**THE WISE MAN** - Part 1

Proverbs 27:17 “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

Hebrews 10:24 “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.”

When my two oldest grandsons were teenagers I helped to invest in an IPhone with the challenge that the three of us would go through a program to sharpen one another, and to hold one another accountable. The program would consist of three things and we could text one another (using our IPhone).

The three things centered on the physical, spiritual and mental. So for five days a week lasting for six months (it takes about that amount of time for a habit to be formed) we would be texting one another daily what we did physically. And since both of them were playing football and going to the gym they had plenty of exercise for the body. They (as well as myself) would also text what we read in the Bible that morning and then thirdly the thought that God gave us through our reading. I am now doing this with my son-in-law, holding one another accountable in these three areas. Why? So that we might sharpen as well as spur one another on especially now with **‘that** **day’** approaching.

The reason that I mention this is that now in my quiet time I am beginning to read through Proverbs because it is such a practical book about the art of living. Several years ago I did this with Ecclesiastes and you can go to our ‘teaching page’ and read what was written in this series.

For example, this morning here is what I texted my son-in-law:

“**Physical**: Nordic walking, pushups and standups.
**Spiritual**: Proverbs 1:2-4 "for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight; for receiving instruction in prudent behavior, doing what is right and just and fair; for giving prudence to those who are simple, knowledge and discretion to the young---."
**Thought**: Wisdom, discipline, understanding, prudence and knowledge are needed to do that which is right, just and fair. Today in all of society and in all professions there is such a need for the characteristics mentioned above. Where can we find them? Here in the Word of God. I stand on the Word.”

I want to challenge you to get a partner (wife, children, colleague, etc.) to spur one another on in God’s Word and prayer.

May God bless!

**THE WISE MAN** - Part 2

Proverbs 18:15 “The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out.”

Proverbs 1:5 “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.“

When I look at the world’s situation there is a desperate need for wise men/women who can see clearly what the problem is and give solutions. However, when we talk about a wise man/woman we are also talking about character.

When I was the field leader for our work of Operation Mobilization in South America I wrote a book called THE PERSON THAT GOD USES: MAN OF CHARACTER. The one thing that we need is to be is men/women of influence. No matter what sphere the Lord places us in (our jobs, school, media, government, household, etc.) we can have an influence for the Kingdom of God that dwells within. (Luke 17:21)

One of the first things that stand out in the character of a wise man is being teachable. So often in talking with people – when something is mentioned you hear the words: “I know,” and immediately you perceive that they are not teachable. Like proverbs says, “The ears of the wise seek it out.” Or “Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.“

We all could use the advice of Proverbs: “Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.” Proverbs 19:20

One of the things that I have noticed in my life is that God has different ways of bringing to us knowledge, but sometimes the way God uses offends us and so we miss that teachable moment. God used a jackass to teach Balaam and sometimes we might think it is a jackass trying to say something to us.

Another aspect of the character of a wise man is that he is a righteous man. This righteousness will come out in many ways. For example, he will be a man who will speak the truth. He will be a man of his word. “Teaching you true and reliable words, so that you can give sound answers to him who sent you?” Proverbs 22:21

This righteousness will be seen in his relationship to the Lord in shunning evil, hating what is false, doing what is righteous, because of his reverential trust in the Lord.

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

Proverbs 14:16 “A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.”

THIS IS A MAN/WOMAN THAT WILL HAVE INLFUENCE FOR THE KNGDOM OF GOD!

**THE WISE MAN –** Part 3 – His Character

Proverbs 15:33 “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor. “

Proverbs 17:27 “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.”

Proverbs 29:8 “Mockers stir up a city, but wise men turn away anger.”

Proverbs 29:11 “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control.”

According to the book of Proverbs the wise man is one of impeccable character exemplified by the life of Christ that we read about in the Gospels. God is wanting to form us into the image of His Son. One of the most prominent characteristics of Christ is His humility. We read in Philippians 2 that “though being the very nature of God he did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing; being made in the very nature of the servant; being made in the likeness of man **He humbled Himself**.”

How different from what we see today with the so-called wise men as they seek recognition in what they have achieved or done for the Lord. Jesus humbled himself and because of that he has been highly glorified and honored.

Another aspect of Christ and a wise man according to the book of Proverbs is that he is a self-controlled person. “A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. “ “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.” How often in the heat of the battle or crisis the tendency is to lose our calm and we use words that we wish we could take back, but they have already gone out and have done the damage.

