

11. Daily Wisdom

Biblical material: Ps. 19:7-14; 119:98-105; Prov. 3:13-16; 30:8, 9; Matt. 13:22; 16:26; Rom. 12:17, 18; 13:1-4.

Quotes:

- Never mistake knowledge for wisdom. One helps you make a living; the other helps you make a life. *Sandra Carey*
- The key to wisdom is knowing all the right questions. *John A. Simone, Sr.*
- Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it. *David Starr Jordan*
- Wisdom ceases to be wisdom when it becomes too proud to weep, too grave to laugh, and too selfish to seek other than itself. *Kahlil Gibran*
- He who knows others is learned; he who knows himself is wise. *Lao-Tze*
- Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom. *Thomas Jefferson*

Questions

How do the scriptures make us “wise unto salvation”? How do we approach the scriptures anyway? For the way in which we regard them will determine to a great extent the answers we gain from our study—so what are they, and what are they for? How can the Bible become “daily wisdom” rather than a regular chore? How do we find answers to our questions?

Discussion/ Comment

“In the Bible we can find principles that can give us the wisdom we need to make the right decisions, particularly on moral issues.” Sunday’s lesson. The lesson titles give us an insight into the intent: the source of wisdom, social wisdom, wisdom in the workplace, the Bible and wealth, wise leadership. The focus is on using the Bible to make wise decisions. So we need some practical recommendations for how we use the Bible so we can become wise.

Allow me some suggestions. To understand the Bible you need to ask the right questions! The first and most obvious is to do with the basic sentences—do you understand the actual words used? The first role of language is to agree what words represent. Because if two people use one word and yet mean different things, no wonder there’s misunderstanding.

The second is to ask for the meaning, not just of the words, but of the whole passage. “What is it all about?” or “What is the author getting at?” The way in which words are put together leads you to make some decision as to what the passage itself means.

The third is to ask the reason why! What is it for? Why is this being written, what is its purpose? And of course this can be the most hotly debated, for different people see different reasons and purposes.

These are the basics, and they apply to any kind of writing. But for the Christian, treating the Bible as the Word of God, there’s a fundamental aspect that must be added—what does this tell me about God, how I relate to Him, and why is this significant in the context of the universe-wide conflict over the character of God? We need to understand what God is trying to communicate—and why is he communicating!

Rudyard Kipling is right when he speaks about his six “honest serving-men”:

**“I keep six honest serving-men/
(They taught me all I knew);/
Their names are What
and Why and When/
And How and Where and Who.”**

So *what is the Bible?* Is it a code-book? A system of rules? A treatise on achieving salvation? None of these—it's a record of the divine-human interaction, and how this is significant. Therefore you must discover through the events recorded and the prophecies and the poetry the underlying Biblical philosophy. If you use it as a source of quotable quotes for life you will miss its essential meaning and purpose. For the Bible is a whole, not just an accumulation of texts.

What is the Bible for? is the second question. If we take its own self-described purpose, it is to help us understand how God acts in human history, and how he operates. The accounts are first for those believers of the specific time, but principles can be derived that have general application.

The third is *How to use it?* We have not done well as a church in this regard. To use a little here and a little there means we end up with just a collection of "littles." For every "proof text" has its opposite, and hurling dismembered pieces of the Bible at each other is no way for Christians to behave. It always reminds me of unruly children at a birthday party. Instead of sitting down to enjoy eating the feast, they throwing it all at each other, so that all you end up with is a total mess.

After all these questions, always make sure you ask the God-question: what do I learn about God and his character from this passage?

Remember never to use one text in isolation. There's a major danger of misuse and misunderstanding if we do not relate ideas/words/themes to other instances in the Bible. The most important concept is CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT. We need to understand what's going on, and why, if we are going to be able to derive the foundational principles that apply to us today. Ask yourself (using the six honest serving-men):

What is the theme? Try to sum it up in a couple of words.

What is the author's intention? Write out a brief statement of the aim.

What is the where and when? In other words, what is its geographical, social, situational, practical and historical context? How are these aspects relevant?

How is the thought/idea/story worked out? Why is it in the Bible? What is it for? (Purpose)

Why is it relevant? What is the message? (Meaning)

What is the conclusion?

How does this influence my understanding of God and his character? How is God involved? What are the consequences for any aspect of God? Who is this God that is described?

How does this all apply to us/me? Why is it important? Who is affected?

Text comments

Law of the Lord perfect, to be studied, provides insight and understanding (Ps. 19:7-14; 119:98-105). Finding wisdom and gaining understanding are the highest goals (Prov. 3:13-16; 30:8, 9). Varied responses to scripture illustrated by the parable of the sower (Matt. 13:22). Be wise and do not repay evil with evil, live at peace (Rom. 12:17, 18).

Ellen White Comments

As the lessons of the Bible are wrought into the daily life, they have a deep and lasting influence upon the character. {AA 205}. The Bible is not too sacred and sublime to be opened daily and studied diligently. The truths of the word of God are to be brought into contact with the supposed little things of life. {AH 189}. Those teachers who do not daily bring the word of God into their life work, are in great peril. They have not a saving knowledge of God or of Christ... We need no fanciful teaching regarding the personality of God. {CET 83}.