

Proverbs

What You Get Is Not What You See

Lesson #6 for February 7, 2015

Scriptures: Proverbs 14; 15; Daniel 7:25; Mark 12:30-31; Isaiah 5:20; Matthew 20:26-28.

1. In this lesson we will be focusing on the contrast between human wisdom and divine wisdom. It is so easy for us as human beings to be deceived. If you watch a magic show live or on television, you will realize how easily even with a little sleight-of-hand we can be deceived. But, unfortunately, probably the most serious deceptions come from our own minds. Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is interpreted in our brains based on our previous experiences. As a result, if some information is presented that does not fit easily with what our current thinking is, we often reject it without even a second thought. This is especially true when it comes time to judge our own behaviors. Ninety-six percent of Americans interviewed a few years ago believed they will go to heaven. Only four percent thought they might go to hell!
2. Can you think of any modern examples of the fact that we have only a limited view of reality? Think of the x-rays, gamma rays, and the radio and television and satellite signals that pass right through our bodies, and we do not even know it! They are certainly in the air all around us. Does this help us to understand that something invisible can be very real? Does that help us to understand how limited our sensual perceptions are?
3. So, how can we avoid deceiving ourselves? This section in the book of Proverbs will give us some good ideas. We need to live by faith and not merely by sight. What does that mean? If we cannot be sure about what we can actually see—in light of the traditional statement, “seeing is believing”—how can we believe in things we cannot even see?
4. Let us take a simple example. On some days, we may feel so discouraged that we wonder if even God loves us! However, the Scriptures make it very clear that He does. Are we going to go by our own feelings? Or, by the sure Word of God?
5. Our minds can obviously only process a certain amount of information at one time. And even that small amount of information is processed by the brain only admitting information that we feel comfortable accepting.
6. Read Proverbs 14. What does this chapter tell us about fools? **(1)** Like Satan, the originator of sin, the selfish fool speaks proudly. (Proverbs 14:3) **(2)** The fool readily mocks wisdom which he chooses not to accept. (Proverbs 14:6-9) He may profess to seek wisdom, but he will reject ideas such as the fact that God created our world. He may even mock the idea of sin! **(3)** The fool is easily deceived. (Proverbs 14:15) Critics who mock the truths of the Bible turn around and accept some of the most incredible things. They actually believe that it might have been possible for life to develop purely by chance alone given billions of theoretical years. **(4)** The fool is often impulsive. (Proverbs 14:16,29) In his pride the fool often thinks that he knows what is best and does not need to take time to think things through. He reacts quickly and mostly by impulse alone. **(5)** The fool makes fun of and oppresses others. (Proverbs 14:21,31) Fools who are so certain that they are right are intolerant of others with different ideas, and they love to treat those others with contempt. (See Daniel 7:25; 8:11-12.) (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sunday, February 1.)
7. While we may feel quite confident to identify foolish thinking and behavior in others, how good are we at recognizing foolishness in ourselves? Can you think of a specific instance when you or someone you know personally acted like one of the fools mentioned above?
8. In contrast to foolishness, Proverbs 14 also outlines some characteristics of the wise. **(1)** The wise person speaks with humility. (Proverbs 14:3) Those who are wise are always prepared to

learn; they are not quick to judge. They consider carefully other people's ideas, and they listen carefully when people present them. **(2)** The wise value the learning and knowledge they have. (Proverbs 14:6,18) The wisest people in the world are those who recognize how much there is still to learn. While the fool thinks he already knows everything that he needs to know, the wise are constantly seeking to learn more. **(3)** The wise are careful and cautious. (Proverbs 14:15) The wise person clearly understands the issues in the great controversy between God and Satan. He knows that sin and evil exist. He does everything possible to avoid giving Satan even a small inroad. And he does his best to identify as quickly as possible any temptation to evil. **(4)** The wise keep their cool. (Proverbs 14:29,33) They do not need to become excessively excited when different ideas are presented because they look to the wisdom from above and they have learned to exercise self-control. (Proverbs 14:14,26; Isaiah 30:15) **(5)** The wise are compassionate and sensitive. (Proverbs 14:21,31) The wise recognize that they have a relationship with God vertically and at the same time have important horizontal relationships with their brothers and sisters around the world. (See *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Monday, February 2.)

