

引言 INTRODUCTION

We will begin a new series on the study of wisdom from the book of Proverbs. I remember a professor in a church I attended before. Once I asked him: “How can you be so wise?” Being a long-time member of a small church, he is like a general manager. If Dr. Chin says it is okay, then we can go ahead and do it. But he is also a humble man rather than a boss. He smiled as he answered me: “You will be wiser when you get older.” He is right! At least I learned some good lessons after making a ton of mistakes in life. I realize that an old Chinese saying is true: “You will stumble ahead if you ignore an old man’s advice.” I wish my children will listen to me on everything. I got mad at my older son at one time because he insisted to wear short pants in winter. Then I wondered: “Why bother?” I am not the person standing outside waiting for the school bus. Since then I just gently remind him: “Hey, it will be below 40 degree the whole day.” Both boys need to grow up and I need to let-go. The next challenge for me is to prevent a heart attack when they drive on the road!

Wisdom is different from intelligence and knowledge. Intelligence is something we are born with. You may be a quick learner because your intelligent quotient (IQ) is higher than others. But an intelligent person still needs to learn. That is where knowledge comes into play. But a diploma does not guarantee success in life. We need wisdom to do things and interact with people effectively. Wisdom is accumulated through observation and experience. God never wants us to be smart, but wise. There are many super smart non-believers who only care about self-gain. But God’s wisdom always brings benefits to everyone. James 3:17 says: **But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.** The verse lists eight virtues that God’s wisdom will bless ourselves and others.

The book of Proverbs is a collection of short and wise statements. Proverbs are like maxims. People say “It’s better to be safe than sorry,” as an advice for safety. “Good things come to those who wait” reminds us to be patient. Proverbs is part of the wisdom books in the Bible. The Chinese Sunday school just finished a study on the books of Job and Ecclesiastes. What are the differences between the three books? Proverbs describes **normality**. For example, you will accumulate wealth if you work hard. Job points out the **abnormality** in life. Job suffered great hardship even though he was a righteous man. Ecclesiastes deals with **uncertainty**. Sometimes, you cannot predict the outcome. The common theme for all three books is to trust God. We obey Him, and commit our future to Him. Solomon was considered as the author of Proverbs. The very first verse in the book reads: **The proverbs of Solomon son of David, king of Israel.** The Bible says Solomon composed 3,000 proverbs. However, a few other authors are also mentioned in the book of Proverbs. It is possible that Solomon wrote some and collected insights from other sources. Just like the Psalms, a later editor compiled different works to become a part of our Bible. Proverbs is unique because

often there is not a single theme in a chapter. You have to read it slowly with a reflective heart in order to digest the content. Since there are 31 chapters, some people suggest we can read one chapter a day. That is something you can consider. In our studies, we will pick ten topics to study in future sermons.

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 智慧的尋求 Search for Wisdom

We will cover 1:1-7 today as an overview of the book. This opening section tells us the content of the book, its intent and how a person should cherish it. First, the author encourages us to search for wisdom. There are at least eight words that describe various forms of wisdom. There is also a list of action words that tell us how to search for wisdom. Verse 2 says we have to **attain wisdom and discipline**. The Hebrew word “attain” is usually translated as “know” in the Old Testament. It has a sense of knowing by experience. For example, when you learn how to drive, you can study the user manual of a car and watch some YouTube videos about the skills. You still do not know how to operate a car until you sit inside and learn from a seasoned driver. The author says we can attain wisdom and discipline through experience. Wikipedia defines wisdom as “the ability to contemplate and act using knowledge, experience, understanding, common sense and insight.” We should gain wisdom, but also use it. Here the verse says one way to attain wisdom is through discipline. Punishments at home or warnings and fines in the society are effective ways to discourage people from breaking the rules. Very often, God also uses discipline to break our stubbornness in sin. The second half of verse 2 says we can also search for wisdom by **understanding words of insight**. The word “understand” means to perceive. It means to ponder on what is learned in order to comprehend the meaning. When Jesus told parables, there were two different reactions in the listeners. Some people thought those were only trivial stories. But Jesus’ disciples returned later and asked their Master for an explanation. Any literate person can read the Bible. But only Christians can understand the meaning. It is because the Holy Spirit lives inside believers to guide them to the truth. When we first heard the gospel as non-believers, the message might sound like foreign language. But the more we probe, the more we can understand as the Holy Spirit illuminates our hearts. We then skip down to verse 6. It says we search for wisdom by “**understanding proverbs and parables, the sayings and riddles of the wise**.” Here we see the same word “understand.” We gain wisdom by understanding four different kinds of wisdom. The Hebrew word for “proverbs” means “to be like.” Many proverbs in the book are metaphors. For instance, those who put their sole focus on money, their wealth will “**sprout wings and fly off to the sky like an eagle**” (23:5). The word “parables” refers to sarcastic sayings. For example, a woman who only has the appearance but without discretion is like “**a gold ring in a pig’s snout**” (11:22). The intent is to instill a positive lesson from a negative analogy. The third word on the list “the sayings... of the wise” are perhaps direct teaching from some wise teachers. Finally, “riddles” can be understood as some obscured figure of speech. This kind of proverbs will be easier to understand if we know the Hebrew culture. Knowing the background helps us gain

