

The Keys To Wisdom

Love

Patience

Obedience

Mercy

Trust

Understanding

Truth

Discretion



Proverbs

WEEK 5

“Learning To Hate”

Study: Proverbs 8:12-17

Reading: Psalms 101:1-8, Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

When I was in seventh grade, one of my brother’s friends, who was three years older than I was, said that I looked like a “butterball” when I was playing basketball. Those words cut quite deep into my mind and emotions. I wasn’t that chubby of a kid, but I did not want to be a butterball. I wrote “I am a butterball” on a piece of paper and taped it to the wall of my room where I would see it every day. This was to be a reminder to me to exercise each day and push myself to lose a few pounds.

Today, we are going to see how we need to approach sin the same way that I approached my extra pounds. When we begin to see sin the way God sees it, we will begin to develop a hatred for it. The more we hate sin, the less we will do it.

What Does the Bible Say?

For the first several chapters of Proverbs, we have looked at wisdom as an object, but in the next several verses we will look at wisdom as if it has a personality. We see this as verse 12 begins with the words, “I, wisdom.” Solomon tells us that wisdom doesn’t live alone, but it is a close companion with prudence. When a person is prudent, he makes good judgements and uses common sense. Wisdom also walks hand in hand with knowledge and discretion.

True wisdom can’t dwell without a proper fear of the Lord. One of the aspects of fearing the Lord is having a hatred of evil. Solomon listed some evils that we should hate. We should hate pride and arrogance, as well as the paths that lead toward sin. Along with these, we should also hate perverted language (vs 13).

Wisdom allows a person to give wise counsel in helping others live a godly life. That person also can give sound wisdom and godly direction to those who want to listen. Wisdom also involves being able to understand all sides of an issue. Understanding a situation enables a person to give the

wise counsel that is needed. Wisdom helps empower children of God by giving them the tools needed to live a successful Christian life (vs 14).

Leaders must have wisdom if they wish to be successful. Without wisdom, men are able to rule for a short time, but their leadership will fail. When a wise man is in leadership, he will have a long and successful ministry (vs 15-16).

When a person continually seeks after wisdom in his life, he will be continually rewarded. If we are intent on becoming wise, we will become wise. That doesn't mean that just wanting to become wiser will make us wise, but when we follow the biblical process for gaining wisdom, we will find wisdom (vs 17).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Are you seeking after wisdom in your life? Do you care if you are a wise person? Are you developing a hatred for evil in your life? One of the best ways to avoid sin is to develop a hatred for it. The more you see the terrible effects that sin has on people, the more you will hate it. You can also develop a hatred for sin by getting to know God more. You have to realize that sin is a big deal to God. Even if it is what we call a "little white lie," God hates sin. Don't let Satan trick you into thinking that God is loving and doesn't care if you sin. It is true that God is a loving God, but God is also a holy God. Because of his holiness, all men who have not accepted His salvation will spend eternity in hell. If you want to become wise, God will give you wisdom. Begin today to follow the biblical steps to wisdom found throughout proverbs and the rest of the Word of God.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you develop a hatred for evil.*
- * *Praise God because He is a holy God.*
- * *Thank God for the wisdom that He has given you.*

Thought for the day

Who does wisdom dwell with (vs 12)?

What does it mean to be prudent (vs 12)?

What does wisdom find (vs 12)?

- 1.
- 2.

How are these two things vital to having wisdom (vs 12)?

What is part of the fear of the Lord (vs 12)?

Why is it hard to hate some types of evil (vs 13)?

How can you develop a hatred for evil?

How do pride and arrogance battle with wisdom (vs 13)?

What is the difference between being confident in your wisdom and being proud and arrogant?

Why is counsel important to wisdom (vs 14)?

Who are you seeking counsel from on a regular basis?

How does wisdom have insight (vs 14)?

How does wisdom produce strength (vs 14)?

Why is wisdom so important for rulers (vs 15)?

How does ruling justly go hand in hand with wisdom (vs 16)?

Who does wisdom love (vs 17)? What do you think this means?

