

## The Reality of Wisdom

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31



Wisdom, in Proverbs

is not an idea to be grasped  
or a moral slogan that can be printed  
on trendy pineapple patterned stationary.

Wisdom is feminine,

and she is personified as one who calls to us  
**not** in a still small voice  
within the private chambers of our heart.

Wisdom does **not**  
call us in the study carols  
of the world's best libraries;  
she does **not** raise her voice  
in the silence of our prayer closets.

Wisdom does **not** offer herself privy  
to the few who work hard and diligently;

**Wisdom offers herself openly  
to everyone and everything.**

Wisdom is calling

in the public square down town;  
she is at the city gates  
putting up her billboard on Hwys 40, 321 and 16;  
she is at every door and threshold  
beckoning to all,  
all that lives.

And it seems she is sharing her truth:

that she is prevenient  
and embodies age that seems ageless  
—having been the first  
of God's creative endeavors:

“the Lord created me at the beginning of his work,  
the first of his acts of long ago.”

Her truth is that she has always  
worked alongside God:  
“then I was beside him like a master worker.”

She is play and creativity,  
she is a delight to God,  
**and**  
like the Lord God,  
she delights in us.

Some might think of Wisdom  
as the pearl of great price.  
Most of the time  
when we talk about wisdom  
we, who are thinkers and feelers,  
we are either seeking Wisdom’s discernment  
as our personal benefit;  
or we are ready to dispense wisdom  
on others and their situations.

Our consumerism infiltrates  
even the sacred desire for wisdom.  
And then again  
there are times when think  
we have to work hard to attain wisdom;  
again, as if she were something  
to be grasped only in the mind and heart.

But perhaps you’ve heard the phrase,  
*‘knowledge is acquired, wisdom is revealed’?*

Wisdom, knowledge, insight,  
they all share a common thread for us.  
But here in scripture  
Wisdom goes beyond  
what we might consider the conventional  
—beyond something gained, attained or dispensed.

Wisdom according to the book of Proverbs  
permeates our reality.  
The poetry of it all is breathtaking.



She was there  
when the earth's foundations were dug  
and set in place.  
She was there when God told the waters  
to only go this far,  
mapping out the shore lines and beaches;  
she was there  
in the swirling chaos  
of creativity and energy and inspiration  
before the earth (maybe the cosmos) were formed,  
before there were even bits of soil!  
This is certainly a revelation,  
to tendency to our limited perceptions, right?

I asked for wisdom  
from the hive mind.  
And there were revelations.  
Though it may sound trite,  
someone shared this with me,  
"You have to accept the fact  
that sometimes you are the pigeon  
and sometimes you are the statue."

I'll give you a minute with that  
if you need it.

Thank you, Claude Chabrol French filmmaker,  
—and it is the truth.  
When I crowdsourced for my sermon

on Facebook this week,  
asking about wisdom,  
many of you gave great responses.

And then again there were a lot of responses,  
that bordered on cliché  
and seemed more like 'pithy slogans'.<sup>1</sup>

My question was inadvertently perhaps set up  
to give me those kinds of responses:  
tell me the best wisdom you've received  
or what is a piece of wisdom  
you'd like to pass on.

And lots of people answered with conventional wisdom  
saying things like,  
"Nothing good happens after midnight,"  
"to each his or her own,"  
and "everyone is weird"  
(though again I'm not sure if that is cliché or just a fact).

What we define as wisdom in our lives,  
as is interesting;  
lots of the wisdom responses  
shared with me were either  
sayings from trusted family members  
or conventional wisdom,  
idioms that Americans love.

Our conventional wisdom is usually  
"defined as ideas so accepted  
they go unquestioned.  
Unfortunately, conventional wisdom  
is often wrong."<sup>2</sup>

We can say things like,  
*nothing good happens after midnight*

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<sup>1</sup> *Pithy Slogans* is borrowed language from Tom Long

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/9-bits-of-conventional-wisdom-you-should-ignore/>

—but that's not really true  
if your child was born at 2am.  
Taking a nod to our health,  
we used to think it was wise  
to skip the butter

—how many of us remember  
the brown tub of Country Crock on your table—  
thank goodness we are wiser,  
butter really is better!

We say wisdom comes with age  
and there is truth to that  
—as most of feel that our 30-year-old selves  
make better decisions  
and have a better sense our reality  
than our 15-year-old selves did.

The thing is almost everyone  
has a set of guiding principles  
in which they use in their everyday lives.  
We, as Americans, have national proverbs  
like, *the early bird gets the worm*  
and, *you've got to pull yourself up  
by your own boot straps.*

Most of our national conventional wisdom  
celebrates the individual  
and borders on apathetic.  
*Live and let live,*  
*don't rock the boat,*  
*different strokes for different folks.*

Tom Long calls our most loved national proverbs  
the postmodern verbal shoulder shrug of, ***whatever!***<sup>3</sup>

But that kind of wisdom  
is completely different  
than what we encounter  
when it comes to biblical wisdom.

