



Theme: Summer Wisdom
"Character and Wisdom"

Sermon preached by Jeff Huber, June 27-28, 2026, at Summit Church, Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

⁵ Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit." – John 3:5

SLIDE Summer Wisdom: Character and Wisdom

We continue in a series of sermons on Biblical wisdom that we find in the books of Proverbs in our Old Testament, or Hebrew Bible, and the book of James in the New Testament. My hope is that this series will give us a better understanding of the wisdom literature in our Bible and that as we look at God's word, the Holy Spirit will move you. Today we are going to look at the background of the book of Proverbs and Hebrew poetry, and the Meditation Moments of this series will allow you to read through large sections of the book Proverbs and the letter of James. We began two weeks ago with this question.

SLIDE Where do we find wisdom in today's world?

We live in a world that tells us wisdom is found on our phone and

every question can be answered by some form of AI, but we all know this is not true. AI can give us information but cannot tell us how to use it. Wisdom is meant to take us deeper than definitions. It is meant to give us a perspective that looks at life from a bigger picture.

The book of Proverbs talks to us about two paths—often referred to as the path of wisdom or the path of folly. They are also referred to as the path of righteousness or the path of wickedness. On one path we find **life, joy, and hope**. That path has God's will laid out before us. On the other path we find **disappointment, heartache, pain** and the path that God does not want to take.

SLIDE Path of Wisdom or Path of Folly

SLIDE Path of Righteousness or Path of Wickedness

Most of us are not living righteously or wickedly but we are living **somewhere in between**. We long to be more righteous than we are and yet we struggle because we don't intend to be wicked but **occasionally, we head down that path**. We find ourselves stuck somewhere in between. Today, we are going to talk about character and what the book of Proverbs teaches us about the character that God intends for us to have—**the character of the Wise**.

Character has several different meanings when it comes to human beings. Sometimes we say something like, **“That person is a real character.”** What does that usually mean? Maybe they are funny or they are eccentric or unusual or strange. It does not always mean something admirable when we say someone is a “real character.”

But what do we mean when we say someone has character? We are looking more at their inner qualities and how they live their life. Our intent when we use that phrase is to describe someone with integrity. There is consistency in their behavior and something admirable about how they live. Once someone has character, we often say, **“That is someone I want to be like.”**

This is what we want to talk about today. We want to talk about those traits and who we are on the inside and how that comes out in our daily lives. We want to try and get a **picture of what God hopes** our character will be like according to the book of Proverbs.

In doing this we are going to focus on one Hebrew word that shows up over **100 times in the 31 chapters** in the book of Proverbs. It appears in Proverbs more than any other word in reference to the character that God would have us build up. The word **“character” itself does not show up** in the book of Proverbs, but this word is for all intents and purposes what the book of Proverbs means when it defines the character of the Wise. This word is a Hebrew word, *“tzedakah.”*

SLIDE *Tzedakah* (תְּצַדִּיק)

I want us to know how to say this word so let's say it together. **tzuh-DAH-kuh** (or **suh-dack-uh**) the **"Tz" sound**: Start with a sharp, crisp “tz” sound, exactly like the end of the word *pizza*. The emphasis is on the middle syllable, **“DAH”**, receives the primary stress.

This word appears more than 500 times in the Old Testament. The equivalent of this word in Greek shows up almost 200 times in the New Testament and so we find this word almost 700 times in the Bible. That is more often than the word “love” appears in the Bible. This word captures what God's will is for our heart and for our lives.

So, what does tzedakah mean? Most of the time this word is simply translated as “righteousness.”

SLIDE *tzedakah* = righteousness (upright, straight, just)

Another variant of the word in its simplest form is “righteous.” The literal translation is “upright” or “straight.” It sometimes is translated as “just” or “justice”. Most cases the word however are translated as “righteousness.” **Righteousness is the goal** of the Christian life. Righteousness is the **character that God would have us**

live into.

So, what does righteousness mean?

