

WISDOM IN TURBULENT TIMES

PROVERBS 4:5-9, JAMES 3:17

The book of Proverbs is a father's instructions to his son. Through these proverbs a dad imparts wisdom, but even more so he wants to cultivate a hunger for wisdom in the heart of his son. The writer knows his boy will be a better man, and live a better life, if he pursues wisdom.

In fact, the opening chapters of the Proverbs revolve around two women. This father warns his son about the immoral woman. She "reduces a man to a crust of bread," "preys upon his precious life," "has cast down many wounded," and "her house is the way to hell."

This father warns his son to steer clear of this wicked woman. She's been in more laps than a napkin, and he doesn't want his precious son to be her next victim.

Instead, the writer of Proverbs tries to fix up his son with another gal, *Lady Wisdom*. The father says in Proverbs 3:13, "Happy is the man who finds wisdom."

And this is God's desire for us today. *Check out Lady Wisdom. She's attractive. She's a knock-out. She would be a blessing to any man. Lady Wisdom is a real catch.*

Hear this father's encouragement to his son, 4:5, "Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you.

Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom.

And in all your getting, get understanding. Exalt her, and she will promote you; she will bring you honor when you embrace

her. She will place on your head an ornament of grace; a crown of glory, she will deliver you.”

Marry wisdom, embrace her, and she will adorn her man with grace, and crown him with glory. **Get wisdom!**

And Solomon is speaking here from experience. He too made this wise choice. Solomon practiced what he preached. *Do you recall the story, early in his career?*

The Jewish historian, Josephus, tells us Solomon was only 14 years old, when the Lord appeared to the young king in a dream. Essentially, God gave to Solomon a blank check. He told him, “**Ask! What shall I give you?**”

At the time, Solomon was overwhelmed with the responsibilities he had inherited. He confessed, “*I do not know how to go out or come in.*” In short, “*I have no idea what I’m doing. I’m at a loss.*” He faced enormous challenges for a 14 year old. A great nation had turned their eyes toward him. They were expecting a child to lead them, as his father David had done so successfully.

Perhaps you have a fourteen year old at home. If you gave him or her a blank check what would they order?

Video games, a new skateboard, AirPods, expensive sneakers? Or would they ask for a starting spot on the Varsity team, or to be captain of the cheerleaders? Well, even at 14, Solomon asked for wisdom. He was wise enough from the start to know that he needed wisdom.

In 1 Kings 3:9 Solomon makes his request, “**Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that**

I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"

Solomon was wise enough already, to know it didn't matter *the size of his bank account, or the length of his days, or his popularity, or victory over his enemies* - if he wasn't wise in leading his people nothing else would matter. His life and tenure would be a disappointment.

And God was pleased with Solomon's request.

So much so, that along with wisdom to lead, God also threw in everything Solomon could've asked for, but didn't: *riches, and longevity, and honor, and victory.*

Proving **Matthew 6:33** before the Savior even spoke the words, "**Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you...**" *And do you remember what happened next?*

A crazy court case was brought to King Solomon...

This was a case you'd find televised on **Judge Judy**. Two women - hookers no less - they were roomies.

Each woman had a baby, yet one of the gals rolled over in her sleep and accidentally smothered her child. This mom got up and swapped her child's corpse with her roommate's living and breathing child. And there were no dental records, no DNA, no maternity tests...

It was one woman's word against another. *What was the king to do?* King Solomon said, "**Bring me a sword.**"

He threatens to cut the baby in two and give half to each lady... *For the king realized a baby's real mother could never put an argument above the life of her own flesh and blood.* In

a brilliant example of wisdom, Solomon settled the dispute, and discerned the child's birth mother. **Justice was served through wisdom.**

And I love how 1 Kings 3 closes, verse 28. "All Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice." Hear it again, "for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him..."