We do not realize how many of us walk by sight and not by faith. We believe the things that are seen, but do not appreciate the precious promises given us in His Word.—Ellen G. White, *RH*, April 8, 1884 par. 1; *OHC* 85.2. Compare *FW* 35.2; *GW92* 411.2; *1SM* 350.2.

9. What does it mean to walk by faith and not by sight? Is it easy to trust God's Word and move forward even when we cannot see how things could work out? Is that what Jacob and Rebecca should have done rather than tricking Isaac? Why do you think God asks us to do that?

Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. **Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing.** Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 330.1. [Bold type is added.]

10. Sinners love to do things in the dark. They think that if they are more or less out of the sight of other human beings, they can do as they like. They need to understand that "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good." (Proverbs 15:3, *NKJV*) Are you comfortable with that idea? For God's friends this should be good news. For sinners—especially those who recognize God's existence—it may be frightening.
11. Proverbs 15&16 take on a more theological bent. There are plenty of passages in Scripture suggesting that God sees and knows and understands everything. For example, look at Psalm 33:18; 139 and Job 28:24,28. How different would our lives be if every day we "practiced the presence of God" as suggested in Lesson 1 of this series?
12. Unfortunately, sinners tend to think that if they can avoid any human detecting their sin at the time when it happens, there will be no long-term consequences. They need to be reminded of the judgment: "There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account." (Hebrews 4:13, *NKJV*)
13. Read Proverbs 15:3; Isaiah 5:20; and Hebrews 5:11-6:3. These verses are just a few of the many in Scripture contrasting good and evil. The Bible does not leave us in doubt about the differences between the two.
14. Read Proverbs 15. There are several passages in this chapter talking about joy or cheer. "A joyful heart makes a cheerful face." (Proverbs 15:13, *NASB, 1995*) "When people are happy, they smile." (Proverbs 15:13, *GNB*) Jesus Himself said, "Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

(Matthew 6:34, *NKJV*) Despite the troubles that Christians may face, we can choose how to respond to them. Pain, suffering, and trials need not conquer us. We have a heavenly Father who guarantees us that we will not be tempted more than we are able to bear. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

15. Read Acts 20:34, *GNB*: “There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.” Have you experienced that in your own life? Luke was quoting Paul who in turn was quoting Jesus Christ; but, we do not have the original words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels.
16. Shouldn't we be cheerful and happy because we know for certain that God loves us? How can we be sure of that? Do you have any questions about that in your own mind?
17. Read Proverbs 20:24 and 21:31. Compare Daniel 2 and 7. Books like Daniel and Revelation make it very clear that God understands and knows the future. He can predict events far in the future. (See Isaiah 40-55.) In Proverbs 16:1, we are told: “We may make our plans, but God has the last word.” If we are willing to cooperate with God, He will direct (Proverbs 16:9) and establish our plans (Proverbs 16:3) and work for us even among our enemies. (Proverbs 16:4,7) The one key is to cooperate with God in all that we do.
18. Read Proverbs 16:18-19. Do we need any further evidence concerning this famous passage? Don't we all recognize that “pride goes before destruction”? Wasn't pride the first sin? (See Ezekiel 28:17.) Jesus strongly urged His disciples to seek humility instead. (Matthew 20:26-28)
19. Read Proverbs 16:33. For careful Bible students, it is clear that the casting of lots was used on several important occasions recorded in the Bible. While we do not know exactly how the casting of lots was done in ancient times, it seems clear that God guided the results. Does that mean we should use those kinds of methods today? Would that be the best way to choose a General Conference president? Or, some other church official? There are several reasons why we should not use those methods today. First of all, if a person were chosen by casting lots and then that person did not do a perfect job, we might tend to blame God for that person's failure. God takes responsibility in His sphere, and He asks us to take responsibility in those areas where we can do so. Of course, we always need to remember that in light of the great controversy, the Devil will be working his hardest to make our best laid plans fail.