In the Bible this word is almost always a **relational word**. It is not that you are living into a certain set of laws. In other words, it's not about following the rules and because you follow the rules you are righteous or tzedakah. That is not how it works. Instead, tzedakah is a relational term that is about doing the right thing.

SLIDE *tzedakah* = doing the right thing

Tzedakah is always doing the right thing in **relationship** to who or what you're speaking about or who or what you are interacting with. It can refer to your relationship to the creation or the Creator or the animals around us or the human beings in which we are in contact with. It is about consistently and always doing the right thing.

Tzedakah is not always an action. It is not always doing the right things but also **thinking the right thoughts**. It is having the right attitude. Righteousness, as the name implies, is **right behavior**, right thoughts and right attitudes. This concept permeates the entire Scriptures, and it is what God is looking for in us.

SLIDE *tzedakah* = sanctification or holiness

In the New Testament and in Christian theology the words we use are sanctification or holiness which means **becoming more like Christ**. for righteousness—always doing the right thing, having the right thoughts and the right attitudes in our hearts.

When we think about righteousness, we often think about it referring to people. But in the **book of Proverbs**, we find righteousness referring to **all our relationships** and all of creation. Proverbs 12:10 is a great example of this.

BIBLE (be sure and add “righteous” to this slide)

***¹⁰ The godly [righteous] care for their animals,
but the wicked are always cruel.***

I find it fascinating that righteousness has something to do with how we treat our pets or livestock that are in our care. Righteousness is to permeate all parts of existence and creation. We find in Proverbs that righteousness refers to the **little things and the small things** in life.

GRAPHIC Jasper

Last week we had to put our little dog Jasper to sleep. I have used him in sermons over the years. He was 18 years old and it was time, but I found myself going through pictures and finding him joining us in all kinds of adventures. The last few years of his life he had congestive heart failure and he needed three medicines. Many of us who have animals understand how they are part of the family and how they also in many ways reflect the glory of God with their companionship and their faithfulness. They also teach us about forgiveness and patience, especially as they get older. I think that's why this proverb is one that many of us find compelling and why the writer of this included how we care for our animals as a sign of righteousness, or doing what is right.

So, what does this look like in our life? The book of Proverbs was written as a collection of wisdom from **wise sages** who had lived a full life and were sharing their wisdom with younger generations. I think of the wise sages who have **been around the block a few times** and have been a part of my life and part of the church. They have wisdom about how life works. I remember one of them, **Jim Aubrey**, whose ashes are out in our columbarium, sharing with sharing a piece of wisdom that you learn a lot about someone by playing a round of golf with them. I found myself thinking back over the times that we played golf and I was a bit worried!

Several weeks ago, I was playing golf and I got paired up with someone who I did not know. We introduced ourselves and he asked

what I did and I told him that I was a pastor in town. He proceeded to play poorly, and I could tell he was frustrated and halfway through the round he turned to me, and he said, **“You have no idea how hard it is to play a bad round of golf with the preacher.** I've been holding my tongue the last nine holes and it's getting difficult!”

Before thinking about what I was saying I replied, **“Jesus said that if you think** it then it is just like you have said it, so you might as well say out loud anyway.”

We both got a kick out of that and laughed a bit. But as I thought about that experience I realized there are several areas of righteousness that we could talk about in terms of character. I want us to consider what this might look like in several different areas of our lives.

SLIDE Righteousness and our relationship to God.

The first one has to do with our relationship with our Creator. What does righteousness, or doing the right thing, look like as the child relating to our Creator—relating to God? The book of Proverbs has a lot to teach us about this and one of the overwhelming messages is an idea that we talked about in the very first sermon in the series. We read about this in Proverbs 9:10.

BIBLE

10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

We also read in Proverbs 14:26 these words.

BIBLE

26 Those who fear the Lord are secure.

Proverbs 19:23 brings us this message.

BIBLE

23 Fear of the Lord leads to life, bringing and protection from

harm.

