

# A Wise Man Is Strong

by Paris Reidhead

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*Wisdom is the key to a happy home, success, and unlocking our potential, and it comes from seeking insight from God through Jesus Christ.*

**Duration:** 41:55

**Scripture:** Proverbs 24:1-10, Matthew 6:33

**Topics:** "Wise Man"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker recounts a story of a condemned man and his brother who visits him in prison. The condemned man expresses his hatred and bitterness towards those involved in his capture and trial. The brother, torn between his love for his sibling and his pledge to the governor, ultimately decides not to help him. The speaker then emphasizes the importance of organizing knowledge into useful forms and the need for wisdom in order to avoid failure and sin. The alternative to wisdom, according to the speaker, is weakness and disaster.

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## Transcript

Chapter 24, verse 5. Proverbs 24 and verse 5. It will profit us if we read verses 1 through 10. Be not thou envious against evil men, neither desire to be with them. For their heart studieth destruction, and their lips talk of mischief.

Through wisdom is an house builtd, and by understanding it is established. And by knowledge shall the chambers be filled with all precious and pleasant riches. A wise man is strong.

Yea, a man of knowledge increases strength. For by wise counsel thou shalt make thy war, and in multitude of counsellors there is safety. Wisdom is too high for a fool.

He openeth not his mouth in the gate. He that deviseth to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. The thought of foolishness is sin, and the scorner is an abomination to men.

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Years ago, 1939, I was pastor of the little church at Long Prairie, Minnesota, and arranged to have the Gideons from Minneapolis come up to Todd County for the Todd County Bible Rally Day. I think we had Gideons in some 50 or 60 churches.

In the little hotel in Long Prairie, we had our Sunday dinner. I was, as the chairman of the program, seated beside the president of the Minnesota encampment, Mr. Riggs, and who also was on the board for the

national encampment. It was there that we were just beginning to sense and feel the mobilization effort.

It was started. And as we were talking, they were telling me about getting testaments printed. I said, Mr. Riggs, I think it's wonderful that you have a New Testament with the Psalms, for the Psalms will teach Christians to worship.

But I believe that you're making a great mistake by not including in this Testament the Proverbs, because it's Proverbs that gives wisdom. Many a young man having a New Testament and reading in it that word of wisdom will be spared from the tragedy that will come were he not reminded of the consequences of his sin. So for most of that lunchtime until our program began, I argued with Mr. Riggs, trying to prove to him that it was absolutely essential that Proverbs be made available to the servicemen.

He parted, and it wasn't until about 18 months later, he said, as I met him in Minneapolis at his home, oh, by the way, I've meant to write to you all this time and tell you that when I got to the National Committee, I fought for about as long as you fought with me to get Proverbs put into the New Testaments. And they said it's going to be done. They decided to do it.

So somewhere back there in Minnesota, just a young man myself, was a deep recognition, the great need of wisdom. And that I or any young man in a place of temptation, thinking perhaps that virtue and honor had lost its value and sin was the only means of satisfaction, could be warned and protected by wise words. It was because of that, I suppose, that I found another occasion years later when the text, A wise man is strong, yea, man of knowledge increases strength, was quite different.

I'll not relate the situation to you. But it was then that I discovered that the word of God is relevant to the daily needs. Then the year was 1940, and there began then a practice which has continued, though not unbroken, I must admit, and continued until the present.

Proverbs, as you know, has 31 chapters. It makes an excellent calendar. And you do well for one or two months out of the year to read the Proverbs.

Read it as you would turn the leaves of your calendar. Read it with the intent of being nourished and guided and helped by that which is there. This, too, is the word of God.

The wise man is strong. Literally, the wise man is in strength, is in strength, for the strength is in wisdom. This has to do with the wisdom that comes from good counsel.

It is that wisdom that gives firmness in purpose, bravery in conflict, certainty that one's cause is right. A wise man is better than a strong man, said the Septuagint, with something of a perversion of the text, but nonetheless in truth. Then it says, knowledge strengtheneth power.

Wise man is strong, but more knowledge even increases that strength, and strengtheneth power. You need wisdom. Being born of God gives you new life.

Having passed from death to life, you have the inner assurance that your sins are pardoned, that the past is under the blood and will not rise to haunt you again. If you do not have that assurance tonight, then no amount of wisdom other than that will be of value to you. For if you are content to go with unpardoned, unforgiven sin, you've given inner evidence to your own heart that folly reigns and sits upon the throne of your life.

