

January 29-February 4

January 29th Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Proverbs 7:1-5 The Wise will find delight in the Commands of the Lord and know they are for Generation to Generation

Today's three readings are partially review, but also in part to stress a purpose, the wise will see the unity of the scriptures and find this a wonderful delight to marvel over.

1. Let's start with a review of the SHEMA in Deuteronomy 6:4-9. **Q** *What does the Hebrew word SHEMA mean?* Got it, good —now are you prepared to do such? **Q** *Tell a few things you know about the SHEMA.*
2. **Turn to Proverbs 7:1-5. Now if you see the father as passing along the commands of the Lord to the son, you see it is one generation to another generation, then you are seeing the SHEMA in practice.** That is the intent of the SHEMA in part. Next start to note even the little symbolic use of a place the commands are to be placed -- on one's hand in Proverbs 7:3—this is a symbol of remembrance from the SHEMA. These are **ceremonial symbols** but the spirit of them is the real point—take note of the Lord's commands generation to generation and pass them on. And of course the commands of the Lord are for the **HEART**—right back to the SHEMA, Deut 6:6.
3. **Q** *Do you see that Proverbs, and particularly the first nine chapters has imbibed the spirit of the SHEMA and is actually an example of working it out generation to generation?*

Prayer: *Pray today with thanksgiving for any that you knew who have died but taught well the faith and desired to pass it on to the next generation. Next intercede for parents today and their call to pass on the truth of the Lord's Word to the next generation. Include the temptations which they face.*

January 30th Read Mark 12: 28-34

The Wise Know the Essentials

of the Faith

Yes, a little more review but this time we are in the New Testament and Mark's Gospel. Have you noticed that Mark 12:29 includes the opening line of the SHEMA of Deuteronomy 6:4. Nothing happens in Scripture by coincidence!

1. Jesus was raised as a Jewish boy and at home would have been taught the SHEMA. He attended the synagogue and temple and there the SHEMA was recited. God's people are the people of the Lord from generation to generation in covenant bonds with Him. They will not turn to another god or idol. Jesus includes the opening sentence and then proceeds to the first great commandment.

2. Notice the **unnamed questioner** to whom Jesus is answering in verse 28. There is something most unusual about him. He knows something about the real essentials and the heart of the true faith. Jesus tells us in verse 34a that this is a **wise** man or a man of understanding or discretion! **A very rare word used by Jesus.**
3. Next Jesus says that this man is not far from the Kingdom of God. Now many sermons have been preached about this man being near but not in! **Maybe**, but we do not really know what became of him. The first point is clear—he had wisdom to understand the essentials of the way of the Lord from the ceremonial. This is the first step towards the Kingdom of God—understanding the essentials. Once this is grasped then the next step is to embrace it with all one’s heart and to trust in the sufficiency of the Lord. Wisdom must have truth and understanding as its basis.

Prayer: *Lord, we want to be people of understanding and wisdom and we need your light so that we can distinguish the essentials from the peripheral. Grant us the illumination of the Holy Spirit to grow with such discernment. Today we also pray that we will grow in our understanding of the wonderful unity of the whole Bible and see the great continuities and ways things develop over time.*

January 31th Read Proverbs 11:1-13 The Wise Know about Gossip (1)

Today we begin a three-part reading on gossip—the wise know about gossip and its power and dangers and also endeavour to avoid it.

1. We must start with a definition of what is gossip. So ask that question as we begin?
Q What is gossip? *The answer is not as easy as one thinks because gossip is often passing along the truth, it is not always false statements although it can be unverified or factually incorrect information on occasion. Gossip also has the element of passing the matter along to others OFTEN with an attitude of betrayal, harm and vindictiveness hidden under the surface.* So there are several elements to this definition of gossip which is why sometimes the translators use the word “slander”.
2. The *Oxford English Dictionary* speaks of a gossip as being those who indulge in idle talk, persons who discuss matters which are the private concern of others, and often rumour spreading.
3. At one level gossip can be what is found in the 9th commandment –Exodus 20: 16 which we often call lying, which often contains elements of truth.
4. But today’s proverb, **11:13** is stressing the idea that the gossip has information which was given in confidence and now it is shared with the world. The parallel proverb is **20:19**
5. The person who violates the confidence is a fool and not a wise person.
6. There are two sinful matters addressed here: i) a failure to practice discernment and discretion when one should know better, ii) a superiority sin, of failing to really love your neighbour and not do that which will lead to their good.
7. Yes, there is a time to speak but now is the time not to communicate.