And this is the challenge I want to leave you with in this session. Does your church, even your community, **see the wisdom of God in the decisions you make?**

For after, over a year of this pandemic - and now it looks as if it's far from over - my big take-away is that I need wisdom, and far more of it than I ever thought.

Over the last year every pastor here has faced some *who's-baby-is-this* type of decision! *How do I support the pro-life President when he acts like a jerk?... Do I back the police, when everyone saw what the Minneapolis cop did to George Floyd?... Do we wear masks, and confirm what many folks believe, that we're caving into fear - or do we go mask-less, and say to others that we really don't care about our community?*

At times this year I wanted to speak with Solomonic wisdom, "Bring me the scissors," and cut up everybody's face mask. Then a new Covid case would hit a person I know, and the concern would reappear.

Last week we lost an elder and friend to Covid, and as I speak we have another member of our church on a ventilator.

Please, pray for Ann, and Chris' family. The coronavirus and its variant are still a lethal threat.

My take-away from ministry over the last two years is that in times of crisis the leaders of a church have to think clearly, and demonstrate discernment, and lead their congregation with godly, Spirit-inspired, God-ordained, prayer-obtained, near-Solomonic wisdom.

And you get wisdom, by seeking it in advance. Like Solomon you need wisdom to get God's wisdom.

There are so many pressures today bearing down on a pastor. It seems like every church member has their own special interest through which they see the world and make moral judgments. And people love to label. They see every conflict as good guys versus bad guys. And they'll clump you in with the bad guys for the silliest of reasons. Social media has become the megaphone that's makes these voices of approval or disapproval louder. And in the wake of it all, too many Christians and Church leaders have lost the courage to think critically. We succumb to superficial biases, jump to conclusions, make generalizations, oversimplify complex issues, and paint people with a broad brush.

Too many leaders have stopped seeking wisdom from above, and have capitulated to the group-think.

Over this past year pastors, especially pastors with a Christian School, or Sunday School, or a lot of elderly folk, or who serve under unfriendly governments - have encountered one impossible decision after another.

Have you discovered that despite what people assume not all situations are right or wrong, white or black, up or down? The answer isn't always clear. There can be legitimate concerns on both sides of an argument... *And I'll lose favor in the eyes of some folk with either choice I make.* It's truly *"a no-win situation."*

Listen again to Solomon's exhortation to his son in light of the decisions you've had to make, *"Get wisdom! Get understanding!... love her, and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom..."*

That's true today as much as any time since Solomon.

I remember, *when like Solomon, I was 14 years old ministry-wise. I was actually 22 when I became a pastor, but I was so lacking I could've just as easily been 14.*

I thought the decisions were difficult then... I figured when I got older I'd accumulate some wisdom and the job would get easier. I hate to tell you, that just ain't so!

Today, I'm 63 and the decisions are more high-stakes than ever. Maybe as a church we now have more to lose, but this past year has been excruciatingly difficult.

And yet God has been faithful to us. *He really has!* He has given us wisdom and understanding, and more...

This last year's chaos provided a backdrop for God's wisdom to shine. As with Solomon, our church, and school, and community saw *"that the wisdom of God was in us to administer justice."* I think folks realized that we were going to seek God's will not just toe a party line.

In the midst of the long pandemic and times of unrest we've gone before God's throne of grace to get wisdom, and as with Solomon, He's given us not just wisdom, but what we didn't ask for - *increased offering and people*.

This past year at our Calvary Chapel wisdom has proven to be the principle thing! I haven't told Kathy, but I think she already knows, I've got a girlfriend. She's Lady Wisdom, and I love and long for her more and more.

And yet I've discovered that though God gives wisdom He first has prerequisites. As in the case of Solomon's blank check, the fact the king asked for wisdom indicates the boy was wise beyond his years in the first place.

Wisdom begets wisdom.

