

WORLD'S WISDOM 2

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In a recent article in *Decision* magazine, Billy Graham asked the question, “How wise is man?” He proceeded to point out how corrupt and sinful our world has become. He also noted that the world is in a sorry state because it lives by the world’s wisdom – not by God’s, our own society included. It is full of pride, lust, greed, anger, gluttony, covetousness, and especially spiritual sloth. We have leaned to our own understanding because we have had our minds filled with the world’s wisdom. It consists of knowledge, physical science, so-called social and political science, as well as the philosophy of humanism. All because our learned people have become, as C. S. Lewis so aptly said, “metaphysically uneducated,” filled with pride because they know so much.

To start our discussion of the world’s wisdom, I must differentiate the godly knowledge that God allows us to access (such as hard science), and comprehension of what is true or right coupled with optimum judgment as to action. To define wisdom, the dictionary says it is the ability to optimally (effectively and efficiently) apply perceptions and knowledge, and so produce the desired results. It is this latter definition of wisdom Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 3:19, where he said, “For the wisdom of this world is

foolishness in God's sight." As I reflect on history, I realize the world's wisdom has for the most part governed the course of societies throughout all time.

Recently, I clipped a piece from a Christian magazine called "Digging Deeper." It was a commentary on an exposition of scripture concerning wisdom. The definition in the side bar said, "Wisdom is God's gift of spiritual insight that enables us to make practical use of knowledge. Wisdom is making decisions based on the knowledge God has revealed in Scripture. Wisdom thus enables us to make decisions in line with God's purposes. It shows us how to put godly knowledge to work in daily living."

When we pray for wisdom, we are praying for the ability to see all of life, particularly troublesome circumstances, from God's point of view. Wisdom helps us discern the ultimate purpose of the trials, and enables us to grow while enduring them. James, therefore, admonished us to ask for wisdom if we lack it (James 1:5). God supplies it liberally if we ask.

The recent newsletter about my suffering during my last cardiac catheterization is a case in point. The bladder spasm I had with an indwelling catheter in my bladder was the worst pain I have ever experienced. When I asked the Lord what I could learn from the experience he told me, "Now you know how I suffered physically when I took the punishment for your sin!" It was God's wisdom that I should know that.

The worldly wisdom of certain kinds of intellectuals has influenced much of our civilization. These intellectuals have been around ever since the beginning of recorded history (around 2880 BC or even before). They are called philosophers or prophets, and their thoughts have been recorded for the edification of mankind. There is only one problem with most of their wisdom – much of it comes out of polluted minds. The result is that there are many philosophies all claiming to have truth, but many contradict others, so one is hard put to believe what they individually consider as the truth. Many of these philosophies have a profound influence on society for a time, but when they prove not to be true, they are discarded.

Philosophy is the study of general and fundamental problems concerning matters such as existence, knowledge, values, reason, mind, and language. Most recorded philosophies do not address all of the subjects. They do, however, always try to address what they consider truth about a subject of interest, such as the matters listed above. I have to admit that having read most of the important philosophical works from Plato to Kierkegaard, I was often confused by their verbiage. In many words they claimed to have truth, but the contradictions in the “truths” they espoused lead us to believe that they did not have truth, or if they did it was only partial. The whole truth is, however, available to us. Jesus came to attest to the truth. He said that he is truth (John 14:6).

God first revealed his truth on Mount Sinai to a prophet (philosopher) named Moses. People could not and did not, consistently live by that truth until God sent Jesus to

reveal the genuine truth; after atoning for our sins, he sent the Holy Spirit to give us the power to live in union with the truth. Christians can do this, but those who are unbelievers cannot (Romans 8:7). Even the Jews to whom and for whom the philosophy was originally given, have not been able to consistently live by it.

There are good reasons why they cannot. The first and most obvious reason is man is rebellious. We do not tolerate the imposition of another will above our own. A second reason is Satan does not want us to live by it. He stimulates the minds of those of philosophical bent to promulgate anything but what is given by God. One reason why Judeo-Christian philosophy is truth is that it was given by the source of all knowledge. Since God is all knowledge (omniscient), it is a fact that what was revealed to Moses and through Jesus is based on the knowledge of what God knows is right. Even though mankind knows this, they do not obey it. Satan sends lies to make us believe otherwise. Since Satan's offerings appeal to our human nature, we choose to believe him. Another reason is that we do not have spiritual immunity to resist Satan's offerings, so we are infected with other philosophies (sin).

