



Wise Up! A series in Proverbs

Date: Sunday 3rd July

Speaker: Becky Stamps (South Site & City Centre PM), Ruth Page (City Centre AM)

Key Verses: Proverbs 1:1-9

Talk Summary:

What is wisdom? Wisdom in Hebrew is both a relational word (actually several words) as well as a way of thinking. Ancient Israel used the wisdom literature (Proverbs, along with Ecclesiastes and Job) to wrestle with key questions: how to live justly in the world, how to get the most out of life. Following the tradition of Solomon, wisdom was prized as an asset far more precious than money, land, power and so on. The ancient Israelites wrote down things they found to be true and would want to pass on to their children and/or future leaders. Over this series, we'll be looking at different themes (money, relationships, honesty, anger) and how the Proverbs help provide us with some of God's wisdom on those topics.

Wisdom is more than helpful sayings though: wisdom is a characteristic of God. It's how the world was created to work (e.g. if you work hard you'll be rewarded, while if you don't, you won't). Sin (and grace) disrupt these but broadly speaking, the wisdom of God is still to be met throughout the world and is helpful in all of life. One word translated 'wisdom' is really to do with gleaning insight from a very skilled, knowledgeable person by means of a close, intimate relationship with them. This relationship transfers skills but also a deep love for each other and conveys a sense of helping the less skilled person in a holistic, deeply transformational way. This relational wisdom, walked out in relationship is what God wants to impart to his people and the offer he makes to everyone who wants to walk with him.

Another theme which reoccurs throughout Proverbs is the choice between 'wisdom' and 'folly'. At any given moment, with any decision (large or small), there is the option of choosing the wise course of action or the foolish. Often small steps in one direction will end up in big decisions which are wise or foolish depending on the course taken. Proverbs pictures this as like two women who call in the street: one who is like a wise teacher, inviting people in to come and learn how to be 'prudent' (make intelligent, sound, just

decisions). Following her leads to a good life of relative comfort and joy. The other choice is like a foolish woman who wants to entice people to sleep with her and so make poor choices, wasting their life and potential and ultimately leading to ruin.

Some ways to help us make wise choices, rather than foolish ones might be: make sure we know what God's wisdom is by reading the Bible for ourselves and spending time in prayer; reflecting on where our lives are currently going and asking God to help us where we need to make small shifts that will bear wise fruit over time; and making sure we're part of a Christian community where everyone is known and loved, and can therefore ask for helpful advice and wisdom from their community.

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? *(Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it)*

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- Where have you found wisdom in your own life (the Bible, other people, quiet worshipful spaces, specific books/teachers, other things?) This could be a good icebreaker if you got people to name the wisest podcast, TV show, book or YouTuber they've engaged with recently!
- What's one thing that stands out to you, or one question you're left asking, as you reflect on 'wisdom' being part of God's character and written into the nature of the universe?
- What's one thing you can commit to doing this week that will help you to seek and follow more of God's practical wisdom for your life?

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?
 - Upcoming Events (go to bvc.so/whats-on for details)