

Obtaining the Wisdom of God

Lessons from the Wisdom of Sirach

I. Introduction

a. Cosette's riding

- i. Learning to ride at a working ranch; kept graduating to more difficult horses to train. Exciting/sense of accomplishment to get the more difficult horse, but a bit terrifying – a new level of wisdom is needed – how do I do this?!
- ii. Horses do not like people riding them! The only thing more painful than being thrown off is to stay on! It's pretty ugly. But the rider must overcome to bring control over and peace to this animal.

b. A great analogy for our lives!

- i. When we became Christians, we embraced a new wisdom than when we had lived before—the way of the cross, the way of the Kingdom. Yet, practically, as we get older, God gives us new opportunities/broncos that require greater wisdom!
 1. Single, married, longer-time married!
 2. Father
 3. Son to aging parents
 4. Attorney and owner of a small business
 5. My own health.
 6. In my role as a church leader
 7. My character, new temptations, new opportunities to grow
 8. Sometimes these new horses/challenges progress naturally with time. Sometimes thrust into our lives suddenly, without warning. Find yourself holding on for dear life!
 9. God's wisdom is needed.
- ii. Each of you has new challenges/opportunities/bucking broncos in your lives, horses that are trying to throw you off. God will use these to bring you His wisdom, to transform your situation into something that truly honors Him.

- c. We've done two lessons from Sirach; this will be the last. Previous lessons covered extremely practical topics:
 - i. Preparing for and overcoming temptation
 - ii. not having a "double mind"
 - iii. honoring our parents
 - iv. eating
 - v. money
 - vi. patience of God
- d. Focus of today's lesson: Obtaining God's wisdom.
 - i. Jesus ben Sirach was a man who studied the Law diligently. Purpose:
 - 1. to provide wisdom and instruction
 - 2. that lovers of wisdom might "live a life according to the law"
- e. Wisdom of Sirach, one of the intertestamental books (Apocrypha).
 - i. These books were included in both Catholic and Protestant Bibles up until the 1880s, then removed from the Protestant Bibles.
 - ii. In past lessons, I hope I have shown you that this book is in accord with both the Old and New Testament Scriptures.
 - iii. Today, I will stick mainly with the Sirach text and not so much from other parts of Scripture. If you doubt that the book of Sirach is inspired, I ask that you test the things we read today against the Scriptures. Don't take my word for it!
- f. *As we go through the lesson, pick one area you desire greater wisdom in. I'd suggest the area that is causing you the most pain, challenge, difficulty, or the area where you see the greatest opportunity to accomplish God's work.*
 - i. The Story of the Successful Insurance Agent. Everyone wanted his results, asked him how he did it. He told them: simple, nothing that others could not do, but extremely difficult: required tremendous discipline and hard work to work his method. When it came down to it, no one wanted to do what he did to obtain the results he obtained. He stopped telling people about his method. In fact, they really did not want his wisdom.
 - ii. What Sirach tells us is very accessible to all of us.
 - iii. Will we embrace and put it into practice?

- iv. Ultimately, each of us must ask the question: Do I really want God's wisdom?

II. God Alone is Wise; He Alone Gives Wisdom; Wisdom is Available to Us All!

a. Read **WoS 1:1-8**

- i. There is only One who is wise. God created wisdom.
- ii. God poured her (Wisdom) out on all His works (we see this in the creation).
- iii. God gives wisdom to those who love Him.

b. Read **WoS 24:1-12**

- i. "And in every people and nation I have gained a possession. With all these, I have sought a place to rest; In what inheritance will I lodge?" (v. 6-7)
 - 1. God is seeking a place for His wisdom to lodge.
 - 2. He gave this to Israel and intended it to ultimately go to all nations.
 - 3. **Question:** Will we be a place God's wisdom will rest?

