

**“Living Wisely.”**  
**1 Kings 2:1-12, 3:3-14**  
**Ephesians 5:15-20**

There are two birds that are often found flying around the deserts in North America: One is the hummingbird and the other is the vulture.

The vulture feeds on rotting flesh, and the hummingbird feeds on the colorful blossoms of desert plants.

The vulture feeds on what was. It fills itself with what is dead and gone. But the hummingbird lives on what is. On the present. It fills itself with freshness and life. Each bird finds what it is looking for. We all do. (1)

This is what is found in each of our texts for today. In First Kings we see Solomon asking God for “an understanding mind” -- in other words, “wisdom.” Then the writer of Ephesians (Paul or someone else) says: “*Be careful how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time.....*and then down further: “*Do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit.*”

Each day of our lives we are faced with a wide array of choices. As we all know, we will have to live with whatever choices we make. This calls for wisdom. *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines wisdom as the “power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action.”

We often think of wisdom as being acquired through age -- and this is often the case -- but one should not assume that they are wise simply because they have lived a long time. Wisdom comes to a person not by life experience only, but also by one’s exposure to truth. There have been older people who deny the Holocaust or who belong to the Flat Earth Society, so let’s not attribute wisdom to chronological age alone. Being exposed to truth over falsehood has much to do with making a person wise.

Around a century ago, automaker Henry Ford asked electrical genius Charlie Steinmetz to build the generators for his factory. One day the generators ground to a halt, and repairmen couldn’t find the problem. So Ford called in Steinmetz, who tinkered with the machines for a few hours and then threw the switch. The generators came to life! Later that week Henry Ford received a bill from Charlie Steinmetz in the amount of \$10,000.

Henry Ford according to some accounts, was a bit tight-fisted (I can’t verify whether this is fair to say about him or not.) and he balked at the idea

of forking out \$10,000 for just a few hours of work.

Steinmetz replied this way: “*For tinkering with the generators, \$10. For knowing where to tinker, \$9,990.*” Ford paid the bill.

The repairmen who couldn’t find the problem with the generators had knowledge alright, but it was Charlie Steinmetz who had wisdom. The difference between “knowledge” and “wisdom” is that knowledge is knowing *how* to do something --wisdom is knowing *what* to do. Wisdom comes not by knowing how to use a tool, but in knowing which tool to use.

This translates into the way that we live out the lives that God gave us. It isn’t enough that we simply know a lot of things -- it is even more important to know which road to take, to make good choices and right decisions.

King Solomon was the ruler of Israel. What does somebody in a big, important job like that need more than anything? Wisdom. So Solomon asked for wisdom.

Lisa is a 35-year old mother who stays at home with her kids. That’s a big, important job, too. So what does Lisa need more than anything? Wisdom.

Justin drives a truck over the interstate. What does Justin need most of all? Wisdom.

Michelle is an elementary schoolteacher. What is Michelle’s greatest need? Wisdom.

What is the greatest need that ANYONE has? It’s wisdom. The power to recognize the best road to take and the will to take it!

Most of us are the products of the choices we make. I waited until I was 32 years old before I got married, and lo and behold I met my wife! That turned out to be a wise choice and I am reaping the blessings of it today! On another matter, every time my stomach growls I am inclined to eat a whole bag of cheese curds. THAT is an UNWISE choice -- and now I have to go almost cold turkey and get rid of excess pounds!

Wisdom is about making good choices.

The Bible itself is loaded with wisdom. In Ephesians 4 and 5, Paul makes a list of all kinds of wise ways of living our lives. Things, that if we apply them, will keep us out of all kinds of trouble! He lists such things as:

*Put off your old self* (That means repent.)

*Put off falsehood* (That means be truthful and genuine.)

*Do not let the sun go down on your anger.* (That means forgive.)

*Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouths.* (That means don't gossip or belittle someone.)

*Get rid of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, and malice.* (That means choose your battles carefully.)

*There should be no hint of sexual immorality, impurity, or greed.* (Follow the Ten Commandments.)

*No obscenity, foolish talk, or coarse jesting.* (Speak as though a tape of what you say will be played back for your grandchildren to listen to.)

The Bible is loaded with wisdom! Yet, how many of us -- myself included -- fail to live up to its teachings! We have just seen an abbreviated list of wise choices raised by the Apostle Paul (Or whoever wrote this letter to the church in Ephesus). The people from our Tuesday morning Bible study have come up with a list as well. I'll share those with you:

*“Don't spend your days watching TV. Get outside.”*

*“Spend more time with your children or grandchildren.”*

*“Don't be nasty with people. Be pleasant, instead.”*

*“Don't drink too much. After the first couple of drinks it stops being a beverage and becomes a poison.”*

*“Don't smoke -- that's poison, too.”*

It's all about the choices we make. Every choice we make produces a

result. The question to ask beforehand is: “*Where is this going to take me?*”

A member of Alcoholics Anonymous once sent Ann Landers a letter revealing how he expected to get one thing from alcohol and instead got another. Here is what he wrote:

*Dear Ann Landers,*

*We drank for joy and became miserable.*

*We drank for sophistication and became obnoxious.*

*We drank for friendship and made enemies.*

*We drank for sleep and awakened without rest.*

*We drank for strength and felt weak.*

*We drank “medicinally” and acquired health problems.*

*We drank for bravery and became afraid.*

*We drank to make conversation easier and slurred our speech.*

*We drank to feel heavenly and ended up feeling like hell.*

*We drank to forget and were forever haunted.*

*We drank for freedom and became slaves.*

Drinking is okay, but too much drinking is unwise. Cheese curds are okay, but eating a whole bag of them is unwise.

Getting angry with someone is a normal emotion, but un-forgiveness is unwise. Being angry at God is a normal feeling -- and God is big enough to take it, but rejecting God is unwise.

Human beings were created by God to be in relationship with one another, but an inappropriate relationship is unwise. Money is a good servant, but a terrible master.

Two birds fly over our nation's deserts: One is the hummingbird and the other is the vulture. The vultures roam the desert and they find rotting meat because that is what they look for. But the hummingbirds ignore the rotten stuff and seek after the good.

God grant us the wisdom to seek only what is good. To dwell on only what is good. To think and to say only what is good.....and to live accordingly.

AMEN.

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(1). Brett Blair