A wise man in the midst of the storms of life will not be a man of anxiety and confusion, but a man who has a calmness and peace around him. Why? Because his life is rooted in the fact of who God is. We see this with Jesus, as a man, walking here on earth in the midst of the accusations and going to the cross. We see Him as a man who has a tremendous calmness around Him and being able to say: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

Also remember what He said to the disciple that He loved as well as his mother:  "Dear woman, here is your son,” and to the disciple, "Here is your mother.” (John 19:26-27) The influence that we can have is to have the same calmness in the midst of the confusion, shaking or terror that is gripping our nation as well as our world.

We are told to “be angry but sin not.” We do see the need for anger when it comes to some of the things that we see being done today. It is not an anger against a person, but an anger against ideas, philosophies and satanic bondage that is holding many in captivity. Jesus was calm, but when He walked into the temple and saw the money changers and what was being done we see a righteous anger bubbling up within Him when He saw the house of God being turned into something that was completely contrary to God’s ways.

Yes, a wise man, according to Proverbs, will not only be humble, but self-controlled. May God work these attributes into all of us!

**THE WISE MAN** - Part 4 - His Character

Proverbs 19:2 “It is not good to have zeal without knowledge, nor to be hasty and miss the way.”

Proverbs 13:16 “Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.”

Proverbs 14:8 “The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.”

Proverbs 12:23 “A prudent man keeps his knowledge to himself, but the heart of fools blurts out folly.”

Proverbs 15:2 “The tongue of the wise commends knowledge, but the mouth of the fool gushes folly.”

Hebrews chapter 12:2 tells us that we should fix our eyes on Jesus because He is the author and the finisher of our faith. When it comes to the character of a wise man there is no better example than Jesus Christ Himself when He walked on this earth as a man.

Jesus was a cautious man in the sense that He was not rash in what He was doing. He knew His Father’s will and that His steps were measured to fulfill the destiny that His Father had for Him. Because of this He did not miss the way and on the cross His final words were: “It is finished.”

We are told in Proverbs 13:16 “Every prudent man acts out of knowledge, but a fool exposes his folly.” This is a wise man who thinks before he acts and before he speaks. How often our tongues get us into trouble, not only in what we say, but also what we write. Today with the Internet what we say and write can very quickly become public.

When I look at the life of Christ here on earth I see a person who waited before speaking and when He did speak it astounded the audience that was listening. When He was asked if we should pay taxes to Caesar, what was His answer? He took time and said: “Show me a coin” and then He asked: “Whose inscription is on it?” and the answer was: “Caesar’s.” So He said: “Render unto Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” What an answer!

Or take the example when they dragged a sinful womab to Jesus and said that according to the law of Moses such a person should be stoned. What did Jesus do? He did not answer immediately, but took His time, stooped down and wrote something in the sand, and then He said: “He who is without sin let him cast the first stone.” I believe that the reason Jesus took time before answering was to allow His Heavenly Father to give Him the answer. We too need to be slow to speak and quick to listen.

Another example is that the wise man is patient and this is seen in his forgiveness. Like Proverbs says: “A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.”  Proverbs 19:11

Today we see how easily our so-called wise men become offended and vindictive. Just take a look at our politics today and you see what I mean.

Lastly, according to Proverbs the wise man is concerned about goodwill and peace among men and he works towards that goal. Proverbs 14:9 “Fools mock at making amends for sin, but goodwill is found among the upright.” We read that when Jesus was born there was a host of angels who said to the shepherds: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **peace, goodwill** toward men!" Luke 2:13-14

To me the distinguishing mark of Christ, and I believe the distinguishing mark of a wise man in the book of Proverbs is that he is a man who pursues peace and goodwill towards his fellow man. And we desperately need wise men today.

**THE WISE MAN** - Part 5 – His Relationship to God

Proverbs 9:10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.”

Proverbs 14:16 “A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless.”

Proverbs 15:33 “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.”

A wise man’s relationship to God is important because we know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1:20 “Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” It is almost as if Paul is saying to the wise man of the world that if he is so wise then come and give us the solutions to the problems that we are faced with in the world today. They have no real solutions! Why? To begin with, it’s because they have the wrong world-view.

According to the book of Proverbs a man is wise, because of his fear of God and he has God’s view of the world, what we call a “Biblical Worldview.” A Biblical Worldview is laid out in the first 10 chapters of the book of Genesis which brings out the creation, the fall of man, and God’s solution with the redemption of man. This is why the wise man in his relationship to God has the right foundation to bring solutions to the problems of the world today.