Prayer: *“Lord, I know that if I think more carefully about what gossip is, I will find I engage in it and encourage it. I have wronged many people over the years through it. Help me to be far more attentive and sensitive to it in myself and others. And forgive me for the sinful talk I have done.” Amen (TK)*

February 1th Read Proverbs 16:25-33 The Wise Know about Gossip (2)

Today our focus is **16:27-28, a double proverb**. One of the causes for division and discord between people, yes, also between Christians, is that a gossip stirs up trouble between those who were once friends.

1. Verse 27 gives us quite an image of a scoundrel whose conversations spread wild fires. Think of the incredible forest fires we hear about in California and British Columbia. These fires cause incredible destruction, so too certain people they bring havoc by their gossip.
2. Verse 28A tells us that such perverse speaking will cause division between people and verse 28B tells us that this is the way of a gossip to separate people who were once close friends. Proverbs often says the same thing two, three, sometimes even four times in close succession and that is what we have in these two proverbs. It piles up images and phrases but it is all part of a great point here: watch out for the fool who is a gossip and do not fall into their trap!
3. The point today is to learn restraint and to do all one can to not create division amongst friends. Gossip is the evil’s one’s tool to destroy Psalm 133:1.
4. “Gossip is like cancer in the body of Christ.” (TK)

Prayer: *Spend today praying for wisdom to know the power of the evil one at work amongst believer’s through gossip. Pray for the power of the Holy Spirit to work in sanctifying our communication and to root out gossip through confession and new desires.*

February 2nd Read Proverbs 25:18-28 The Wise Know about Gossip (2)

Today our focus is a single proverb, **25:23. This is about slyness of gossip.**

1. Timothy Keller wrote that “...gossip and slander are subtle and elusive. Gossip comes in many disguises. It can be heads-up about ‘something you should know.’ It can masquerade as an expression of false compassion for ‘poor so-and-so.’ It can even come in the form of a request for prayer. Gossip is also not always conveyed by words themselves.” **Q.** Relate this quotation back to today’s proverb and ask yourself is gossip often masquerading as something else?
2. Further Keller writes, “How can you assess if your statement about someone is gossip or not? Ask: Is this something I should be talking to the person about directly? Is this information something the person wouldn’t mind me sharing? Is this the kind of thing I would want someone sharing about me?” “Have you heard anyone tell

you something recently that you knew qualified as gossip? How did you respond to the speaker? How should you have responded?"

3. **Q.** Now what do you think of Keller's advice as to how to assess gossip? Have you learned something that you need to do?

Prayer: *Confess that sometimes we make excuses for sin and have some very pious ways of doing that. Seek the grace and mercy of the Lord. Next pray about maturity of assessing gossip and recognising it.*

February 3rd Read James 3:1-18 The Wise Know about the Tongue

Recall for last month we saw that James is like the New Testament book of wisdom and has many similarities to Proverbs in the Old Testament. So moving along from gossip we look at the tongue or speaking in a more general way here in James three.

1. Begin by identifying all the pictures in James three which describe the influence and power of the 'tongue'. Name these pictures (James 3:3-8):.....

2. **Q.** Next, ask what does each picture try to convey as a truth?

3. Compare back by reading two proverbs now, **Proverbs 10:19** and **Proverbs 13:3**

4. **Q.** Can you think of any proverbs in our speech which are about the tongue but not from the Bible? We use proverbs also as a way of talking.

Prayer: *"Lord, I see people around me who are in great need of things I can give them with my words. But I'm too busy, too afraid, too indifferent, too self-absorbed to even notice the opportunities. Clear my vision and anoint my lips so that my words can be sweet to the souls of others." Amen (TK)*

February 4th Read Proverbs 8:22-36 The Wise Take Delight in the Wisdom of the Lord and its Manifestations

We have come again to another Lord's Day. Let us rejoice and be glad in it! We take up the theme today of joy and delight.

1. Proverbs 8:22-31, speaks here about the Lord God Almighty rejoicing in the world He has created. Now start to think of the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and creation. Divine wisdom was there even before the waters were created. Such wisdom resides in the Triune God.
2. Verses 22 & following is poetic expression about the eternal nature of divine wisdom, and how creation shows forth the wisdom of God. The creation of humans is a further expression of such wisdom. "God was wise when he made the world." (RA) The climax came with man being created—verse 31.

3. Verses 32-36 now are about our response to such divine wisdom: rejoice, listen and hear, worship, obey, and walk in such by faith.
4. "Either a man loves wisdom and life or avoids her and dies; the choice is simple."
(RA) Verse 36.
5. **Q.** *"Next time you face a case of unanswered prayer, ask yourself: Do you love God for God himself or for the things you get from him?" (TK)*

Prayer: *"Lord, I am startled by this teaching that the heart of wisdom is joy and delight in things for themselves. My modern life makes me too busy to stop and ponder 'the work of thy hands' until it triggers praise to my maker and redeemer. Let me take time for beauty." Amen (TK)*