From the beginning Satan has portrayed to men the gains to be won by transgression. Thus he seduced angels. Thus he tempted Adam and Eve to sin. And thus he is still leading multitudes away from obedience to God. The path of transgression is made to appear desirable; “but the end thereof are the ways of death.” Proverbs 14:12. Happy [are] they who, having ventured in this way, learn how bitter are the fruits of sin, and turn from it betimes.—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 720.3 (1890). [Content in brackets is added.]

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.—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 251.2 (1905); *2MCP* 797.1.

20. As we suggested at the beginning of our lesson, one of the major contrasts in this lesson is between our wisdom and God's wisdom. Are there ever times in your life when you think you know what is best, maybe even better than God does? It is hard for us to think about the question in those stark terms? How often do we consciously choose to sin when we know it is

not a good idea and certainly not God's plan for our lives? What does it take for us to recognize our own feeble, fallible, and imperfect perceptions of reality? How do we learn to live according to God's wisdom, appreciate it, and understand it better? Surely, none of us would suggest that we really know more about what is right for us than God does.

21. As Seventh-day Adventists, we not only have the inspired biblical records but also the writings of Ellen White to guide us. Do you regard these sources as dependable truth? Are there additional ways in which God is able to guide our individual lives on a day-by-day basis? Do we need more light than we have available to us now?
22. Read Matthew 7:13-14. In these verses, wasn't Jesus advising us to choose the difficult and unpopular way as opposed to the broad, easy, popular way?
23. How safe is it for us to do what we think is right? Read Judges 17:6 or 21:25. (The two verses say the same thing.) Is doing just what you please—what is right in your own eyes—the same as doing what is right in God's eyes? Can you think of some examples where individuals you know—or at least you know about—did what they thought was right and the result was disastrous? How many people believe used—or even new—car dealers? How many people believe what they hear on the news or read on the Internet? Are those reliable sources? How can we develop true, reliable, trusting relationships without at the same time being too gullible?
24. Even the book of Proverbs suggests that there were a lot of so-called wisdom writings in the Ancient Near East. Some of them may have been borrowed by Solomon and modified or simply included in the book we are studying. Why do we consider this book inspired while we consider those other writings not inspired? Did God guide Solomon in picking out those Proverbs which represent the truth and, thus, inspire them?
25. If we put God first in everything we do, will we be safe? (Proverbs 1:7; Matthew 6:33) In Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28-30, God spelled out the results of following His wisdom versus rebelling against Him. As you look at the history of Israel down through the generations, is it not very clear what the results were of rebelling against Him?
26. True wisdom includes an understanding of the great controversy between God and Satan over the character and government of God. Many of the stories in the Bible such as the story of Job and the story of Abraham when he was asked to sacrifice his son may seem puzzling without understanding that perspective.
27. Caleb and Joshua, the two faithful spies in Numbers 13:25-14:38, and Elisha in 2 Kings 6:11-23 illustrated the value of seeing God's perspective on things. God knows everything about everyone from the moment we are conceived until the time when we die. (Psalm 139)

Nobody can fool God. He knows when those who offer prayer or worship are sincere or hypocritical (*Prov. 15:8; compare Isa. 1:11-17*). He even knows our thoughts (*Prov. 15:26*). So, rather than avoiding God when we sin (*Gen. 3:7, 8*), we would be better off to confess what He already knows and receive forgiveness (*Ps. 32:1-5*). (*Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide p. 75*)

28. We recognize that things would be much less complicated on this earth if God had forced us to always do His will. But that, of course, would eliminate human freedom and the possibility of love. God would never accept that. But, God is still in charge. He does His best to warn and instruct us; but, even when terrible things happen, such as Joseph's brothers selling him into slavery, God works it all out for the best. Don't you think we can trust Him?

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