

Walking With Wisdom Proverbs 3:21-26

(Would you stand as we read the passage.)

Someone explained the difference between knowledge, understanding and wisdom with this illustration:

One morning a mother was busily ironing clothes when the phone rang. Setting the iron aside she turned to her young daughter who had been watching her mother and instructed her not to touch the iron because it was hot. Curiosity had overcome her little mind as with fascination she had watched the iron dissolve wrinkles on the clothes. In an attempt to try her hand at ironing, she touched a part of the iron that was hot.

The next day the mother was again ironing when the phone rang. Once again she instructed her daughter not to touch the hot iron. Once again piqued by her curiosity, she reached for the iron, but stopped. Remembering the incident from the previous day she had received instruction which gave her knowledge about the hot iron, she had touched the hot iron which gave her understanding that the iron was indeed hot and this time she had exercised wisdom to restrain herself from touching what she already knew to be hot both by her knowledge and her understanding.

Whether by personal experience or observation, Solomon provides both knowledge and understanding in the instructions to his son. Through them he himself has gained wisdom. Now he is hoping that his instructions will provide his son with wisdom as well.

You would think that we would learn from history, that the experiences of our forefathers, both good and bad would give us a little more insight into how we should conduct ourselves in a way that would avoid the consequences of wrong choices. You would think that we would listen to their sound

advice, but we don't. In Proverbs we have been given nuggets of truth, ancient wisdom that provides guidance for modern times.

When we come to the place of recognizing that the path of wisdom leads to joy in life as we see in this passage today there are three benefits to why choosing to walk in wisdom is the best path to follow. With so many twists and turns in life, with so many possible routes to take, so many detours, so many choices following the sound advice of Proverbs can keep us from straying off the path.

Walking in wisdom brings refreshment.

Walking in wisdom brings rest.

Walking in wisdom brings reassurance.

I. WALKING IN WISDOM BRINGS REFRESHMENT – v. 21-22

Monday night of this past week I was watching the 116th running of the Boston Marathon. 26.2 miles is a long way to run. There is a term in running long distances called "hitting the wall." It's a condition caused by the depletion of glycogen that is stored in the liver and the muscles. Glycogen is stored up energy the body relies on. Before a race runners will load up on carbohydrates. In the process of digestion blood glucose and insulin levels rise and along with some other enzymes become glycogen and are then stored in the liver and muscles for future use. As a runner progresses in his race the storage of glycogen is called on to produce the energy needed to allow the body to continue to exert itself, but after about 18-20 miles the stored glycogen has been depleted resulting in sudden fatigue and loss of energy. To remedy this loss of glycogen, runners will take in nourishment. Elite runners have a drink mix that they take while running that helps to replenish the energy source.

Other runners will take in a sports drink along with gel packs or gummy snacks that are quickly digested and absorbed into the body for the energy needed to keep running past the wall to the finish.

During the race temperatures soared to an unseasonal 80 degrees. That's quite hot for distance running. 50 degrees is better. To refresh themselves from the heat and to replenish depleting energy they would grab a bottle to stay hydrated and replenish lost nutrients. Periodically there are places along the course where a machine generated mist to spray the runners to cool them off. These elite runners know where each water station is, they are in tune with how their body feels during the race and what they will need to finish strong.

Think of wisdom as something that refreshes the soul; that helps to replenish what is needed to stay strong in the race of life. We get weary from the long struggle of each day. The miles pound on and our energy is depleted. Solomon is suggesting that if we follow wisdom, if we keep her in sight, then we will be refreshed along the way because we have made wise choices. A runner who knows he needs to hydrate and misses a water station will find that he puts himself in danger of not being able to finish the race or finish well. And so it is in life. If we miss the things that can refresh us, we will have difficulty completing the race.

We come to times in our life where we need to have some refreshment. Webster's defines it as making to feel cooler, stronger, more energetic, to replenish and to revive.

I confessed to Robyn the other night that I'm feeling drained, exhausted, lacking energy. Ministry is tiring – emotionally, physically, spiritually. Maybe you have felt that way, too. Maybe you feel that way right now. It's a difficult state of mind and body to be in. Responsibilities at work, school and home weigh us down. Things are going on in your world where you feel like even a yearlong vacation wouldn't be enough. It's the pits. Life is tough. In boxing, you don't know if you can go another round. In running you don't know if you can go another step.

Following the path of wisdom brings refreshment. I'm reminded of a story in the Old Testament that I would like for us to turn to. Things in Israel weren't going so well. Their king was Ahab. Look at a brief description of him.

