

Understanding God in a Confusing World

5-20-20

Living Forward in Faith & Back in Wisdom (part 3)

I. Slide1 Announce:

A. **Slide2** A reminder of our *online gathering* if you've tuned in close to 7pm.

1. You'll watch this together (video better) w/the addition of **discussion & prayer**. If you'd like a little more interaction, join here...

B. **Pray:** 2 Cor.4:18 *So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever. Lord if **Faith** is a the art of **living forward** in obedience...we need that **faith** in our lives.*

II. Slide3,4 Intro: *Living Forward in Faith & Back in Wisdom* (part 3)

A. In our *walk of faith* close communication with God is **critical**. **Why?** Because we have **2 kinds of wisdom** available to us, **and** we must **distinguish** which one to follow...for **that** specific situation.

B. **Slide5a** If you did a **cross-section** of **Solomon's life** it would reveal he was: *an author, poet, songwriter, artist, king, diplomat, theologian, teacher, zoologist, psychologist, philosopher, financier, engineer, & architect.*

1. How could **Solomon's success** grow to such *unparalleled heights*?

a) **Read** 2 Chron.1:7-12

2. Solomon asked for 2 things: **wisdom & knowledge**.

a) **Not** the *theoretical* kind of knowledge **that** could grasp *abstract matters*, **but** the ability to apply divine truth to **daily life**.

b) Although Solomon was an *intelligent well-educated* king, he recognized that he lacked the wisdom which only **God** could provide.

- C. **Slide5b** A 1000 years later **James** is writing on this same subject. He counseled his listeners, follow Solomon's lead...**Ask for it!** (1:5 *If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you*)
- D. In James 3 he reminds us there are **2 basic tools** all *teachers* use to communicate... **Their tongue** (ch.3:1-12) **and Their lives** (ch.3:13-18). Read 3:13-18
1. The **wisdom** in the life of the teacher James speaks of here, is **not human** but **divine wisdom**.
 2. **Wisdom** here **doesn't** mean a high I.Q. **Or** your ability to pack away facts. **Or** your impressive eloquence.
 - a) The test of wisdom is **a life** that is patterned after the truth & is under control!¹
- E. **Illust:** The story often goes w/new believers...that they immediately try to **set the world straight**.
1. Often 1st stop is home - where they declare **spiritual martial law**. **And billy-club** family members w/bible verses whenever they step out of line.
 2. Then they wonder why they aren't standing in line to **get saved** like you?
 - a) **What's lacking? Wisdom** (i.e. a balance of **gentleness** & **control** that Paul described to Timothy, *and a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition*)

III. Slide6a 1ST FORM OF WISDOM

- A. There is **1 kind of wisdom** that is available to every human.
1. It's the wisdom that comes from **Reason** and **Experience**.
 - a) This wisdom is part of God's **common grace** available to everyone.
 - b) **Slide6b** As rational beings, we can **gather evidence**, **seek counsel** from others, **weigh options** and **likely outcomes**, and **determine the wise decision**²

¹ Charles Swindoll; James.

² Paradox, Ken Wytmsa, pg.38

B. We are called to Be Wise:

1. Paul said, *I want you to be wise as to what is good and innocent as to what is evil*. Rom.16:19.
2. Jesus said, *Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves*. Mt.10:16 [same word *innocent*/aKER-I-os/guiltless/pure]

C. So we as believers are on the same footing as an *unbeliever* (because they are *created in God's image*, they also *rational creatures*).

1. But for those of us who, have entered into *the abundant life*, have access to *communication with our Creator*, there may be times when He calls us to something *radical*, and something *important*, something that runs *counter* to that which *normal wisdom* would dictate.

IV. Slide7 2ND FORM OF WISDOM

A. When we follow this *2nd form of wisdom*, the specific direction from God that only *faith* can comprehend, our choice *may look foolish*, like *Abraham's decision to sacrifice his son*.

1. At times like that, we must be certain we are hearing God correctly. That's why we desperately need the discipline of *communicating with Him*.

