Wise Words

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[0:00] This is the First Mustang Pulpit Podcast, a podcast of the weekly preaching and teaching at First Mustang. Thank you for joining us.!

I'm honing in on one verse, but that really will be kind of the launching pad for what I want to do tonight and how I want to walk us through this particular verse, but then even just the greater subject of wisdom and walking in the way of wisdom.
What does it mean to be wise? What does it mean to be foolish? Well, you have worldly answers to those questions.
What it would mean to be wise, perhaps, is you have a high IQ. Maybe you had a high ACT score. You're knowledgeable. You're book smart.
You're heady. You're smart. Or in Boston, we'd say you're wicked smart. The way of the wise.
[1:30] The world would define it these ways. Or foolishness, perhaps, just the opposite, would be perhaps a low IQ, low ACT score.

Not very book smart. I can't repeat what we'd say in Boston, but just take me at my word. Wisdom or the wise and the foolish.
Well, the Bible would answer this differently. The way of the wise, as seen primarily in the wisdom literature found throughout Scripture, would point us to the practical application of God's Word to daily living.
The practical application of God's Word to daily living. Or you could say it's living in the fear of the Lord and for His glory.
It's the idea of being wise. Wise. Now, we could flesh that out in a variety of ways that we see primarily in the book of Proverbs.
[2:52] The foolish, the Bible would say, are those who are morally depraved. Those who live for self. Those who live for worldly pleasures.

And as Joey mentioned this morning, or passions of the flesh. What it means to be foolish. To be self-centered.
Living for your own glory rather than for the glory of God. Disobeying God's commands in order to do things your own way.
Well, tonight I want to turn our attention to one particular verse in Proverbs 25. Verse 11, which the ESV translates, A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.
[4:03] I love what one commentator said. When looking at this particular simile, it comes in a cluster of similes in verses 11 through 14.

So I'll just read on down. Verse 12 says, Verse 13, Like the cold of snow in the time of harvest is a faithful messenger to those who send him.
He refreshes the soul of his masters. And then like clouds in wind without rain is a man who boasts of a gift.
He does not give. Short, pithy sayings that carry and convey specific truth.
Another commentator defined a proverb as a truth couched in a form that is easy to remember. A philosophy based on experience and a rule for conduct.
[5:17] This one's my favorite though. Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience. That's good.

Proverbs are short sentences drawn from long experience. So if we were to look at this particular proverb like I just read and like I mentioned, we can see that it's in a series of likes or similes.
The idea is that it would convey a truth alongside of that which would have been known by the original audience.

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They would understand this. So verse 14, the lesson would be, Don't promise gifts and fail to give them. Don't promise a gift and fail to give them.
That's like a cloud and wind without rain. So as a man who boasts of a gift, he does not give. Verse 13, a faithful person can be very refreshing to the person who is counting on him or her to complete a task.
[6:33] You see that there as he compares it to the cold of snow and the time of harvest. So the faithful messenger to those who send him, he refreshes the soul of his masters.

He's dependable. He's a man of his word. Then we see in verse 12 that a rebuke should be a benefit to a listener.
A rebuke should be a benefit to a listener, which I would add this, a mark of humility is that you're able to receive a rebuke in order to try and grow.
That you may learn. That you'd be a student. That you wouldn't just simply reject a rebuke, but that you'd listen and ask the Lord to teach you in the midst of this rebuke.
That's for a whole nother sermon. And then verse 11. The primary meaning of this particular text is a wise word spoken at a proper time is a thing of beauty.
[7:48] A wise word spoken at the proper time is a thing of beauty. So what I want to do tonight is just walk through this.

I think I've got four points and we have a lot to do tonight. So I'm going to try to end us on time to be able to present the new members at the conclusion of the service.
And so what I want to do is just walk through four points that are going to take us from the very specific, looking just at this verse, and then we'll pull back or we'll widen the lens, looking at how can this be said of me in my life?
How do I make application of this in my life? How do I become a person who knows what to say and when to say it?
But before we get there, number one, what exactly is happening in this verse? What exactly is happening in this verse?
[8:57] Well, a good inductive Bible study method would be to make observations. And you make observations like the apples of gold.