It's the New Testament principle taught time and time again, "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance." And this is true when it comes to acquiring spiritual things, including understanding and wisdom... *The rich get richer and the wise get wiser.*

There is a verse that addresses God's prerequisites for us receiving His wisdom. In James 3 the apostle contrasts *heavenly wisdom* and *earthly wisdom*. There is *the wisdom of God* and there is *the wisdom of demons*.

James says in 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." And this is where I want to camp out for the remainder of my time. God entrusts His wisdom to people who seek it with the following three attitudes...

First, God gives His wisdom to the “pure” - to people who have no personal or selfish agenda - who have no ulterior motive. People who are simply lovers of truth.

Second, God gives His wisdom to the “peaceable.” The peacemakers are willing to put in the work to promote unity and harmony. They’re gentle rather than harsh and headstrong. They’re strong enough to yield their own opinions - knowing they are merely opinions - and extend mercy. They are the bearer of good fruits.

And **third**, God gives His wisdom to people who work to avoid partiality and hypocrisy - who are the “impartial.”

If you want to make wise decisions, and be respected by your community and church; then **be pure, be peaceable, be impartial.** Wisdom begets wisdom. God gives wisdom to the pure, and peaceable, and impartial.

Let me start with this third attitude. James 3:17 tells us people living here below need wisdom from above, and that wisdom is “*without partiality and without hypocrisy.*”

This means you’ll obtain God’s wisdom if you strive to eliminate unfair biases, and prejudices, and generalities from your thinking. A wise man refuses to wear tinted glasses. He avoids looking through colored lens.

He wants to see clearly without prejudice.

And we all should recognize that our perspective gets tinted by various factors - *culture, past experiences, assumptions, misconceptions, preferences, prejudices.* A person full of God’s wisdom makes a concerted effort to be objective in their thinking, and processing of life.

You could say it like this, wisdom avoids using broad brushes to paint people. A broad brush is used by an artist when he wants to just throw out paint on the canvas - spread out a vast sky or ocean - but no artist every tries to paint a masterpiece with a broad brush.

A real work of art requires smaller brushes to fill in the detail. It's the subtle nuances that achieve the realism.

And the same is true in navigating people and relationships. A broad brush approach takes you only so far in evaluating people. To know someone and have a relationship it takes narrower brushes that apply the finer points and paint in the details that make us who we are.

Even the Caped Crusaders, Batman and Robin, the great champions of fair-play, once made the mistake of painting with a broad brush. **Let's go on location...**

You'll have to tune in next week to see what happens!

But "Holy stereotype, Batman," Robin made a hasty generalization, "*You can never trust a woman...*"

And our hero Batman corrected what apparently had become a troublesome habit for the Boy Wonder... *I'm sure Cat Woman is the only woman of which it's true....*

*But don't you hate it when someone broad brushes you? When they say. "All conservatives, and Pro-lifers, and Gun Owners are vigilantes." **How many of these stereotypes could be used to pigeon-hole you?***

Look at the last swipe "My Pillow customers"... "*Just because I bought a My Pillow doesn't make me a domestic terrorist!*"

Don't do that to me! I simply wanted a good night's sleep." We, as Christians, hate to be broad brushed, yet why are we so quick to do it to others?

How often do we make hasty generalizations? Have you ever thought, *all homeless people are lazy... all lawyers are crooks... all politicians are dishonest... all teenagers are irresponsible... all preachers are greedy... all New Yorkers are rude... all bosses are uncaring... all Episcopalians are liberal... all rich people are materialistic... all blondes are dense... all Baptists are close-minded... all CGN guys are pushing for women preachers... all CCA guys are older than fifty...*

Whenever you hear "all" or "every" beware! You have just made an assumption that is probably not true.

Remember what Jesus said to the Pharisees in John 8:15, *"You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one."*

And in the eyes of modern, woke Pharisees, judgments are still made *"according to the flesh."*

If you're white you're a racist. If you're black you think you're oppressed. If you're Asian you're good at math. If you're Hispanic you might be illegal. If you're a man you're probably a misogynist. If you're a woman you're trying to break the glass ceiling... Rather than learn a person's name, and get to know their underlying passions and principles, it's easier to stick a label on them, and pigeon-hole that person. This is why stereotypes and generalizations are tools of the bigot.