Oh, how sad it is to think that there you are in the midst, in the presence of pardon, and spurn it. I shall never forget the impression that was made upon me of learning that the governor of Georgia had in his jurisdiction in the prison of Georgia, the brother of a very fine outstanding citizen, one that had served the state of Georgia long and well. The brother was a ne'er-do-well, a bitter man.

The good man, the honorable man, the faithful civic servant, came to the governor in behalf of his mother and pled with the governor, was a family friend. And finally the governor said, all right, I'll give you a pardon and allow you to serve it, if when you see your brother you feel that it is wise. If you feel when you're there in his cell block that he's ready to be pardoned, that he will be free to go back into society, I will accept your decision.

Here is the pardon. And he signed it. But only deliver it if you feel it is wise.

And so the brother of the condemned man went to see him. He was pledged not to say what he carried with him. As he came into the cell block, the condemned brother began to curse and swear and pour out his hatred and his bitterness and begin to say what he would do to the law enforcement officers that had captured him and the lawyers that had presented the case against him and proven his guilt.

It was a torrent of hatred that came from his lips. Listening, remembering the plea of the mother, feeling all that he could of the ties of relationship to the, this is brother, and yet recognizing that he had made a pledge to the governor of the state. At long last, this good man put his hand through the bars and said, Goodbye, Tom, and turned and walked away and came back with tears to the governor's office and said, Here, I couldn't serve it.

As much as I love him, I love the honorable, upright, honest people and the laws of this state more than to release him again to terrorize society. Oh, the folly of that man behind the cell block. Oh, the folly of being in the presence of pardon, but because of his attitude, making it impossible for that pardon to be received.

And so it is with the impenitent heart, the unbelieving heart, the rebellious and the bitter heart. God has in his hand a pardon that was purchased by the blood of his dear son. A pardon that he's willing to present to the broken and the contrite in spirit.

A pardon he's willing to serve upon all who will sue for peace, confessing their guilt and recognizing their wrong. But to think that there are those who are in the very presence of God, but because of their attitude of folly, must depart to that which is far greater than just death, eternal death. This, I say, is the foolishness that's bound up in the heart of the rebel that refuses to recognize guilt and repent of the crime of sin.

If you are here tonight, I would plead with you to do the first, perhaps the only wise thing you've ever done, the wisest certainly, to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and as Savior. Wisdom begins with the fear of God. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

He only is wise who recognizes that there's one worthy to rule. One whose right it is to rule. One whose obligation it is to rule in righteousness and in judgment.

One who is too right, so righteous and so just, that he will not his eyes to any sin, anyone's sin. And unless one sees this, they are living in folly. To think that one can get by with anything when there's a God who sits upon the throne, to whom the night is as the day, and who knows the thoughts of the heart before they have entered the mind, and knows the words that will come to the tongue before the tongue is formed from dust.

No. The fear of the Lord is certainly the beginning of wisdom. And this fear is that wholesome awareness that God, who knows everything I think and everything I plan and everything I say and everything I do, and before him I stand.

Therefore, to open one's mind to this righteous reign of God, and to submit to his rule, and to have the security and confidence that comes from knowing that God says what he means, and he means exactly what he says. This establishes the framework for wisdom. And any who would seek to be wise without having this cornerstone laid, are as those who would build a skyscraper on the beach sand.

Build ever so well as they may, it cannot stand because it has no foundation. To recognize that God is just, and that God hates evil, and that God will punish sin, allows one then to have, I say, the frame of reference within which all wisdom must be built. It's the boundaries, for anything that passes these markers cannot be wise.

Wisdom must be bounded, and it is bounded on this, that there is a God who lives and rules and reigns. He then begins to be wise, who recognizes that sin is a crime, who renounces his right to this life of crime, who confesses his sin and his guilt, who secures pardon and forgiveness. Having done this, he will continue to recognize that God will reign in the future as he has in the past.

I believe this is necessary for the security and the comfort and the certainty of your own mind and heart. Wisdom is the foundation of all domestic happiness. You can't expect to have a happy home unless wisdom reigns.

You perhaps did not have a happy home, I don't know. It either was or it wasn't, or it was or was not in some degree. But if it was a happy home and your memories are pleasant, then it is was such because there was wisdom.