knowledge. In the English word, hotdog is not made of meat from a pet. But hamburger did originate from a city in Germany according to some sources.

After we have talked about how to search for wisdom, next we will ask who needs wisdom. The simple answer is everyone. However, the Proverbs talks about wisdom from God, not secular wisdom to help people find a job or invest their money. Therefore, people who do not seek after God will not search for God's wisdom. This passage tells us who will embrace God's wisdom. In verse 4 we see **"the simple"** and **"the young."** The "simple" ones are not those who have a lower IQ. They are simple-minded people. They are like curious children who are always observe and like to ask "why." They gain wisdom from getting answers. Whereas, the young ones are early in their ages. They are immature in their mind. Both groups are teachable. They readily believe in all that they learn. Some children grow up in an environment where people tell them that only appearance, material possession and pleasure are important. Those items will become their goals. That is why it is important for children to come to know God early on. Then they will grow up to become humble, honest, and trustworthy people. They can discern if something is not consistent with the Bible. My wife's oldest sister has two daughters. They attended church since childhood. Once the family went to a museum of natural science. There were some displays on evolution. One girl asked her parents: "The Bible says God created us. How come the exhibition shows that humans were previously monkeys?" What she saw contrary to what she learned. That reminds me of Proverbs 22:6 – **Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.** Accordingly to the Bible, God's way is the only right way. Therefore, Christians parents must seize the opportunities when their children are young and their hearts are receptive to lead them to the Lord. One day, they will leave home and make decisions for life. Going back to chapter 1 of the book. Verse 5 tells us another two groups of people who will search for wisdom. They are **"the wise"** and **"the discerning."** We saw both words earlier. Wise people will find opportunities to gain more wisdom, and the people who understand wisdom are eager to get more understanding. Think of it like hobbies. You will love to associate with people who share your same interest in cooking, movies, exercise or sports. They can chat for hours and share new ideas or information. How I wish to see people mingle in the church to talk more about spiritual matters!

2. 智慧的源頭 Source of Wisdom

We need to search for wisdom because it will benefit our life. But where does true wisdom come from? You can learn wisdom from your parents or other senior folks. You can gain wisdom from observing the people and things around you. You can ask further where do those people you learn from acquire their wisdom. There must be an ultimate source of wisdom. The author of Proverbs and other wisdom literature in the Bible make it clear that God is the source of all wisdom. Verse 7 of the passage says: **The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.** We see the expression "the fear of the Lord" often in the Old Testament. The phrase is used 17 times in the book of Proverbs. This "fear" here is not about terror, although we should be afraid of God's judgment. Rather, it refers to a respect similar to children honoring their parents. The