How can you find wisdom (vs 17)? What do you think this looks like?

“Repetition Is the Key”

Study: Proverbs 8:18-36

Reading: Genesis 1 & 2

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

Several years ago, my wife and I were taking a walk along Lake Michigan around Good Harbor Bay. As we looked at the lake we saw a couple of large inflatable dolphins floating in the water. My wife and I looked around thinking that someone would be swimming after them, but there was hardly anyone else on the beach. We watched those dolphins for a couple of minutes and no one was going out to get them. In my mind I thought about how much my young children would enjoy playing with one of these toys, and I almost persuaded myself to go out and get them. I decided to wait till the currents pushed them to shore, but instead, the currents drew them out into the lake. I waited for them to come to me, but it never happened.

Today, we are going to see that wisdom is there for the taking. All we have to do is make the effort to obtain wisdom, and God will give us the wisdom that we are seeking.

What Does the Bible Say?

Solomon continued to write as if the personality of wisdom was talking. Wisdom has riches and honor on his side. He also is a close associate with wealth and righteousness (vs 18). The word “fruit” in verse 19 is used to describe the product that wisdom produces. Just as a healthy fruit tree will produce good fruit, wisdom will produce something that is far more valuable than the purest gold and the best silver.

Wisdom walks in accordance to the laws of God. It is characterized by righteousness (vs 20). Wisdom provides a person with great wealth and fills their bank accounts with treasure. Remember that wise men are not always financially wealthy, though many times God will financially bless those who are wise. Wisdom will result in spiritual wealth (vs 21).

Before man ever existed, wisdom was possessed by God. God created the earth by His wisdom and has given man the opportunity to be wise also.

Solomon went on to describe the acts of creation that God performed and how wisdom has been present on the earth since before creation. Take some time to carefully read over and meditate on these verses as they will give you a better understanding of the power of God in the creation of the earth (vs 22-31).

Solomon closed this discourse on wisdom by charging his readers to listen to what he has written. He described how we will receive blessings if we obey what he had written (vs 32). He encouraged us to “heed” instruction. This is found over and over in the book of Proverbs because it is our natural tendency as humans to do our own thing and not listen to wise counsel and godly instruction (vs 33). Wisdom gives a person the ability to live a wonderful life, but the lack of wisdom brings misery and destruction (vs 34-35).

How Does this Apply to Me?

It almost seems that all Solomon does is repeat himself over and over again. Sometimes he does it in the same way and, other times he does it in different ways. He repeats himself for a reason. He does it because he knows how important it is for you to make wisdom a vital part of your life. It was the very wisdom of God that created the earth. It is wisdom that has caused many men to prosper materially and many more to prosper spiritually. Solomon also knew that many people would hear about wisdom, but wouldn’t make the effort to become wise themselves. That is why he attempted to motivate all his readers to become wise.

Don’t the benefits of wisdom sound wonderful? Do you want to have all the benefits that have been mentioned in Proverbs? It is one thing to want wisdom and it is another thing to seek after wisdom. It will take work and the denial of selfish pleasures, but you can become a wise person.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Praise God for being the Wise Creator.
- * Thank God for giving you the opportunity to become wise.
- * Ask God to help you become a wise person.

Thought for the day

What are some of the benefits of wisdom found in verse 18?

What does verse 19 declare about wisdom?

If wisdom is so great, why do you think so few people seek after it?

What do you think wisdom has to do with justice (vs 20)?

What will often be the result of wisdom (vs 21)?

How was wisdom part of creation (vs 22-23)?

What are some things that were created after wisdom (vs 24-26)?

How can the wisdom of God be seen in the sun, moon and stars (vs 27)?

How can the wisdom of God be seen in the creation of the land and the seas (vs 28-29)?

How is wisdom pictured in verse 30?

What did wisdom delight in (vs 31)?

How does this reveal that men are far different than animals (vs 31)?

What is promised to those who keep the ways of wisdom (vs 32)?

What does instruction have to do with wisdom (vs 33)?

What does verse 34 emphasize about gaining wisdom?