We learned several weeks ago that this is not about standing in holy terror of God. This is **not about cowering** before God. Instead, it is **reverence and awe**. It is recognizing that **God sees all things** and God is holy. **God is God and we are not** and so we walk with respect towards God. We long to **honor God and to serve God** and to bless God and to do God's will. This is an **attitude of the heart** as well as being reflected in our actions and our behaviors towards God.

The idea is that we honor God in everything. One of the ways that we have tried to teach this in our congregation is through our purpose statement. Most of you have seen this before but if you have not this is what we used in our newcomer lunch in helping ourselves understand how it is we can become more like Christ and grow in our faith. Our purpose statement is simple.

GRAPHIC (CHURCH LOGO)

We want to be Jesus Christ to the world. We do that by loving God, loving others, and sharing the Good News. Many of you have commented on how this is a big challenge. It is supposed to be! But we **didn't make this up** in the church. This is what you find in the book of Proverbs when it says to live out ***tzedakah***, or righteousness. Righteousness is simply **becoming more like Jesus Christ to the world**. It is how we should strive to live when you say we're going to be a follower of Jesus.

The challenge is **figuring out how this looks** in our lives. Many have asked me as a pastor, "How do I live out this idea of being Jesus Christ to the world?" Let me be clear that we don't have a little police force that goes around to see if you are doing these things. The reality is that if we don't have a plan, however, we will not grow. So, let me share some ideas about how each of us might take a step towards sanctification or being holy or righteous. These ideas again don't come

from. They come from Jesus.

I want it to be clear that we don't do this so we can say we are better than someone else. This church and those of us who are part of the church are **not better Christians** than anyone else. The proverbs are clear that when we become prideful, and we have it all figured out, then that is when we are foolish and we fail. Proverbs 11:2 is just one of over 20 that speak this truth.

BIBLE

² Pride leads to disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.

We simply are doing our best to follow Christ and become more like him. So, let's look remember these core commandments given to us by Jesus and see how they might give us some clues into righteousness. It's good to remember that both the great commandments and great commission given to us by Jesus are relational. Here's how Jesus put it in Matthew 22. It's helpful to remember the context.

BIBLE

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?"

³⁷ Jesus replied, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments."

It's important to note that these commandments are nothing new to the religious leaders. They would have known these, but Jesus wants

to know if their character has been shaped by these words. He would later say to these same leaders they were like white-washed tombs, pretty on the outside but stinky and smelly on the inside. When it comes to loving God, that is what fills us up and fuels us to be able to do the second commandment which is equally important. There are several ways we can develop our loving God muscles.

SLIDE Prayer changes us

Praying weekly, or better yet daily, changes us. I think of C.S. Lewis who said, **“I don’t pray to change God. I pray because it changes me.”** Research reveals that consistent prayer actively rewires your brain through **neuroplasticity**. It strengthens neural pathways for focus and emotional regulation by lighting up the **prefrontal cortex**, while **calming** the **amygdala**—the brain's fear and stress center. Key neurological and chemical changes that happen when you pray include:

- **Decreased Stress Hormones:** Prayer lowers cortisol levels, deactivating your body's "fight or flight" response.
- **Increased "Feel-Good" Chemicals:** The practice stimulates the release of **dopamine, serotonin, and oxytocin**, which are tied to **motivation, mood stabilization, and social connection**.
- **Enhanced Empathy:** Studies led by researchers like Dr. Andrew Newberg indicate that **prayer increases activity in the cingulate cortex**, a region that manages empathic thinking and emotional depth. In other words, loving God through prayer **leads us to be able to love others, and ourselves**, well.
- **Sense of Transcendence:** Brain scans of individuals deep in prayer show decreased activity in the **parietal lobe**, the area of the brain that creates your sense of self in space, often leading to a feeling of **connection to something larger**.

Recently I met with a young man in my office about struggles that he was having. After we visited, I asked if I could pray for him. We prayed for his struggles and then we gave God thanks for the ways in which this young man felt blessed. He looked at me after the prayer with tears in his eyes and said, **“I needed that. It helped me realize how big God is and that with God, I'll make it through my problems to the other side. I just realized that I am not alone!”**

SLIDE Worship connects us to others and God

Regular weekly worship with the body of Christ connects us to God and others and changes our character. We are reminded each week that what the world often teaches us is not wisdom but sometimes foolishness. I was meeting with someone this week that reminded me that the Psalms are also wisdom literature. They are going through a tough time and the words of Psalm 46:10 came back to him. I was reminded of how that Psalm started.

