Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 1 — **The Beginning of Wisdom** - Proverbs 1

WISDOM BEGINS NOT WITH KNOWING EVERYTHING, BUT WITH RECOGNIZING WHO GOD IS. PROVERBS 1:7 TELLS US THAT THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF KNOWLEDGE. THIS FEAR DOES NOT MEAN LIVING TERRIFIED OF GOD; IT MEANS APPROACHING HIM WITH REVERENCE, HUMILITY, AND A WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN. WE LIVE IN A WORLD THAT ENCOURAGES US TO TRUST OUR OWN OPINIONS, FOLLOW OUR FEELINGS, AND MAKE DECISIONS BASED ON WHAT SEEMS RIGHT IN THE MOMENT. BUT BIBLICAL WISDOM BEGINS WHEN WE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GOD SEES WHAT WE CANNOT SEE AND KNOWS WHAT WE CANNOT KNOW. WE DO NOT BECOME WISE SIMPLY BY GROWING OLDER OR ACCUMULATING INFORMATION; WE BECOME WISE AS WE LEARN TO RECEIVE GOD'S INSTRUCTION AND APPLY IT TO EVERYDAY LIFE. BEFORE MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIPS, WORK, FINANCES, OR FUTURE, WE MUST FIRST ASK WHETHER WE ARE WILLING TO LET GOD SHAPE OUR THINKING. WISDOM BEGINS WHEN WE STOP TREATING GOD AS SOMEONE WHO SIMPLY APPROVES OUR PLANS AND START SEEKING HIM AS THE ONE WHO GUIDES THEM.

PRAYER

FATHER, TEACH ME TO FEAR YOU WITH REVERENCE AND HUMILITY. HELP ME TO LISTEN TO YOUR INSTRUCTION INSTEAD OF RELYING ONLY ON MY OWN UNDERSTANDING. SHAPE MY DECISIONS, ATTITUDES, AND DESIRES SO THAT MY LIFE REFLECTS YOUR WISDOM. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***WHERE AM I RELYING MORE ON MY OWN UNDERSTANDING THAN ON GOD'S WISDOM?***
- ***READ JAMES 1:5. WHAT DOES GOD INVITE US TO DO WHEN WE LACK WISDOM?***

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 2 — **Wisdom in Everyday Decisions** - Proverbs 3

PROVERBS 3:5–6 INVITES US TO TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS AND NOT LEAN ENTIRELY ON OUR OWN UNDERSTANDING. THIS IS EASIER TO SAY THAN TO PRACTICE, ESPECIALLY WHEN WE FACE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT OUR FUTURE. SOMETIMES WE WANT GOD TO SHOW US THE ENTIRE PATH BEFORE WE TAKE THE FIRST STEP, BUT SCRIPTURE CALLS US TO TRUST HIM EVEN WHEN WE CANNOT SEE EVERYTHING AHEAD. TRUSTING GOD DOES NOT MEAN REFUSING TO THINK CAREFULLY, SEEK ADVICE, OR MAKE PRACTICAL PLANS. IT MEANS BRINGING THOSE PLANS BEFORE HIM AND REMAINING WILLING TO FOLLOW HIS DIRECTION. WE CAN RESEARCH, PREPARE, ASK WISE PEOPLE FOR COUNSEL, AND CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR CHOICES WHILE REMEMBERING THAT OUR UNDERSTANDING IS LIMITED. GOD MAY NOT REVEAL EVERY DETAIL IMMEDIATELY, BUT HE REMAINS FAITHFUL TO GUIDE THOSE WHO SEEK HIM. WISDOM IS NOT MERELY KNOWING WHICH DECISION WILL PRODUCE THE EASIEST OUTCOME; IT IS LEARNING TO HONOR GOD IN THE DECISIONS WE MAKE. WHEN THE FUTURE FEELS UNCERTAIN, WE CAN TAKE THE NEXT FAITHFUL STEP WITHOUT DEMANDING THAT GOD EXPLAIN EVERY STEP AFTER IT.