I Kings 16:30-33

King Ahab was a scoundrel, he was evil and idolatrous and he had married someone who was even more wicked than he was. God saw how wicked Ahab was and sent a message to him to show him that there was only one true God and that He was all powerful. He sent His prophet Elijah with a message. God is going to withhold the rain for a few years. The only way rain will be restored is when God says so.

God then told Elijah to leave town – go into hiding. He told him where to go and what he would find. It would be a place to be refreshed from the journey. We pick up the story in the next chapter.

I Kings 17:2-6

For their sin and with the departure of Elijah God was now going to isolate them from His presence. His word would be absent. But he was going to keep His servant refreshed. Even in our desert places God has His streams to refresh us. Let Him lead you there.

If you have followed God with all your heart and sought out His wisdom and been obedient to follow Him you will find that refreshment sometimes comes in the most unusual way. What it boils down to is trust. Trust in God that He knows what He is doing. We saw that earlier in Proverbs 3 that if we trust in the Lord with all our heart and not depend on our own understanding, God will direct our steps. Therein is wisdom. It requires trust in God, trust that believes He will take care of us during times that are beyond our own strength to endure. We acknowledge and accept His direction when we step out in faith. **One author notes that what occurs with God's provision for Elijah demonstrated that**

“the word of God was not dependent on man but that man was dependent on the word of God.”

Now, as the story in I Kings goes, without any rain, the brook eventually dried up. Elijah could have found himself in a pickle. He was days away from any Wal-Mart or Kroger store, there was no convenience store on the corner of Nowhere and Somewhere. God could have split some rocks like He did during the wandering years of Israel in the desert, but He had another plan. God sometimes doesn't make sense in what He does, this is one of those times. Like the title of the TV series from the 1960's "Father Knows Best." God's ways are above our ways and His plans are beyond our understanding (Rom. 11:33; Isaiah 55:9). A person who follows wisdom will obey and in the process be refreshed. Look at the next section.

I Kings 17:4-16

God not only brought daily refreshment to Elijah for His obedience, but also to the widow as well. Now understand something. This is important. God will refresh you through wisdom when you obey even in the middle of the storms of life. If you didn't know Zarephath, was a small town between Sidon and Tyre on the coast. It was ruled by Ethabaal who just happened to be Jezebel's father. Jezebel was King Ahab's wife. The place where Elijah was commanded to go was right in the middle the very land where Baal worship had come. And if you read this story more closely, the widow from whom Elijah would be refreshed was not even from Israel. She was a foreigner herself and she was poor. God will use the unlikely to show that what He does is beyond our ability and our understanding so that we trust Him more.

Psalm 23:5 comes to mind: **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.”** Elijah was being refreshed in the very middle of the enemies of God and yet he had peace, peace that came from obedience, obedience that trusted God, trust that developed wisdom. He would need to be

refreshed for the next difficult assignment God would give him. Be refreshed yourself because we don't know when or what the next trial will be. So go, be refreshed.

Sage advice again resonates from the beloved Psalmist who knew the truth of what he wrote: **“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, HE RESTORES MY SOUL.” (Psalm 23:1-3a)**

Are the events of life bearing down on you? Do you feel depleted of all your strength and feel like it's difficult to go on? Do you need to receive some refreshment today? Only God can restore you.

Road races have strategic places where aid stations are placed so that runners can be refreshed along the way. God has placed strategic aid stations along the road for us to refresh and restore our soul along the journey. These aid stations are all familiar to us and we are wise to get refreshment from them. You know them, but they bear repeating: God's Word, spending time in fellowship with others, prayer, praise/worship times.

Here's a word to the wise. It's found in Paul's writings from **II Corinthians 12:9**

“But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.”

The Message: “and then he told me, My grace is enough; it's all you need. My strength comes into its own in your weakness. Once I heard that, I was glad to let it happen. I quit focusing on the handicap and began appreciating the gift. It was a case of Christ's strength moving in on my weakness.”

Be like Elijah and learn that walking in wisdom brings refreshment when we obey. Walking in wisdom also bring rest.

II. WALKING IN WISDOM BRINGS REST – v. 23-24

Sometimes refreshment isn't enough. We are too exhausted to keep going. Responsibilities weigh us down and they become taxing, draining, we need more than just a drink from a cool brook or the shade of a large Maple tree. We need sleep. A lack of sleep has some unpleasant side effects. Sleep deprivation can manifest itself in sheer exhaustion where you have no energy or desire to do anything; you're even too tired to work the remote. It can impair coordination. Reaction time is greatly hindered. You may experience blurred vision – even hallucinations along with just general discomfort or even serious health problems.