I am sure that there can be great happiness, without knowing Jesus Christ, of a certain level and kind. For whereas it is absolutely true, and I rescind it not, that the beginning of wisdom is the fear of God, there are those that have proceeded to take these principles of wisdom, isolated as they are from the root, and have used them, for instance. China has the longest unbroken national history of any nation in the world, any nation of which we have record.

I personally feel it's due to their obedience to the fourth commandment, honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land the Lord thy God giveth thee. It was thus that they became wise in ancestor worship, for in this veneration of the family, in this obedience to this commandment, there was the preservation of value, there was the protection of their culture, there was the continuity of their hopes and their standards, there was, in other words, that practical structure, that skeletal structure upon which a nation of enduring history could be built. We see today that that's changed.

There's been a systematic attempt to eradicate ancestor veneration and worship. And with it comes the certainty that the natural consequence of disobedience will result. So many homes have been ruled by wise parents who did not know Jesus Christ.

They were wise in their relationship to each other, wise in their relationship to their children, and their neighbors, and their creditors, their employers. And because there was wisdom, there was given that foundation upon which natural happiness could result. Many there are who look back and know that their parents did not know Jesus Christ.

And yet because they were wise in this natural wisdom, they brought a certain measure of pleasant memory and contribution to their children. By the same token, there have been Christians whose sins were certainly forgiven, who were pardoned, but who felt that there was no place in their life for wisdom, and that it didn't make any difference how it was done. Because they were forgiven, because they were pardoned, this was all that mattered.

And so, oblivious to the fact that principles carry with them natural consequences, though they were Christians, they went on in folly. For one can be righteous to their relationship to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and foolish in their relationship to their children, to each other, or to their neighbors, or their employer. The one does not mean that the person will observe the other.

Everyday situations require wisdom. What to do with your children, what to do with your discipline problems, what to do with opportunity, how to provide challenge, how to reward merit. These are all questions for which specific items of wisdom are needed.

The happy home is the home where parents have sought wisdom. Only wisdom can cause people to live together peacefully and happily. This is true in church life.

The only possible way that there can be blessing and happiness in the relationship of the church is when each one seeks wisdom for himself in relation to others, and recognizes that because his motives are pure, because his relationship to Christ is clear, does not necessarily ensure that he's going to react properly when he is challenged or questioned or crossed. Wisdom we need. We ought to constantly ask God for us, for none of us are wise.

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child unless it is beaten out by deliberate discipline and the circumstances of life, and the wise use of those circumstances. That which was bound up in the heart of the child is going to remain bound up in the heart of the adult. Wisdom, however, being as it is the foundation of happiness and all social relationships I've only referred to, does come because one has a brilliant mind or a good education.

It does not necessarily come because one has a great memory. One of the professors I had at college had photographic memory. He had majored in his doctorate in the history of the cases of the Supreme Court.

He could recite the essential, the pertinent data for every case that had occurred before the Supreme Court from its founding until we were there in college, and sometimes we thought he was going to do it. He had made a trip through Europe. It was the most boring recital I'd ever heard, for he was not concerned about what was there, but how many kilometers and how many minutes it took to go from one place to the other, and the population of each little place.

Knowledge he had in abundance, facts were there, but he utterly lacked, and this was not my appraisal as much as his own testimony, he utterly lacked the ability to organize those items of knowledge into useful guides and rules for life, for himself and for others. Therefore, you cannot be educated to be wise. The best that schools can do is give you items of fact, items of history, and of knowledge.

They can acquaint you with techniques, but they cannot give you that understanding that will enable you to see the mechanics of the rule to the exception or the qualification or the wisest use of the rule or the innovations that that situation demands. This is wisdom. Wisdom, therefore, is to be defined as the organization of knowledge into useful tools for life.

How are you going to obtain it, this wisdom? How are you going to know? First, you're going to have to learn from every source that you can. You are to read as much as you are able. You are to read that which is going to enlighten your mind, not only with specific items of information, but going to give you insight into the use of knowledge.

It is, I say, not knowledge that produces success in the business world. College professors are notoriously poor. They work on salaries with very little annual increase, and most of them never know any measure of financial security.

And yet their minds are filled with information and facts and knowledge, and they have access to the world's greatest resources of additional knowledge and libraries. But this is not meant that they have made, in terms of monetary achievement, success, though they may have in all the personal satisfactions that come from doing their job well. The fact that you have an education does not necessarily mean that you're going to be a success.