Chinese Union Bible accurately translates the word as “reverence.” The word “beginning” can mean a starting point. But here it can also be interpreted as a foundation. Putting everything together, a proper perspective about God is the basis for obtaining wisdom. Therefore, a person who has a healthy relationship with God will search for wisdom. In contrast, the “fools” will ignore wisdom. They are not dumb people. They are too smart and prideful to want to know God. Psalm 14:1 says: **The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good.** Since they do not acknowledge God’s existence, they will not follow God’s standard for right and wrong. Spiritual deficiency leads to moral and behavioral depravity. There are some extremely clever criminals and dictators in the world. They figure out crafty ways to mistreat others for their own gain. But those who love God will love the wisdom of God. Any pursuit of knowledge is a process to understand God’s creation and its natural laws. My college major was biology. Later, I went to the seminary to study theology. “Bio” means life and “Theo” is for God. The suffix of the two words “logy” is the Latin word for theory. It is where we derive the word logic. The same word in Greek is “logos,” which is a speech or a principle. We find the word in John 1:1 – **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.** John use “Word” to describe Jesus Christ. He is the Son of God and He is God. Jesus became a man and came into our world to show us and teach us about God. Think of it like watching a movie that is based on a novel. The words in the book are played out in a visible form. Many religions try to imagine how the deities they worship look like. They invent different forms of god! Only Jesus descended from heaven and told people: “I AM!” No one can know God or approach Him if it is not through Jesus. He helps us realize the true meaning of life by building an eternal relationship with Him. We exist because God created us. He puts us here in this time and place to know Him and to glorify Him. Wisdom of God brings us wisdom in life. Our reverence toward God will cause us to make reference of God. We will pray to God and look for solutions in the Bible when we need guidance. Our reverence toward God will also find its relevance to our life. Beliefs and daily living are not two unrelated entities. We cannot behave like a Christian in a church but live as an atheist outside the church. God’s wisdom is applicable to every aspect of our life.

結論 CONCLUSION

The Proverbs is God’s user manual for our life. In our future studies we will talk about how to apply God’s wisdom in parenting, speech, managing wealth and other topics. What we need is not just information. We read the Bible not only to enrich our knowledge. Such information is useless unless it brings about transformation in our life. Jesus did not ask us to raise Bible scholars, but to make disciples. They are people who imitate after Jesus in His thoughts, speech and deeds. Those are the same goals as we embark on a series of studies on Proverbs. We should have the same mentality every time we open the Word of God. We acquire God’s wisdom, and we practice what we have learned in our daily life.

箴言 Proverbs 1:1-7

引言 INTRODUCTION

從今天起我們會開始一個新的系列。我們會從箴言來看智慧。我記得我以前參加過的教會裡的一位教授。有一次我問他：「你怎麼這麼有智慧？」他是那個小教會的長期會友，他就像一個總經理。只要陳教授說可以，計劃便能推展。但他是一個謙卑的人，而不是一個大老闆。他笑著回答我：「等你再老一些，你自然會更有智慧。」他是對的！至少我在生活中犯了一大堆錯誤後學了一些教訓。古語有句話是對的：「不聽老人言，吃虧在眼前。」我希望我的孩子常常都聽我的話。有一次我生大兒子的氣，因為他堅持冬天穿短褲。後來我想通了：管他！又不是我站在外面等校車。從此我只是輕輕提醒他：「今天一整天都在 40 度以下啊。」兩個孩子都需要長大，而我需要學習放手。我的下一個挑戰是他們在路上開車時如何防止自己心臟病發作！

智慧和智力和知識不一樣。智力是我們與生俱來的。你可能是個學東西很快的人，因為你的智商比其他人高。但是聰明的人仍然需要去上學。這就是知識的重要性。但學位無法保證人的成功。我們需要智慧來有效地待人處事。智慧是通過觀察和經驗累積起來的。神從不希望我們聰明，而是要我們有智慧。有很多超級聰明的非信徒，他們只在乎自己的利益。但神的智慧總是給每個人帶來好處。雅各書 3:17 說：惟獨從上頭來的智慧，先是清潔，後是和平，溫良柔順，滿有憐憫，多結善果，沒有偏見，沒有假冒。這節經文列出神的智慧會祝福我們和他人的八種美德。

箴言書是一些簡短而帶有智慧的句子所組成。箴言就像格言。人們說「注意安全總比後悔好」提醒我們要小心。「等待的人會有好結果」勸告我們要有耐心。箴言是聖經中詩歌智慧書的一部分。中文主日學剛剛完成了約伯記和傳道書的學習。這三卷書有什麼區別？箴言描述**正常**的狀態。比如，你努力工作就

會累積財富。約伯記指出生命中的**反常**。約伯雖然是個義人，但還是遭受了極大的苦難。傳道書處理人生的**無常**。有時候，你無法預測結果。三卷書的共同主題是要信靠神。我們順服祂，把我們的未來交託給祂。所羅門被認為是箴言的作者。這本書的第一節經文是：**以色列王大衛的兒子所羅門的箴言**。聖經說所羅門寫了三千句箴言。然而，箴言書中也提到了其他幾位作者。所羅門可能寫了一些箴言並從其他來源收集別人智慧的話。就像詩篇一樣，後來的編輯把不同人的作品合起來，成為我們聖經的一部分。箴言是很獨特的書卷，因為一章之中可能沒有一個中心主題。你必須帶著反思的心慢慢閱讀，才能消化內容。這卷書有 31 章，有人建議我們一天看一章。你可以考慮這樣做。在我們以後的學習中，我們會挑選十個主題來詳細查考。