BIBLE

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength,
always ready to help in times of trouble.**
- ² So we will not fear when earthquakes come
and the mountains crumble into the sea.**
- ³ Let the oceans roar and foam.
Let the mountains tremble as the waters surge!**

BIBLE

- ¹⁰ “Be still and know that I am God!
I will be honored by every nation.
I will be honored throughout the world.”**

Part of what we do in living rightly towards God is giving God praise. We begin our service of worship with some music and that is not just warm up for the sermon. We sing because we are called to lift our

voices and give praise to God.

Early Christianity called this **“the liturgy”** which means, **“the work of the people.”** The liturgy is what we do as the right response to the God who is the author of all things. We sing and say praises to God because God created us and God sustains us. God made you to love you and wants a relationship with you. Prayer and worship are central to that right relationship. We wake up in the morning and the right response for every one of us in this room is to fall to our knees next to our bed or to stand up and lift our hands and our heads and say, “God, we praise you for who you are and for what you've done for us.”

This is our right response. This is righteousness in our relationship to God. This is reflected in the wonderful song our Next Gen kids and students sang this last week for Vacation Bible School. They were here all week singing this song and learning this truth about living in a right relationship with God.

**SLIDE I remember the day that my life was changed
 ‘Cause you had my heart when you called my name
 With my eyes on you it will be okay
 I will roll with you**

**SLIDE I know through it all, you’re a friend to me
 If I start to fall, you’re the one I need
 I believe that you will never ever never leave
 That’s the kind of love that you have for me**

**SLIDE You turned my life around, was lost but now I’m found
 Took my life, turned it upside-down
 Now I roll with you**

SLIDE Through the valley and the waves

**In the sun or in the rain
Whatever comes my way
I will roll with you**

That is righteousness. Is the right response of the Creatures to the Creator. That is the first form of righteousness which we are to live out. How do we respond to the love that God offers us? How do we respond to what God has done for us?

The second category of righteousness has to do with our own internal righteousness. We might call this personal holiness. This is about who we are when no one else is looking. This is about the state of our heart.

Many years ago, I went to our annual meeting of Methodist Pastors from the Rocky Mountain area in Denver and the first night I had a hotel room to myself. I had been in some meetings all day and by the time I got back to my room I was kind of wound up. It was about midnight by the time I got back to my room, and I wondered what I would do with myself. If I had flipped on the television set, I could have easily found my way to HBO or Showtime and some other cable channels which show questionable material after midnight. The programs which are on that late are simply not very righteous. Some might argue that most of their programming is not very righteous. But I must be honest and say that there is part of my heart that enjoys seeing that stuff. There is something broken in me which says, "I'm really curious about that."

That was 20 years ago and today that is a daily temptation because of this device we hold in our hand which access to what seems like infinite, unrighteous content! So, do I turn them on or not? Do I open scroll my phone and begin surfing to find things which are like that and not very righteous? Through the asking of questions I looked over, and I saw this pocket Bible that we give out. I picked it up and

began to read from the Proverbs and found myself in chapter 5.

BIBLE

³ **For the lips of an immoral woman are as sweet as honey,
and her mouth is smoother than oil.**

⁴ **But in the end she is as bitter as poison,
as dangerous as a double-edged sword.**

⁵ **Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave.**

⁶ **For she cares nothing about the path to life.
She staggers down a crooked trail and doesn't realize it.**

Are you kidding me? This proverb applies to all people, not just women. It points to the dangers of treating people like objects to be consumed, which is what pornography encourages us to do. I was reminded that I need to stay away from the cable channels late at night and the Internet because **I belong to Jesus Christ**. Even though my wife would **never know** about it, and you would never know about it unless I used it as a sermon illustration, God would know about it. I don't think those things help my soul. I think they **diminish my humanity** and so I didn't want to do that.