The wise man of Proverbs is a man that acknowledges God; that God is exactly who He says He is in His written Word. Because of this he trusts in the Lord to direct his steps and makes his decisions to follow God’s ways, laws, commandments, statues and decrees. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.”  Proverbs 3:5

The problem that we have today is that we depend upon man’s knowledge and experience and not God’s character and revelation. Like the book of Proverbs brings out, there is a way that seems right to a man, but it leads to death. We see this in the 20th century with the rise and fall of fascism, communism as well as humanism “isms” have been responsible for over 150 million deaths. This is the result of man’s wisdom without God.

The wise man according to Proverbs is also a man who heeds instructions and does not despise the discipline of the Lord. Because he knows that the discipline of the Lord is leading him not only in a prudent life, but a life of doing what is right, just and fair.

One other aspect of a wise man according to Proverbs and his relationship to his Lord - is his quickness to confess his sin. He knows this truth that he “who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”

The wise man according to Proverbs is a man that knows that God is slow to move from the seat of mercy to the seat of judgment, but move He will. The wise man has a healthy fear of his God. He rests in the truth that when he confesses sin and rebellion that God is quick to move from judgment to the seat of mercy.

**THE WISE MAN** - Part 6 - His Relationship to His Wife

Proverbs 18:22 “He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the Lord.”

We saw the wise man’s relationship to God, but what about his relationship to his wife?  It is important for us to go back to the beginning when God created man.  We read: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; **male and female he created them**. God blessed them and said to them, ‘**Be fruitful and increase in number**; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

Together we see that they are to rule and reign. Both are necessary for subduing the earth and to rule over God’s creation. Together they are to be fruitful and increase in number. In chapter 2 of Genesis God saw that it was not good for man to live alone and needed a suitable helper and so out of Adam’s rib a woman God formed and brought her to Adam. Out of a man came a woman, but now we see that out of a woman comes a child, men and women.

A man will leave his father and mother and cling to his wife. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” This is God’s order. Not two men or two women, but a man and woman. This is the main building block for society. Tear this prime order down and soon society will collapse.

A wise man will ‘love’ his wife. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” (Ephesians 5:25) The love that is mentioned here is the type of love that God produces and this is the love that we are to have for our wife. There are four characteristics about this love that need to be mentioned and it was this type of love that Jesus had for the church and that He gave His life for.

1.    **Accept**: Jesus Christ accepts us where we are and in that acceptance we begin to change. So it is with a husband’s love for his wife. He accepts her because he is accepted by Jesus Christ.

2.    **Aware**: Jesus was aware of us: our needs, our past, all our pains, every secret desire, etc. and all through our life - His grace will be sufficient. So it is with a wise man. He needs to be aware of his wife’s needs, her pain, her desires and her standing with the Lord spiritually.

3.    **Gives**: Jesus gave all of Himself. So it with a wise man in his relationship with his wife.

4.    **Forgives**: While were yet sinners Christ died for us. What He said on the cross He says to us all: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” If we do not have a forgiving spirit, then we will have a bitter spirit and we know how a bitter spirit can ruin and destroy.

A wise man, according to Proverbs, recognizes that a good wife is a precious gift from God and understands that a great favor has been bestowed upon him. This in turn leads him to look at his wife as a crowning glory.   “A wife of noble character is her husband's crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones.” Proverbs 12:4

The wise man looks at his wife as Christ looks at the church in not only praising her, trusting her, but being faithful to her.  I was writing recently to some friends looking back over the past 50 years of ministry and the one thing that we could say is that God has been faithful and that this should be the characteristic of a husband to his wife – to be faithful.

This ‘lack of’ faithfulness to wives is a problem in our society today. Proverbs admonishes us to, “Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well,” (Proverb 5:15) and not to be “captivated by an adulteress. Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?” Proverbs 5:20

We live in a time when our families are under constant demonic attacks and we need wise men and wise husbands to arise for such a time as this.

**THE WISE MAN** – Part 7 – Choose Well

Joshua 24:15 “But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. **But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."**

God created us with a free will. We can choose what we want.

Just has Joshua gave the children of Israel the choice to serve whom they wanted, so it is with us. At the end of our life what we have become, what we have achieved, as well as our eternal destination can be summed up in one word: CHOICE. What did we choose? What path did we take? Being able to choose is a tremendous blessing, but also an awesome responsibility with consequences - so choose well!