By fostering assumptions based on *"the flesh,"* or *our outward characteristics,* you can dehumanize people you don't like, and make yourself look more righteous. You can separate how you treat them, from how you think you should be treated. This is

how people justify a prejudice and cancel people with whom they disagree.

Yet in John 8:15 Jesus said, “I judge no one.” And of course, **Jesus could have.** He had access to the all-seeing eyes of God. But unlike this world, and its Pharisees, Jesus “judged no one according to the flesh.”

Jesus cared about people so deeply that He looked beyond their appearance, or their category, or their grouping - to the thoughts and intents of their heart.

Jesus used a different standard for evaluating people. In John 10 He calls Himself the Good Shepherd who knows each sheep by name. Jesus understands our idiosyncrasies and peculiarities... Prejudice just slaps the paint on with a broad brush, but love fine tunes and paints by the numbers. It stays within narrow lines.

Love realizes that each of us is God’s special creation. Just as the Creator makes no two snowflakes, or fingerprints, or retinas identical, no two people are exactly alike. *And God’s wisdom is gifted to the folks who understand this truth and seek to judge **impartially.***

Which brings me to the second prerequisite for receiving wisdom. James says that wisdom from above is not only “without partiality and hypocrisy,” but is also “peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits.” So in order to receive this kind of wisdom it helps if you match it with the same sort of attitudes...

Are you peaceable? The Greek word means “tranquil or passive.” When the Portuguese explorer, Magellan, sailed the

straights at the tip of South America, he went from the violent, stormy, hurricane-prone Atlantic, into another ocean - that at the time, was far more docile and passive. Thus, he named it "Pacific" or *Peaceful Ocean*.

Are you a stormy person? Always stirring stuff up? Do you cause turbulence in relationships at church? It reminds me of the man who's habit was to rock the boat; then try to convince everyone there was a storm at sea.

In contrast, Psalm 133 declares, "How pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." Do you love unity and enjoy its pleasantries? James 3:17 teaches us that God's wisdom goes to the peaceful, not the stormy!

And it also flows to the "gentle." This Greek word speaks not of weakness, but of moderation and restraint.

This kind of "gentleness" is strong enough to hold its tongue and keep its opinion to itself. Rather than make a rash judgment it has the ability to wait until all the information is in before it draws a final conclusion.

Gentleness is careful to avoid erroneous evaluations.

One of my all-time favorite television commercials was done for the Super Bowl by Ameriquest Mortgage.

A man gets home from work before his wife. He plans to treat her to a delicious meal. He's been to the grocery, and has all the ingredients to cook spaghetti.

He even has fresh cut flowers for the table.

But as the sauce simmers on the stove, the couple's fluffy, white kitten jumps up on the counter top, and knocks off the

pot of sauce. The cat falls into the spilt spaghetti sauce, which colors its fur a blood-like red.

The husband has been chopping lettuce, so as he reaches to clean up the spill, he's got a butcher knife in one hand, and his blood-red kitty in the other hand...

Just as his wife opens the door and sees him!

Actually why don't I just show you the clip...

Here is a loving, caring, thoughtful husband - *the envy of most wives*. He's cooking his honey dinner. He should be rewarded for his love and initiative. **Instead his wife thinks she's married to a cat-killer.** The caption sums up the commercial's message, **"Don't judge too quickly."** In dealing with people and issues we all should *be careful about jumping to wrong conclusions*.

Especially, under the unprecedented circumstances we've faced this past year... Prior to 2020 no one alive could say they were experienced in navigating global pandemics. Obviously, experience has been a non-factor in these decisions. This is new ground for us all.

