Who’s the wisest person you’ve ever known? By that I don’t mean the classmate who always gets 100 on every tests or champions on Jeopardy or Trivia Pursuit. There is a difference between being knowledgeable and being wise. Being knowledgeable focuses more on the acquisition of information. Nowadays, with the advance of technology that is available to all of us at the palm of our hands, one can practically search for any questions that one can think of and the answers can come up almost instantaneously.

 But being wise, on the other hand, focuses more on making the right decisions, after weighing out all options and alternatives. **Wisdom is the God-given ability to judge or discern correctly and to follow the best course of action, based on one’s knowledge, understanding and also one’s experience as well.** It is the ability to see beneath the surface of things.

 Speaking of wisdom, our bible is also a collection book of wisdom, not only from the teachings of Jesus and the prophecy of the Old Testament prophets, or the pastoral letter written by the Apostle Paul and others to the early church but there are books that are categorized as the “wisdom” literature – they are Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalm. Each of them offers a unique perspective of how God plays an important role in our everyday lives. Proverbs 9:10 tells us that, *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.”*

 The Holy Spirit is the source of our Wisdom. God freely gives us the wisdom of discernment as we trust in God’s guidance. According to another “Wise” person - Confucius, human wisdom can be learned in three different ways also.

***“***[***First, by reflection, which is the noblest; Second, by imitation, which is the easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.***](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/c/confucius131984.html)***”***

When we reflect, which is the noblest, we look back and draw upon the best of what life has to offer. We put everything into perspectives and we carefully calculate the course of our action before we act. We learn from the mistakes that we made and try our best not to repeat them again.

 Second, when **we imitate**, which is the easiest, we try to imitate someone who may be successful in what he or she does. Chances are, they’ve gone through all the trials and struggles and have overcome many of the challenges. However, what works for that person may not work for others. There’s little or no sense of ownership whatsoever when we simply adopt the plan of others.

 Thirdly, when we learn wisdom **by experience**, we may experience the bitterness of life but we also gain the reward of laboring through the struggles and triumph at the end. Like the old saying, “No pain, no gain!” Just look at all the Olympic athletes, none of them becomes champions overnight simply by putting on a pair of skates, snowboards, or skis. It took many years of training, hard work, determination and preparations. It took hundreds of falls, many trips to the hospitals, the disappointments and the frustrations of coming up just a little bit on the short-end of the stick, in order to get them where they are at right now.

 One of the most memorable moments that we’ve seen during this year’s Winter Olympic was during the Opening Ceremony when we saw the US skier Heidi Kloser walking oncrutches a day after she had totally torn her ACL, MCL and sustained multiple fractures on her body during a pretty bad fall on her practice run. Despite her injury, she insisted that she would walk into the stadium and to represent her country.

 When she was taken up to the ambulance, Kloser asked her parents if she was still an Olympian even though she never completed an official run. Her dad assured her, “Of course you are!” Well, somehow I have a feeling that with much hard works ahead, we might find her in the next Olympic or other competitions in the future.

 Certainly this was just one of many triumphant stories that we can learn in life – the ability to bounce back up on our feet after we’ve suffered serious setback. The human mind is one of the most complex and intriguing parts of life, full of wisdom and motivation for us to seek and to learn. God has given us the ability to reason and to process thoughts, in order for us to strive towards the perfect holiness in Christ. Through our own experience, we reflect upon God’s provision and God’s love for us all and we strive to imitate what Christ has taught and demonstrated to us.

 **When God created human beings, we were created to share God’s wisdom and intimacy.** **God desires us to seek God not only in a wholistic but in a holy way.** Unfortunately through our sinful and prideful nature, we’ve pursued our own wisdom instead of honoring God’s. We’ve placed ourselves at the same podium as God’s, while failing to acknowledge God’s sovereign work in our lives. We celebrate our own achievements by padded ourselves on our backs. Yay, we did it! What do you think, God? How do you think we did?

 Part of the struggles that the early church experienced was the sense of unity within the body of Christ….while trusting in our own wisdom and not God’s. Is it even possible that they can cope with one another, drawing from their collective God-given wisdom, in spite of their differences, for the up-building of the Kingdom of God?