Paul Johnson, a British historian, wrote a book that examines the lives of some influential intellectuals (philosophers) of our time. Their lives were characterized by amorality, dissoluteness, hate, and hostility to God. They most often were liars, and some of them had no respect for life. Almost all lived governed by the god of this world – Satan. All one has to do to corroborate this is to look at consequences of the adoption of their philosophy. The philosophy of Karl Marx is responsible for the murder of

70,000,000 people in Russia, China, Cuba, and Cambodia. In the same way, the hippie revolution of the sixties was based on the philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Heidigger, and Albert Camus. They proposed a philosophy of existentialism without God. Without God, there was no meaning and no hope. Again, Satan played a role in the distorting of existentialism. Kierkegaard, however, included God in his philosophy, as did the Spanish philosophers Ortega y Gasset, Miguel Unamuno and Julian Marias. Their philosophy is a philosophy of hope. Their philosophy is compatible with Scripture.

As I reflected on philosophy and my faith, I have come to believe the Christian existentialists have a philosophy that reflects God's wisdom. As I have treated patients who do not know God, I realize their worldview is inadequate, their values are the values of the world, and the rest of their philosophy of life is worldly. I also learned that when God is installed into their lives, their worldview is dramatically changed, their values are changed, and they begin to live a life compatible with the philosophy we are given by God. Instead of consistently experiencing anger, fear, sorrow, jealousy, emptiness, disgust, shame, pain, and confusion, they now can consistently experience love, joy and awe. There is an infusion of wisdom, characterized by being able to perceive truths that they have not perceived before. These give rise to thoughts and righteous behaviors that elicit the positive emotions.

I admit I did not study philosophy in undergraduate school. In my psychiatric training, I was, though, indoctrinated by the philosophy (religion) of Freud's psychoanalysis. I did

not believe it, but had to learn it so I could parrot it back to the examiners on the certification board of examiners. Even though I was a pagan, I did not accept it because I could not find empirical evidence that said it made a difference in a person's life. Learning it certainly did not make a difference in my life. As I examined the life of those who believed in Freud's philosophy, and tried to put it into practice, I found they were unable to live righteous lives. One ardent believer, who had five analyses, was married five times; another had a number of affairs, and still another had adulterous sex with his patients. Freud's philosophy profoundly influenced all aspects of our society promoting the philosophy of humanism. Satan's offer in the Garden of Eden was that we could be like gods, and Freud and his disciples echoed this offer.

Since that time, I have read the writings of almost all the major philosophers, whose thinking has been recorded through all time, beginning with Ptah-Hotep (Egyptian). Therefore, I am not ignorant as to what they said. Even so, I am convinced that although they might occasionally have had partial truths they did not have the whole truth.

So what should we do? How can we convince people that when they live by the philosophy of the world, they are lost, dissolute, and on their way to Hell? Sadly, I do not have an answer, only to do what Jesus told us to do. "He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will **be my witnesses** in Jerusalem,

and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:7b, 8). Jesus transforms lives!

The necessity of witnessing is emphasized in an article in World Magazine (March 27 issue) by Andree Seu. She makes the point that only when a preacher can witness to the gospel in his own life is he able to transform churches, countries, and individual lives.

Our country today is desperately in need of transformation. I sound like a broken record, I know, but I am desperate to see revival occur. This newsletter is the only platform I have to speak from consistently, but I appeal to you to pray for revival. In doing so, I suggest you pray for more love, more power, and more of Jesus in your lives. Then pray God will use you to be a witness to your world. As you pray, repent and then repent every day. In this way, you will be cleansed, and you will not be grieving the Holy Spirit.

In your prayers do not hesitate to praise and thank God for all the great things he has done in your life, in the lives of the ones you love, and in your area of the country. If you pray then something will happen. John Wesley said that everything happens with prayer and nothing without it! Pray unceasingly.

BOOKS READ

The Third Chimpanzee, by Jared Diamond, was published by Harper-Collins in 1993.

This book is the predecessor to the next book I will review. All the material in this book is contained in *Guns, Germs and Steel*. The author is an environmentalist and is writing about cultural anthropology. Ignore this book and read the one reviewed below. He expands on the material included here in his more recent publication.

