



1st Quarter 2015 – Proverbs Lesson 6 What You See Is NOT What You Get

Has anyone here heard of WYSIWYG or know what it means? I first heard the term “What You See Is What You Get” in relation to my line of work in computers. Remember a word processing program called Word Perfect? Dark blue background with white text? It was a powerful program with many publishing options and capabilities...but no matter what document formatting you put in place, nothing changed on the screen...always a blue background with white text. In fact, the only way to even see what sort of formatting had been applied was to “Reveal Codes” (Alt-F3 for the nerds like me), which sort of gave you a look under the covers to see which text was bolded or underlined or formatted differently...and the only way to truly see what your document looked like was to physically print it out. Then, along came Microsoft Word and the age of WYSIWYG editing and programming, where everything on the screen looks exactly the way it will look when it’s printed or rendered. The premise of this week’s lesson is that we very seldom have this level of insight into our environment and our relationships and our situations...and what we see is often not what we get. The lesson says, “We see so little, and what we do see always comes filtered through our own minds – including our own preconceived notions, biases, distortions, dysfunctions. Our eyes, our ears – even all our senses – still only give us a very narrow view of the big picture.

- Think about the limited view of reality we have...right here in this room. There are things out there that we know are real; yet, we can’t sense them or see them in any way. How many radio waves are in the air all around you right now (cell phones, satellite programs, wireless networks)? What about whenever 2 or 3 are gathered in my name, God is there in the midst of them? Do we start to understand how limited our senses are?

Saturday’s memory text from Proverbs 14:12 says, “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.” Any thoughts on what this means?

- We tend to have fairly narrow, myopic perspectives...and everything tends to revolve around us. We are very focused on and make judgments based on external behaviors, because we cannot really see other’s heart motives. We are kind of control freaks who don’t like to admit that we are really helpless in our condition, and completely dependent on God for our existence, and in desperate need of a savior...and when I say “we” here, I really mean me. So we careen blindly on with plans that seem so selfishly right...and many times lead us straight into disaster.
- Can you think of any folks in the Bible who likely thought they were doing exactly the right thing but were actually (without intervention) on the path to death?
 - Adam & Eve



- Cain
- Everyone on earth other than Noah's family
- Lot's wife
- Moses (prior to conversion)
- Nadab & Abihu
- Saul
- David (prior to conversion)
- The text's author Solomon

“Solomon's course brought its sure penalty. His separation from God through communication with idolaters was his ruin. As he cast off his allegiance to God, he lost the mastery of himself. ***His moral efficiency was gone.*** His fine sensibilities became blunted, his conscience was seared. He who in his early reign had displayed so much wisdom and sympathy in restoring a helpless babe to its unfortunate mother, fell so low as to consent to the erection of an idol to whom living children were offered as sacrifices. He who in his youth was endowed with discretion and understanding, and who in his strong manhood had been inspired to write, ‘There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death’, in later years departed so far from purity as to countenance licentious, revolting rites connected with the worship of Chemosh and Ashtoreth. He tried – but at what cost! – to unite light with darkness, good with evil, purity with impurity, Christ with Belial. From being one of the greatest kings that ever wielded a scepter, Solomon became a profligate, the tool and slave of others. His character, once noble and manly, became enervated (weakened/debilitated/fatigued) and effeminate. His faith in the living God was supplanted by atheistic doubts. Unbelief marred his happiness, weakened his principles, and degraded his life. The justice and magnanimity of his early reign were changed to despotism and tyranny. Poor, frail human nature! God can do little for men who lose their sense of dependence upon Him. [PK 58.1]

- Judas
- Pilot -
- Peter (prior to conversion)
- Saul/Paul (prior to conversion)
- Ananias & Saphira

Is it related to what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13:12? – “We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun



shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us." In the interim, we have to walk by faith and not by sight.

We can be so easily deceived about the external world, and sadly we can be deceived about ourselves...so how do we protect ourselves from these deceptions?

Any Biblical counsel that comes to mind on how we can avoid being deceived?

- Proverbs certainly provides some basic counsel about not leaning on our own understanding – Prov 3:5 says “Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don’t try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God’s voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he’s the one who will keep you on track. Don’t assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil! Your body will glow with health, your very bones will vibrate with life! Honor God with everything you own; give him the first and the best.”
- 2 Cor 5:7 tells us to “Walk by faith and not by sight” or “It’s what we trust in but don’t yet see that keeps us going.”
- Psalm 37:23 – The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him.
- Prov 16:9 – A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps and makes them sure.