You make an observation of the setting of silver. And then you make an observation of a word fitly spoken. Well, the apples could be pointing to some sort of fruit, could be literally an apple, or it could be another fruit that is golden in its color.
The idea would be that it is something of beauty. But not only that, but it would have a fresh scent. It would be a sweet-smelling scent if we're talking about a literal apple or a literal piece of fruit.
And then the backdrop is that it's in settings of silver. So that which is important and valuable. And that which offsets the beauty of the gold.
You think about the gold set against the silver. And what a thing of beauty that is. So is a word that is fitly or aptly spoken.
[10:14] When it is spoken according to truth. And when it is given in a timely manner. So when you speak that which is true. And you speak it when it's supposed to be spoken.

It is a thing of beauty. Now, some commentators point to this and say that it could be that what we're looking at is something that is artistic in nature.
So it would be not just a literal fruit and literal setting of silver like a bowl. But that it could be something of art. That you would have the backdrop as silver.
And then you'd have the golden fruit that is set in this art. Again, the point being, it is a thing of beauty. Now, if we were to cross-reference this, we could cross-reference this with Proverbs 15, 23. To make an apt answer is a joy to a man in a word in season how good it is. Proverbs 24, 26.
[11:22] Whoever gives an honest answer kisses the lips. See the beauty of this poetic wisdom literature?

It paints a picture that is memorable as it is driving home the truth that we need to apply to our lives. Now, one way that we could help us and that would be a help in understanding the beauty of this verse is to contrast it.
And if you were to contrast it with a series of Proverbs that the foolish speak. Let me just read a few of them for you.
Which, again, you know me. And I love to point out helpful resources to you. This is a very helpful resource. Tremper Longman III, How to Read Proverbs.

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[12:25] Great resource. How to Read Proverbs, Tremper Longman. Tremper Longman says, as we look at an anatomy of false words.

If we were to look at an anatomy of false words, we will find several different categories that we could say this is a mark of the foolish.
All right? Let me just read a few for you here. Insults or slander? Proverbs 10, 18. Hiding hatred makes you a liar.
Slandering others makes you a fool. Or Proverbs 20, 20. If you insult your father or your mother, the lamp of your life will be snuffed out.
Goes on. Gossip or rumor. Proverbs 11, 13. The gossip goes around telling secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence.
[13:34] Proverbs 18, 8. Rumors are dainty morsels that sink deep into one's heart. Packs a punch, paints a picture.

Not only telling gossip or spreading rumor that is frowned on by Proverbs, but also listening to it. Proverbs 17, 4. Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip.
Liars pay close attention to slander. Flattery or bragging. We see this in the prime case of flattery and the promiscuous woman who wants to use the young man for her own purposes.
In Proverbs 7, verses 21 and 22. She seduced him with her pretty speech and enticed him with her flattery. He followed her at once like an ox going to the slaughter.
Proverbs 26, 23. Smooth words may hide a wicked heart just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot.
[14:46] Bragging. Proverbs 27, 2. Let someone else praise you, not your own mouth. A stranger, not your own lips. And of course, if we were to turn to the New Testament in the book of James, we would read of the great danger that the tongue has.

James has been called the Proverbs of the New Testament. And James details out that how the tongue, though small in nature, can set a blaze, a fire that is uncontrollable and unquenchable.
The idea behind that is that he's pointing out the way of the foolish and the way of the wise. So let's contrast that, though, with the wise.
We see this in woman, the contrast between woman folly and woman wisdom. We see this in Proverbs 8, verses 7 to 9.
Woman wisdom, or lady wisdom, says, I speak the truth and detest every kind of deception. My advice is wholesome. There is nothing devious or crooked in it.
[16:03] My words are plain to anyone with understanding, clear to those with knowledge. The words of wise are true and helpful.

