most important thing you could do is eat this book. And I will do everything I can to help you. Amen.