I'm sure we all decry being told to wear a mask, **but if a surgeon came in to do surgery on me, and he wasn't masked-up I'd run for the hills.** Don't say a mask does no good at all. I'm sure it has its limitations, but it's got to do *some good* - everyone in an operating room wears one.

I'm just saying it's arrogance on our part to be running around **pointing our finger at each other, and accusing each other of this and that.** I think I was the first pastor to reopen after the lockdown. CalvaryCSM opened May 3rd (*few opened earlier!*).

But now over a year later we still have a section of seating reserved for “*masks only.*”

I’m convinced the church needs to meet in-person, but I have no idea if a mask will do you any good. *It might. Who am I to say?* Thus, we want to give people options and the opportunity to follow their own conscience. **I’m just saying wisdom refrains from pointing fingers!**

How can I get on my social media megaphone and tell other pastors in other states when and how they should reopen their church, and if they don’t do it on my timetable they’re cowards and don’t really love the Lord?

How can I stand in my pulpit and tell other pastors they were wrong for resisting what they felt were overly restrictive government orders? I don’t know their people, or their situation - not to mention their own convictions.

If ever there was an appropriate time to apply Romans 14:4, this is it, “Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”

Of course someone might ask, “Sandy don’t you have an opinion on reopening the church, and resisting the government?” And I’d answer, “*Absolutely, I’ve got an opinion.*” But as the ole saying goes, “Opinions are like belly buttons. Just because everybody has one, doesn’t mean they’re useful for anything.” Heavenly wisdom “will yield” its opinion - *for an opinion is just an opinion.*

Wisdom distinguishes between **opinion** and **truth**.

Realize, it is biblical truth that *Jesus is coming back to snatch away His Church, and the Jews will regather to their ancient homeland, and the world will unite under the rule of an Antichrist* - but whether or not Joe Biden's pull out from Afghanistan is tied in anyway to biblical prophecy is only an opinion. Don't lose your ability to separate **biblical truth** from **opinion and speculation**.

In a world that's polarized - in fact, in a church that's just as polarized - there'll be no real unity unless we all are "willing to yield" our opinions, show each other some "mercy," and give each other the benefit of the doubt.

A rigid and dead uniformity occurs when one opinion is exalted above all others, and people are pressured into embracing that particular *opinion*... Whereas, unity flourishes when the truth is distinguished from opinion. Harmony happens when the truth is embraced, and opinions are treated for what they are, mere opinions.

This is the wisdom that produces "good fruits."

James is telling us that the person who receives God's wisdom is the person who's willing to work at unity. He or she puts in the time and effort that wisdom requires.

Recently, I read a quote from an Arab actor, who said, "At times stereotyping happens not because of any nefarious reasons but rather because people don't know who you are or where you come from, so they go for the broad strokes about you, your culture, your faith, all that..." I think he's being generous in his evaluation.

He's saying the reason folks jump to conclusions or paint others with a broad brush isn't because they're racist, it's because they just don't take the time or make the effort to get to know the person or situation.

And pastors are the worst culprits. We're often too busy to check out what we hear; yet people are pressing us for our opinion, so we make judgments based on rumor and hearsay. Rather than refuse to speak until we know what we're talking about, we parrot what we've heard. I know, because to my own shame I've done it. It's not wise. And it's not the attitude God blesses.

This is why James 3:17 tells us God's wisdom is received by folks who are determined to be "peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits..."

I've heard it said this way, "The people who judge seldom help, and the people who help seldom judge."

Wisdom cares enough about people to actually work at relationships and get involved in other people's lives.

And the absence of this attitude is our unity's biggest hindrance. It's so much easier to jump to conclusions or use broad generalities about people, than it is to hear all the facts and reason out a truth-based conclusion.

I hope you realize, rarely is anyone or anything *all good* or *all bad*. Most people tend to be a mixed bag.