What will a person who finds wisdom also find (vs 35)?

What do you think this means?

What happens to the person who fails to find wisdom (vs 35)?

“An Open Mind”

Study: Proverbs 9:1-12

Reading: James 1:19-25, Nehemiah 6:8-12

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

There have been a few times over the years where people have talked to me about something I said during a sermon. There was one time where a man lovingly questioned the truth of one of the statements that I had made. I realized, that to a certain extent, he was right. I really hadn't said anything wrong, but I didn't clarify what I meant by a certain term that I used. I appreciated the fact that he came and talked to me about the issue. Now, when I talk about the subject again, I can make the clarification that I didn't make that morning.

Today, we are going to see how wisdom is available to all men. We will also see how fools reject instruction, but wise men are willing to listen to instructions and make the necessary changes.

What Does the Bible Say?

Solomon began chapter nine by likening wisdom to a great banquet. The first thing that a banquet must have is a banquet hall or some place to eat. The reference to “seven pillars” indicated that a hall was large enough to hold a banquet (vs 1). The next thing that a banquet must have is food and tables to serve it on. A banquet must also have some type of beverage. The “mixed wine” would be watered down wine to make it less intoxicating (vs 2).

Just as a banquet host would send out personal invitations or give a public invitation, the banquet that is sponsored by lady wisdom invites everyone to partake of the feast. We can see this as Solomon describes how lady wisdom sent her maidens out to invite others to the feast (vs 3). The cry of wisdom goes out to all men, especially to those who are naive and lack understanding. They are invited to partake in wisdom and to learn what it is like to be wise (vs 4-5). They are encouraged to forsake their selfish desires and find out what life is all about (vs 6). By this illustration Solomon was explaining how all men have the ability to be wise. Wisdom

isn't hard to find, but we have to be willing to give up our selfish desires if we want to be wise. Wisdom is also like a great feast in that it abundantly provides the proper spiritual nourishment that a person needs to live a healthy spiritual life.

Solomon then went on to describe the differences between a scoffer and a wise man. He told us that a scoffer is one who is unwilling to listen to correction or instruction, but a wise man enjoys it when he is instructed. He knew that a wise man will have a fear of the Lord. The more we see God for who He is and the more we realize what He has done, the wiser we will become (vs 10). When we live our life in wisdom, we will live a full life (vs 11). The responsibility for becoming wise or becoming a scoffer is placed on each individual. You are responsible for yourself. God has given you the ability to become wise, but he has also given you the chance to choose to become a scoffer.

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you listen to others when you are corrected? Do you get angry at someone when they are trying to help you? Do you want others to tell you when you have done wrong? One of the greatest marks of a wise man is his ability to take correction. To love correction means that you have to humble yourself and be willing to recognize the fact that you make mistakes. As humans, we often want to do things in our own way and our own timing. This often causes us to resist wise counsel and leads us into sin. You need to always be willing and open to receive instruction and correction. If someone approaches you and corrects you, you need to listen to what they have to say. Sometimes they will be wrong, but more often than not, they will be right.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for people who care enough about you to correct you.*
- * *Ask God to help you listen to instruction and correction.*
- * *Praise God that His instruction is always perfect.*

Thought for the day

How is the house of wisdom pictured (vs 1)?

What picture is given in verse 2?

What do you think this is attempting to reveal about wisdom?

Who was sent out (vs 3)?

What does this reveal about wisdom?

Who is called to attend the feast of wisdom (vs 4)?

How would you describe a "simple" person?

What were the simple people invited to do (vs 4-5)?

What does this reveal about the ability for everyone to become wise?

What were the simple called to do (vs 6)?

What do you think this looks like?

What happens to those who correct scoffers (vs 7)?

What do you think verse 7 is declaring?

What happens when you reprove a wise man (vs 8)?

In light of that verse, would you consider yourself a scoffer or wise man?

How can you be the type of man described in verse 9?

How is the "fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom (vs 10)?

What will happen to the lives of the wise (vs 11)?

What do you think verse 12 is teaching?