解釋 EXPLANATION

1. 智慧的尋求 Search for Wisdom

我們今天會看 1:1-7 作為全書的概覽。這段開場白告訴我們這卷書的內容、目的和我們應該如何看重它。首先，作者鼓勵我們尋求智慧。這一段之中至少有八個用詞描述各種形式的智慧。而且還有一連串的動詞告訴我們如何尋求智慧。第 2 節說我們必須**曉得智慧和訓誨**。「曉得」這個字在舊約中通常被翻譯為「知道」。它描述通過經驗而獲得的知識。例如，當你學開車時，你可以讀汽車的說明書並看一些有關開車技術的 YouTube 視頻。但是你仍然不知道怎樣開車，除非你坐在裡面並接受別人的指導。作者說我們能從經驗中得到智慧和訓誨。維基百科將智慧定義為「使用知識、經驗、理解、常理和洞察力來思考和行動的能力」。我們要獲得智慧，同時也要使用它。這節經文說獲得智慧的一種方法是藉著「訓誨」。這個字的意思是管教。家庭的管教或在社會上的警告和罰款是阻止人違反規則的有效方法。很多時候，神也使用管教來破碎我們頑梗的心。第 2 節的後半部分說，我們也可以通過**分辨通達的言語**來尋求智慧。「分辨」就是理解的意思。它是指思考所學到的東西來明白其中的含義。當耶

耶穌講比喻時，聽眾有兩種不同的反應。有些人認為那些只是無關重要的故事。但是耶穌的門徒後來回來，向主尋求解釋。任何識字的人都可以閱讀聖經。但只有基督徒才能理解其中的含義。因為聖靈住在信徒裡面，引導他們明白真理。當我們仍然是非信徒的時候，福音的內容可能聽起來像外語。但我們越探究，聖靈便開啟我們的心。然後我們跳到第 6 節。經文說我們通過「明白箴言和譬喻，懂得智慧人的言詞和謎語」來尋求智慧。這裡說我們要了解四種不同形式的智慧。「箴言」的希伯來文意思是「好像」。書中的許多語句都是類比。例如，那些只專注於金錢的人，他們的財富會「長翅膀，如鷹向天飛去」（23:5）。「譬喻」指的是諷刺性的言論。例如，一個只有外表而沒有判斷力的女士「如同金環帶在豬鼻上」（11:22）。其目的是從負面的形容來傳遞正面的教訓。第三個用詞「智慧人的言詞」可能是一些智者的直接教導。最後，「謎語」可以理解為一些暗晦的修辭手法。如果我們了解希伯來文化，這一類的箴言會更容易理解。在英文中，熱狗不是由寵物的肉製成的。根據一個說法，漢堡包確實起源於德國的一個城市。了解背景有助於我們獲得知識。

我們了解如何尋求智慧之後，接下來我們要問誰需要尋求智慧。一般的答案是每個人。然而，箴言談論的是來自神的智慧，而不是幫助人找到工作或投資的世俗智慧。所以不尋求神的人就不會尋求神的智慧。這段經文告訴我們那些人會渴慕神的智慧。在第 4 節，我們看到「愚人」和「少年人」。「愚人」不是智商較低的人。他們是單純的人。他們就像好奇的孩子，專心觀察，並喜歡問「為什麼」。他們從答案中獲得智慧。然後，「少年人」是指年齡還小的人。他們的心智尚未成熟。兩類都是受教的人，而且他們很樂於接受所學到的東西。有些孩子被灌輸只有外表、物質和享樂才是最重要的教導。這些東西將成為他們的人生目標。因此小孩儘早認識神很重要。如此他們長大後會成為謙卑、誠實和可靠的人。他們可以辨別出跟真理不相符的事物。我太太的大姐有兩個女兒。他們從小就去教會。有一次，他們一家人去參觀自然科學博物館。他們看到一些關於進化論的展覽。其中一個女孩問她的父母：「聖經說神創造了我們。為什麼這裡說人類是猴子變的？」她所看到的與她所學到的不一致。

