

There are different kinds of wisdom or knowledge in the world. There is common sense, which is what some of us lack, but what everyone should know. There are street smarts, which is practical wisdom you only get from life and the school of hard knocks. There is book knowledge that comes from academia and school. There is the wisdom of children, who teach us things only a child can. There is the wisdom from experience that only those who have lived long can possess. And there is Biblical or Christian wisdom.

What I want us to wrestle with this morning is what makes Christian wisdom unique? What actually makes it Christian?

All truth is God's truth yes. There is a sense in which all wisdom ultimately comes from God. But I want us to understand that there is something unique about Christian wisdom.

I believe we must understand what makes Christian wisdom distinct. It is far more than a collection of ancient wise sayings from old philosophers and wise men. The book of Proverbs is a collection of Christian wisdom. We believe it is more than just a collection of wise sayings and nice ancient thoughts.

We believe this is the Revelation and the very Word of God.

If that is true, it means there is something unique about Christian wisdom. This morning we will look at three things that make Christian wisdom unique.

I especially want us to be thinking about what makes it Christian.

And what makes it stand out.

Because if we fail to understand what makes Christian wisdom Christian, then we might not apply it in the correct way.

And we might be misunderstanding what the Bible is trying to teach us.

I. Christian wisdom begins with the fear of God (Proverbs 1:7).

This verse is the key and beginning of Christian wisdom.

It tells us where knowledge comes from.

And ultimately, it comes from God.

Verse 7, **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

Contextually, it is significant for us to note what this verse means in the midst of the book.

The entire book of Proverbs is a collection of ancient wisdom.

Solomon wrote or compiled this book.

But he did not come up with every single proverb.

He did not write every single verse from scratch.

Many of them were wise sayings he heard.

When I was young I used to have a book I filled with quotes.

Anytime I heard something impactful.

Or something that was really good I wrote it down in my book.

That is somewhat like what Solomon did.

He collected some of the wisest things he heard and he wrote plenty.

Now, obviously, God was behind the book.

The Holy Spirit guided it, and every word is inspired, authoritative, and divine.

So, what is it that makes these the Word of God?

It cannot be that these statements are just uniquely profound.

There is something that makes them Christian.

But what is it that makes them Christian?

Is it that Solomon claimed them, or stole them, or somehow transformed them into Christian wisdom?

Or, is it because true wisdom begins with the fear of God?

These statements are just generic wisdom if they are divorced from the Bible.

But they become Christian when they are understood by the fear of the Lord.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Christian wisdom.

Every single proverb is only Christian when we understand how it relates to God.

We need to define and unpack what the fear of the Lord means.
It is living with respect and reverence for God.
It is approaching life as if God is in the room and watching.

Think about the difference between how you drive normally and how you drive when you notice a police officer is behind you.
Or how a middle school class room might act with a substitute or when the normal teacher is there.
Or how someone might work when they notice the boss is in the office and watching.
The fear of the Lord is living like God cares.
It is living as if you care about God.
It is approaching every part of life like God is walking behind you.

Which, He is because He is always present.
He always sees and He always knows.
But most of the time, even those of us who are believers struggle to care.
And we do not live with any fear of God.

We forget about Him.
We doubt He is watching.
Or we spend a few moments caring more about other things rather than what God thinks.
Which is unwise.

Christian wisdom begins with the fear of God.
It is what separates Christian wisdom from the wisdom of the world.
It is what separates Christian wisdom from any other kind of wisdom.
It makes it unique.

It is unique because it gets to the heart of what Christian wisdom is for.
It explains the purpose.
Why would we want to be wise in the first place?

Why would we have a desire to be wise people?
Our goal is to please God.
Our purpose is to live with a fear and reverence for God.

That is a different purpose than generic wisdom.
It is different than the desires of the world.
Our goal is not to be wise because it improves ourselves.
We do not seek to be wise for our own sake.
It is not so that we can become sages who others seek out and want to be like.

Our goal is not enlightenment or knowledge.
We do not seek wisdom for wisdom's sake.
We do not try to learn and gain knowledge so we can be smarter.
It is it not that wisdom has secrets for us that make attaining it worthwhile.

We do not seek wisdom out of practical concerns.
Being wise makes life a lot easier than being foolish.
Wisdom can help us avoid heartache or discomfort of making terrible decisions that wisdom would have helped us avoid.
Christian wisdom is not about being practical.
That is not the goal of Christian wisdom.

We do not pursue wisdom in order to be the most effective or productive.
Christian wisdom is not about doing the most good.
Christian wisdom is about fearing God.