Writing about his experience with sleep deprivation as a prisoner of Russia, former Israeli Prime Minister Menachan Begin wrote: “In the head of the interrogated prisoner, a haze begins to form. His spirit is wearied to death, his legs are unsteady, and he has one soul desire: to sleep...Anyone who has experienced this desire knows that not even hunger and thirst are comparable with it.”

Any number of life events can take sleep from us and that ultimately drain us of energy. You know what those things are that sap your strength, that leave you utterly exhausted. Like Superman's kryptonite, they drain your strength.

Listen to this passage from the Message.

“You'll travel safely, you'll neither tire nor trip.”

To trip or stumble is to strike something in such a way that its result is fatal or disastrous. The word parallels another Hebrew verb that means to crush fine. [Robyn made a cheese cake for Sarah's shower last week and she took a bunch of Nilla Wafers and crushed them really fine for the crust.](#) The same

word is used in **Exodus 21:22** when a pregnant woman is struck with such force that it causes a premature birth. We have all at one time or another gotten up in the middle of the night to use the little room or we're racing to another room to answer the phone because we're expecting an important phone call only to kick the leg of the sofa or the corner of the doorway. And we've done it in bare feet. The blow was so hard it dropped us to our knees in pain and caused tears came to our eyes.

The writer is saying that when we walk in wisdom we will be sure footed so that we don't dash our foot against something that will cause pain. We'll avoid those places all together. Wisdom will follow the right path. As a matter of fact, because we have allowed God to direct our path at the end of the day we'll be able to sleep in peace. Again, I like how the Message puts verse 24.

“You'll take afternoon naps without a worry, you'll enjoy a good night's sleep.”
Isn't that great?

I have to admit that on some Saturdays I am not pleased with David. Now, I love my son to pieces, but when I have had a particularly busy week; when Robyn has had several days of 3a.m. phone calls like this last week from employees who won't make it in to work and when I get up regularly at 5a.m. to have devotions and go for a run by 6a.m., an early Saturday wakeup is not welcome. I want to sleep in till 7. Just once in a while would be great. I need rest. You may need rest. You can't keep going all the time. You weren't made to go all the time. I once heard a speaker say he'd rather burn out than rust out for God. Now in principle I understand what he meant, but we weren't created to burn on all cylinders all the time. Even God rested. It's important. [Years ago I was talking with an engineer who worked at Fischer Body in Pontiac.](#) We were talking about rest and he said that even machines aren't designed to run 24/7.

On one occasion traveling with His disciples Jesus had some words of advice to offer his recruits. A couple of incidents had occurred which required some time away. He had sent the twelve out to the surrounding towns to preach repentance. They ministered to the physical and spiritual needs of the people. Ministry is hard work. Please take time to offer a word of encouragement to our church workers whether they teach or serve on the Board or ministry team or prepare communion or work in flower beds, it's work. The disciples had returned to Jesus exhausted. On top of that Jesus had just received word that John the Baptist had been killed by King Herod. Here's how Mark records about the event: **“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, ‘Come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’ So they went away by themselves in a goat to a solitary place.” (Mark 6:30-32)**

Jesus said to them, hey guys, we've been burning the candle at both ends, we need some time to get away. I know this quiet spot up in the mountains where we can get some R&R. There's a little cabin we can camp out at. A stream runs nearby if you want to go fishing. Some great trails lead you to spots that overlook the valley where you can see for miles. Let's get away from it all for a few days. The rest of the story is that people found out where they were at and followed them. He fed a multitude.

Maybe you need some rest because stuff is pressing in. Stop what you're doing. Listen to what Jesus is saying and get some rest. Maybe the burden you're carrying is too much. Jesus offers some counsel to us written at the hands of Matthew. **“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My**

yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

The young ox was paired with a stronger, seasoned ox (and I don't mean seasoned with salt, pepper and some basil). In this way the young ox could learn how to plow. That meant though that the bulk of the weight in pulling fell to the stronger, older ox. He bore the brunt of the yoke and the weight of the plow. Jesus is telling us to let Him be the one who pulls our burdens. With Him carrying the load it affords us rest. The person of wisdom will walk in the rest afforded Him through following the Lord.

I would like to return to Elijah for a moment. Here's the story. We left Israel without rain. Elijah had left at God's command. Three years later God told Him to go back to Israel and confront Ahab. Ahab was not in a good mood. He had killed a bunch of prophets and continued to be a wicked king. Israel had no interest in God. Elijah called Ahab to Mt. Carmel along with all the priests of Baal. He also invited the people up to witness what was about to take place.