Proverbs 10, 11. The words of the wise are a life-giving fountain. The words of the wicked conceal violent intentions. We see that Proverbs 13, 3 says, Those who control their tongue will have a long life.
Opening your mouth can ruin everything. We see in Proverbs 17, 28, Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent.
When they shut with their mouths shut, they seem intelligent. How about the gentle nature of wise words?
Proverbs 15, 4. Gentle words are a tree of life. A deceitful tongue crushes the spirit. Proverbs 16, 24. Kind words are like honey, sweet to the soul, and healthy for the body.
[17:04] One last one, coming back to the idea of rebuke, and that being something that is helpful. Proverbs 27, 5. An open rebuke is better than hidden love.

Verse 6. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses. You see the contrast that is found throughout the book of Proverbs between words that come from the foolish that are destructive, words that come from the wise that are helpful, or they are fitting.
They are like apples of gold in settings of silver. So, what is happening in this text is that which is spoken, and the timing in which it is spoken is a thing of beauty.
And my prayer is, for my life and for yours, this would be said of us. That we are a people who speak words that are true, that are accurate, that are helpful, not words that destroy, and tear down, and spread gossip, and slander.
Oh, that we'd be a people of wisdom. So, let's zoom out, though, in point number two. Point number two. When does this happen? When does this happen?
[18:37] So, what is happening in this text? We just looked at it. But now, when does this happen? Well, if you were to look with me, in fact, go ahead and turn to the beginning of Proverbs.

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Proverbs chapter one. And we see the purpose statement of the beginning of wisdom or the beginning of knowledge.
Of course, you know it. In verse seven, in the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. And then he contrasts that.
Fools despise wisdom and instruction. But look with me in verse one of chapter one. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, to know wisdom and instruction, to understand words of insight, to receive instruction in wise dealing, in righteousness, justice, in equity, to give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth.
Let the wise hear and increase in learning. And let the one who understands obtain guidance to understand a proverb and a saying. The words of the wise and their riddles.
[19:52] The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. You don't need to turn there, but Proverbs 9.10 would say, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And the knowledge of the Holy One in sight. Proverbs 14, verses 26 to 27. In the fear of the Lord, one has strong confidence and his children will have a refuge.
In the fear of the Lord is a fountain of life that one may turn away from the snares of death. So it begins with the fear of the Lord.
Now maybe you're here tonight and you say, Jeff, I don't know what is the fear of the Lord. Does that mean that we don't know when he's going to lose his cool?
We don't know when he's going to strike? We don't know when he's going to play games with us? No. We go back to the character and nature of God.
[20:58] He is perfect. He doesn't play games. He is good. He is kind. He is sovereign. He is wise. He is gracious.

He is kind and merciful. He's all-powerful. We go back to the character and nature of God as seen throughout the pages of Scripture. So to be one who is smitten with the fear of the Lord is to understand who he is and who we are.
It's to have reverence and awe for him that he is God and I am not. His way is perfect and my way is not perfect. He knows all things and I know very little.
I know few things. So, the beginning of wisdom would be the fear of the Lord.
But let me take you to the New Testament. I think this is so important. Turn with me to 2 Timothy. 2 Timothy chapter 3. When does this happen?
[22:11] When do I become a person of wisdom? You could say the Old Testament points to the fear of the Lord, black and white.

But I want you to take note of what Paul writes to Timothy here in a very familiar passage. However, let me begin reading in verse 14.
Paul writing to young Timothy, the pastor, but as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
Jesus. It's powerful. Pointing to you've been acquainted with, you have been taught that which comes from the sacred writings which would point back to the Old Testament and the Old Testament is able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
when this happens is at the moment of conversion. When you trust Christ as Savior and Lord, even as Joey preached the glorious gospel this morning, which let me just say, never grow weary or tired of hearing the gospel proclaimed because in it not only have we been introduced into being a child of God but it's that which we stand in and which we will be glorified in one day.
[24:01] So my brother, great job this morning. What an encouragement as we read from and heard from Titus. But this is where it begins.

