

Hey, we're in a series about the cycle of research-wisdom-action as key decision-makers—and today we're focused on the seven key P's for gaining wisdom and reaping from that wisdom, for you and those you serve. These P's are about getting wisdom for every dimension of life...in fact, the more complex the situation, the more wisdom needed, of course! So, let's go to the first P for gaining wisdom.

Pursuit. Well, to start with the biggest picture, wisdom is often in pretty short supply, especially for truly difficult sets of facts and circumstances. Just like common sense is often uncommon, on-the-spot wisdom is quite uncommon. Really, you say, why is that true? Well, wisdom is relatively uncommon because few people have cultivated a disciplined, fruitful approach to gain and deploy wisdom. So...where from here?

Well, the first and foremost step for gaining and deploying wisdom is dogged pursuit. Yeah, I don't mean some catch-as-catch-can approach—I am talking about a relentless, carefully-crafted pursuit of wisdom, day-in-and-day-out. And that requires a clear mental commitment and a relentless spiritual commitment. OK, you might say, relentless! But then just how do we pursue wisdom? Let's go to the second P.

Proverbs. Yeah, proverbs are those short, pithy sayings that most everybody in a particular culture has heard. And, let's face it, a number of commonly thrown-around American proverbs are just plain fun. Like...*the early bird gets the worm...you can't teach an old dog new tricks...a picture is worth a thousand words.* And some of those proverbs do have a measure of wisdom applicable to many situations.

But of course what I'm talking about are the proverbs from the book of Proverbs in the Bible. Why are these Bible proverbs different? Because they are God-inspired! Frankly, believers who saturate themselves with these sayings that cover a large variety of topics will be well-served for a lifetime.

Unsurprisingly and tellingly, some of the most notable Bible proverbs are foundationally about wisdom itself. How about Proverbs 1:5 (ESV): "Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance." Then there's Proverbs 1:7: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline." Then how about rounding out the wisdom theme with Proverbs 4:5? "Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or swerve from them." Of course, those three verses are a complete affirmation of the relentless pursuit of wisdom.

And those overarching words of God's wisdom about wisdom are supplemented with words about many topics...how about that famous one about raising children? "Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6.) Unfortunately, many folks have treated the general wisdom from this as something bigger—a totally iron-clad specific promise from God. Sadly, this wisdom is not a scientific formula...yeah, God created people with a free will to discard their early training.

Hey, here's the key point: the Bible's proverbs are very core guidance for life. When we foundationally saturate ourselves in those wise sayings, the lifelong dividends will be great! So, what's the next P?...

Prescriptions. Hey, it's sadly remarkable that huge numbers of Christians routinely don't do what Jesus commands them to. How about "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mark 12:31) And this one: "Go forth and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:19a) Even worse, they often don't even pretend to obey.

As strange as this may sound at first, these commandments are actually *prescriptions* for the believer's wisest possible life in service to God. Yes, that's our service to others in loving and in the proclaiming of the Gospel and in the nurturing of disciples. When believers become others-centric via the central stream of God's priorities, we have the very best prescriptions for taking wise action throughout all dimensions of life. And those prescriptions are dual-purpose—for the betterment of both us *and* the others we touch.

Yes, God's commandments are not just rules with potentially wrathful negative consequences...they are joy-laden prescriptions to result in abundant lives for you and others you serve. Yes, we are to abide in God's best for us...and His best are His prescriptions designed to yield our best results and our best impact! So yeah, it's your relentless pursuit of God's proverbs and prescriptions! Now...moving on to the next P...

Parables. Of course, I am talking about Jesus's parables here. The origin of the English word "parable" is a Greek word which essentially means "throwing alongside" or "casting alongside." Yeah, it means to illustrate a point or a truth by analogy or by comparison.

Hey, there are more than thirty parables in the Gospels...and you likely know several of them very well, like, say, the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares and the Parable of the Sower. One of my favorites for teaching Jesus-followers of all ages is the Parable of the Talents—that's because it reveals the core point of the Christian's focus, which is simply, comprehensively *great stewardship for others*. And along the way, that parable works to defeat the idea that money itself is evil and that socialism is a Christian goal.

Jesus's parables are deep spiritual lessons clothed in ordinary life-event stories. His disciples asked why He taught in parables. His response? Basically, to reveal truth to those who wanted truth and to conceal the truth from those who didn't, like the Pharisees. Sometimes the meaning of Jesus's parables is made clear but other times requires digging. But all His parables bear rich fruit for pursuers. The next P is...

Plotlines. Now let's cut to the core. In your life's choices and results, what is the key contributing story and its plotlines? So what do *you* believe God's bigger-picture story to be? That has huge directional impact on your life's paths! For example, many unbelievers think the information in the Bible is irrelevant to their lives. And their sad plight results.

Hey, the Apostle Paul declared *his* embracing of God's foundational plotline—he wrote that "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." (1 Corinthians 2:2). And Paul wrote: "God our Savior...desires all people to be saved." And the Apostle Peter added *this* depth to God's plotline: "The Lord is...not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Yes, God's plotline is the Cross and its eternal work reconciling all those who choose Christ to their Father in heaven. And we are ambassadors for Christ, God making His appeal through us. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Be especially careful here: churches, denominations, and individual believers can and do choose different plotlines than these key Scriptures, plotlines that lead to widely different journeys that are lacking and even contrary to these truths. Are you ensuring you are most fully conformed to God's plotlines, regardless of what others might think? Choose God's foundational plotlines—yes, choose wisely. Next is:

People. Now here's the sixth in this list of P's, *people*...and there's a vital reason for that ranking! Hey, we can access people of many profiles for individual bursts of wisdom...for example, an attorney helping us navigate a legal issue. But when it comes to the wisdom needed in making key life decisions in our stewardships of others, we should work to select people as our counselors who are as much in alignment with God's P's as possible. So, are your counselors really, truly, clearly overflowing with wisdom from their relentless pursuit and their solid interpretations of God's proverbs, prescriptions, parables, and plotlines?

Yes, we already know *we* should forge *our* way conformed to that key "fifth-P"—God's plotlines. But are your counselors anchoring their lives on God's macro-plotlines? Just what is the true impact of the people you go to for advice? Do they truly love people...or condemn others? Are they Cross-centric...yes, are they actively casting a net for all of Christ's love and the Cross's message of reconciliation to the Father? Are they Great-Commission people...yes, focused on the eternal betterment of all who would come? Last is...

Petition. Now, let's turn to the last P of our seven P's for wisdom...petition! James 1:5 says that "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him."

How cool is that? But wait, that's not just asking of God for wisdom in a vacuum of lack of revealed wisdom through Scriptures and the counsel of wise people. Indeed, asking God for wisdom and obtaining that wisdom are *first* undergirded by all those other P's! So, let's recap the "seven P's" list for the Christian.

Pursuit. Proverbs. Prescriptions. Parables. Plotlines. People. Petition. Yes, those seven P's *can* work in concert to equip us with the wisdom necessary for our thriving in a complex, challenging world! Wisdom.