SLIDE The Bible contains instruction AND is a love letter from God

Sometimes we make the mistake of seeing the Bible as just a book to be studied. Yes, we should study the scriptures, and they do contain instructions that lead to life. But the Bible is also e believe in the study of God's word which enables spiritual growth and transformation and holiness to begin in our hearts. The foundation of our life and faith is not to be found on the cable channels after midnight or on the Internet. This is why we give you the study guide each week to encourage you in this area of your life AND we put a prayer at the end. We can easily forget that books like the Proverbs are meant to be studied and followed AND they are meant to be prayed.

SLIDE The transcendence and immanence of God

The transcendence and immanence of God are core theological concepts defining God's relationship to the universe. Transcendence means God is wholly separate from, and independent of, the created world. Immanence means God is actively present, accessible, and involved within His creation.

Divine Transcendence describes a God who is “wholly other.” Because God is the Creator, God is infinite, eternal, and unbound by the physical limitations of space and time.

- **Core Meaning:** God is exalted above creation in majesty, power, and holiness.
- **Philosophical View:** In classical theism, it establishes that God does not depend on the universe for God's existence.
- **Implication:** It highlights human limitations and underscores the majesty, mystery, and awe-inspiring nature of God.

Divine Immanence, on the other hand, describes a God who is intimately close and active in the world.

- **Core Meaning:** God is actively sustaining the created order. God is omnipresent, meaning no part of creation is without God's presence.
- **Philosophical View:** In Christian theology, this is exemplified by the Incarnation (God becoming human in Jesus Christ), showing God's direct interaction with humanity.
- **Implication:** It emphasizes God's compassion, approachability, and God's personal relationship with humanity.

It's critical that these two attributes must exist in **tension**. If God is over-emphasized as **transcendent**, God can be perceived as distant, abstract, and uncaring. If God is over-emphasized as **immanent**, it risks

blurring the line between Creator and creation (pantheism) or making God appear too ordinary or easily understood. Together, they paint a complete picture of a God who is both infinitely greater than human comprehension (transcendent) yet intimately acquainted with every detail of our daily lives (immanent).

The big idea is that we need BOTH a God that is transcendent and that is mysterious, and a God that is immanent, knowing that God is real and active in our world. God is external AND internal. That means God exists outside of us, and inside of us. God see what others cannot see about us AND God sees what we cannot see about ourselves AND God see what we can be. Here is a challenging question for each of us.

SLIDE Who am I when no one else is looking?

This is not just about pornography, but it is also about attitudes like pride and arrogance. Do I see myself as better than other people, or do I see myself as a servant of other people? Personal holiness is not just about what comes out of our mouth, but what goes through our mind. In all these areas God calls us to think the right thoughts.

This is about how our heart is being shaped into the image of Christ. We are the clay and God is the potter and we invite God to mold and shape us into a reflection of Christ. Jesus talks to us about this in the Sermon on the Mount which is the New Testament equivalent to the book of Proverbs. Jesus lays out the path of the righteous in this sermon in Matthew 5.

“You have heard it said of old, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I say unto you, don't even lust after another person.”

“You have heard it said of old, ‘Do not commit murder,’ But I say to you, do not even hate or be angry.”

Jesus is talking about our relationship inside and who we are in the innermost part of our being. He makes these big sweeping

statements, called “prophetic hyperbole” not because he wants us to be perfect but to get our attention and make a point.

Jesus defines for us an internal righteousness which is the path that God calls us to follow. God calls us to live this right path within our hearts and to pay attention to who we are when no one else is looking. These words of Jesus point to the second part of the great commandment, loving others as we love ourselves. Jesus is clearly pointing to what is happening inside. Who we are inside will impact how we treat others on the outside.