The deal was that he and the priests of Baal would prepare an altar and on the altar offer a sacrifice. The catch was they weren't supposed to use any matches to start the fire. Whichever God/god (big G or little g) rained down fire on the sacrifice would be God. Well, the Baal priests, shouted and danced and cut themselves to appease Baal, but they didn't hear a thing. You could hear crickets chirping and the wind blowing through the grass but not a peep from Baal. They did this most of the day. It was getting late, time for the afternoon sacrifice when Elijah prepared his sacrifice by dousing it with 12 huge jars of water. He prayed a simple prayer and the God of heaven immediately answered with fire that burned up the sacrifice, the altar and the water around the altar. Then Elijah took all the priests of Baal and put them death. You would have thought with such a sound defeat he would have rode on down to Jerusalem and took it over. Instead the

account says that when Queen Jezebel heard what happened she threatened to kill him. You would think that a guy who just defeated 400 other guys in the power of the Lord would not be afraid of a woman, but he was. He took off for the hills. We pick it up in chapter 19.

I Kings 19:3-9

Each of us at some time or other needs to rest. The burdens we carry can be heavy. When we ask Him to carry those burdens, He will give us as Proverbs states “**sweet rest,**” rest that is pleasant, rest without fear. But in order to receive such rest we must in wisdom walk with God.

When was the last time you had a good night’s sleep? I mean really? Serta and Tempurpedic and the Sleep Number mattress can make all kinds of claims about the kind of great sleep you can get if you buy their product, but only really good sleep comes from the Lord when we walk in wisdom. Follow Him.

Walking in wisdom brings refreshment.

Walking in wisdom brings rest.

Walking in wisdom brings reassurance.

III. WALKING IN WISDOM BRINGS REASSURANCE – v. 25-26

Sometimes we can take a step of action and wonder if we’ve done the right thing. We can second guess ourselves. The next decision becomes more difficult and we can even become paralyzed into making a decision because we’re just not sure.

This passage says that when you walk in the wisdom of God, God Himself will be your confidence. One author suggests that when we possess wisdom, we will be confident in God in every life situation. That gives us reassurance to move ahead. Solomon notes that we can look around at the disaster that falls on the wicked and not worry because their fate will not be ours. Their

disaster is described as being sudden. Of the 25 times the word “**sudden**” occurs in the Old Testament, 24 of them are in connection with some kind of disaster or judgment.

Malachi 3:1 “See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before Me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to His temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of His coming? Who can stand when He appears? For He will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap.”

Solomon suggests that when we walk in wisdom along the path the Lord has led us, when we obey Him, we don’t have to fear the sudden destruction that will overtake the wicked. If we walk in wisdom we will be far from the path that the wicked take. Remember, their path leads to destruction. Their path leads to death. But the path God takes us on, even though there will be some rough places to travel, will always lead to life, will always lead to a place of rest, will always be for our good and for His glory.

The same promise Jesus gave His disciples just before His ascension is the same promise to us “**behold, I am always with you.**” Throughout Scripture we are given the reassurance of His presence when in wisdom we walk with Him.

II Kings 6:15-17

Remember that to walk in wisdom equates to a walk of trust. As I read **Psalm 23:4 “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me. Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me;”** I like to think of that verse in this way that even though we don’t know the path God may lead us to take, we do know the One who leads us and He will not lead us astray. A walk of wisdom follows God, it has confidence in Him. Pure and simple it means trusting Him rather

than in self. Paul wrote once that he came to a point where he placed no confidence in the flesh, it was all in God. **How about you? Do you need the reassurance of His presence today? Do you need rest today? Do you need refreshment today?**

I told you earlier that I've been tired. Maybe that's where you're at today. For my birthday Robyn got me a CD by Mercy Me. The very first song has been such an encouragement to me. Since my birthday I've probably played it 30 or 40 times. Maybe it will remind you of what you need and where you can go to get it. Wisdom knows the path.

It brings refreshment.

It brings rest.

It brings reassurance.

Follow it.

Mercy Me - Hungry

Hungry, I come to You for I know, You satisfy.
I am empty but I know Your love, Does not run dry.

So I wait for You,
So I wait for You.
I'm falling on my knees,
Offering all of me,
Jesus, You're all this heart is living for

Broken I run to You, for Your arms are opened wide.
I am weary but I know Your touch restores my life.

So I wait for You,
Oh I wait for You.
I'm falling on my knees,
Offering all of me,
Jesus, You're all this heart is living for.

I'm falling on my knees,
Offering all of me,
Jesus, You're all this heart is living for.
Ahhhhhh. Ahhhhh.