

There is a series of pictures on the internet with the tag line: Why women live longer than men. What follows is a group of pictures with men taking some “strange” chances in doing ordinary things. You have to see them to believe them! (just put the line in google search and be prepared for what you see!) How many times have we said or been asked, “What were you thinking?” Often, we weren’t.

There was recently a commercial showing a young girl with her bike, the bike helmet, some plywood sheets, a saw, makeshift planks and other ramp making materials. The last frame showed her sporting a nice pink cast on her broken arm! I am sure someone asked, “What were you thinking?”

The CEV translate Proverbs 10:8, *“I am Wisdom, Common Sense is my closest friend, I possess knowledge and sound judgment.”* The Message says, *“I am Lady Wisdom, and I live next to Sanity, Knowledge and Discretion live just down the street.”* The Living Bible unites Wisdom with *Good Judgment*. The NIV & NRSV combine *prudence* with wisdom. Wisdom teaches Common Sense.

Our passage in Proverbs this morning has Wisdom informing us of her worth. What she can do for us. The first, a proper fear and respect for the Lord. God wants what is best for us. I recall an Old Testament professor sharing what he thought about the dietary laws of Old Testament times. His conclusion was that these laws were mostly common sense for the day. They were to protect the Israelites from disease, etc. in the days before refrigeration. These guidelines to him, only made sense for the period of time they were written. They also protected from cross contamination. These were just common sense guidelines. God wanting what was best for creation.

For Wisdom the fear of the Lord is more awe and respect. It is not fear and trembling, being afraid to come into the presence of God. It is love, honor and respect - the wisdom that comes from God’s teachings.

Wisdom would then have us, “hate that which is evil”. However, we need to note the examples that she uses for evil: pride, arrogance and perverted speech. The emphasis on “me” rather than on God. God’s concern is for the community - for the good of all. Jesus tells a parable in Luke 12:13-21 of a man who had had good harvests and who decides to build bigger and better barns so that he can store up his treasures for himself. He can sit back and say, “See, what I have done.” The words of Jesus, *“...You fool, This very night your life will be demanded from you.”* All his work for self will fall into the hands of another.

This is similar to Paul’s warning in Galatians 5:19. Here Paul lists what he calls the works of the flesh: Sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension, factions and envy. These are not the works of Wisdom.

Contrast these to Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5. Jesus refers to the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, peacemakers, those who are poor in heart. He is, in a way, echoing Proverbs 8:20, *“I walk in ways of righteousness, along the paths of justice.”* Wisdom’s call is that we follow after her and her teachings. A call that Jesus seemed to heed.

As we gain wisdom, we gain wealth. However, I do not see this in terms of the world’s understanding of wealth: riches and things. I see it as wealth in relationships, friendships, community. In how we relate and work with one another. Would you rather be rich and live in a

gated community fearful of all of those around you? Or, would you rather be less rich in terms of things but wealthy in community fellowship, friendships - a love and caring community? Wisdom would have us seek the latter.

We need a Common Sense world. Let's look at some of the Proverbs' call for common sense. For example, Proverbs 15:1 "*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a hard word stirs up anger.*" We know that shouting encourages shouting. Both the US and Canadian coverage of the Olympics have noted that in these Olympic games there has more booing than in previous ones. They note that this is new to the Olympic games. Another Proverb along these lines is 15:18, "*A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.*"

Law enforcement officers have been trained that in dealing with domestic violence, a calm, soft voice does more to calm a situation than does shouting, etc. I am not sure if they understand the Wisdom in this training but if you talk with those who have used this type of calming procedure - in the majority of the cases it works. When will we learn to seek Wisdom?

Here is another, Proverbs 16:9, "*Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.*" How many people get caught up in pride, stubborn pride. We won't admit that we may have been wrong. Some feuds have lasted so long that the feuding parties can no longer remember what they were feuding about. Take the Hatfields and McCoys. Pride keeps the feud going. Pride ends marriages and relationships. Wisdom says, throw out your pride.

Moving on to Proverbs 19:27, "*Stop listening to my instructions my son and you will stray from the words of knowledge.*" Or, as I read this, "read the directions first". Now, confession time, I tend to rush into things. The directions are there only if I need them. Diane always reads the directions through first. She thinks it should be done right the first time. Always wondered what fun there is in that! AHHH but doesn't pride come in there somewhere too. We need to keep learning, listening. It is when we stop listening that we often get into trouble.

One last one for today, Proverbs 26:20, "*Without wood a fire goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies.*" We know how destructive gossip can be, even when it is proven false. We believe what we read in tweets, papers, etc. It is easier than getting the facts, especially if it is something we want to believe. We all remember the children's game where you sit in a circle and a secret is whispered from ear to ear around the room. It never ends the same way it begins. There is usually one some where in the circle who intentionally changes the words and meaning. They are not concerned with the process or who it may hurt. The Proverbs refers to such folk as "fools". They do it more for their own gain than for the good of the whole.

Wisdom comes to teach. Do we learn? Our goal is to seek wisdom and her teachings, her common sense, sanity, prudence, etc. What if we applied wisdom to the current campaign?

The writer of Ecclesiastes sums up the teachings of wisdom: "*Now that all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.*" Or, seek wisdom, she pays the best dividends.

NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988