SLIDE Doing the right thing towards others

The book of Proverbs tells us a lot about this, and we are going to talk more about it in two weeks as we look at wisdom for relationships. Our relationships with other people are to be defined by this right path. It is about not lying; belittling or berating others. It is about building other people up. We reach out to others both in word and deed. We strive to serve both the body of Christ and all of God's creation. This means we share with other people what it means to be Jesus Christ by going out into the world. We go to Africa, Guatemala, the Navajo Nation, and Loveland to serve. Our youth served our children this week at Vacation Bible School. We go to Manna Soup Kitchen and to the Thrift Shop to serve. We go to our workplaces and to our homes and to our neighborhoods to serve. We build houses for those in need with Habitat for Humanity, and we make shoeboxes for children throughout the world at Christmas.

I talked to a physician from our church recently who said he had begun praying with his patients if they wanted that. We have discovered in a very profound way that when people are provided with prayer and spiritual care, they heal faster and better than if they don't receive that kind of care. What would it be like for us to share with others the good news but to provide health care and mental health

care and spiritual care all in one place? It's exciting to think how we might touch other people's lives as we seek to be Jesus Christ to the world on our new campus in Three Springs.

SLIDE Pocket Bible

Some of you know we give out these pocket Bibles for you to carry with you, and for you to give away. I received an e-mail from a man in our congregation who travels frequently. He told me that each time he comes back from a trip he must get a new Bible because he has given these away in China, Korea, Japan, Mexico and less remote places like New York, Seattle, and next week Las Vegas. He said that in his travels he constantly runs into people who are struggling and can hand them a Bible with the passage marked that can touch that need. He wrote this in his e-mail: **“Mine have gotten a great workout. It is a great little book. I just wanted to thank the congregation for making them available.”** How wonderful is that!

We are called in all our relationships, whether they are in business or at church or at home or in our neighborhood, to pursue a path of holiness and becoming more like Christ. In Romans 12:10 the Apostle Paul says it this way:

BIBLE

⁹ Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. ¹⁰ Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other.

BIBLE

¹² Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble and keep on praying. ¹³ When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

These words point to importance of social holiness. Our relationship with a living God is meant to change us so that we then go

out and live out the picture of the Kingdom of God. There are people in the kingdom of God who are reaching out constantly to their neighbor, being ready to help and practice hospitality. The biblical ideal is that we would find righteousness throughout society. The book of Proverbs tells us that righteousness exalts the nation. Kings are to rule in righteousness—mayors, governors and every leader in our government who claim to follow Christ are to rule in righteousness—that is to do the right thing in all relationships. As a nation we are to strive to do the right thing in our relationship with other nations. Proverbs 29 gives us this wisdom.

BIBLE

**² When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice.
But when the wicked are in power, they groan.**

BIBLE

**⁷ *The godly care about the rights of the poor;
the wicked don't care at all.***

Proverbs 21 links together two important ideas of how we are to be as people of character.

BIBLE

**² *People may be right in their own eyes,
but the Lord examines their heart.***

**³ *The Lord is more pleased when we do what is right and just
than when we offer him sacrifices.***

The central idea is that God doesn't need your money, but God does want your heart. God wants us to grow, and God knows the only way we grow is when we let go of the things that have a hold of our heart, and for most of us in our culture that is our money. Let me say this as clearly as I can as your pastor. The only way we become more like Jesus Christ, the only way that we become more righteous, the only

way that we can truly pursue holiness is on purpose. I hope that you will prayerfully consider what your next step of faith might be. For some of you it is simply committing to come to worship each week.

Some of you will want to get a Bible. Some of you will want to start getting the Meditation Moments each day on your phone or pick up a copy as you leave. Some of you will want to connect to a small group. Some of you want to come to the next dinner with the Pastor on July 23 to learn more about these things. Some of you want to join the advanced studies that we are offering. Some of you will feel called to work with our Next Gen. Some of you will want to serve at Manna Soup Kitchen or the Thrift Shop or with Native Hope on the Navajo Nation. Some may want to go on a service trip. I simply want to encourage you to take a step and make a commitment to doing that today so you can grow closer to God and become more like Jesus Christ in the world.