“Avoiding Foolishness”

Study: Proverbs 9:13-18

Reading: Ephesians 5:1-21

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

One of the things that has often puzzled me is why a person would build a gas station right next to one that is already there. In fact, I have seen street corners that have two of the same kind of gas stations right across the street from each other. In these situations, the question is, “Which one do I choose?” There are often several factors that go into that choice. The first thing that most people look for is the lowest price. If the price is the same, then many people will look at the convenience of pulling in and pulling out. There could be several other factors that go into which station will be chosen. But one thing is for sure, Each station will do their best to attract you to be their customer.

Today, we are going to read how we have a choice between wisdom and foolishness. Just as you have a choice of which gas station you want to fill-up at, you also have a choice between wisdom and foolishness.

What Does the Bible Say?

As we read yesterday, and will continue to read about today, Solomon used figurative illustrations to contrast wisdom with foolishness. Yesterday, we saw how wisdom was illustrated by a banquet and a lady preparing a feast. We saw how all those who take part in the feast of wisdom are blessed by the Lord.

In the last six verses of chapter nine, Solomon illustrated foolishness by using a woman who was completely opposite of the woman in the first six verses. This woman is boisterous. She is undisciplined and lacks knowledge. Solomon wanted us to understand that the world widely spreads its foolish ideas. The foolish woman sits in all sorts of places. She is sitting in places where everyone in the city will pass by and hear her thoughts. She wants to persuade as many people as possible to give into her thinking (vs 13-14). She wants to get people to turn aside from the path of wisdom and follow after her foolish ideas (vs 15).

Notice that in verse four, the wise lady called out to the same people that the foolish lady invited to her feast. Every person continually chooses between wisdom and foolishness. Wisdom and foolishness are both calling for you so you have to decide which one you are going to follow (vs 16).

Foolishness proclaims that “stolen water is sweet” and “bread eaten in secret is pleasant.” These phrases refer to sexual relationships outside of marriage. Foolish men and women proclaim the joys of sin and want to get others to join in their sin (vs 17).

The end result of foolishness will be the opposite of wisdom. The ways of foolishness end in spiritual death and a broken life. Foolishness causes the fool to buy into Satan’s ideas about life. Following foolish ideas leads men into sin, often without them fully realizing where they are headed (vs 18).

How Does this Apply to Me?

As I read this passage, I couldn’t help but compare the wise lady to the church and the foolish lady to the world’s system. The church is calling you to listen to the Word of God and become wise. The church feeds you with spiritual food so that you can be a strong and vibrant Christian. On the other hand, much of the world and the media it presents can be compared to the foolish lady. Worldly entertainment is constantly at our fingertips. It wants you to buy into the idea that sin is okay. It wants you to think that there is no right and wrong and that you can do whatever you want. Often, Christians are persuaded by the thinking of the world and they don’t even realize it. We often think that it is no big deal if the things that are entertaining us are a little perverted or sinful in nature. Many Christians struggle spiritually and many more are headed in that direction because they have been tricked into following the ideas of Satan and the world.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you follow after wisdom and avoid foolishness.*
- * *Thank God that He shows you the difference between right and wrong if you ask Him to.*

Thought for the day

Why do you think the foolish woman is pictured as being loud (vs 13)?

What do you think it means that she is “seductive” (vs 13-ESV)?

What does this show about the power of foolishness?

What does the woman know?

Where does the “woman Folly” sit (vs 14)?

What do you think this is trying to illustrate?

Who does she call out to (vs 14)?

Who do you think are represented by these people (vs 15)?

Who does the woman call out to (vs 16)?

How would you define a simple person (vs 16)?

How can you avoid being a simple person?

How does the foolish woman attempt to entice those who are passing by (vs 17)?

How would you say this message in the terms of our modern day thinking?

What does the simple person not understand (vs 18)?

What do you think verse 18 is emphasizing (vs 18)?

Describe what steps you are taking in your life to move you from being a simple person to a wise person.