In Matthew 16 Jesus asks His disciple who people say that He is and Peter comes out with the great acclamation that He is the Christ - the Son of the Living God. ‘Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.’ Matthew 16:17

Jesus went on to explain that the path that He had chosen to do His Father’s will (Luke 22:42) was going to the cross. However, ‘Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"’ Matthew 16:22

What Peter was saying to Jesus was that He should pity himself, and why must HE suffer being that He is the Son of God? But Jesus turned to Peter and rebuked him quite sternly and said: "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." Matthew 16:23

Jesus went on to say: "If anyone would come after me, he must **deny himself** and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matthew 16:24) What we have here is a choice. We can choose to pity ourselves or we can choose to deny ourselves. The choice is ours. What path do we choose? Choose well. Self-pity is one of the main reasons for depression. Just start feeling sorry for yourself and you will soon feel depressed. God’s way is to choose the cross and deny self. Choose well.

We could also ask ourselves: What kind of nation do we want? We have the ability and opportunity to choose.  In God’s Word we are told:  “Choose some wise, understanding and respected men from each of your tribes, and I will set them over you." (Deuteronomy 1:13) We can choose those we want to govern. Choose well.

According to the Word we can choose life or death. The choice is ours. “This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you **life and death**, blessings and curses. Now **choose life**, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Deuteronomy 30:19-20

We should not make our choice ‘in a vacuum;’ there must be a true foundation that we make our choices from. So, what is the foundation for our choice? I can think of three.

1.    We can make out choice based upon what I call the 51%. If 51% of the people are doing it then we choose to go along. ***However, are the 51% right?*** Jesus said that the road that leads to destruction is wide and many (51%?) are following it.

2.   Or we can make our choice based upon the ‘popular fad’ of today and so we choose what has become popular. However, tomorrow it will be something else that is popular and so we see that it is a very flimsy foundation for our choices.

3.   We can make our choice based upon our belief system whatever that might be – humanism, secularism, atheism, socialism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, etc.

Or, we can make our choice based upon God’s Word, the Scripture of the Bible. This is what I will choose. First, because it is infallible. Secondly, because it is flawless, and thirdly, because it never changes. It is the solid foundation. God, who has given us His Word is not a man that He should lie.

In closing we need to understand the tremendous privilege we have to make our own choices, but also what a responsibility hangs on the choices we make. Choose well!

**THE WISE MAN** – Part 8 – Spiral of Silence – part 1

2 Corinthians 4:13 "I believed; therefore I have spoken."

Over the past few weeks I have been hearing a lot about the “spiral of silence” and decided that I would do some research and see what it is all about and how it pertains to us.

**Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann** was a German political scientist who came up with the term “spiral of silence” that gave an explanation of how public opinion can influence individual opinions or actions. For example, in 1991 support was measured for the Gulf War. The researchers wanted to know if the support was a consensus view or did media coverage contribute to a spiral of silence that dampened opposition to the war? They concluded that those who watched television and sensed that the public supported the war were more likely to support the war as well. They found that this study supports the spiral of silence, **people can be swayed by public opinion rather than face social isolation.**

Wikipedia says: “The phrase *"spiral of silence"* actually refers to how people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views are in the minority. The model is based on three premises: 1) people have a "quasi-statistical organ," a sixth-sense if you will, which allows them to know the prevailing public opinion, even without access to polls, 2) people have a fear of isolation and know what behaviors will increase their likelihood of being socially isolated, and 3) people are reticent to express their minority views, primarily out of fear of being isolated.”

This brings out several things that we need to consider.

First, even if we are in the minority (or think that we are) we must speak the truth and not what is politically correct, or simply popular. I am afraid God’s people have been too silent when it comes to expressing God’s truth. Instead of allowing people who are opposed to God’s truth to shape public opinion, it is God’s people of truth and Spirit who should be the shakers and movers.

Secondly, we know that Satan has divided this world into little kingdoms (or one could call them prisons) and the bars that hold them in are not made out of steel, but rather the bars are ‘acceptance’ and ‘rejection.’ These are the needs that every human being has; that to be accepted and not rejected or isolated. We want people to be released from these prisons and be able to enter the Kingdom of God. This is what the Gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. We read in Ephesians 1:6 “To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us **accepted** in the beloved.” (KJV)

Our needs have been met in Christ Jesus.