B. So this *2nd form of wisdom* is only available to *followers of Jesus*.

1. It has to do with *Faith*.

a) *Faith is taking the 1st step, even when we can't see the whole staircase*. MLK jr.

b) *Faith* is the *bird* that feels the light when the dawn is still dark. *Rabindranath Tagore*

(1) *Although I'd like to knock the **faith** out of the *mocking bird* that sits out my window at night.*

2. *Slide8a* Living forward in faith. Safe with God by living into the absurdity of *trust*. i.e. *Abraham* moving forward w/the sacrificing of *Isaac*.

3. **Living back in wisdom.** Following natural and spiritual principles that have been proven over time. Maybe it's something you've learned from your own life experiences **or** from someone else's.
 - a) ***Key:** Generally we can either safely move **forward** in faith **or** **back** in **Slide8b** wisdom, **and we can be obeying God in either option!** [living in life's *tension*]
 - b) Sometimes when we step out in **faith**, it flies in the face of *wisdom* (reason & exp)
4. The art of distinguishing between the 2 is developed in the discipline of *continuous communication with God*.

V. Slide9a CONTINUOUS COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

A. Think about the **history** of *communicating with God*.

1. **In the OT** for the most part it was **God** who initiated communication. (Abraham, Moses, the prophets, and the judges).
2. **In the NT** we get to *come boldly before the throne of God*. We get to *cry Abba*, the term of familiarity and intimacy. In Christ we are *adopted as sons and daughters*, and Jesus *calls us friends*.
 - a) Have we learned to appropriate this wonderful **privilege** and **status** with a proper sense of *awe, worship, and humility*?
 - b) When God spoke to Moses, he took off his sandals **and** hid his face in fear. Isaiah said, I am **undone** and **unclean** seeing God's holiness.
3. **Slide9b** **Conversational prayer** should *orient us to God*, **rather than** prayer that tries to get God to *orient Himself to us*.
 - a) **Slide10** Brother Lawrence said, "*stop putting your trust in human rules, devotional exercises and acts of your penance. Instead exercise a living obedient faith in God. Live as though He were beside you and with you all the time, as indeed he is. Seek to do what he wants, as and when he commands it, and make his command your joy and Chief pleasure. The man who lives like that will be fully human, completely Christian and genuinely happy.*"

4. **Think about it:** God has just as much access to **all** our other thoughts as He does to those **specifically directed to Him** *in the form of prayers*.

a) That's why it's more about *praying w/o ceasing* rather than *saying our prayers*

B. **Slide11a** So how do I hear God? How do we know when He speaks?

1. *1st, there is no magic formula*. Many will try to tell you there is. **Nope**. **But** there are certainly things that *help set us up* for better hearing the voice of God.

a) Mt.5:8 *God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God*.

b) Ps.24:3,4 *Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? 4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies*.

(1) **Slide11b Sin** disrupts our relationship with God. **Pure lives help**.

C. **Elijah** learned that God's *already speaking* in certain areas. God is often in the *still, small voice* and not always in the **thunder**.

1. **Where do we go to hear that clear but quiet voice?**

a) **God speaks in nature**. Psalm 19:1 *The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork*.

b) **God clearly speaks in scripture**. Psalm 119:9 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word*.

(1) So, note He already is speaking in Nature & in Scripture.

D. **Slide12a Illustration:** What do you **SEE** when you walk into someone's home?

I see *electrical/lighting* when I walk in someone's home.

1. **What do you SEE?** [If you love gardening, you prob notice someone's front or back yard. If you love sewing, you prob notice someone's drapes. If you love cars, you notice what someone drives. If you're into working out, you prob notice whether you think they're in shape or not...just

remember **round** is a shape! **If you know construction**, you notice flaws in peoples homes (Lar, “ever notice your hall cabinet hangs down 1/4” from the celing?”)]

a) **Slide12b** We see whatever we have *immersed* ourselves in.

b) **Thus** we need to **immerse** ourselves in the *Words of Scripture*, they become a **lens** through which we can't help but see the world.

2. Praying without ceasing is a **discipline**. Growing in our prayer lives requires a **lifelong commitment**.

E. **This week** God will call you to **both** *Living Forward in Faith & Back in Wisdom*.

1. Rom.12:12 **be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer**.