

Wisdom

‘Preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you...’ (PR 3: 21, 22)

Like you, I watch helplessly as divided men and women leave faith and family for another partnership, be it a younger lover, the actualizing of an ‘LGBT’ self, or just a ‘fresh’ start. Adultery takes on many forms in our world today. Especially painful is the mangling of many by the one who buys the lie that happiness lies in the illicit orgasm, the romantic rush, creaturely comforts that bypass the Creator. Solomon warns those who conceive adultery: ‘At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent.’ (PR 4:11)

How relevant is the wisdom of Proverbs for our consumer-driven culture! The wise declare: ‘Yes I have hardships and disappointment, yet my happiness rests in the One who orders all things and makes a way for me in all my conflicts.’ Wisdom guides that life and safeguards all who surround it by what Joseph Pieper describes as ‘the perfected ability to make right decisions.’ (His definition of prudence, which I am describing here as wisdom, is laid out excellently in *The Four Cardinal Virtues*, Notre Dame Press.) On wisdom hinges all other virtues. How else can you understand ‘this root and guide of all good action’?

I rejoice in a host of husbands who have betrayed their wives (with porn and both genders) then repented and worked hard to restore family life. From them I have learned wisdom. Why? Wisdom guided their steps; they were willing to be trained by her, and their recovery highlights several facets of Pieper’s wisdom.

First, wisdom is rooted in the truth; truth is her standard, and wisdom insists that one love the truth and effort to actualize it. Wisdom is based both on an ideal—God only honors sexual love in marriage and my wife deserves that—but also on a real struggle to stay true to that ideal—I must work hard and find roots in a recovery community in order to win back her trust. Wisdom aligns with Reality. One aligns with the truth of God’s will and works hard to live out that truth.

Secondly, wisdom insists on an ‘energetic promptness’, an ability to swiftly decide for the good. That means clearing out any delusion related to ‘managing’ one’s own sin. Wisdom’s clear-sightedness frees him to refuse nostalgic rubbish. He remembers things as they were—demonic entrapments that destroyed life rather than enhanced it; he runs to the fountain of life to partake of the One whose friends hold him to his best. One friend said: ‘I recall daily the devastation of my wife and marriage but also the refuge of our love today. We’ve worked too hard to give that up for anything.’

Thirdly, wisdom is all about foresight, ‘a sure instinct for the future.’ My friends are preparing for a long life with good women and kids and grandkids. ‘I am making truthful decisions today for tomorrow’ is their credo. These former fools repented unto Almighty Mercy and became wise.

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Wisdom makes whole divided lives, and sets in motion a righteous future for thousands of others.