“Rules Are Good”

Study: Proverbs 10:1-3

Reading: Ephesians 6:1-4, Matthew 26:42-46

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

At the Christian High School that I attended, we had a certain way that cars were dismissed after school. For about 5 minutes, after the final bell, no cars were allowed to pull in or out of the school parking lot. During that 5 minutes, the students would be allowed to go to their cars until a parking lot attendant allowed the cars to leave. After the 5 minutes, the students whose parents were not there would have to go inside while the cars were dismissed row by row. There were specific rules put in place as a result of an accident where a young man’s leg was severely damaged and had to be amputated. Following that incident, the school did not want to take any more chances and formed strict rules for the safety of the students.

Today, we are going to see that God gives us rules for a reason. We will see that if we follow these rules, we will be able to have a wonderful relationship with God and others, but when we fail to follow the rules things won’t go so well for us.

What Does the Bible Say?

For the next five chapters, we will be looking at several contrasting, two-line proverbs. At times, we will find it difficult to know exactly what Solomon meant because they are not in any particular order and they usually don’t have a surrounding context. Because of the variety of topics covered in each passage, I will usually just apply one or two of them in the application section, though the Holy Spirit will help you apply the other ones that you read.

A wise child is one who makes morally right decisions. When a child is making decisions that are right before God, he will have glad parents. When a child is making foolish, morally wrong decisions, he will cause great sadness to his parents. Almost every person, whether a little child or a senior citizen, can have a great relationship with his parents if he learns to

do what is right (vs 1).

When a person makes or is able to save money dishonestly, it will not be profitable to him. It might appear that dealing dishonestly with finances is rewarding, but the one who is dishonest is headed down the path of destruction. That destruction is not always financial destruction. Financial dishonesty can bring destructions to one's social, spiritual and physical status. The opposite of this proverb is also true. When we handle our finances honestly, God will bless us abundantly (vs 2).

There are several places in the Scripture, where we can see that God has promised that He will take care of His children. If you are a child of God and are living for Him, you will never have to worry about having the necessities in life. We do need to keep in mind that we often have a different idea of necessities than God does (vs 3).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Do you have a good relationship with your parents? Do you have the type of relationship with them that allows you to share your deepest feeling? Sometimes, broken relationships between parents and children are caused by parental mistakes, but many times, they are caused by selfish children. You need to be willing to submit yourself to God and submit yourself to your mom and your dad. When you are making decisions based on the Word of God and your parents are also following God's Word, you will have great relationships. God has designed us to have relationships and has told us in the Bible how we can have wonderful relationships. The problem is that we often view God's Law as something that ties us down rather than the key that frees us to have the best possible relationships. If you are having problems in any of your relationships, compare your life to what the Word of God says and change the areas that need to be changed.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Thank God for the relationships He has given you.
- * Ask God to help you have great relationships.
- * Thank God because He wants to have a relationship with you.

Thought for the day

What makes a glad father (vs 1)?

How would you define a wise son?

What will be the result of a foolish son (vs 1)?

Why do you think Solomon referred to the father and the mother the way he did in verse 1?

How have you seen this verse become a reality in your life or the lives of others around you?

What does not profit (vs 2)?

What are ways that treasure can be gained dishonestly?

What delivers from death (vs 3)?

****In Proverbs, there are times that death is a reference to spiritual death and destruction. It is a general term and idea for things going badly.*

How would you define righteousness?

What will God not do (vs 3)?

What are some other Bible references that say similar things?

What does God do for the wicked (vs 3)?

What do you think that means?

“A Wise Conversationalist”

Study: Proverbs 10:4-8

Reading: Proverbs 24:30-34, Psalms 109:13-20

Memory: Isaiah 40:23

Have you ever come across people who aren't good conversationalists. I would place those type of people into two categories. There are the ones who barely talk and the ones who always talk. To me, I would rather be around a person who barely talks than those who talk too much. At least I know that the ones who barely talk are listening to what I am saying. I often get frustrated with the ones who talk too much, because they won't listen to me. I will be in the middle of telling them a story and they are just waiting to cut in to tell me something about them. It seems that they don't care what I am saying as long as they get to tell me about themselves.

