

- I. The Right Order; Sunday, September 21, 2014
(Sunnyslope)

Psalm 19:14

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be
pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

- A. "Good morning, church!"
- B. [Xander's 13th birthday is today]
 - 1. [Yesterday, took him fishing on Lake Cushman]
 - 2. [Taught him how to fish]
- C. There are a lot of technical details about fishing..
 - 1. ...but what it really all boils down to is a very simple philosophy that applies across just about every discipline of life
 - 2. The wisdom from fishing on the lake, at its most basic, are 3 steps
 - a) Think things through
 - (1) The mechanics of fishing
 - (2) Where do we want to be on the lake?
 - (3) What sort of bait should we use?
 - (4) How will we cast and retrieve?
 - (5) What problems should we be prepared to encounter?
 - b) Get prepared
 - (1) Setup our rods, lines, and bait
 - (2) Add weights and floats to the lines
 - (3) Organize our cabin area so that if we catch a fish, we are ready to deal with it

- c) Be patient; wait for opportunity
 - (1) Don't fidget
 - (2) Don't fret
 - (3) Just be patient; relax
- D. It seems to me that this most basic philosophy of how to fish is the ideal way to approach life itself
 - 1. In all things in life, we should start with careful thought
 - 2. Then prepare ourselves and our environment based on what we've thought through
 - 3. And finally wait; be patient
- E. What happens when that order is inverted?
 - 1. We start with sitting around waiting for opportunities to come along
 - 2. But that's just a fancy way of saying we're being lazy
 - 3. Then when opportunities do show up, we're not prepared for them
 - 4. So we have to frantically react
 - 5. And that usually doesn't work out well
 - 6. And so we end with thinking, trying to rationalize why things didn't work out so well and how it can't possibly be our fault
- F. The order of operations of any situation is pretty critical
 - 1. We need to put important things in the right order, not just do the important things
 - 2. When the order of steps is in the wrong order, this leads to failure...
 - 3. ...even though we're doing all the same steps

- G. For Christians, it's not good enough to have the same principles as is defined in Scripture
 - 1. In other words: if we look to Scripture for a list of things to do and things to avoid, that's good..
 - 2. ...but it's not good enough
 - 3. The right steps may be in our lives just fine, but if they're not in the right order, we run into problems

- H. As Christians, we need to think, prepare, and wait... in that order
 - 1. First, we need to ask God for wisdom; because without this, what follows will be misdirected
 - 2. Second, we need to work: pray, study, and serve
 - 3. Then third, wait patiently on God; striving to see things from God's perspective and to life within God's timeline

- II. Let's look at some ancient Jewish wisdom and teach on the topic of putting things in the right order
 - A. [Hebrew words are written with consonants, no vowels]

 - B. Each of the three letters making up the Hebrew word for king-MeLeC-stands for a part of the human body
 - M - Mo-aCH - Brain

 - L- LeV - Heart

 - C - CaVeD - Liver

 - 1. What is more, those three parts of the human body carry special spiritual allusions
 - a) The brain alludes to our analytical and thoughtful abilities

 - b) Whenever the word heart is used in Scripture, it means our emotional beings

- c) Finally, the word CaVeD, liver, means base bodily appetites
 - 2. Furthermore, the word MeLeC, 'king,' occurs thousands of times in Scripture
 - a) Biblically, when discussing people, king can refer to anybody rising to leadership over his fellow humans
 - 3. Thus, aspiring to leadership means running your life and making your decisions based primarily on intellectual and thoughtful analysis
 - a) Secondly, consider your emotions
 - b) Finally, only once all else is in place, indulge the bodily appetites
 - 4. A successful life is lived firstly on doing what one's head directs and only subsequently on what one's heart wants
 - a) Seldom, if ever, are important decisions made based on the calls of the body
- C. Conversely, let's see what Hebrew word emerges by reversing the three letters
 - 1. What if one runs one's life with paramount emphasis on food, fun, and the body?
 - a) Then if time and energy still allow, one does what one's heart directs
 - b) And finally, if ever, one listens to the call of one's head
 - c) What would that life look like?
 - 2. Reversing the order of the letters making up the Hebrew for king, we now have:
 - Caved - liver - bodily appetites
 - Lev - heart - emotions
 - Mo ach - brain - the intellect