PRAYER

LORD, HELP ME TRUST YOU WITH THE DECISIONS I FACE TODAY. GIVE ME WISDOM TO PLAN CAREFULLY, HUMILITY TO RECEIVE COUNSEL, AND FAITH TO FOLLOW YOUR DIRECTION WHEN I CANNOT SEE THE WHOLE PICTURE. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***IS THERE A DECISION IN MY LIFE WHERE I WANT CERTAINTY BEFORE I AM WILLING TO TRUST GOD?***
- ***READ PSALM 32:8. WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD'S GUIDANCE?***

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 3 — ***Living Wisely in a World That Cannot Satisfy*** - *Ecclesiastes 2*

IN ECCLESIASTES, THE TEACHER EXPLORES PLEASURE, ACHIEVEMENT, POSSESSIONS, WORK, AND HUMAN WISDOM, ASKING WHETHER THESE THINGS CAN PROVIDE LASTING MEANING. HIS REFLECTIONS CHALLENGE THE IDEA THAT A SUCCESSFUL LIFE IS AUTOMATICALLY A SATISFYING ONE. WE CAN ACCOMPLISH GOALS, GAIN RECOGNITION, EARN MONEY, AND EXPERIENCE ENJOYABLE MOMENTS WHILE STILL DISCOVERING THAT NONE OF THESE THINGS CAN CARRY THE FULL WEIGHT OF OUR PURPOSE. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT WORK, RELATIONSHIPS, OR ENJOYMENT ARE BAD. RATHER, THEY BECOME INADEQUATE WHEN WE EXPECT THEM TO GIVE US THE ULTIMATE MEANING ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE. ECCLESIASTES TEACHES US TO RECOGNIZE THE LIMITS OF LIFE "UNDER THE SUN"—LIFE VIEWED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF OUR EARTHLY EXPERIENCES ALONE. WISDOM HELPS US ENJOY GOD'S GIFTS WITHOUT MAKING THEM OUR GODS. INSTEAD OF CONSTANTLY ASKING WHAT MORE WE NEED TO ACQUIRE, WE CAN ASK WHETHER WE ARE RECEIVING TODAY'S GIFTS WITH GRATITUDE AND LIVING FAITHFULLY BEFORE THE ONE WHO GIVES THEM. A MEANINGFUL LIFE IS NOT BUILT SIMPLY BY COLLECTING MORE EXPERIENCES OR ACCOMPLISHMENTS; IT IS FOUND BY LEARNING TO LIVE IN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

PRAYER

GOD, GUARD MY HEART FROM CHASING ACHIEVEMENTS, POSSESSIONS, OR EXPERIENCES AS THOUGH THEY COULD SATISFY ME COMPLETELY. TEACH ME TO RECEIVE YOUR GIFTS WITH GRATITUDE AND FIND MY DEEPEST PURPOSE IN KNOWING AND HONORING YOU. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***WHAT EARTHLY ACHIEVEMENT OR POSSESSION AM I TEMPTED TO TREAT AS THE SOURCE OF MY SATISFACTION?***
- ***READ MATTHEW 6:19–21. HOW DOES JESUS REDIRECT OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS VALUABLE?***

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 4 — ***Trusting God's Wisdom When Life Hurts*** - Job 1

JOB'S STORY BEGINS WITH A MAN WHO HONORS GOD BUT SUDDENLY EXPERIENCES DEVASTATING LOSS. HIS SUFFERING CHALLENGES A COMMON ASSUMPTION: THAT IF WE DO WHAT IS RIGHT, LIFE SHOULD ALWAYS GO WELL. THE BOOK OF JOB REMINDS US THAT SUFFERING IS NOT NECESSARILY EVIDENCE OF PERSONAL FAILURE OR GOD'S REJECTION. SOMETIMES WE EXPERIENCE PAIN THAT WE CANNOT EXPLAIN, AND EASY ANSWERS CAN MAKE THAT PAIN EVEN HARDER TO BEAR. JOB DOES NOT RECEIVE AN IMMEDIATE EXPLANATION FOR EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS TO HIM. INSTEAD, WE ARE INVITED TO SEE THE LIMITS OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING AND THE DEPTH OF GOD'S WISDOM. FAITH DOES NOT REQUIRE US TO PRETEND THAT SUFFERING DOES NOT HURT OR TO SILENCE EVERY DIFFICULT QUESTION. JOB GRIEVES, WRESTLES, AND SPEAKS HONESTLY ABOUT HIS ANGUISH. YET HIS STORY REMINDS US THAT OUR CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT TELL THE WHOLE STORY OF GOD'S CHARACTER. WHEN LIFE BECOMES CONFUSING, WE CAN BRING OUR SORROW TO GOD WITHOUT ASSUMING THAT HE HAS STOPPED BEING WISE OR TRUSTWORTHY. WE MAY NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT GOD IS DOING, BUT OUR LIMITED UNDERSTANDING DOES NOT MEAN THAT GOD HAS LOST HIS WISDOM.