You see, Christian wisdom cannot be applied without fearing God.
Every single proverb in the book of Proverbs is meant to be applied in the fear of God.
Every single practical piece of wisdom in the Bible, only works if you fear God.
The Bible is not filled with generic wisdom or practical stuff anyone can do.
It might seem like it on the surface.

Maybe proverbs like "a good name is better than gold"
Or "don't insult your neighbor and then say you were joking"
Or "a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands and poverty will come upon you like a bandit."

Those might seem like things anyone could write or anyone could apply to their lives even if they don't care about Jesus or the Bible.
And that is how some are tempted to call people to Jesus.
Or to get people to read the Bible.
Like we hope they just start using some Bible advice and maybe it will make them want to convert to Christianity.
But they only become Christian.
They only begin to be Christian,
If they are applied with the fear of the Lord.

But Christian wisdom is more than that.
It is practical and helpful.
It will help you become better and be who God made you to be.
But it cannot be divorced from the fear of the Lord.
That is what makes it Christian.
Christian wisdom must be used on behalf of the Christian God.

"fools despise wisdom and instruction."

This is the reverse side of wisdom.
There are fools who do not seek wisdom.
And there are fools who do not want instruction.
They are partially like those who do not want the instructions.
Or they do not want directions.

Contextually, this is not just those people who do not want to learn.
It really is those who despise true wisdom.
Fools are those who do not fear the Lord.

Christian wisdom, which is true wisdom, only begins with the fear of God.

And if you do not fear God, you cannot find wisdom.
If you do not fear God, then you despise wisdom and learning.
Because it can only come from fearing the Lord.
And you if despise God, you will despise wisdom.
You are a fool who refuses to learn.
And someone who refuses to acknowledge God as Lord.

Christian wisdom begins with respect for God.
Because wisdom is all about trying to understand the best thing to do.
It is how to know what the right decision is in the midst of difficult
circumstances.
When the right answer or best course of action is unclear or uncertain.
We don't need wisdom to know whether or not we should steal.
We do need wisdom to know what to do when we see that our boss is
stealing.

Christian wisdom is knowing what is best to do.
What best honors God.
What is the best thing to do for someone who fears the Lord.
That is what makes it Christian.
Or at least part of what makes it Christian.

II. Christian wisdom is fully revealed by Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30).

This is the core of Christian wisdom.
It is the Christian part.
Not just the Christian part, but the Christ part.

And the Scriptures tell us this if you want to turn over to 1 Corinthians 1.
The entire last half of chapter 1 is about the wisdom of God.
And He contrasts the wisdom of God with the world's wisdom.
And in the middle of it are these two verses.

Verse 24, **"Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God"**

Verse 30, **It is because of Him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.**

What do these verses both tell us?

They tell us that Jesus Christ is actually the incarnation of wisdom.

It is not that Jesus shows us what wisdom is because He is so smart.

It is that Jesus is wisdom wrapped up in flesh.

Jesus is the climax and fullest expression of what wisdom is.

He shows us in every word and every example how to be wise.

Because wisdom is not about ideals of principles.

Wisdom is not something you can know just from reading a book or taking a class.

It comes from Jesus.

And Jesus is not just a traveling wise man.

He is not like an enlightenment philosopher.

He is not someone sitting high on a mountain giving random words of wisdom and proverbs.

He is wisdom personified.

The proverbs actually foreshadowed this.

It tried to prepare us for the idea that wisdom could be found ultimately in a person.

Throughout the book of Proverbs wisdom is personified as a person.

And folly or foolishness is personified as a person.

They are both personified as two women.

The woman wisdom and the woman folly.

And we can choose which one we want to follow.

Some of you may remember, last year I preached a sermon on Proverbs comparing them.

So, we should be ready to see that wisdom can be a person.

But in Jesus it is not a metaphor.
It is not just an example or cute story.
Here, Jesus is the incarnation of wisdom.
He is the wisdom of God.