Guns, Germs and Steel, written by Jared Diamond, was published by W. W. Norton and Co. in 2005. The author is a physiologist, who is writing about cultural anthropology. He is obviously not a Christian since he is an evolutionist and an equalitarian. He went to New Guinea early in his career as a scientist to study birds, but was diverted to his current studies by his lack of familiarity with the cultures he encountered. Unfortunately, he was very impressed by the aborigines' exquisite familiarity of their environment and interpreted this as a sign of a superior level of intelligence over his own.

After his initial experience, he endeavored to look at all ethnic groups in the light of his biases, and he concluded that the things that advanced civilizations were the extrinsic factors of weapons (guns), germs (diseases) and the discovery of steel with which to make weapons.

I had to admit I struggled to finish this lengthy book. He has a tendency to be repetitive, as if he is trying to convince himself he is right. Since I am not an equalitarian except for our position before God, I disagreed with him so much it distracted me as I read. My personal belief is that some are more equal than others are.

His point of view is, though, that of the intellectual world of today. One sees this in the writings of many academics, so much so that it is politically correct doctrine. Obviously, his book will encourage them in their actions.

The Naked Gospel is a book sent to me by a brother Christian. Written by Andrew Farley, a professor of applied linguistics at Texas Tech University, it was published by Zondervan in 2009. One of his reviewers said he stripped away all fakery found in the church today and challenged us to be a normal Christian while living as a healthy Christian. It does just that.

I could not put the book down after I started it and read it straight through. The reason I could not quit was I agreed with him so thoroughly. It is interesting that I am on the curriculum committee of the seminary where I teach, and I have been struggling with deciding what we really should be teaching. Obviously, we are not teaching the right things in our seminaries since so many of our former students do not think they were educated for the ministry in today's churches.

Some of the points Farley makes are that we have never quit our pharisaical bent and preoccupation with obeying the law. He says we often see ourselves as a sinner in the arms of a loving God who chooses not to see our sins. God does, however, see us as we really are. Another windmill he tilts with is the notion we are to tithe to our churches. He helps us understand what we are really to give.

The only part of his book that gave me pause was his definition of our “flesh.” My spiritual anthropology caused me to hesitate and really give the subject further thought. I concluded he was partly right, but he confused the nature of our humanity and the behaviors they elicited before and after we were regenerated.

Otherwise, the book does strip away all the fakery that has accreted to the gospel through the centuries and brings us back to the simplicity of that which Paul described in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8.

If I Could Ask God Anything, by Katherine Slattery, was published by Thomas Nelson in 2010. Kitty (she is my friend and I can call her by her familiar name) did a great job in explaining the fundamentals of faith in language kids can understand. One cannot read through the book, for it is like reading the dictionary, but it is a great book with which to teach kids. Her approach is from an evangelical point of view, and is not in any way contradictory to the Word of God. She has done a wonderful job of putting this together for the edification of all children. It is written in simple language that any child over five can understand. She has even explained the origin and significance of some of our holidays.

I heartily recommend this book to parents and Sunday school teachers – either as a primary resource or to supplement their other curricular materials. There are approximately 200 different questions and answers in the book that allow for continuous

presentation for almost a year if done on a daily basis, or for four years if taught question by question only on Sundays. I wish I had it available when I was raising my children.

PERSONAL COMMENTS

Each day my body is decaying and each day my mind is being renewed (2 Corinthians 4:16). I have had a wonderful time since I retired spending time with the Lord. We have a wonderful time each morning conversing with one another, and each day I get new revelations of his thinking. Most of the time he refers me back to his Word where I get new insights.

In my conversation, I tell him that I need to know where he wants me to go and what he wants me to do. He then tells me where and opens doors for me to tell people about him and how he wants them to live life.

I continue to visit alive and dead churches, and have learned so much about what energizes a church. We had a wonderful experience one Sunday when we went to a local independent church and really were able to encounter the Lord as we worshiped. The preaching was exegetical and anointed even though the pastor had not gone to seminary. The church was really energized too. We have had other experiences that were equally illuminating. I have now visited 20 churches.

ITINERARY

May 24th, Carolina Evangelical Divinity School commencement, Greensboro, NC.

June 19th North Haven Church in Raleigh, NC Seminar on "Happiness".

July 14-17 Aldersgate Renewal Ministries, Charleston WV, Workshop on the Nuts and Bolts of Discipleship.