 Last week, we talked about how **Christ serves as the foundation and the cornerstone of our faith.** In order for God’s temple to stand, we must allow God’s Spirit to live in us!

 The Apostle Paul reminded us that despite our human wisdom and knowledge of this world, we are still fools in God’s sight. Ultimately we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God. We are God’s temple on earth that is if we allow the Holy Spirit to live in us. **When world sees us on the outside, they shall also see God on our inside.**

 Through God’s covenant to God’s people, we are set aside as “holy” people. Holy doesn’t mean that we are more special or perfect. Being “Holy” literally means that we are “set-apart” to do God’s work. It means we stand out in the crowd and are called to be different from the rest of the world. We are uniquely made in order to fulfill God’s purpose here on earth.

 In the past couple of weeks, we’ve been studying passages from the Old Testament that deal with the various laws and regulations that the LORD had handed down to the people. These were not Laws of Moses, these were the Law of God. These laws were handed down to us to be used as a “measuring stick”, a benchmark, so that we don’t fall too far off-track. They were set to liberate us, give us freedom and not to be restricted by them.

 In the passage that we read earlier taken from the book of Leviticus, there were 15 “**You Shall Not**”s in this brief passage - You shall not do this; you shall not do that! All of these “You Shall Not”s were followed by only two “**You Shall**”s - *“****You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy”*** and ***“You shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD”.***

 These were moral laws that shaped and defined the teachings of Jesus. They expressed our “holiness” before God. Every action we take, every word that’s coming out of our mouths, every thought that we have within our minds reflect upon who we are and who God is. “*You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*  Interestingly this declaration parallels with the Gospel passage in Matthew that some of us were studying last week in our Bible Study from Matthew 5:48, “*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”*

 **God does not, however, expect us to be perfect (and we’re not), but that does not prevent us from striving for wholeness, holiness, and perfection in Christ.**

When we realize how much we fall short of God’s standard, by the grace of God, it motivates us to make adjustments in order to embrace our differences and our future. The Holy Spirit continues to refine us through our trials and challenges in life. There’s a term for this, if you look that up, it’s called “Sanctification”.

 The word “sanctification” involves God’s continuing work in our imperfect lives through the Holy Spirit. Our lives are but “work-in-progress”. Jesus often referred us to be the “Holy Temple”. When we have Christ in our hearts, God enabled us to be His “Holy Temple” – a sanctuary for refuge, nurture and fellowship. It is a place where we worship, and to seek shelter from the storm. However, **the temple that God was referring to is not just the physical building but of our lives.** Our temple is where God’s Spirit lives. We exemplify who God is by how we live our everyday lives and the kind of fruits that we bear.

 Holiness does not mean that we make grand sacrifices to God, or whoever donates the most money to charity, or can recite the longest prayers or can name all 66 books in the Bible. Holiness is doing what is the “right thing to do”, even when everyone else thinks you’re odd, different and unconventional. Holiness is about not taking in personal gains at the expense of others. It mean holding onto your conviction even against popular opinions and the strongest critics. Holiness means treating everyone fairly for who they are while withholding personal judgment and hates. Holiness means embracing those who are misfits and the least popular in society and those who are marginalized by gender, age or other physical or mental disabilities.

 **It would be scandalous to our faith in proclaiming God’s “holiness” in our lives, yet we fail to seek the “wholeness” in the Body of Christ**. It is not enough to claim that we are “IN” and we’re saved, while others are struggling to make-ends-meet and are lost out in the open sea. God’s Kingdom will not be fully realized until the day when whole body becomes holy once again.

 Every time we come and stand before the cross, we are reminded once again that “*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.”[[2]](#footnote-2)* The cross humbles us and brings us back down to reality once again. We realize that all is vanity if Christ’s mission is not accomplished here on earth. It is Christ whom we ultimately serve and worship. Therefore, we shall be Holy as the LORD our God is Holy.

 In the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Leviticus 19:2* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *I Corinthians 3:19* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)