

By God's grace, I married someone who really cares about health
And b/c she cares about health and b/c she cares about me
Emily asks me questions that no one else in my life asks
“Have you had any vegetables today? Have you had any water today?”

And many days, if Emily had not asked that question
The answer would be “no” and the answer would *stay* “no”
There are days, when left alone, that I forget to eat & my only liquid is coffee
So I am all the better for having Emily in my life to help me
Pay attention to, you know, some of my basic bodily needs

When occasionally exasperated by my lack of self-care
Emily will ask, “What on earth would you do if you weren't married to me?”
And I can tell you what I would NOT do:
Eat steamed broccoli, take cod liver oil supplements, drink water
All those things that I know I should do to be healthy

Because on my own, what I really *want* to do looks little like what I *need* to do
What I *want* to do is eat pizza and cheap Chinese food every single day
And that is the honest truth.

I have to come love what it feels like to be healthy as result of a good diet
But the desire I have to cave-in and eat junk food is strong and persistent
It's not that I feel better when I eat what I want—quite the opposite
There's a special kind of headache that comes w/eating 3 lbs of Chinese food
But I have this kind of amnesia when I smell sesame chicken
And I feel compelled to dig in with the endurance of a marathon runner

Our bodies are amazingly resilient, but they were not built to run on
The amount of sugar/salt/fat the avg. American consumes on a daily basis
And so, as a result of what we eat, we have a huge public health crisis
The things we *want* are often so different from the things we *need*
And learning to prioritize the latter & renounce our addiction to the former
Is the great task of maturity and wisdom and represents the road to health

This particular dynamic—admitting what we need is different than what we want
Is central to the life of the Christian
One of the first steps toward health in Christ is simply admitting
That we are all inclined toward unhealth (not just in diet)
We have an addiction to self-destructive behaviors
We're sick and we need healing
We're broken and we need restoration
We're fools and we need the wisdom of God
The Christian believes that to deny these things is to live in fantasy land
And to deprive ourselves of the opportunity for health

Just look at our world
Heaven, help us.
We know not what we do.
Another heartbreaking loss of lives—this time in Nice, France.
Turkey, on the edge of civil war
How many tragedies and demonstrations of human depravity
Must we experience
Before we as the human race admit our need of help?
Have we not yet hit rock bottom?

It's with this attitude of desperation, of needing guidance in the middle of crisis
That we turn to the Scriptures
What do we do when we don't know what to do?
How do we live?

Proverbs 3:1-8 (page # _____)

My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and shun evil. This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.

The passage is written from the point of view of a parent

The author is writing to his readers

As if he were writing to his own children

This advice is given in the context of a loving relationship

It's an act of mercy; it's an extension of kindness

The father longs for his child to be well and to avoid harm

These are precious words

I'll never forget being in high school and going through a particularly hard season

And my dad left a note for me in my car containing a simple quote:

"The steel of greatness is forged in the fire." Love, Dad.

I'll always remember those words of wisdom/encouragement from my dad.

There's something about fatherly advice or a fatherly blessing that we really need

Jesus received his father's blessing at his baptism – "This is my son..."

Some of us had that fatherly validation & blessing and treasure it

Others of us didn't know our fathers

Or the father you had was unwise, or unkind or even abusive

And you long for that kind of supportive fatherly relationship

This morning, I want to encourage you to accept the words of Scripture

We've just read as the loving, fatherly wisdom of God

The wisdom we all hoped to receive from our earthly fathers

These are the words of love and of blessing; words → flourishing

And what does the father say to his children? *Actions* and *Expectations* (gen. true)

ACTIONS

Do not forget = remember/treasure/keep in your memory

Keep my commands = like a treasured family heirloom, hold on to it

Let love/faithfulness = diligently preserve the way of love/faithfulness

Bind/write them = make reminders; hold it till it becomes part of you

Trust God/lean not = Trust God's wisdom; be skeptical of your own

Fear God/shun evil = respect/submit to God; despise way of rebellion

Acknowledge/submit = your whole life is mindful of God

Not wise in own eyes = doubt your own "truth," fear God's

EXPECTATIONS

Long life =	Living in these ways sets you up for a long life
Prosperity=	These are ways of living → abundance
Favor/good name=	Wisdom → blessed relationships (w/God + others)
Straight paths=	You'll sense God is guiding your path (obstacles)
Health=	Living aligned w/God's ways leads to nourishment

In the same way that eating the foods God designed for our body → health
There are ways of living & behaving & engaging in the world
That leads, by God's design, to peace, abundance, favor, straight paths
Emotional/spiritual/physical health

And the people who habitually abide by the actions listed in the text here
[Reference white board]
The ones who (generally speaking) can expect these outcomes [white board]
Can be described in a single term favored by the author of the Proverb:
The term is WISE.
People who live like this are WISE.

