

Risky Business

I still vividly remember a time years ago when I really scared myself driving. I had become frustrated following a slow truck on a winding road, mile after mile after mile. Finally, I saw my chance to pass and took it. But there was a car coming towards me faster than I thought, which meant I barely made it back into my own lane in time. By the grace of God, I came through, shaken but unharmed. I learned my lesson, though. Saving a few minutes was certainly not worth risking a high-speed collision, especially when I considered that it wasn't just my own life I'd put in danger; my toddler son was in the car too. I have been much more careful ever since.

A brush with death is an effective teacher, with the power to permanently change us. We tend to see things more clearly afterward, to reexamine our behavior and our priorities in light of the reminder that life itself is fragile. We might also be moved to repent if our own folly contributed to the crisis. How much better it would be, though, if we could become wise without the drama of near tragedy to teach us what not to do! Not all disasters are self-inflicted, of course, but many are. Have you, knowingly or unknowingly, placed yourself (or others) in jeopardy by risky behavior? Are you by bad habits endangering your health? Are you storing up suffering for yourself by neglecting your marriage, your finances, or the discipline of your children? In Proverbs 3:13-26 we're told:

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding, for she [wisdom] is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold... Her ways are pleasant ways, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed... My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight... Then you will go on your way in safety, and your foot will not stumble... for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being snared.

God himself is the source of all wisdom – the starting point, the essence, the sum total, the final word. Where you lack understanding, ask him and he has promised to give it generously (James 1:5). Then be wise enough to apply it, rather than putting yourself at unnecessary risk or expecting God to deliver you from a mess of your own making. And when, in his goodness, God brings you safely to the end of another day, give him fervent thanks.

S. Johnson