3. What does the Hebrew word CaLeM, (the opposite of MeLeC) mean?
 - a) Answer: Embarrassment, shame, calumny
 - b) Notice that words like calumny and calamity possess the root letters of CLM.
 4. The lesson is clear
 - a) To reach the heights of leadership and success, do first what your head tells you
 - b) Only then consult your heart, and finally, very finally, think of what your body craves
 - c) Failing to heed this guidance leads to calumny, embarrassment and shame
- D. The problem is that knowing this does not ensure that we will follow it
1. Every business professional incarcerated for cutting corners and every politician publicly humiliated by his extra-marital affairs knows that he should have followed his head rather than his bodily desires or his heart
- E. Ancient Jewish wisdom teaches that the basic requirement for a king of Israel was an active and healthy relationship with God
1. The Israelite king had to write his own copy of the Torah and he had to follow it
 2. A connection with God is one of the strongest tools for building character
 3. Possessing deep conviction that regardless of where one finds oneself, the King of Kings is watching with the highest expectations is a guard rail of moral safety

III. We can see the order of operations set out very well in the stories of Solomon in 1 Kings

A. Let's start with God asking Solomon for what he wants

1 Kings 3:5

One night while Solomon was in Gibeon, the Lord God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Solomon, ask for anything you want, and I will give it to you."

1. Solomon could have answered that he wanted secure a safe and prosperous kingdom for God's people
 2. Or that he wanted to build a great temple to God
 3. But these would have been asking for things in the wrong order
- B. Solomon asks for wisdom first, above all other things; he recognizes that without wisdom first, everything else (while good and well-intentioned) will be less than what it could have been
- C. This please God

1 Kings 3:10-12

God said: "Solomon, I'm pleased that you asked for this. You could have asked to live a long time or to be rich. Or you could have asked for your enemies to be destroyed. Instead, you asked for wisdom to make right decisions. So I'll make you wiser than anyone who has ever lived or ever will live."

D. And this is the really interesting bit: God was so pleased that Solomon asked for wisdom that God granted Solomon what he didn't ask for

1 Kings 13-14

¹³I'll also give you what you didn't ask for. You'll be rich and respected as long as you live, and you'll be greater than any other king. ¹⁴If you obey me and follow my commands, as your father David did, I'll let you live a long time.

- E. And of course we know from other stories that God did bless Solomon with great wisdom; and in fact the next chapter tells us how wise Solomon was

1 Kings 4:29-30

Solomon was brilliant. God had blessed him with insight and understanding. He was wiser than anyone else in the world, including the wisest people of the east and of Egypt.

1 Kings 4:32-33

Solomon became famous in every country around Judah and Israel. Solomon wrote three thousand wise sayings and composed more than one thousand songs. He could talk about all kinds of plants, from large trees to small bushes, and he taught about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish.

1 Kings 4:34

Kings all over the world heard about Solomon's wisdom and sent people to listen to him teach.

- F. Now fast forward a bit, and we're told in Scripture in great detail of the building of the temple under Solomon's direction

1. After the temple was completed, God appeared to Solomon in a dream (just as He had done before when He had asked Solomon to select what he wanted)
2. And in this dream, God took possession of the temple and promised to maintain the throne of David

1 Kings 9:3-5

I heard your prayer and what you asked me to do. This temple you have built is where I will be worshiped forever. It belongs to me, and I will never stop watching over it.

You must obey me, as your father David did, and be honest and fair. Obey my laws and teachings, and I will keep my promise to David that someone from your family will always be king of Israel.

- G. Now, I wonder if this would have been the same result had the order of operations been reversed

1. If Solomon had first built the temple...

2. ...and then waited for God to show up..
3. ...would God have blessed Solomon in the same way?

- H. Let us seek God's wisdom first and foremost
- I. May God's wisdom flow to us
- J. And may we be always willing to listen and to place that wisdom first in the order of operations
- K. Amen