I've indicated a case in point. You need wisdom. How to use that information, how to organize it in such a way that it becomes a personal, a financial profit to you or to others.

This is wisdom. This is that thing which God has given to those who will seek him and ask it. I trust that as a Christian you will not come one whit behind others who, not knowing Jesus Christ or refusing to bow to him, come to the fountain of wisdom that we may have neglected.

We ought to be the wisest of men because the Word of God tells us that Jesus Christ is made unto us the wisdom of God and the power of God. Christ crucified, the wisdom of God, the power of God, the text declares. So when Jesus Christ is in you as Lord and Savior, the one who has all wisdom is in you.

And it ought to be, therefore, that you trust him for your salvation from hell and the consequences of sin. But it ought to be that you recognize that in that dilemma, in that problem, in those relationships, in those difficulties, the one that is in you is himself the fountain of all wisdom. Solomon wrote Proverbs not because he was brilliantly trained, but because, I believe, he had the gift of the Word of Wisdom.

And that which he has was given by inspiration of God for your prophet. You ought, therefore, to seek from what God has said through Solomon and elsewhere in the Word. You ought to look for illustrations of these principles around you on every hand.

For instance, one of the principles that wisdom dictates is this, that every failure carries with it the seeds of an equivalent or a greater success. Now this is very hard for most of us to believe, but wisdom says that it is true. You need to realize this, that your failures under God can be the means of your final and greatest success.

Oh, if I can impress this upon you and upon my own heart, that we do not need to accept a temporary failure as a final defeat, but capitalize on that failure to find in it the seeds of that greater success. Be it in sin, did you hear me? When you have grieved God and broken your own heart, and you to discover your weakness and his strength, give you a sympathy with others that will enable you to speak to them when they come in heartbreak. And that which was your failure can carry with it the seeds of an even greater success.

Because somehow in the alchemy of love, it's been transmuted from failure. This is what wisdom does. Knowledge will gather the statistics of all the successful people and the failures in life.

And you will have to classify yourself as one of the other. Wisdom will give you to understand that some who were failures became success because they were able to tap onto a source of understanding that others did not seek. I come to you tonight, I know you failed, as I have.

We hear it said, knowledge is power. This is not the case only. Knowledge only becomes power when it's organized into useful forms.

You may know that you fail, there's no power in this. This is just a fact, a statistical historical fact. But when you discover why you fail, and when you discover how you could have kept from failure, when you discover that there is one in you that will enable you to turn that failure into success, now it's become power.

But not because of the knowledge, but because you have acquired a superior use of that knowledge. And you have done this because there's one that's in you. But what is the alternative to wisdom? What is the alternative to availing yourself of all this that the Lord Jesus intends you to know, and to be, and to do? These principles which are so essential for your happiness.

The alternative is sin and weakness, disaster. What are some of the characteristics? In the seventh verse that I read, we discover that wisdom is too high for a fool, he openeth not his mouth in the gate. A groveling mind, a mind that has no confidence in its own opinion or in its own value.

This is the effect of sin. This is the alternative to wisdom. In the eighth verse, we discover that the alternative to wisdom is a malicious temper.

He that devises to do evil shall be called a mischievous person. A groveling mind, a malicious temper. And in the ninth verse, we discover that the alternative to wisdom is a malignant mood.

The thought of foolishness is sin, and the scorner is an abomination to man. Oh, this awful cancer of cynicism, the foolishness of scorn. And in the tenth verse, we discover that the alternative to wisdom is this sin which always brings weakness, namely cowardly faint-heartedness.

If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small. Do you understand what I'm seeking to say to you tonight? It's wonderful if you're a Christian and you know your sins are pardoned. But you have problems, practical problems, and God has practical answers for practical problems.

And these answers come in principles, and these principles will be made clear to you by the Holy Spirit. Christ in you is wisdom, and when you come to him and say, Lord, I have not wisdom, he does not chasten you. He does not reprove or rebuke you.

He does not turn you away, but he gives that which you need. Just as he was pleased with Solomon because he sought for his tasks and responsibility, wisdom, he'll be pleased with you when you seek from him wisdom. With all thy getting, get wisdom.

Wisdom is the chief thing. As a Christian that begins with coming to Jesus Christ, receiving him as Lord and Savior. But from then on, you're going to find knowledge in those sources from which it comes, but wisdom comes from the Lord.