這就讓我想起箴言 22:6：教養孩童，使他走當行的道，就是到老他也不偏離。根據聖經，唯一正確的路是神的路。因此，基督徒父母必須在孩子還小的時候抓緊機會，在他們願意聽的時候帶領他們歸向主。有一天他們會離開家，做各種的決定。回到本書的第一章。第 5 節告訴我們有另外兩類人會尋求智慧。他們是「智慧人」和「聰明人」。我們之前看過這兩個詞語。有智慧的人會想辦法獲得更多的智慧，有見識的人也渴望得到更多的知識。我們可以把它想像成一種嗜好。你會喜歡和有相同興趣的人交流，無論是煮菜、電影、鍛煉身體或體育。你可以聊幾個小時並分享新的想法或信息。我多麼希望看到人們在教堂聚集時多談論屬靈的事！

2. 智慧的源頭 Source of Wisdom

我們需要尋求智慧，因為它對我們的生活帶來益處。但是真正的智慧從何而來？你可以從父母或其他長輩那裡學到智慧。你可以通過觀察周圍的人和事來獲得智慧。你可以進一步問那些你的學習對象是從哪裡獲得他們的智慧。因此必須有一個終極的智慧源頭。箴言和其他聖經中的智慧文學都指出神是一切智慧的源頭。經文第 7 節說：敬畏耶和華是知識的開端；愚妄人藐視智慧和訓誨。我們在舊約中經常看到「敬畏耶和華」這句話。它在箴言書中出現了 17 次。「敬畏」不是指恐懼，雖然我們應該害怕神的審判。它乃指好像小孩對父母的尊重。和合本中文聖經準確地將這個字翻譯為「敬畏」。因此，它包含敬重和畏懼兩重意思。「開端」可以指一個起步點。但在這裡也可以理解為基礎。綜合以上所說的，對神正確的認識是獲得智慧的基礎。因此，一個謙卑地尋求智慧的人應該是一個與神有健康關係的人。相反，「愚妄人」不尋求智慧。他們不是愚蠢的人。他們是太聰明和驕傲，不願意認識神。詩篇 14:1 說：愚頑人心裡說：沒有神。他們都是邪惡，行了可憎惡的事；沒有一個人行善。他們既然不承認神的存在，他們自然也不會遵守神的標準。屬靈上的罪便導致道德和行為的罪。世界上有一些非常聰明的罪犯和獨裁者。他們想出狡猾的方法來剝奪別人的利益。但愛神的人必然愛慕神的智慧。任何知識的追求都是解

開神的創造和自然法則的過程。我的大學專業是生物學。後來，我去神學院學習神學。“Bio”代表生命，“Theo”代表神。“logy”在拉丁文的意思是理論。我們從這個字得到英文邏輯這個字。希臘文的同一個字是“logos”，它是指話語或是原則。我們可以想到約翰福音 1:1 說：太初有道，道與神同在，道就是神。「道」這個字就是“logos”。約翰用「道」來形容耶穌基督。祂是神的兒子，祂就是神。耶穌成為一個人，來到我們的世界，向我們展示和教導我們關於神的事。我們可以把它想像為讀小說和看電影的區別。書中的文字以看得見的形式呈現出來。許多宗教都試圖想像他們所敬拜的神明。結果他們發明了各式各樣的神！只有耶穌從天而降，告訴人們：「我是！」若不是通過耶穌，沒有人能夠認識神或接近祂。透過與耶穌建立永恆的關係，我們明白生命的真正意義。我們的存在是因為神創造了我們。祂把我們放在這個時空來認識祂並榮耀祂。神的智慧帶給我們生活中的智慧。我們對神的敬畏會使我們常常想到神。當我們需要指引方向時，我們會向神禱告並在聖經中尋找答案。我們對神的敬畏也會與我們的生活息息相關。信仰和生活並不是兩個沒有關聯的東西。我們不能在教堂裡表現得像個基督徒，而在教堂外像個無神論者一樣。神的智慧適用於我們生活的各方面。

結論 CONCLUSION

箴言是神給我們生活的使用手冊。在以後的學習中，我們將討論如何在教養兒女、言語、財富等話題上應用神的智慧。我們需要的不僅僅是知識。我們讀聖經不僅是為了增進我們的知識。這些信息必須改變我們的生命，否則便是無用的學問。耶穌不是要我們培養聖經學者，而是要我們建立門徒。他們是在思想、言語和行為上效法耶穌的人。這些也是我們研讀箴言的相同目標。其實每次當我們打開神的話語時，我們都應該有同樣的心態。我們獲得神的智慧，並將所學到的應用在日常生活中。