God said to Jeremiah in 15:19, "If you return, then I will bring you back; you shall stand before Me; if you take out the precious from the vile, you shall be as My mouth." At the time the prophet's character was *part precious* and *part vile*. How

often could the same be said of us? Our desire has been to serve the Lord, *that's precious*. But we've been bitter and angry, *that's vile*.

Nobody's perfect. We're all a mixture of motivations. And the same is true of the decisions we have to make.

Rarely is a pastor's evaluation so one-sided that serious deliberation isn't necessary. Seldom do we get to make a choice that's *good over evil, or right over wrong*. It's a luxury to say, *here's a decision chapter and verse*. Those are the easy decisions - the good versus the bad.

But most of the decisions I'm called on to make, *especially those I've made this last year*, are between what's good and best, and these are harder choices.

What do we do when there's good and bad on both sides of an argument? Where an uneasy tension exists.

Part of the problem is that pastors today are expected to know-it-all. We're called on to be experts in everything from *theology to epidemiology*. Yet not every decision is clear. It's not always an up or down vote. There's usually some truth and wisdom on both sides of the argument.

One thing is for sure we have to resist the urge to take shortcuts and come up with easy answers by not doing our research, or just accepting what someone else tells us, or mimicking what we've heard. As men of God it's our responsibility to seek and stand on what is true.

Shortly after the pandemic broke I got a call from an Atlanta news reporter requesting an interview on the Church's

response! It would've been nice publicity for Calvary Chapel, but I turned it down. I felt the place for me was on my knees before God, not in front of a camera pretending I'm an expert when obviously I'm not.

Throughout this pandemic we've had to balance lots of competing concerns. *Our community's health versus the need believers have for in-person worship... The merits of wearing a mask versus individual freedoms... The benefits versus the risk of vaccination?... Complying with government versus maintaining precious liberties...*

These days, seldom do I face a decision where there's not some truth in both the pro and con columns.

It reminds me of how F. Scott Fitzgerald once defined the word "*genius*." He said, "It's the capacity to hold two conflicting ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." Let me repeat... "Genius is the capacity to hold two conflicting ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."

This definition has been so helpful to me. Yet rather than label this capacity as "*genius*" I prefer to call it "*wisdom*." It's wisdom that balances competing priorities without needing to immediately reconcile them.

We need an assistant pastor, but we lack the money. We lack the money, because we need an assistant pastor. Both may be true. Pulling on the string at one end is the need for faith. At the other end is financial responsibility. And wisdom is the ability to balance both concerns at the same time and act on them successfully.

The point is wisdom comes to *the peaceable not the stormy*, people who are *committed to truth not opinion*, and who are *into solving problems not creating them*.

Which brings us to the third prerequisite for receiving God's wisdom. Verse 17 tells us, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure..." And I've saved what's first on James' list, as last for us, because I feel like "purity" is the most important condition for obtaining God's wisdom.

If you're going to walk in wisdom you can't be toting a hidden or self-serving agenda. Your motives and your judgments have to be "pure" and sincere. The word means "clean, innocent, unadulterated." The opposite of which is murky, or cloudy, or polluted, or compromised.

Some pastors criticize not because they're concerned about truth - *they have ulterior motives*. I've seen pastors find fault in others, just to make themselves seem holier. "Oh, look at me, I'm the sole keeper of the flame. I'm the lone man of God who's refused to bow his knee to Baal."

By bringing another pastor down, they can elevate themselves. This is selfish motivation and very unwise.

Here's how it often plays out. We develop a beef with a brother, but rather than deal with that beef *as is*, we blow it out of proportion and look for substantiating evidence that might justify and bolster our grievance.

So often in our criticisms of other people or groups we sellout the truth to bolster our beef... *Accusations get exaggerated. Infractions are blown out of proportion. We extrapolate*

conclusions based on where it all might lead, rather than what has actually been said, or occurred.

And we do it because we want to condemn the other side, and render “*those people*” guiltier than they actually are. It’s not peaceable or gentle. And it’s surely not pure.