Having the character of the wise, seeking righteousness, is about seeing God and the love of God in the smallest of places and knowing that God can do big things through those. Righteousness is not about doing what comes naturally but about doing what is right and good and the loving thing to do. Sometimes that is very difficult, but when righteousness is practiced, things in the world change. You can read all about righteousness, but it is only when you see it lived out and you see an example of the it you go, “Ah, that is righteousness.”

GRAPHIC Achmed Ismail Khatib

As we see bomb flying across the Middle East, I found myself thinking about a 12-year-old Palestinian boy named Achmed Ismail Khatib. He was playing with his friends and taunting Israeli soldiers by throwing pebbles at them. This is not an uncommon thing to have happened in the Palestinian territories. He had a play gun which is not a very smart thing to have when you're in a powder keg. An Israeli soldier thought it was a real gun and opened fire on the little boy. He was

taken to a nearby hospital where his parents were told he was not going to live.

It was an Israeli hospital and the doctors told Achmed's parents that there were people their son's life could save in the hospital if they were willing to donate his organs. This family, though they were bearing the grief of their 12-year-old who had been shot by an Israeli soldier and were in an Israeli hospital, decided to donate his organs to six Israelis. He helped save five children ages seven months to 14 years of age and one Israeli woman who was 58 years old.

There were Palestinians who were angry with the parents, saying, "How could you do this? How could you betray your people and give your son's organs to Israelis who are our enemies?"

GRAPHIC Ismail al-Khatib

The father's response was this.

SLIDE *"I don't mind seeing my son's organs in the body of an Israeli or Palestinian. The Palestinian people want peace for everyone. I feel like my son has entered the heart of every Israeli."*

That is righteousness lived out. It is a willingness to set aside the pain and the hurt and the animosity and to be able to say, "If he is going to die, I want my child's life to help others to live and I don't care which side they are on." I guarantee you that one act of righteousness will have a greater impact on this conflict between Israel and Palestine than a dozen conferences on peace. This is what happens when righteousness is lived out.

I want to end with this truth. Righteousness is formed in us when we discipline ourselves and when we take time to worship, study God's Word, invest in the lives of others and reach out in service to the world. But righteousness also is formed through hardship and difficulty. God

did not send hardship or difficulty to teach us about righteousness, but hardship in our lives can be used by God to shape us and change us and help us become more like him.

I noticed that almost everyone who serves in a powerful way in ministry in his church often does so because of something difficult that has happened in their lives. God will take whatever struggle you have had and used that to shape you and form you into his image. My prayer is that you will allow **God** to build character in your life and to help you become wise beyond your years. Let's end with these words which are our memory verse for the week.

BIBLE

²¹ **Whoever pursues righteousness and unfailing love
will find life, righteousness, and honor.**

SLIDE Prayer

Let's pray.

Oh God, how grateful we are that you have called us to holiness, to righteousness—that you long for us to treat others with respect and dignity—to care for the poor and the hungry—to do justice in our world—that you are longing for us to have integrity—to tell the truth—to in small ways demonstrate a servants heart overflowing with love—that you have invited us oh God, even when no one is looking, to have a heart for you.

Help us oh God to be those kinds of people who live our lives so that others see you in us. God, we are grateful that you are merciful—slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love—that you sent Jesus Christ that we might have a Savior—that in our baptisms and through that water you promised to wash us clean and make us new when we stumble and fall so that we will turn back to you. This day forgive us oh God and draws near.

May we pursue righteousness and unfailing love, so we find life, righteousness, and honor. We this in your holy name. Amen

July 11-12 Order

1. Countdown
2. Ryan welcomes people and invites them to stand in body or spirit.
3. Song – “Glorious Day”
4. Song – “Winds of Love”
5. Jeff welcomes and shares:
 - A. QR Code
 - B. Invites people to greet each other
6. Announcement Video
7. Sermon Video Intro
8. Sermon
9. Med Moments
10. Offering (VBS Video)
11. VIDEO VBS Song – “Roll With You”
12. Prayer and Lord’s Prayer
13. Care Ministers
14. The Bridge
15. Closing Prayer