

What is wisdom? Is it learned or are we gifted with it? Maybe the answer is yes — one definition from Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: **Wisdom is a deposit of reflections upon human experience, the trivial along with the ultimate, both superficial and profound. It is philosophy rooted in the soil of life: truth springs out of the earth. It is philosophy although it is not rooted in a system. It teaches rational living, which, at the same time, is good and godly living. It teaches that the life controlled by reason is the life beset by the fewest sorrows. And it teaches how when troubles come as apparently at best they do, the wise can bear them. Righteousness and peace kiss each other.**

Or: **Wisdom is the discipline of applying truth to one's life in light of experiences; commonsense**

Three "wisdom" books in our Bible: Ecclesiastes, Job and Proverbs.

The instruction from Proverbs is that we are to learn wisdom, get/secure wisdom, seek wisdom and then use it. As I thought about this I begin to see the first step in wisdom begins with listening and observing. How many times in our teen years did we roll our eyes when mom or dad were talking, imparting their words of wisdom to us? How many of us knew that we knew better than they did or so we thought? And, how often in later years have we looked back and acknowledged that they were right? If we had only listened.

Wisdom must start with listening, evaluating what is going on around us. It is the knowledge of right or wrong. It is our using what we have heard and observed. Remember those early warnings that we got at home: Don't play in the street. Don't touch a hot stove/dish. Don't play with fire. Don't believe everything you read or hear. As we observe the world, "Look before you leap."

This means that we need to "get an education." Not necessarily in the formal sense - but all of our life should be a school of life-long learning. We should never stop trying to gain wisdom and knowledge. We should not be afraid to change our minds or adjust our thinking. We learn as we age, as we experience life.

Some Proverbs may need some updating to modern life. Circumstances change. The world is not the same today as it was back when they were written. Our world situation is different - we have no king - so far. And, they need to be read as a whole. For example, the book of Ecclesiastes is mostly negative. The wisdom really comes in its last two verses. If we take the early verses and ignore the last two we have lost the impact of the entire book. Wisdom!

Thus, we are challenged to gain insight, wisdom. There may be a good reason why things are done the way they are. There may also be a good reason to change something. It may just be tradition (which is neither good nor bad) but traditions are not cast in stone. The more we grow and gain wisdom the better it is for all. The writer says that wisdom will reward us. She will acknowledge us (we get a star on our paper). We should not be afraid of wisdom, knowledge or commonsense.

Some Proverbs are negative. Have you heard, "What you don't know can't hurt you." Well we know it can. There are those who seem to long for ignorance. But for the writers of Proverbs wisdom is something to be sought after and cherished. It is not to be neglected.

Paul in I Corinthians 13 gives us his wisdom on life. When all is said and done, the only thing that is really important is love. There are many with gifts or talents in the world/church. The impact is not on how good your talent is but the spirit in which it is used. Everything has

value, writes Paul: preaching, teaching, serving, administration, etc. But if they are not done in the spirit of love - they amount to nothing.

I was driving the other day on route 99 and there was a young woman on the corner with one of these direction signs for a nearby business. She was there on the corner dancing with joy. She didn't seem to mind what others might think, etc. She was just dancing away - waving her sign. Smiling with a smile a mile wide. She was taking what could be a difficult task and making it as joyful as she possibly could. It almost looked like she loved what she was doing!

Yes, there is faith. Yes, there is hope - but without love these amount to nothing. If we are to win in the world then we need to begin to understand that love is needed to win in it. Paul had understood the wisdom and power of love. When we really examine his writings we see his love for those he served. He wants what is best for them and he wants them to act as Christ acted. His love comes through what Christ did for him and for the world. He is not in this for his own gain. He is always pointing to Christ and Christ's love for the world. Whatever he did was done in the shadow of this 13th chapter of Corinthians. These simple verses are wisdom for the ages. If all we had of Paul were this one chapter we would have enough.

Two quotes I found this week: First from Teilhard de Chardin: **The day will come when after harnessing space, the winds, the tides and gravitation, we shall harness for God the energies of love. And on that day, for the second time in the history of the world, we shall have discovered fire.**

Mother Teresa: **Spread love everywhere you go: first of all in your own house. Give love to your children, to your wife or husband, to a next door neighbor...Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God's kindness; kindness in your face; kindness in your eyes; kindness in your smile; kindness in your warm greeting.**

It was love that made this Table possible. Might we be reminded again as we share in the bread and cup the words of Jesus, *"For God so loved the world..."*

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988
IBD - vol 4, p. 860 (Wisdom), Abingdon, Nashville, TN 1962