Over the course of the CCA / CGN breach this has been done over and over again by both sides. One group wants to demonize the other group as worse than they are, so they make unfair and inflated accusations.

I certainly have disagreements with the Calvary Global Network, and problems with its direction, but no one I know involved in that group is heretical. I still have more in common spiritually with many of the CGN guys than I do with the Baptists and Methodists down the street...

I’m just saying God’s wisdom comes to “**the pure**” - to those who use it for **impartial** and **peaceable** purposes.

Actually, one of the most egregious examples I see of biased, agenda-driven judgment is the evil tactic of tearing people down using **guilt-by-association** tactics.

Here’s a cartoon that illustrates how it works... Larry King is old. Tiger Woods plays golf. Both men cheated on their wife. So the principle of guilt-by-association says if you’re old and play golf you cheat on your wife. And that’s why this fellow gets a whack on top of the head.

Of course, it’s not fair, it’s not right - but sadly, church people and pastors do this kind of thing all the time.

Someone assumes that because I participate at a conference with another speaker, I must be aligned theologically with that speaker and in harmony with what he stands for and has to say. *That's ridiculous.* I may not even know the person or have even heard of him before.

Actually, I've been to Calvary Chapel conferences where I haven't always agreed with the other Calvary pastors on stage. Just because I shake hands with a fellow it doesn't mean I share that guy's entire theology.

I recall Pastor Chuck being accused of compromise because a photo was taken of him on stage at a Harvest Crusade with a pastor who had questionable beliefs...

It was silly. *Sharing the same space physically doesn't mean you share the same place theologically.* Again, that folks get away with these kinds of judgments, says to me that many pastors lack wisdom and aren't thinking for themselves. We're content with easy answers and superficial evaluations. We've stopped thinking critically.

Sadly, I've run into a lot of pastors who I felt were more committed to the party line than they were God's truth. When you start to say to yourself, *"If I want my status to rise in this group; then I better not listen to this fellow, or I shouldn't be thinking like that..."* then you're no longer pursuing truth. You've become a slave to the approval of men. Your valuing promotion over truth.

God help us! That's not wise. As Solomon said, **"Get wisdom! Get understanding!... Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you."**

Like the Apostle John I have no greater joy than for you to walk in truth. But over time the best way to insure that you walk in truth is to be spiritually discerning and to think critically - not just blindly follow the Pied Pipers.

I want you to be like the Prophet Habakkuk when he saw confusing signs on the world's stage. He saw God raising up the army of Assyria, and wondered why?

But he didn't run off to the group down the street, or log on to a slick website or podcast, nor did he think only what he'd been told by others to think... *No!* In his own words this is what he did, "I will stand my watch and set myself on the rampart, and watch to see what (God) will say to me, and what I will answer when I am corrected."

Habakkuk sought the high ground. The man of God went to the top of the wall. He found a quiet place where he could get alone with God, and the Prophet sought *the Lord's will, and His alone*, for his life and ministry.

And that's what I trust you'll do in the days ahead. In these tumultuous, chaotic times get wisdom from above. "Wisdom is the principle thing; therefore get wisdom."

Let me close with a song I sing from time to time. Though I've learned thousands of worship songs since, this is my go-to song. When I'm around the house or in the car, it's the tune that most often pops into my mind.

It's an old Maranatha Music song by Chuck Girard. *And don't worry, I won't actually sing it. I'll just quote it...*

"Our lives are in Your hands, what better place for them to be. The One who sees beyond today must know what's best for

you and me. O Lord, I trust in You, for Your ways are not like mine. Remember me in all my narrow ways of thinking. Help me Lord just to trust in what You say.” And I love that line, *“Remember me in all my narrow ways of thinking...”* Deliver me Lord from my limited perspective! **“Help me to trust in what You say!”**

And the way He delivers me is through wisdom. You need wisdom in turbulent times. Embrace her, don't forsake her, exalt her... **in all your getting get wisdom!**