How I go from being one who is a fool to one who is wise is through faith in Jesus Christ. That's what scripture points to.
But take note of verses 16 and 17. All scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.
The inspired, inerrant, infallible, authoritative, all-sufficient word of God is where we are taught and reproved and corrected and trained in righteousness.

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righteousness. So, we see here that this makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. But turn back to your left real quick to 1 Corinthians.
[25:27] 1 Corinthians chapter 1. Let me read this passage for you. chapter 1, verse 30.

And because of Him, you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness, and sanctification and redemption so that it is written, let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.
This is when it happens, when we are found in Christ. That's a repeated phrase throughout the New Testament. The idea of the identification. This is your identity.
You are found in Christ. You are a follower of Christ, a disciple of Christ, a Christian, a little Christ, a disciple, a learner from Christ and of Christ.
This is when this happens. We go from being foolish to being wise. And my contention would be that you don't become a person who speaks words that are fitly or aptly spoken apart from saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
[27:09] Jeff, do you mean that there are non-believers who can say kind things? Well, of course they can. There's non-believers who can say kind words, but what we're talking about is the way of wisdom defined by the Bible.

Not just kind words, but biblical words, like apples of gold and settings of silver is a word aptly spoken. So, this happens when we come to faith in Jesus Christ.
Let me move on. Number three, what exactly happens? What exactly happens? Well, we know from Scripture and even from what we heard this morning, from the sermon this morning, but in the reading that Jeremy read from Ephesians chapter two, verses one through ten, what happens is that in 2 Corinthians 5 17, you have been brought from death to life and you are a new creation in Christ.
You've been born again, John chapter three. It's the idea that you are now a child of God, not a child of wrath. You've been accepted in the beloved.
You can say with the apostle Paul, there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. this is what happens.
[28:42] But Ezekiel also references this and Jeremiah as well in the idea of the new covenant is that your heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh.

You are given a new heart. Hence, you are a new creation in Christ. And my submission to you is that scripture points to the heart that dictates the way the mouth speaks.
Matthew chapter 15 verse 18, but what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart and this defiles a person.
Let me read what Longman writes here as well that I think will be helpful for us. The idea of the heart.
What exactly happens? A new heart is given by God. Proverbs 12 23, the wise don't make a show of their knowledge, but the hearts of fools broadcast their foolishness.
[29:53] Proverbs 16 23, from a wise mind or heart comes wise speech. The words of the wise are persuasive. Proverbs 18 4, wise words are like deep waters.

Wisdom flows from the wise like a bubbling brook. Proverbs 10 20, the words of the godly are like sterling silver. The heart of a fool is worthless.
Proverbs 26 23, smooth words may hide a wicked heart just as a pretty glaze covers a clay pot as I read earlier. The idea of the heart.
What exactly happens is you are given a new heart and with that new heart at the moment of conversion sets you on a course of what Joey mentioned even this morning of sanctification or we might call it progressive sanctification.
It is growth in grace. It's growth in Christlikeness. It's becoming a wise person. So this leads to point number four.
[31:07] How do I grow in this wisdom? How do I grow in this wisdom? Now, the answer is not rocket science.

The answer is by reading and meditating on the word of God. How do you grow in wisdom?
By reading and meditating on the word of God. Where do you get that from? We just read it in Proverbs chapter one. And as you walk through the book of Proverbs, which by the way, let me encourage you.
I know you've probably heard this before. Maybe you've practiced this. But read a chapter of Proverbs daily as corresponds to the day of the month.

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So today is Proverbs 17. Read the entire chapter 17 of Proverbs. And then tomorrow is chapter 18. Then the next day, 19.
[32:06] And just do that on repeat. Let that be a part of your Bible reading. Why? Because you're just checking a box? No, because you want to grow in wisdom.