Wise people, according to the Proverb
Are not necessarily the ones who are the most intelligent
Or who have had the most experience
Or who have the most plaques and degrees and certificates on their wall

No, the wise are the ones who listen, who are eager to learn
Proverb 1:5- "Wise people listen and add to their learning."
The wise are listeners, learners, students
They're coachable, instruct-able, flexible
When you correct a wise person, they thank you
They're skeptical of their own wisdom
And they are humble and hungry to know God's
People who habitually live like this set themselves up to be well
This is what it looks like to be wise

Now, if wisdom is MORE like a posture of living and LESS like knowing the most
Then a child can be wise and an elder can be a fool

They say that one person has 30 years of experience
And another has 1 year of experience, 30 times
The difference between the two people is one of them is WISE
One of them is listening/learning from the years; the other is not

Henry Cloud, in his book *Necessary Endings*
Describes 3 types of people & how to deal w/them (Wise, Foolish, Evil)

Evil People = Money, guns and lawyers

Wise People = Correct them and they listen (CEO story)

Foolish People = May be brilliant/gifted, but if you correct them
Gear up for a fight; excuses, excuses, excuses
Talking more doesn't help bring clarity or agreement
It's always someone else's fault, someone else's problem
When dealing with foolish people, set boundaries & consequences

I can't verify this with hard data, but I'm pretty sure that
98% of comments on news websites come from people
Who would fit nicely into this last category

At a certain point, in our public discourse re: politics, social issues, any # of topics
We've clearly given up on seeking true understanding of what's good/right
And we just want to win
We've just come to dislike the people who disagree with us
Or we just like arguing; we've gone the way of the fool

Things like cable news and talk radio
Seem only to perpetuate foolish behavior
Hosts (on the L & R) say inflammatory things about people and policies
To evoke from us an emotional and irrational response
That we are likely to express on websites and call-in shows and social media
And that engagement drives ad-revenue
Which only incentivizes hosts to get more inflammatory (cycle continues)

We are being tempted in endlessly to surrender to the way of the fool
To speak first, speak loud, no mercy sir
To drink our own Kool-Aid & buy in to our own wisdom
To believe that every thought we have should be broadcast to everyone else
Believing we already know everything we need to know

And all the while Wisdom cries out:

“How long will you foolish people love your foolish ways?
Repent and pay attention to my advice
Listen and I will teach you
Learn from me and live!”

The way of wisdom is the way of listening
And we have a chronic shortage of listeners in the world today

Perhaps more than anyone else
People who follow Jesus, who understand the Gospel
Should be known by our diligence in listening. Why?

First, b/c the Gospel trains us to renounce our own wisdom

The Gospel teaches us that:
All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God
All we like sheep have gone astray, each to our own ways
There is no one who is righteous, not even one

If we believe those things are true, we should:
Be skeptical of any advice that sounds like “listening to your heart”
Because we know that on our own, our hearts are hard, sinful, selfish

And so, the things we need most
Wisdom, instruction, guidance, renewal
Must come from OUTSIDE of us
And if they’re to make their way INSIDE of us, we need to be still and listen.

I heard a story about a member of our church

Who, when he first came to X & had a radical conversion, pursued a mentor
And told the mentor, “I’ll do anything you tell me to do.” And he did.

He knew that what he most needed

Was not going to come from his own heart

So he sought wisdom from the outside

He listened and he obeyed

This is the kind of thing *everyone* who follows Jesus should do

The second reason Christians should be known for our diligence in listening

Is because even our Lord Jesus, in whose steps we’re learning to live

Was a listener

In Luke’s Gospel, we see Jesus, the very son of God

The 2nd person of the Trinity, the one “thru whom all things were made”

As a 12-year-old, seated at the feet of the teachers, asking them questions

Can you imagine: Jesus asking YOU questions to gain understanding

Jesus asking YOU to explain the Scriptures about him to him

But that’s what he did

He came in the form of a servant (according to Philippians 2)

He came in the form of a *student*

And what do the Scriptures say?

“Jesus grew in *wisdom* and stature and in favor with God and men”

We should listen b/c the Gospel trains us to doubt our own wisdom

And we should listen, b/c that’s what it means to follow in the way of Jesus

And as a community that is dedicated to helping one another follow Jesus

We should commit to being a community of listeners/learners/students

A community that is humble and hungry

Eager to understand and obey the wisdom of our Father in heaven

So, how do you get started?

What are practical steps to grow as a listener, to pursue the way of wisdom?

1. Eliminate the input of fools (news outlets, social media, music, etc.)
2. Surround yourself w/input of wise (people/resources/music/media)
3. Ask 3 questions (& listen) before sharing your opinion
4. Let someone else have the last word
5. Thank someone when they correct you and reflect on their words.
6. Pray
7. Ask someone if you're wise/foolish (according to Cloud's definition)
8. Read the Bible
9. Memorize Scripture
10. Practice silence.

The way of wisdom can be counterintuitive, countercultural

And so what is, in fact, the wisdom of God

May look, to the world, to be utter foolishness

The Apostle Paul said this very thing in 1 Corinthians 1 regarding the cross:

“The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

“We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

Church, may we learn to love the wisdom of God

May we learn to love the way of the cross

May we become a community of listeners/learners

Who together sit at the feet of our Teacher

Eager to be instructed in the way that leads to life

Invitation to prayer.