In what ways might our unique insight into the Great Controversy perspective can help keep us from being so small-minded and self-focused

- reminds us that it is not all about me...God has been accused and his character maligned
- there is a war being waged for hearts and minds and souls
- helps us maintain a something bigger than ourselves viewpoint

Come and Reason practical concepts that can help protect ourselves from self-deception

- Applying natural law principles can help immediately breaks down bias, distortions and subjectiveness. Natural laws are applied in a very rational, objective, unbiased manner...100% consistent, constant, unwavering, unchangeable.
- The 3-pronged Scripture/Science/Experience integrative evidence based approach can provide meaningful perspective while removing distortion and emotion by allowing you to test theories/situations against all 3 zones.
- Learning to think and reason for yourself...learning to seek and love the truth. I spent some years of my life in a situation where I did not really want to know the truth...because I was pretty sure I wouldn’t like the truth if I knew it...so I became quite adept at avoiding and distorting and denying the truth. Which, of course, did not make the truth any less true. As Tim has said, you cannot bend the truth...you can only bend your mind around the truth – like when you hold up a glass lens between your eye and a telephone pole. To you, the pole



looks bent even though it is still perfectly straight. I believe for sure the most important truth to know and the truth that “sets us free” from Satan’s lies...is the truth that God is exactly who Jesus revealed Him to be. But I believe when He said, “you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free” he was talking about all truth...and that this love of truth and pursuit of truth could be liberating in every area of our lives – because that’s how we were made. Has anyone else ever experienced this? When you have come to really know and accept the truth...in a relationship? Maybe in a job/career choice? Which college to attend or major course of study? A medical diagnosis or condition? Please don’t misunderstand that this is easy or not a struggle...but for me, even if the truth is unpleasant, frightening, painful, or even heartbreaking...if I search for the truth, if I am open to it, acknowledge it, accept it, and even embrace it...I find even a painful truth can be liberating and freeing...and puts me in a much better position to be able to handle and meet the situation head-on versus being self-deceived and in denial. Thoughts?

SUNDAY/MONDAY

The Assurance of the Fool & The Fear of the Wise

Fool Speaks Proudly – proud words have resulted in a blow to his lips, an outcome contrasted against the lips of the wise, which are preserved. And, never missing an opportunity to mention it, the quarterly says the “rod” associated with the fool’s lips in Proverbs 14:3, implies the fool’s eventual punishment. Is this really what the text implies?

- The NLT reads, “A fool’s proud talk becomes a rod that beats him, but the words of the wise keep them safe.” The Amplified Bible says, “In the fool’s own mouth is a rod to shame his pride.”
- Luke 6:45 – A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.
- Matthew 12:37 – For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.
- Another, similar proverb found in chapter 17 verse 28 reads, “Even dunces who keep quiet are thought to be wise; as long as they keep their mouths shut, they’re smart.”...which is rumored to be the basis for a familiar quote often attributed to Mark Twain or Abraham Lincoln: “It is better to remain silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt.”

Wise Speak Humbly – The wise restrain their mouths as evidenced by *silent* reflection...they really *listen* thoughtfully, consider opposing ideas, weigh out evidence, and try to learn from others. Is this a struggle for anyone here...to “restrain their mouths”? And in this culture of social media, it is not just our mouths we have to restrain...but maybe our keys on a keyboard.



Fool Mocks Wisdom – a fool appears to seek wisdom, but is skeptical of it and doesn't believe in true wisdom. He will not find it because, in his own mind, there is no wisdom apart from himself. If the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, believing you are wise in and of yourself has to be at the opposite end of that spectrum, and you will start to see this as a theme when describing fool psychology. Most damaging is mocking and misunderstanding the destructive power of sin that often accompanies the imposed law construct...where the fear of punishment and of the punisher far outweighs any fear of sin's damaging effects and the natural law consequences.

Wise Value Learning & Knowledge (& Truth) – Sitting at the feet of a teacher requires a posture of humility and a teachable spirit. It is difficult to be taught or to learn anything if you think you already know it all. The wise are in a constant search for wisdom and knowledge, and enjoy the experience of learning and growing. How is mastering this skill important for eternity?