PRAYER

FATHER, WHEN SUFFERING OR DISAPPOINTMENT COMES, HELP ME RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO ASSUME THAT YOU HAVE ABANDONED ME. GIVE ME FAITH TO BRING YOU MY HONEST QUESTIONS AND STRENGTH TO TRUST YOUR CHARACTER WHEN I CANNOT UNDERSTAND MY CIRCUMSTANCES. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***HAVE I EVER ASSUMED THAT A DIFFICULT SEASON MEANT GOD WAS DISPLEASED WITH ME?***
- ***READ PSALM 34:18. WHAT COMFORT DOES THIS PASSAGE OFFER TO THOSE WHO ARE HURTING?***

Happy Thanksgiving

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 5 — ***God Is Just, Even When We Don't Understand*** - *Job 38*

AFTER JOB AND HIS FRIENDS SPEND MUCH OF THE BOOK WRESTLING WITH SUFFERING AND JUSTICE, GOD FINALLY SPEAKS FROM THE WHIRLWIND. INSTEAD OF GIVING JOB A SIMPLE EXPLANATION FOR EVERY PAINFUL EVENT, GOD REVEALS HIS GREATNESS THROUGH QUESTIONS ABOUT CREATION, THE EARTH, THE SEA, AND THE ORDER OF THE WORLD. GOD'S RESPONSE REMINDS JOB THAT THE WISDOM GOVERNING CREATION REACHES FAR BEYOND WHAT ANY HUMAN BEING CAN COMPREHEND. THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT OUR SUFFERING IS INSIGNIFICANT OR THAT GOD DISMISSES OUR QUESTIONS. RATHER, IT SHOWS THAT WE CANNOT JUDGE THE WHOLE STORY FROM THE SMALL PORTION WE CAN SEE. JOB'S FRIENDS REPEATEDLY TRY TO EXPLAIN HIS SUFFERING WITH CONFIDENT BUT MISTAKEN CONCLUSIONS. THEIR ERROR WARNS US AGAINST ASSUMING WE ALWAYS KNOW WHY SOMEONE IS SUFFERING OR WHAT GOD MUST BE DOING. WE ARE CALLED TO PURSUE JUSTICE, COMFORT THOSE WHO HURT, AND SPEAK TRUTHFULLY, WHILE REMAINING HUMBLE ABOUT WHAT WE DO NOT KNOW. GOD'S JUSTICE IS NOT DEPENDENT ON OUR ABILITY TO UNDERSTAND EVERY CIRCUMSTANCE. WE CAN TRUST HIM WITHOUT PRETENDING THAT EVERY QUESTION HAS ALREADY BEEN ANSWERED.

PRAYER

RIGHTEOUS GOD, YOU SEE WHAT I CANNOT SEE AND UNDERSTAND WHAT I CANNOT UNDERSTAND. KEEP ME FROM MAKING CARELESS JUDGMENTS ABOUT OTHERS AND TEACH ME TO RESPOND TO SUFFERING WITH COMPASSION, HUMILITY, AND FAITH IN YOUR JUSTICE. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***WHERE DO I NEED TO PRACTICE HUMILITY INSTEAD OF ASSUMING I UNDERSTAND GOD'S PURPOSES?***
- ***READ ISAIAH 55:8–9. HOW DO THESE VERSES HELP US APPROACH GOD'S WISDOM?***

Happy Thanksgiving

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 6 — *Wisdom That Shows Up in How We Live*
- Proverbs 15