Today, we are going to see that one of the characteristics of a wise man is that he listens to others. He is not quick to open his mouth and babble, but he listens and evaluates what others are saying.

What Does the Bible Say?

As Christians, we should be examples of righteousness in every area of our lives. One of the areas we often overlook is being an example by the way that we work. When we do a job, we shouldn't do it half-heartedly, but we should do it to the best of our ability. The lazy man will just do enough to get by, while the diligent worker goes over and above what is required of him. Diligence will always pay off, and will make a man profitable in the job that God has given Him (vs 4).

Most of us won't spend our summers working in the fields and storing up for winter, but in the Bible lands, this was a common practice. They would build storage bins for their grain to help them survive during the winter months. In today's society, we are able to buy fresh food all year round, but the principle taught here can still apply to us. I believe a case can be made from this verse for saving money. When we set aside some money in a savings account, we are preparing for unexpected expenses and tough

times financially. This can be compared to gathering grain in the summer (a time of plenty), and preparing for winter (a time when we are financially stressed - vs 5).

Those who do what is right, will receive abundant blessing from God. On the other hand, when a person devises how he can bring ruin to his neighbor, he will face the consequences of his sin (vs 6). The person who does what is right will long be remembered for his outstanding character after he dies, but the person who does evil will be quickly and easily forgotten or looked down upon (vs 7).

One of the hardest things for a person to do is to listen while he is talking. A person who continually talks is a fool because he has no way of receiving instruction. On the other hand, a wise man will readily receive and evaluate any instruction that he can get (vs 8).

How Does this Apply to Me?

What type of worker are you? Are you known as a hard worker or do you just do what it takes to get by? You have the opportunity to be a great witness for Christ just by the way that you work. When you go the extra mile, you are displaying the character that a boss and fellow workers will respect and this could open the door for sharing the Gospel.

Are you striving to be a righteous person? God will reward those who are trying to do what is right. If you want your life to be blessed by God, then make it your goal to be a righteous person.

Do you tend to talk a lot or are you the type of person who listens to instruction? You should always be willing to listen to the instruction and counsel of others. Even if it is not the wisest counsel, it will help you evaluate what is the wisest thing to do. Be a person who is a listener and not just a talker.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Ask God to help you be a godly example at work.*
- * *Thank God for giving you the ability to work.*
- * *Praise God because He is a righteous God.*

Thought for the day

What can cause poverty (vs 4)?

What can bring about riches (vs 4)?

Does this mean that everyone who is poor is lazy and everyone who is rich is a hard worker? Explain.

What is the general principle this verse is teaching?

Why was it important for them to gather in the summer (vs 5)?

How do you think a person could sleep through a harvest (vs 5)?

What do you think this verse is teaching?

How can you practically apply the truth of this verse?

Who will be blessed (vs 6)?

What does it mean to be righteous?

What does a wicked person do (vs 6)?

What do you think the end of verse 6 means?

How will the righteous person be remembered when he or she is gone (vs 7)?

How will wicked men be remembered (vs 7)?

What will a wise person do (vs 8)?

Who is the righteous person contrasted with (vs 8)?

How have you seen verse 8 come true in the lives of people you know?

Memory Verses

Isaiah 40:1 Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. 2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. 3 A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God? 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all people will see it together. The LORD has spoken!" 6 A voice says, "Cry!" And I said, "What shall I cry?" All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the LORD blows on it; surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. 9 Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" 10 Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. 11 He will feed his flock like a shepherd. He will carry the lambs in his arms, holding them close to his heart. He will gently lead the mother sheep with their young. 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? 13 Who has measured the Spirit of the LORD, or what man shows him his counsel? 14 Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; behold, he takes up the coastlands like fine dust. 16 Lebanon would not suffice for fuel, nor are its beasts enough for a burnt offering. 17 All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. 18 To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? 19 An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. 20 He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. 21 Do you not know? Do you not hear? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth? 22 It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them like a tent to dwell in; 23 who brings princes to nothing, and makes the rulers of the earth as emptiness.