- God is infinite, we are finite...the gap between us is and will always be...infinite. We will spend all eternity learning and growing and being enlightened by more and more and more truth. If we don't enjoy and value that experience here on earth, then we probably won't like it up there either.

Fool Is Credulous – gullible, naïve, imprudent, unconsidered, uncritical...the quarterly says he has lost the ability to think critically about what he hears, and believes "every word" or everything he reads on the Internet. The lesson also points out some of the paradox and irony of a secular society that laughs at or impugns belief in God or intelligent design or creation...even though some of their beliefs – big bang/evolution, when tested, can appear quite foolish and require even more faith.

Wise Are Cautious – The wise are acutely aware that evil exists, and recognize the destructive power of sin...so they are careful. I would say that the wise understand the nature of God's natural laws and consequences. They do not rely on their own feelings and personal opinions, but practice a more integrated evidence-based approach to discern good from bad, right from wrong, truth from lies.

Fool Is Impulsive – Because fools believe they have the truth within themselves, they react quickly, impulsively without taking time to think. I mean think of the Twitter-sphere culture we have going on right now. Do we see any quick, impulsive, knee-jerk reactions happening today? It is painfully obvious that most took no time to think about comments being made...to the world...into perpetuity. Any thoughts on how this ability to spout off our thoughts to the world at every whim...with a certain degree of anonymity...have further impacted our ability to be "foolish" in this regard?

- Kids not getting into their college of choice
- Not being hired for jobs
- Losing jobs/losing customers/losing sponsors or advertisers



Wise Are Calm – The lesson indicates that faith in God allows the wise to relax, practice self-control, and the fear of God gives them confidence. No argument here...but doesn't it really depend which God you believe in...and which law lens you look through...whether fearing and trusting God makes you calm and gives you peace? Tim has mentioned an analogy he uses with his patients who are struggling with being told to "just trust God" or "turn your life over to God". He tells them to imagine walking at the mall and having a stranger ask for their house keys and saying, "It's OK...you can trust me." Would they feel comfortable giving a stranger the keys to their house...would that make them feel calm and peaceful? If not, then how could they possibly turn the keys to their *life* over to a stranger...it is so important that we get to know God for who he really is and what he is really like. Only then can we be confident putting our trust in him and be filled with his peace that passes all understanding.

Fool Oppresses Others – Fools are intolerant of others, and will oppress and treat them with contempt. These are the tactics of Satan...the characteristics of the beast system – coercion, intolerance, force, oppression. How often are these taken in the name of the church? In the name of God? Any examples?

- Roman church
- Crusades
- Rwanda/Genocide
- Pro-Life
- Isis

Wise Are Compassionate & Sensitive – The quarterly points out the inextricable link between the most important commandments – "Love the Lord your God and your neighbor as yourself." We cannot love God and treat other people poorly...I think that is profound. The greatest expression of our faith is how we deal with others, especially those in need. Agree or disagree?

TUESDAY

The Eyes of the Lord

Tuesday's text is from Proverbs 15:3 and says, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." The MSG says, "God doesn't miss a thing." The lesson asks, "How does this text make you feel and why? Does how you feel depend on what law lens you look through?"

- Does this text bring to mind the recording angel that used to stand in the front of the church during children's story with a clipboard and pen, poised to write down every possible behavior infraction?
- What have we learned about natural law concepts that lets us know this text is not about a heavenly watchdog or police force?



- His eyes are everywhere because He is omnipotent...omnipresent...and He sees everything, because natural laws have natural consequences. If we have been converted and healed, he sees it...if we have not been converted and remain terminal, he sees it.

The quarterly talks about Solomon's understanding that true wisdom is the ability to correctly discern between good and evil – the right from the wrong, which I think is accurate and well-said. But then, it goes rather predictably into the heavenly recording angel mindset that God sees everything we do, even if no one else does, and that on a human level, knowing this should help us to remember to always do good instead of evil...and to not be fooled into thinking that just because we might seem to get away with doing evil for now, in the long run we never do. Do we believe this is why God desires for us to do what is right...because we know He's watching and He sees everything and He won't let us get away with it?