And he's with you, and he'll teach you and make you wise. With all thy getting. Then, in other words, the chief thing, the most important thing to you as a Christian, if you're to walk fruitfully and happily and

joyfully, if you're to avoid a groveling mind, a malicious temper, a malignant mood, and cowardly faint heartedness, the answer, the alternative, is wisdom.

A wise man is strong. Where can you go and be taught? Who offers a course in wisdom? No. You're going to have to go to the source of wisdom, to the Lord, to the Word, and daily seek to become wise.

There's no royal road. There's no easy path, but there's no other way to fruitfulness and usefulness. Let us bow in prayer.

How often have you needed wisdom? Do you have decisions that you're facing this week? Do you have problems and questions that have no answer? Are you in the midst of situations that seemingly have no release? Are you confronted with what you think is almost certain failure? Are you distressed about the fact that matters have gotten out of hand? Are you overwhelmed with the discovery of your own inability to cope, perhaps, with yourself? Well, all of these pressures are pressures to drive you to the source of wisdom. God has allowed you to be caught up in this crisis, this dangerous opportunity. Because there's a principle he wants you to learn, which principle, had you known it, would have kept you from this problem? Since you are in the problem, there is a principle that's eluded you or that you've neglected.

Wisdom seeks, therefore, not only for deliverance from the difficulty, but to isolate and to analyze and to understand with insight the principle. Think of your life. Can you not right now, in many different things, say, Father, give me wisdom? Wisdom, make me wise to know thy will.

What is the wise thing to do? Read the Word, certainly. Learn from history. Learn from the testimony of others.

But remember, wisdom is a gift of God. It comes from the Lord. He won't abrade you when you ask for wisdom.

Can you not right now take this Word? The wise man is strong, and wisdom increases strength. Knowledge increases strength. And claim it for yourself, your circumstances, your situation, your life.

And believe that even though at this moment you don't know the answer, you will know that you don't have the solution. You will have. That God, whom you've petitioned for wisdom, has heard your cry and will give it to you.

Bring your life, your perplexities, your pressures, your problems to him now. Lift them on your hands, as it were. Hold them out and say, Lord, I need wisdom.

But if you're here without Jesus Christ, you lift up your hands. Exercise that wisdom of receiving Jesus Christ as your Lord and your Savior, for this is where wisdom begins. I wonder before we pray if there are anyone here that would, by a raised hand, say pray for me.

I'm undergoing a special problem, a particular need, or I have a particular spiritual problem, and I want to be remembered in prayer. Would you raise your hand? Yes, I see it. Thank you.

Yes, yes, yes. God bless you. Yes, I see it.

Others? Yes, thank you. I see it. So it is.

Father, so many hands have been raised. Why, there's enough heartbreak in this room tonight that if we knew it, angels would weep with us. And yet, the answer to all the problems, without oversimplifying, is in thee.

Why, Lord Jesus, thou hast all wisdom and all power and all love. In wisdom, thou dost know what to do. In love, thou dost want to do it.

And in power, thou art able to do it. So many times, Father, our friends do not have wisdom. They don't know how to help us.

And those who have the power often don't have the love. And we can help one another so little. So we come to thee for each one whose hand has been raised, for each heartbreak and need and hope behind it, and would ask thee tonight that to seal the message as being thy truth, that particular wisdom will be given to everyone whose hand was raised and whose heart believes that thou art answering prayer for them just now.

Give them new solutions to their problems, new answers to their difficulties, new insights into their opportunities, and above all, a new purpose to make their lives count for the glory of the Lord Jesus. We pray for those among us who may not know him whom to know is life eternal, and ask that they may recognize the folly of spurning the gift of thy grace and the wisdom of receiving Jesus Christ. Grant that all of us, Lord, may seize upon the Word, the text, the wise man is strong, and knowledge increases the strength.

May we become strong because of wisdom. We need it, Lord. I need it.

Each of us need desperately this wisdom which is from above. Hear us. We've asked thee tonight in faith, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Let us stand for the benediction. We thank thee, Father, for what thou hast done for us in Christ, what thou will do for us as a continuing blessing from the Lord Jesus.

Bless now thy people as they part. Keep them safe as they return to their homes. And grant, Lord, that the sense of thy presence, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, shall garrison and comfort our hearts till we meet again.

Amen.

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