Thirdly, we need to do what Paul told the Corinthian church to do and that is to examine our faith. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” 2 Corinthians 13:5

Is our faith a preference or a conviction? There is a difference between the two. We see this coming out in Daniel 3 with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they were confronted with the fiery furnace for their conviction.

Public opinion was to bow down and give allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar by falling down and worshipping the statue that he built of himself. This was a classic example of the “spiral of silence.” We see that these three men were willing to speak out, face the consequences and give God the glory. At the end, we see the results: “Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, ‘Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.’”

We might not be faced with a fiery furnace, but on many issues, we will be faced with public opinion. The question is: will the spiral of silence kick in or will we speak out. We do not need to speak out in an argumentative way, but we should **study to show ourselves approved unto God** like we read in 2 Timothy 2:15 “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken.’ With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.” (2 Corinthians 4:13) Paul was saying I know that what I believe is real and because it is real, I speak. So it should be with us.

Someone said: “Christians today are in danger of being sucked into such a spiral of silence. But this is not inevitable. We can break the spiral of silence (1) if we are really persuaded of the truth of the Gospel and the Christian worldview, and (2) if we will simply begin to speak up when opportunities arise, trusting the Lord to use our words as He will.” (Luke 12:8-12)

Might God give us the boldness and courage to stand and be accountable. Remember the words of Thomas Jefferson: “Reformation in government follows reformation in opinions.”

Let us speak up and get out what God thinks; God’s truth and wisdom out in the public square!

**THE WISE MAN** – Part 9 – Spiral of Silence – part 2

2 Corinthians 4:13 “It is written: ‘I believed; therefore I have spoken.’ With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.”

I was watching the debates of the presidential candidates. If we mean that each side can come and present their views then that is a debate. But often what happens with Christians who do not **‘toe the political correctness line’** that they are not listened to as far as their views are concerned, but actually maligned because of their Christian stand.

Therefore, many of these debates are not real debates at all. The reason for this maligning of Christians is to **silence them**. We must learn to speak the truth with boldness, not in an argumentative way, but speaking like Paul in the synagogues where Paul reasoned and explained - proving and persuading. Or like Apollos who “vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.” Acts 18:28

There are two things that come to mind regarding the “spiral of silence.” First, we have the need for acceptance, and secondly, that what we believe is a conviction or just a preference. I think it is important for us to re-examine our belief. Acceptance and rejection keep people locked in their ‘little kingdoms.’ A human need we all have is to be accepted and not rejected. We need to come to the realization in a far greater way that this need of acceptance has already been met through Christ. He has accepted us. Unless we come to the place where we recognize that we have been accepted in Christ I doubt that we will be able to stand and speak the truth.

But another reason why we do not speak out is that we do not really believe in what we say we believe. Is it a conviction within us or is it something we prefer now? There is a big difference. Paul said: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." What Paul seems to be saying is that what he believes in is real and because of that - he speaks out with conviction. If what we say we believe in is a preference – will we speak out?

I use the example of the three men thrown into the fiery furnace in the book of Daniel. These men boldly spoke out and in so doing show us what conviction really is. First, we see that what they believed was **unchangeable**. They were given the chance to change their minds, but it was useless. If what we say we believe in can be changed through pressure or whatever, then it is not a conviction.

Secondly, they were willing to **stand alone.** There must have been hundreds of other Jews living in the capital at the time. What were they doing? They must have been bowing down, because the only Jewish people brought to the king were these three men. No one wants to stand alone, but even if we must, we know that what we believe is right and true.

Thirdly, what they believed in was **non-negotiable.** Nebuchadnezzar was willing to give them a second chance to change their mind, to reconsider, to sit down and negotiate - trying to get them to think of the consequences, etc. What was their response? “Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego replied to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we do not need to defend ourselves before you in this matter. If we are thrown into the blazing furnace, the God we serve is able to save us from it, and he will rescue us from your hand, O king. But even if he does not, we want you to know, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up.’” Daniel 3:16-18

Fourthly, they did not need the **assurance of success** before they took a stand. This is what we have with the spiral of silence. If we know that we might be successful, then we will stand, or if we know that others are standing with us we will stand, but all this shows that our faith is only a preference and not a conviction.

There is a need for us to be convinced that the biblical worldview is the only worldview that answers the questions that plague mankind today such as where did we get this universe and why is man different from the rest of creation; why is the world in such a mess and what is the solution? The only worldview that answers these questions and makes sense is the biblical worldview.