When we think about Christian wisdom, our minds typically go to Solomon.
He was called the wisest man who ever lived.
God told him that he would give him anything he asked for.
And he asked for wisdom, and God gave it.
And God blessed Solomon with riches, peace, and other blessings for his wise request.
He wrote the book of Proverbs.
He wrote the book of Ecclesiastes and Songs of Solomon.
We call his collection of books, the "books of wisdom."
He is worth thinking of.
But Solomon should not be the main place our minds go to.
At least, we should not think of him as the ultimate example of wisdom.
Especially not Christian wisdom.
Because Jesus Christ is the one who is actually wisdom himself.
Jesus did not just have greater wisdom than Solomon.
He was wisdom.
And Jesus succeeds where Solomon failed.
Solomon had all of the wisdom in the world.
He was the wisest man to live.
But he could not conquer his demons.
He still made unwise choices.
He made money and wealth and led the country to a golden age.
But his own heart was empty.
The book of Ecclesiastes tells us how Solomon sought to find meaning everywhere.
He chased everything to his hearts content.
But like the prodigal son, none of it worked.
Until, he returned to the fear of the Lord.

But Jesus never did that.
Jesus never failed and never sinned.
Jesus never did what He knew He shouldn't have done.

And Jesus is better than Solomon in plenty of other ways.
Solomon was so wise people came to see him.
Even the Queen of Sheba and others traveled far to hear what Solomon had to say.
But Jesus came down to see us.
Jesus sought out not kings, but women, children, the sick, and the overlooked to share His wisdom.
Solomon gathered riches for Himself, while Jesus gave heavenly riches to any who would come in faith.
Solomon had more riches than any man on earth, but Christ had the greatest riches which are stored up in heaven.
Solomon was faithless and married hundreds of women while being adulterous with hundreds more.
While Christ came down to give His life for the church as His bride.
And Jesus is faithful even when we are faithless.
Jesus is the embodiment of love that Solomon dared to sing of.
Solomon built a massive temple which was covered in gold and one of the great wonders of the world.
But Jesus founded the church and now sits in the heavenly temple that no one can build with their hands.
Jesus does just have wisdom.
Jesus is wisdom.

We also see places where Jesus used His wisdom.
His teachings, parables, and preaching are filled with the wisdom of God.
His answers to the Pharisees were filled with wisdom even when they tried to trap him.
They gave Him trick questions with no right answer, and He was wise enough to always find it anyway.

He even confounded the teachers of the temple as a child with his answers.

Not because He had learned great wisdom, but because He was wisdom.

But the story of Jesus.

The story of Christian wisdom is not about how smart Jesus is.

It is not about how His teachings are wiser than any other teacher.

Christian wisdom is Christ.

It is about who Jesus is.

And it is about what Jesus does.

III. Christian wisdom must be informed by the gospel.

This is something we need to understand.

To be Christian is to be informed by Jesus.

To be a Christian is to be a follower of Jesus.

To be a Christian is to be centered on Jesus.

And that applies to everything that we do.

Anything that we would call Christian, must be informed by Christ.

And the central work of Jesus is the gospel.

It is Christ's life, death, and resurrection on our behalf.

It is the work of Jesus to redeem humanity from the curse of sin and the sting of death.

It is the story of the Scriptures.

What makes something Christian is how it is affected and how it relates to that story.

This is the center of our faith.

Our faith is built around the idea of Jesus.

It is built on what He has done for us.

So, this has to change everything about our faith.

It has to impact every part of our theology.

And it has to impact the way we think about wisdom.

The gospel is not just the starting point of our faith.
It is not the beginning of the race and then we move onto better things.
Everything we believe has to touch the gospel.
Every piece of wisdom we give to one another and to unbelievers has to be filtered through the gospel.
For it to be Christian wisdom, it must be gospel wisdom.

The problem is that there are those who treat Christianity as if we are just offering generic wisdom.
There are those who approach teaching the Bible as if you just offer some good principles for life that anyone can apply.
I understand the impulse and there's a kernel of truth here but the problem is that it can make it seem as if the gospel is optional.
It can make it appear as if Ephesians 5 is just some good ideas that everyone can apply to marriage.
Or is it the book of proverbs it's just good ideas anyone can apply to their life to be a little bit better.
Where are you can take everything the scriptures say about money and apply it and get rich.
Or use things the Bible says about loving each other in order to make more friends so you can have success in politics.
Or do we can just apply some of the civil laws and ideas the Bible has about government in order to build the best government ever.
Or that the sermon on the mount is just some wonderful principles about how we can all be kinder to one another and love each other in the world will be at peace.
All of this acts as if the gospel is just an optional thing.
As if it is decoration or something you can add on but is not necessary.

If you buy a new car there are usually plenty of things you can add if you upgrade it.
If you decide to go crazy and get the nicest version.
You can get heated seats, fancy radio, maybe monitors in the backseat or custom rims with a racing stripe down the middle.