III. Obtaining God's Wisdom Requires the Fear of God

a. Read **WoS 1:9-18**

- i. Jesus taught the fear of God, and yet He also experienced a deep, abiding, loving relationship with the Father. It's not either other, but both and!
 - 1. "And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." (**Matthew 10:28**)
 - 2. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name..." (**Luke 11**)
 - 3. "And the glory which You gave to Me I have given them, that they may be one just as we are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." (**John 17:22-23**)
 - 4. "Into Your hands I commit my Spirit." (**Luke 23:46**)

- ii. Sirach teaches the same. The fear of God brings joy and gladness!
 - 1. The feat of God “intoxicates them with her fruits
 - 2. It fills every house with objects of desire; storehouses with her harvest
 - 3. It makes peace and soundness of health
- iii. The fear of God is
 - 1. The beginning of wisdom (vs. 12)
 - 2. The crown of wisdom (vs. 16)
 - 3. The root of wisdom (vs. 18)
- b. “The wise man will have the fear of God in everything He does; And in these day of sin, he will guard against wrongdoing.” (**WoS 18:26**)
 - i. Why? **Answer (I think):** wisdom can breed arrogance, self-reliance.
 - 1. Solomon’s example: from humble, wise king to disobedient, idol-worshipping king, who passes the throne to a foolish, wicked son.
 - a. Read **WoS 47:12-15, 18-21, 23**
 - b. So humble, so wise, became proud, disobeyed, led astray (amassing wealth, building up calvary, taking foreign women, worshiping idols).
 - c. Solomon lost his fear of God. The wisest man on earth leaves a foolish son. This is such a tragic story.
 - ii. **Questions:** Do I have the fear of God in everything I do? (Fear and love!)
 - 1. When I talk to my wife
 - 2. Walk down the street
 - 3. Open my browser
 - 4. Deal with my clients
 - 5. Plan my week
 - 6. Every purchase I make
- c. Wise, older men fear the Lord

- i. Read **WoS 25:1-6**
 - ii. It's offensive to be an old man who lacks understanding
 - iii. Having judgment and wisdom is "the beauty of old men"
 - iv. "The crown of old men is great experience"
 - v. These men's boast is in the fear of the Lord.
 - vi. Tim B. – wise and experienced attorney, yet great humility, continues to learn and see the need for others.
- d. Fear of God is the root and the crown of wisdom, needed to obtain God's wisdom.

IV. Obtaining God's Wisdom is Difficult

- a. Good to count the cost. **How difficult will it be to obtain God's wisdom?**
 - i. Read **WoS 4:11-16**
 - 1. Wisdom lays hold of those who seek her.
 - 2. If you come to wisdom in the morning, you will be filled with gladness.
 - 3. Must "hold fast to her"
 - 4. God loves those who love her.
 - ii. There is a process of being *united with wisdom*. Read **WoS 4:16-19**
 - 1. Wisdom is at first disturbing, brings fear and dread
 - 2. Wisdom torments a man with her discipline
 - 3. There is a purpose to this
 - a. To see if wisdom can trust his soul
 - b. See if you will pass the test
 - 4. Then she comes right back and gladdens him, revealing her secrets to him.
 - 5. If you fail the test (and wander away from wisdom), you will be ruined.
 - 6. Interesting options as you consider your issue:

- a. Go through painful, difficult education and obtain God's wisdom AND gladness, or
- b. Be ruined!

iii. Read **WoS 6:18-31**

1. Picture: plowing, sowing, waiting in expectation for the fruit, and eventually it comes!
 2. For those who lack discipline, wisdom is like a heavy stone of trial – to be thrown off.
 3. Or, at first, like fetters and a collar, a burden and bondage.
 - a. Don't be angry!
 - b. Wait for it! "... in the end you will find rest."
 - c. **Fetters turn to strong protection, the collar to a glorious robe, bonds like blue thread!**
 - d. Wisdom = a crown of exceeding joy.
 4. Elizabeth, learning how to become a nurse.
 - a. Difficult, stressful, very challenging. Yet, over time, begin mastering (using your hands, how to do the paperwork, how to handle difficult patients and colleagues, etc.).
 - b. Over time, the trials are mastered, build character and skill, AND comfort, peace, help, healing to others.
 5. Jesus:
 - a. suffering, pain, submission to the Father's will, crucified;
 - b. Resulted in His resurrection; King, robed and crowned in glory, bringing healing to the nations.
- b. More tips to obtain wisdom. Read **WoS 6:32-37**
- i. must be willing
 - ii. must apply yourself
 - iii. love to listen