I am concerned just like the late Chuck Colson was concerned, who said: “By rejecting Christianity and its moral framework, western liberal democracies are in grave peril of collapsing upon themselves. They will no longer be able to preserve human rights and liberties. What comes next is tyranny.”

We cannot allow the “spiral of silence” to keep us silent any longer. Might we do what Paul admonished Timothy to do: “Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

**THE WISE MAN** – Part 10 – What is Truth?

John 18:37-38 "’You are a king, then!’ said Pilate. Jesus answered, ‘You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the **truth**. Everyone on the side of **truth** listens to me.’ **‘What is truth?’** Pilate asked.”

We live in a day when issues around the world are becoming very complex. I was reading Stratford’s report on the complexities that we face in today’s world regarding North Korea, the Middle East, China, Russia and realize how we need TRUTH to prevail.

In his day Isaiah made the statement which seems to fit ours as well. “So justice is driven back, and righteousness stands at a distance; truth has stumbled in the streets, honesty cannot enter. Truth is nowhere to be found, and whoever shuns evil becomes a prey.” Isaiah 59:14-15

Pilate asked **"What is truth,"** a question that begs an answer and Jesus answered that question in John 14:6 with "I am the way and **the truth** and the life.”

Another question that we can ask is: What happens when truth (Jesus) has been cast aside?

1.    Words have no meaning. Things made out of words – laws, vows, contracts, etc. have no meaning.

2.    Values have changed. Sacrifice, loyalty, morality, accountability, etc. have changed to independence, personal happiness, tolerance, comfort, instant gratification and the right to make one’s choice. And we know that our choices are made based upon three things – the 51% (we make our choices based upon what the majority say), or the fad that is popular today, or one’s belief system. Our choices determine our destiny.

3.    Image becomes more important than substance. How do I look rather than who I am?

4.    Character is no longer important.

5.    There is no such thing as evil.

6.    Follow your own heart is the way many make decisions. (Jeremiah 11:8 But no one knows how wicked their heart is.)

7.    There is no big story. Nothing makes sense. Everything is in bits and pieces. We do not see the ‘big picture’ of what God is doing.

Jesus said: “I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church (ekkleesia), and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.” Matthew 16:18

CT Studd who opened the Belgium Congo to the Gospel said: “Some wish to live within the sound of Church or Chapel bell. I want to run a rescue shop within a yard of Hell.”

The question is: Where are the gates of hell? Could the gates of hell be the places where influence is being consolidated and affects our society today?

Lance Wallnau brings out seven places where we have influence that are being consolidated today and it is in these seven places that we desperately need truth to prevail.

1. The church or religion which would be the case in some nations. For example, I think of India and Hinduism or the Middle East and Islam. These definitely are places of influence. In my situation when I think of the church we need to make sure, like the Apostle Paul said:

2 Corinthians 11:2-3 “I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him.”

Philippians 2:15-16 “so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe.”

We know that the church does have influence whether it is good or bad. How many today are turned off from the church because of what they see and hear. When it comes to religion in other parts of the world we see the tremendous influence or sway over the people keeping them locked into their prison.

2.    Our educational institutions from kindergarten to university. Some of our great universities, Ivy League institutions were started to train pastors for Christian work and now the word Christian is anathema.

3.   The family. Keeping the family intact and with the values of the church we can survive. We see this with Israel. Today there is a tremendous attack on the family. However, we see with quick divorce, children out of wedlock, premarital sex, and now new definition of marriage (two men or two women).

I wrote in my series of the Ten Commandments: “It is interesting to note with the Ten Commandments that the first four commandments in the first tablet deal with our relationship to God our Creator. The first Commandment brings out how we need to honor God. In the second tablet the first Commandment is dealing with man’s relationship to man - in the command to honor our father and mother. From this it would seem that in God’s eyes, as in a small child’s eyes as well, a parent stands in the place of God. When you think about it - a parent is the child’s creator, provider, lawgiver, teacher and protector. The child’s response to this relationship will greatly determine the child’s response to society and even his relationship with God Himself. How often we have heard how it has been hard for a child who had a cruel father to relate to the goodness of our Heavenly Father.”

4.   We have government – laws. This is another place of tremendous influence and how we need men/women in these places to be the influence like Joseph and Daniel in the Old Testament.

5.   We have the media and oh, how powerful it is! The media is shaping the culture to its likeness. It is forming us according to the opinions of others.