I don't know, I don't know a ton about cars.
But we can act at times as if the gospel is just a nice paint job outside.
Or something to add on instead of recognizing that it is the engine.
The gospel is the only thing that makes our faith go.
You cannot try to drive Christian wisdom with no Jesus and no gospel.
It won't get you anywhere at all.

What is all of that good for if the gospel is not preached?
Or what good is it if you apply all the wisdom from the Bible while
rejecting Jesus?
I don't think that is even possible.
If you hear a sermon that anyone could apply to their life even without
becoming a Christian, then that is not a Christian sermon.
It needs the gospel and it needs Jesus.
Christian wisdom can only be Christian if Jesus is in it.

1 Corinthians 1 explains that the wisdom of God is foolishness to the
world.

"The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing"

Verse 18.

**"It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who
believe."**

The wisdom of God is absolute nonsense to the world.
And it must be foolishness because it is founded on the gospel and the
cross.
Our wisdom is the gospel.
And it seems like foolishness because the world does not accept Jesus.
It does not accept the gospel as true.
And because it rejects the gospel, it recognizes that it must reject our
wisdom.

Christian wisdom cannot make any sense without the gospel.
It must not and it should not.

If our wisdom makes sense without the gospel, then it is no longer Christian wisdom is it just common sense or it is something else entirely. Our advice and our wisdom should not work if Jesus Christ is not raised from the dead.

It should not be helpful or practical or useful if Jesus did not die on the cross for our sins.

This is what I want us to understand.

If we want to see what makes Christian wisdom Christian it is the gospel. Therefore, all of our wisdom should be informed by and transformed by the gospel.

Practically, what does that mean?

It means that the wisdom we give one another, and the advice we give one another should have the gospel in mind.

Let's give some examples that might help.

Think about someone coming to you for marriage advice.

And you say, well the Bible tells husbands to love their wives.

Does that by itself sound like Christian wisdom?

No!

What makes it Christian is the rest of Ephesians 5.

Christian wisdom says, husbands must love their wives in the same manner as Christ loved the church.

That's the gospel.

For Christians, our love is meant to look like how Jesus loved us.

It is shaped by the gospel.

We love even when unloved.

We are to love even when wronged.

We are to give everything and love unconditionally.

Or sometimes I hear Christians talk about Christian wisdom on finances.

And they can say things like "The Bible teaches us to save and not go into debt."

That's nice advice.

That doesn't have anything to do with the gospel or Jesus.

How does the gospel impact Christian wisdom on finances?

Well, Christ tells us to store up our treasures in heaven.

Our perspective is based on the life to come not here.

And Jesus teaches us that our money is actually His.

And we are to generous and give to those in need even if it seems foolish and like a poor investment.

Because that is what Jesus did for us when we were sinners.

Maybe you have been wondering how we can gain Christian wisdom.

What does the gospel say about how we can gain wisdom?

The gospel itself reminds us that Christian wisdom can only come through the gospel.

The gospel tells us that we cannot earn our way to heaven.

We cannot make ourselves pure enough.

We cannot climb the mountain to the heavens and to God.

We cannot make ourselves enlightened.

Instead, Jesus Christ had to come down to earth to us.

He descended in order to save us.

The gospel tells us that Jesus saved us not that we saved ourselves.

And this is true even in how we gain wisdom.

Christianity does not tell us that intellectual exercises will make us wise.

It does not tell us that life experience or getting older will make us wise.

It does not tell us that taking some classes or reading philosophers will make us wise.

It tells us in James 1:5 **"If any of you lack wisdom"**

Which is every single one of us.

None of us are filled with the fullness of the wisdom of God

Or filled with the fullness of the Holy Spirit as much as we possibly can be.

"let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

We cannot gain wisdom ourselves.

Wisdom actually has to be given to us.

The gospel tells us wisdom comes when Jesus gives it to us.

Wisdom comes when we recognize that we cannot get it ourselves.

It comes when we humble ourselves and ask the generous and giving God to give us wisdom.

The gospel is the reminder that we serve a loving and merciful God.

A God who is willing to give eternal life to those who ask.

And a God who will give wisdom even to the foolish.

We cannot earn it ourselves.

We have to ask for it.

Where have we been this morning?

Christian wisdom begins with the fear of God, culminates and climaxes with Jesus, and must include the gospel.

I hope you have seen this morning that Christian wisdom is and must be uniquely Christian.

And this goes for anything at all that we would call "Christian."

It has to be centered on Jesus and informed by the gospel.

And only when we make Jesus the focus.

Only when the gospel is at the heart, can anything in any meaningful sense be called Christian.