- iv. attach yourself to those who are older and wise (rise early and wear out the threshold of their door!)
 - v. Set your mind on God's ordinances
 - vi. Practice (not just read!) the commandments
- c. A picture of our pursuit of wisdom. Read **WoS 14:20-22**
- i. Pursuing wisdom like a tracker.
 - ii. "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." (**Matthew 7:13-14**)
- d. God's heart as we seek Him and His wisdom:
- i. Yet, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting...." (**James 1:5**)
 - ii. God will help us! He wants to give us His wisdom. He's liberal/generous, not nit-picking and critical of your efforts. Amen!

V. What Does a Wise Person Look Like?

- a. Read **Wisdom of Sirach 39:1-11**
- b. Characteristics:
 - i. Seeks out the wisdom of the ancients
 - ii. Is occupied with prophecies
 - iii. Engaged in the riddles and meanings of parables and proverbs
 - iv. Will rise early to come before the Lord
 - v. Make supplication for his sin and give thanks to the Lord
 - vi. Filled with the Spirit of understanding
 - vii. Pour forth words of God's wisdom
 - viii. If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand
 - ix. When he dies, his work will be completed!

VI. Examples of "Honored Men" Who Obtained God's Wisdom

- a. Read **WoS 44:1-4, 8-15**

- i. These men were marked by God’s wisdom;
 - 1. some men of renown, *yet some who no one remembers, perished as if they never existed.*
 - 2. **“Nevertheless, these were men of mercy, whose righteousness lives with God.”**
- ii. Sirach turns to a pantheon of “honored men”. Describes:
 - 1. What they did; how they were wise
 - 2. The mighty things God did through them.
- b. We will look at just a few of these tremendous examples of wise, honored men. ***Take inspiration! What characterizes these men?***
 - i. Enoch (44:16)
 - 1. “Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated as an example of repentance for all generations.”
 - ii. Noah (44:17-18)
 - 1. “[Noah] was found righteous in the time of wrath.... “
 - 2. **Genesis 6** – God sees the wickedness on earth was great, and “every intent of the thoughts within [man’s] heart was only evil continually.”
 - iii. Abraham (44:19-21)
 - 1. “He kept the law of the Most High... [before the Law of Moses was given!]... And he was found faithful in testing.”
 - iv. Moses (45:1)
 - 1. “a man of mercy”
 - 2. fasted 3 times for 40 days for the people
 - 3. after the golden calf incident, asks God to forgive their sin, but if not, that God would blot out his own name from the book of life!
 - v. Phineas (45:23)
 - 1. “showed zeal in the fear of the Lord; And he stood fast when the people turned away...”
 - vi. Joshua and Caleb (46:7)

1. “They withstood the assembly to prevent the people from sinning and to stop their evil murmuring.”

c. Conclusion

- i. Let’s return to where we began: Cozette on her wild horse!
- ii. The pain of being thrown off. Even greater pain of staying on.
- iii. But getting back up, staying on in pain, over time, produces something most wonderful. The horse is broken (in a good way). Still beautiful, powerful, wild, and strong. But, the horse comes under control as the rider grows in their wisdom and ability. It’s always the rider’s fault! But as the rider grows in wisdom and skill, there is a great transformation.
- iv. But it does not stop there. Cosette is pondering a career using these horses to bring peace to victims of sex trafficking, helping these women heal, and develop skills through a relationship with these beautiful horses.
- v. Is this not God’s desire?
 1. That we would have more and more of His wisdom, as we master our wild horses/life’s trials and challenges.
 2. Allowing us to use this wisdom to bring peace and healing to others.
- vi. May Sirach’s words offer you tremendous hope, encouragement, and inspiration to seek after God’s wisdom.
- vii. Count the cost. Pay the price. You will be richly rewarded!