- This is at the very bottom, most elementary level 1/2 on the moral development scale – punishment/reward. “A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. The service is looked upon by such a one in the light of drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. {TMK 120 (That I May Know Him)}
- “We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. *This is why it is so dangerous to mock sin as fools do!* By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death.” {ISM 235}
- No one “gets away” with stepping off the Empire State Building in violation of the law of gravity...no one gets away with tying a plastic bag over their head in violation of the law of respiration...natural law requires no monitoring, no recording, no enforcement...imposed laws are the only kind that require external enforcement. There are no gravity police required.

WEDNESDAY

The Joy of the Lord

Here are the elements of Proverbs 15 that speak specifically to happiness and joy:

- V13: A cheerful heart brings a smile to your face; a sad heart makes it hard to get through the day.



- V14: An intelligent person is always eager to take in more truth; fools feed on fast-food fads and fancies.
- V15: A miserable heart means a miserable life; a cheerful heart fills the day with song.
- V30: A twinkle in the eye means joy in the heart, and good news makes you feel fit as a fiddle.
- Clearly, we are not promised a life without trials...in fact, the opposite is true based on scripture. Matthew 6:34 says “So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings,” and in John 16:33, Jesus says, “I’ve told you all this so that trusting me, you will be unshakable and assured, deeply at peace. In this godless world you will continue to experience difficulties. But take heart! I’ve conquered the world.” But we are also advised to have a merry heart, to be content in all circumstances, rejoice in trials...in fact, to count it *all* joy. So it would seem that the key to deep, lasting joy is not in the changing details of our circumstances...but rather in how we respond to them based on our trust in the constant, unchanging goodness of God.
- The quarterly suggests the parallels between verses 13 and 14 indicate that the “merry heart” is the “heart of him who has understanding” – the heart of one who has faith and sees redemption beyond the immediate ordeal. This is why it is so crucial that we know for ourselves, from our own experience, the reality of God and His love. Then, whatever trials come, whatever suffering we face, those with understanding can endure, because they know God’s love *for themselves*.
- This chapter also introduces another important idea that joy comes more from what we give than from what we receive – a good word shared with others will bring joy to the giver. Who here hasn’t experienced the blessing that comes from blessing others – in word or deed or both?
- Another related factor that contributes to our level of happiness and joy...is developing an attitude and a practice of gratitude – keeping a gratitude journal. Many research studies exist related to this subject...I will site only a few of their findings on the results of establishing a regular habit or practice of being grateful:
 - Woods, et al., 2008 – A relative absence of stress and depression
 - Emmons and McCullough, 2003 – Progress towards important personal goals
 - Emmons and McCullough, 2003 – Higher levels of determination and energy
 - Algoe and Haidt, 2009 – Closer relationships and desire to build stronger relationships
 - Emmons and McCullough, 2003 – Increased levels of happiness – by up to 25%!
 - One of the founders of our church agreed and wrote this in a book called “Ministry of Healing” around 100 years before those studies were conducted: “Nothing tends more to promote health of body and of soul than does a spirit of gratitude and



praise. It is a positive duty to resist melancholy, discontented thoughts and feelings – as much a duty as it is to pray. If we are heaven-bound, how can we go as a band of mourners, groaning and complaining all along the way to our Father’s house? Those professed Christians who are constantly complaining, and who seem to think cheerfulness and happiness a sin, have not genuine religion. {MH 251}

THURSDAY

The Sovereignty of God

1st paragraph in the lesson says, “The bible acknowledges the value of human responsibility and freedom. Yet, the Bible also affirms God’s control over the course of events.” Thoughts? Does this minimize the incredible importance of freedom? Isn’t freedom valued...above all in God’s government.

We prepare, we make plans...but the last word still belongs to God. Does it? Our preparations are not worthless, with an attitude of seeking and submission and desire for direction.

- The thing is...God is infinite; therefore, accomplishing God’s will can have an infinite number of avenues. What is God’s will for me...for all of us? To be healed, to be restored, to be set right with Him. And He has promised that He can use every single thing that happens in our lives to complete that good work in us and perfect our characters. This is what Tim means when he talks about trusting God with outcomes – we are responsible for our own conduct – as students, as parents, as spouses, etc. God has promised to work *all* things for our good (Romans 8)...He has even promised that the work our enemies intend for harm will be used for good (Genesis 50:20), so we do our work, our due diligence and then trust Him with the outcome.
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