6.    We have the arts and entertainment and see the impact of this today. Our movies are going out all over the world and influencing many.

7.    We have business. As business goes so goes the rest, because it takes money to run the rest.

Might God raise up people who are willing to run a rescue shop within these gates of influence!

**THE WISE MAN** - Part 11 – His Words

James 3:1-5 “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body.”

Watch your thoughts, for they become words, watch your words, for they become actions, watch your actions, for they become habits, watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.

We all have heard the little jingle when we were kids: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” It sounds good and perhaps even has a ring of truth to it, but it is not true. Words can hurt; words can kill or words can bring life.

The wise man portrayed in the book of Proverbs knows that words have great power. For example, we know that words of the wise man are able to rescue people from the wicked who lie in wait for their blood. “The words of the wicked lie in wait for blood, but the speech of the upright rescues them.” Proverbs 12:6

Wise counsel or words have the power to help a person escape the traps that the enemy so easily puts in front of us to snare and destroy, and to bring on death. I have often said that a person can learn through experience, but it takes a wise person to learn from the experience and counsel of others. “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.”

Words have the power to bring healing and comfort, and to bring hope to a despairing soul. Sometimes, it is not even the words that we speak, but having a listening ear as they are able to express their sorrow or sense of despair. A wise man, according to the book of Proverbs, is a man who knows how to use faithful words and knows when to be silent. “The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” Proverbs 15:4

As already mentioned, words have the power to either bring life or death. As I was meditating upon this the thought that came was how words were used by some of the dictators in this past century. For example, Hitler using words to rally a nation, inspired a war that left Europe desolate and in chaos with millions dead. Or, on the flipside, words that were used by men like CS Lewis, A. W. Tozer, Francis Schaeffer and many others were words of life. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.” Proverbs 18:21

While our words have power we also need to understand that there are limitations on our words. We have often heard the saying: We should walk the talk. In other words, our actions should go along with what we preach. For example, we could talk about the perfect scheme to get rich, but if we do not work towards it we most usually end up in poverty. “All hard work brings a profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”  Proverbs 14:23

Smooth talk cannot cover-up the fact of who a man is. In other words, using right words will not cover-up of bad character. “Like a clay pot covered with cheap silver, so is smooth talk that covers up an evil heart. Whoever is filled with hate disguises it with his speech, but inside he holds on to deceit.” In other words, smooth talk cannot alter the facts.

In closing, the wise man of Proverbs is a man whose walk and talk go together. What the wise man says coincides with his actions. A great need today in the church, and in our public discourse as well as in the political and economic realm - the need for men and women is to walk the talk.

**THE WISE MAN** – Part 12 – Power of Words

Proverbs 18:21 “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits.”

Unknown writer said: “But it is requisite that members of the common herd be imprisoned in abject ignorance, never doubting that they are ‘free and self-sovereign individuals’ who are in full control of their lives and families, and who can speak freely on any subject they choose, and worship whatever God their consciences dictate.”

When I was taking meetings in Denmark how a Danish fellow who had lived in Canada for many years immigrated back to his home country and what he saw scared him because he saw how he and the rest were being manipulated in what to think, to buy, etc.

One of the definitions of ‘word’ is “verbal signal.” It is a fallacy to think that words are just words from whoever speaks them. Words are not only verbal signals, but they also trigger what some call a “biochemical response” and can be used by powers to modify behavior. We see this in advertisements as well as propaganda that comes out from the government. (Testimony of the Danish man)

I remember growing up hearing an advertisement for Marlboro cigarettes: “So round, so firm, so fully packed.” Very simple, but very powerful. What this did was to appeal to the sucking sense that we are born with. Every day we have an avalanche of information bombarding us that has a mind-numbing effect upon us. This avalanche of information bombarding us is part of the spiritual warfare that we are in. It is to get us to conform to a herd mentality, not question its authority or its morality, but to accept its authority. So often we find that if we do question authority it is as if we have defiled a holy place and we are met with hostility from friends and neighbors. Once we begin to see through this maze of propaganda and begin to understand - we also see how different we are from people or from those we once knew.

We have today what we call “code words,” often used by those in places of authority. Today we are hearing more and more the code word **‘fake news.’** This basically means any news that is not coming from established politicians and mainstream media is to be considered as fake news. In other words, the only source of ‘truth’ or ‘real news’ is from the mainstream media. However, Denzel Washington had it right when he said “If we do not read the newspapers we are uninformed, but if we read them we are misinformed.”