BIBLICAL WISDOM IS NOT SIMPLY AN ABILITY TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS; IT IS DEMONSTRATED IN THE WAY WE SPEAK, RESPOND, WORK, AND TREAT OTHER PEOPLE. PROVERBS 15 TEACHES THAT A GENTLE ANSWER CAN TURN AWAY ANGER, THAT WISE PEOPLE WELCOME CORRECTION, AND THAT HUMILITY IS BETTER THAN PRIDE. THESE TRUTHS MATTER BECAUSE MANY OF OUR MOST IMPORTANT DECISIONS HAPPEN IN ORDINARY MOMENTS. WISDOM APPEARS WHEN WE CHOOSE TO LISTEN RATHER THAN INTERRUPT, RESPOND CALMLY RATHER THAN REACT IN ANGER, ADMIT A MISTAKE RATHER THAN DEFEND OUR PRIDE, AND RECEIVE CORRECTION RATHER THAN REJECT IT. IT ALSO SHAPES THE WAY WE LEAD, SERVE, AND HANDLE DISAGREEMENT. WE MAY PRAY FOR WISDOM ABOUT OUR FUTURE WHILE OVERLOOKING THE OPPORTUNITIES GOD GIVES US TO PRACTICE WISDOM TODAY. BEFORE ASKING GOD TO ENTRUST US WITH GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES, WE CAN ASK HIM TO SHAPE OUR CHARACTER IN THE RESPONSIBILITIES ALREADY IN OUR HANDS. A WISE LIFE IS BUILT THROUGH DAILY CHOICES THAT HONOR GOD, EVEN WHEN THOSE CHOICES SEEM SMALL OR UNNOTICED.

PRAYER
LORD, MAKE ME WISE IN MY WORDS, PATIENT IN MY RESPONSES, AND HUMBLE ENOUGH TO RECEIVE CORRECTION. HELP ME PRACTICE YOUR WISDOM IN MY RELATIONSHIPS, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND ORDINARY DECISIONS TODAY. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***WHICH AREA NEEDS MORE WISDOM IN MY LIFE RIGHT NOW: MY WORDS, MY REACTIONS, OR MY WILLINGNESS TO RECEIVE CORRECTION?***
- ***READ JAMES 3:17. WHAT QUALITIES DISTINGUISH WISDOM THAT COMES FROM GOD?***

Week 19

God is Wisdom

Day 7 — ***Trusting the One Who Knows the Whole Story*** - Job 42

AT THE END OF JOB'S STORY, JOB ACKNOWLEDGES THAT GOD'S WISDOM EXCEEDS HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING. HE HAS ENCOUNTERED GOD IN A WAY THAT CHANGES HIS PERSPECTIVE, EVEN THOUGH HE HAS NOT RECEIVED A DETAILED EXPLANATION FOR EVERY MOMENT OF HIS SUFFERING. THE CONCLUSION REMINDS US THAT FAITH IS NOT A GUARANTEE THAT EVERY MYSTERY WILL BE SOLVED IN THIS LIFETIME. SOMETIMES WISDOM MEANS ACCEPTING THAT WE ARE CREATURES WITH LIMITED UNDERSTANDING WHO DEPEND ON A GOD WHOSE KNOWLEDGE IS COMPLETE. PROVERBS TEACHES US TO SEEK WISDOM, ECCLESIASTES TEACHES US TO RECOGNIZE THE LIMITS OF EARTHLY PURSUITS, AND JOB TEACHES US TO REMAIN HUMBLE BEFORE GOD EVEN WHEN LIFE IS PAINFUL AND CONFUSING. TOGETHER, THESE BOOKS INVITE US TO PURSUE WISDOM WITHOUT BECOMING PROUD, ENJOY GOD'S GIFTS WITHOUT MAKING THEM OUR ULTIMATE PURPOSE, AND ENDURE SUFFERING WITHOUT CONCLUDING THAT GOD IS UNJUST OR UNTRUSTWORTHY. WE CAN ASK DIFFICULT QUESTIONS, SEEK WISE COUNSEL, AND MAKE THOUGHTFUL DECISIONS WHILE CONTINUING TO PLACE OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S CHARACTER. WE DO NOT NEED TO KNOW THE WHOLE STORY TO TRUST THE ONE WHO DOES.

PRAYER

FATHER, THANK YOU FOR BEING WISER THAN I AM AND FAITHFUL EVEN WHEN I DO NOT UNDERSTAND YOUR WAYS. HELP ME SEEK YOUR WISDOM, LIVE WITH HUMILITY, AND TRUST YOU THROUGH BOTH JOYFUL AND PAINFUL SEASONS. MAY MY LIFE SHOW THAT MY CONFIDENCE RESTS IN WHO YOU ARE, NOT IN HAVING EVERY ANSWER. AMEN.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- ***WHAT IS ONE QUESTION OR UNCERTAINTY I NEED TO ENTRUST TO GOD RATHER THAN TRYING TO CONTROL?***
- ***READ ROMANS 11:33–36. HOW DOES THIS PASSAGE ENCOURAGE HUMILITY AND WORSHIP BEFORE GOD'S WISDOM?***