And wisdom cries out. Wisdom calls out. You read through Proverbs chapter eight. You read through Proverbs chapter two. The call is there to come and to listen and to learn.
How often do we neglect that simple practice? Neglecting even coming to his word and reading his word and learning and growing. But it doesn't, it's not just confined to the book of Proverbs, but even Psalm one would point us to this.
The idea of meditating on the word of God day and night so that I may be one who prospers. That it may yield fruit in its season.
Psalm 119 repeatedly points us back to the importance of loving the word of God, knowing the word of God. If you haven't turned back to Proverbs, that's good.
[33:13] You're still in the New Testament. Go to Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter three. Verse 16.

Excuse me. Let me back up to verse 15. Colossians 3 15. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body.
And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
And take note, verse 17. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.
This idea of letting the word of Christ dwell in you richly. And then you see the way it corresponds to 2 Timothy 3 16 and 17.
[34:37] The idea is though that we are helping one another. We're teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom. It's a way of wisdom.

So that when I'm meeting and there's times that I need to be corrected with my speech, that somebody loves me enough to say that to me. They love me enough to say, Jeff, you just said this or what you said would create a faulty view of God.
And I need to be one who is wise, who would receive that rebuke as an act of love. And not like an enemy who just multiplies kisses over and over again.
False flattery. And we could flesh this out in so many ways. But you see it even in this immediate text here. The singing of songs and hymns and spiritual songs.
It's why we do what we do. Which we just heard our pastor say this. We've heard John say this. What we sing matters. It's not just filling the time slot in a service.
[35:52] Just to say, whatever is hip, whatever is cool, whatever is on Caleb, whatever is popular, that we just sing that. No, we sing the word of God.

That's important. That we sing the word of God. We're singing this as a reminder to ourselves and to one another. So when you sing, and we're all singing in here together, we look across and we see others who've gone through a difficult season.
And they're singing, it is well, oh my soul. And that bolsters our faith. Or those who have been struggling with doubt and depression and you name it.
And they're singing, and then we sing the song that he will hold me fast. That bolsters our faith. That encourages us. It grows us in wisdom.
And could I put it this way? We sing songs that are like apples of gold in settings of silver.
[37:04] They're apt. They're appropriate. They're timely. In conclusion, when considering Israel's sin and the suffering servant's obedience being Jesus Christ, in the third of the four servant songs found in the book of Isaiah, Isaiah chapter 50, verse 4, The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught that I may know how to sustain with a word him who is weary.

Morning by morning, He awakens my ear to hear those who are taught.
Oh, listen. Our Savior, our Lord, is the perfect example of one who spoke words of truth and at the opportune time.
May it be said of us that we would be a people of wisdom, that we would be a people who would look like our Savior so that our speech is like apples of gold in settings of silver.
Let's pray together. Our Father, we pause and thank you for the truth of your word. We're thankful for the wisdom literature that we find in the Old Testament that leads us to the suffering servant in

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the prophet Isaiah that leads us to Christ himself, the God-man, that leads us to his death, burial, resurrection, that leads us to faith in Jesus Christ that the Scriptures point us to that we may be saved and sanctified.
[39:28] And our prayer is that when it comes to progressive sanctification, we would be a people whose words are true and timely.

forgive us when we've let our tongues go and they've been destructive, harmful, damaging. Forgive us when we have sought to get a laugh at the expense of another. Forgive us when we've gossiped rather than truly prayed for in our closets.
Forgive us when we've slandered so that we could feel better about ourselves by putting another down. Forgive us when we have critiqued others with a standard that we couldn't even meet ourselves.
Forgive us when we have gossiped and slandered and berated brothers and sisters in Christ. Christ. And oh Lord, would you teach us, mold us, shape us into the image of Christ that we would be a people whose words are marked by the way of the wise.
[40:53] Oh, that we would be a people that bring glory and honor to you with our speech. That is our prayer.

Give us opportunity this week to live this out. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.

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