

Proverbs' wisdom in how we represent God

Continued from page 5B relationship with God. We must understand this in order to understand today's lesson.

A godly father desires nothing more than that his children learn how to live as God intended them to. Solomon was eager to have his son live rightly. Wisdom is not something that comes automatically. We must seek to attain it.

The first step to wisdom is to receive the teaching of the wise. A person must be receptive to the truth if it is to take root. Once the student has heard the truth he needs to hide, or store up, this wisdom so that it is available to him when he needs it. This assumes that the student values wisdom. A wise student

recognizes the usefulness of what he is learning even if it is not immediately apparent to him. He recognizes that all wisdom will be useful someday.

2. Why should we pursue wisdom with great passion?

The author in Proverbs makes the case for the importance of wisdom by multiplying the "if" clauses. By this repetitiveness, he also pointed out to the fact that the pursuit of wisdom should dominate our lives and involve much effort.

Great urgency is conveyed by the verbs used in verse 3. We are not to soullessly pursue the truth. We are to cry after knowledge and call longingly for it.

As a former college student, I realize the importance of

learning vast amounts of information for exams. Often, it took days of studying to firmly grasp what I needed to know. Some of the textbooks were interesting to read while others were very dry reading. Often, I had to spend late nights studying for tests so that I could recall the information when I needed it. Studying was not an option. I had to do it in order to survive.

When it comes to getting the wisdom of God, we should put forth the same effort in learning and understanding His wisdom. The Bible is not the easiest book to read, but we must be diligent in trying to learn wisdom. Some wisdom will not come easy, but we must always seek the Holy Spirit so that we can

understand the wisdom God is trying to give us and apply it to our lives. God's wisdom is most important, and we should put most of our energy in getting it. Giving up on getting wisdom is not an option for Christians.

3. What kind of fear of God is a healthy thing?

Verse 5 tells us that wisdom leads us to an understanding of the fear of God. Proverbs 9:10 tells us that wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord. This fear is not abject terror but a healthy sense of awe and respect as we acknowledge Him for who He is. Fear of the Lord and knowledge of Him are nearly synonymous, for one cannot properly know Him without

having a profound sense of reverence. He is all-powerful and perfectly just. We can come nowhere near His level of greatness.

Holding on to Wisdom (Prov. 3:1-6)

4. Why is it important to remember that the blessings spoken of in Proverbs involve principles, not prophecies?

In our fallen world and with our wayward hearts, it is not enough for us to just receive wisdom; we must work to retain wisdom's hold in our lives. A person who goes to school to learn a profession should not forget the information that was taught after he/she graduates. Likewise, we should not forget the wisdom that we learned because

we will need it for the rest of our lives. Solomon emphasized that our obedience to the truth should not be just a matter of outward conformity or intellectual agreement. We are to store wisdom in our hearts. Our desire should be to live according to wisdom.

Living by wisdom has great benefits. We must remember, of course, that Proverbs is presenting principles, not prophecies. Good people can suffer setbacks and even die young. Last month, we studied Job and the setbacks he suffered. We know that Job was a very upright man, yet he suffered more drawbacks than most of us will in our lifetimes. Of course, Job was rewarded in the end.

'Da Vinci Code' book inaccuracies

Continued from page 5B tongue confess that "Jesus Christ is Lord" (using a title for God).

This isn't Nicaea's precise formulation. But within a couple of decades of the Crucifixion, Hurtado comments, Jesus "shares a unique status with God" and receives "expressions of devotion that are otherwise reserved for God alone."

Later in the first century, Jesus' divinity was taught in the final versions of the four New Testament Gospels that we know. There's corroboration from a pagan outsider, Pliny the Younger, reporting in A.D. 112 from what is present-day Turkey to the Emperor Trajan. He wrote that during worship, Christians "chant antiphonally a hymn to Christ as to a god."

Worship of Jesus wasn't simply some carry-over from pagan Romans' deification of human figures such as the emperors, Hurtado contends. All the earliest worshippers of Jesus were devout Jews who were religiously insulated from paganism and devoted to the one God. How Jesus'

divinity related to Jewish monotheism, a complicated question, involved centuries of further discussion.

Likewise, Paul Hartog of Iowa's conservative Faith Baptist Theological Seminary, writing in Christian Research Journal, cites New Testament passages that call Jesus God, among them John 1:1, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8 and 2 Peter 1:1. But mainly, Hartog surveys the earliest Christian writers after New Testament times. Examples:

• Ignatius of Antioch, martyred around A.D. 107, described Jesus with phrases including "Jesus Christ our God," "God in the flesh" and "God himself was manifested in human form."

• Some manuscripts say Polycarp wrote around A.D. 115 about "our Lord and God Jesus Christ."

• The second epistle of Clement, the earliest surviving Christian sermon from that era, preached that believers should "think of Jesus Christ as of God, as the judge of the living and the dead."

• Justin Martyr, executed

for his faith around A.D. 165, said Jesus is "God and man" and "deserving to be worshipped as God."

• Melito of Sardis preached around A.D. 170 that Jesus is "by nature God and man" and that "the almighty God has made his dwelling through Christ."

• Athenagoras of Athens wrote in A.D. 178 that Christians "speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" and "declare both their power in union and their distinction in order."

• Irenaeus of Lyons wrote around A.D. 180 that every one believed Jesus "was very man and that he was very God," and that his title Emmanuel signifies "his essence, that he is God." Irenaeus continued, "God, then, was made man, and the Lord himself did save us."

On the Net: Hurtado bio; <http://www.dived.ac.uk/larryhurtado>

Christian Research Journal: <http://www.eqip.org/journal/index.asp>

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