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<sup>3</sup> Doug Bratt following the leading of Scott Hoezee, [https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/trinity-sunday-c/?type=old\\_testament\\_lectionary](https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/trinity-sunday-c/?type=old_testament_lectionary)

If we take Proverbs' lead  
and think of Wisdom not just as  
the quintessential bumper sticker slogan  
but also, as personified essence  
of play and creativity  
then we'd have warrant listening to  
our poets, artists and rebels.  
We'd have to listen to your young people  
and our elders;  
our innovators and introverts.

We would see  
that in our own creativity  
is a hint of the Divine Creator  
who created all things along side of Wisdom:  
"I was beside God,  
I was a master worker."



We sense that with Wisdom's acting in creating,  
she feeds our continued sense creativity.  
And so an element of wisdom  
would be that willingness  
to take the risk that goes against  
the *whatever* mentality  
that is so prevalent in our culture.

Mark Twain, reportedly said,  
"Whenever you find yourself  
on the side of the majority,  
it is time to pause and reflect."

Wisdom, biblical Wisdom, Proverbial Wisdom,  
calls us to take the risk  
of seeing reality in a different way.

Biblical Wisdom should shape our reality;  
she saturates our reality according to Proverbs.

Adam Oakley sent me a podcast this week called,  
Unmistakable Creative:  
and the episode was called,  
Exploring the Boundaries of Reality  
with T.K. Coleman.

And here's the wisdom that T.K. Coleman revealed:  
"How you see reality  
is a matter of life and death."<sup>4</sup>  
And if we can see,  
with Proverbs that Wisdom is intimately,  
unmistakably bound up  
in every aspect of our world,  
she will affect our notion  
of how we see reality.

T.K. Coleman explains,  
"that every aspect  
of what you would call the quality of life  
boils down to the little choices  
that you make to cultivate  
a quality of consciousness  
that is conducive to things like  
personal power or peace  
or whatever labels we use  
to talk about flourishing life."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> <https://unmistakablecreative.com/podcast/exploring-the-boundaries-of-reality-with-tk-coleman/>

<sup>5</sup> *ibid*, T.K. Coleman



Flourishing life,  
is the poetry of Wisdom's existence  
in Proverbs.

Flourishing life is what we believe  
our Creator God wants for everything from,  
African dung beetles  
to fruit flies and slugs;  
flourishing life is what the Creator  
built into the design of creation  
whether you are a hairless sphynx cat  
or a peach tree;

flourishing life is the life blood of wisdom  
if you are English lavender  
or a waitress named Tammy  
working at Waffle House.

How we view reality,  
how we make choices in our lives  
to cultivate flourishing life,  
is a matter of life and death.

It is no accident that any of us are here  
—and I'm not getting  
on a high theological horse to say that—  
but each and everyone of us,  
was given the opportunity  
and the wisdom—the play and creativity—  
to impact the world.

We are not here  
to just breathe the universe's air, T.K. Coleman asserts,  
we are not here to throw up our hands  
and claim, that *whatever* works  
—we live for a purpose.

Our lives lived in faith  
are ultimately about living our reality  
with a sense of possibility.  
The possibility that there is always more  
than that which seems obvious.

Wisdom's call is to see our reality  
as more than meaningless existence  
and individual gain.

Wisdom's call to all that lives,  
is a life that flourishes with possibility.  
And if we live with a sense of possibility,  
what can we be other than creators?<sup>6</sup>

What can we be other than artists,  
and poets, and rebels  
against the conventional consumerism wisdom  
of our moment in time?

The Book of Proverbs  
offers a glimpse into the possibility  
of living a wise existence.  
It is founded on the premise  
that life adds up to something coherent and good,  
stable and full of shalom  
because there is a Creator God  
who made each person and each thing.

Further, God made each person  
and each thing  
to work in certain ways  
so that if everybody functions  
the way they were made to function,  
life would get webbed together  
into a marvelously complex,  
inter-locking system of mutual affirmation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, T.K. Coleman

<sup>7</sup> Tom Long, quoted by Scott Hoezee, in Doug Bratt's article Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-

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Flourishing life.

Wisdom calls out to us,  
rejoicing in the beautiful complexity  
of this inhabited world  
and delights in the human race.

Mary Oliver says,  
“This is the first,  
the wildest, and the wisest thing I know:  
that the soul exists  
and is built entirely out of attentiveness.”

How we are attentive our reality;  
how we see reality  
is a matter of life and death.  
This is the reality of wisdom  
the reality of our shared inheritance  
of Wisdom living in and around us.  
This is her call to us.  
She is in everything we know,  
and she can inform all that we do.  
“To you, O people, I call,  
and my cry is to all that live.”