There are other code words being used today that are beginning to shape opinions. Words like **‘loophole’** that lead to greater government regulation, **‘white nationalism or white supremacy,’** or **‘uneducated white voters’** referring to those who live in what is called “flyover country;” people who believe in a strong family, in God and the Bible, and with love for their country.

Moving closer to the end times we will find deception increasing and it is through this avalanche of propaganda we are seeing it and many are being deceived by it. These “code words” do not come about by accident, but are devised by those in power and when repeated over and over have a dumbing down effect upon us.

Satan uses a philosophy called “DIA-PRAX.” *Dia* means to dialogue to resolve conflicts. Prax means to practice. So, the two together means to practice dialogue to come to a certain reasoning or outcome. In this philosophy, there are three elements: Thesis, Anti-thesis and Synthesis or result.

So, when we apply this to Eve in the Garden of Eden - what do we have?

**First,** we have the thesis. This is what God says: “You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die."  (Genesis 3:3)

**Secondly,** we have the anti-thesis, the dialogue with serpent:  "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it **your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God,** knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:4-5) Showing the *benefit* of eating it that you shall be like God knowing good and evil.

**Thirdly**, we now know the synthesis or outcome: “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (Genesis 3:6-7)

Apply this philosophy to homosexuality and what do we come up with?

**First,** we have **the thesis** of what God says: homosexuality is sin. We find this both in the Old and New Testament.

**Secondly,** in this dialogue we see **the anti-thesis** or reasoning coming out that Jesus loves everybody and so should we, and if call what they do a sin then we do not show that we love people. Therefore, we are those with ‘hate speech.’ So, the outcome or **synthesis** is that we *accept* homosexuality and the consequences.

When Jesus was in the wilderness we see the same philosophy being used on Jesus, but Jesus answered with the Word of God.

In this period of deception that is upon us all Paul tells us in Colossians: **“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly** as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.” (Colossians 3:16)

**The only truth is the Word of God.**

 **THE WISE MAN** – Part 13 – Power of Words – part 2

The definition of ‘word’ is ‘verbal signal.’ Words are not only verbal signals, but they also trigger what some call a **‘biochemical response’** and can be used by powers to be, to modify behavior.

Because of this a wise man will use words wisely. His words will be **calm** and **rational, not emotional**. He/she will be a person who thinks before speaking.

Proverbs 15:28 “The heart of the righteous weighs its answers, but the mouth of the wicked gushes evil.”

Proverbs 17:27 “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.”

How often we have spoken out of an emotional trauma, hurt, quarrel and we later wish that we had used instead words that were **gentle and peaceful**.

Proverbs 15:1 “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Proverbs 15:18 “A hot-tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.”

Opinion makers in our society (these are people who use words to make a living: news broadcaster, lawyers, judges, politicians, teachers, etc.) have used words to persuade people in a certain way. A wise man will also use words to persuade a person but towards godly thoughts and ways.

Proverbs 25:15 “Through patience a ruler can be persuaded, and a gentle tongue can break a bone.”

We live in a world filled with hate, pain and suffering but the “God of all comfort” wants to use us to bring comfort through our words knowing that a word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. (Proverbs 25:11)

Jesus told us that “out of the abundance of the heart we speak” so we know that the source of our words will come from who we are; from our character. We are born with a personality, but not with a character. Character is formed as we respond to what comes our way daily. Proverbs tells us to keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

Jesus said that “a good tree will produce good fruit, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.” (Matthew 13:33)

Jesus went on to say “out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks,” and so Proverbs tells us that the mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but violence overwhelms the mouth of the wicked.” (Proverbs 10:11)

“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death.” Proverbs 13:14

Instead of finding the positive aspect of a mouth speaking words that bring life, we find pride that “only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.” (Proverbs 13:10)

We often hear about “hate speech” not realizing that this hate speech comes from “a malicious man disguising himself with his lips, but in his heart he harbors deceit.” (Proverbs 26:24)

I personally have appreciated this Proverbs study on the use of words and many times it has brought me under conviction for how careless I have been with words. How often I have given advice when not asked and seen it fall on deaf ears. One thing that this study on ‘words’ has done is to make me think more before responding, pray more instead of talking, listen more and speak less. Perhaps this should be our New Year’s resolution.

May this New Year be a year of great advancement in the things of God and the extension of His Kingdom!