

Proverbs
A Treasure Worth Seeking
Lesson Text: Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:1-6, 13-18

Aim for Change

By the end of the lesson, we will: **DEFINE** wisdom both in the context of Proverbs and in terms of its practical application to our own lives; **COMPARE** knowledge and wisdom; and **DECIDE** to seek God's wisdom in our own lives.

In Focus

Today's lesson reminds us that wisdom flows into our lives directly from God.

Keep In Mind

*"Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding."
(Psalm 47:6-7 KJV)*

Lesson Text

Lesson Text: Proverbs 2:1-5; 3:1-6, 13-18

- 1 My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,
- 2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;
- 3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,
- 4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;
- 5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 3:1-6, 13-18

- 1 My son, do not forget my law, but let your heart keep my commands;
- 2 For length of days and long life and peace they will add to you.
- 3 Let not mercy and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart,
- 4 And so find favor and [a]high esteem In the sight of God and man.
- 5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
- 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.
- 13 Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding;
- 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold.

15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.
16 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left hand riches and honor.
17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace.
18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her.

The Lesson

The People, Places and Times

Solomon: Authorship of the book of Proverbs is attributed to Solomon in 1:1; 10:1; and 25:1. However, several sections are attributed to other authors (see 22:17 24:34; 30:1 31:31). Along with Job and Ecclesiastes, Proverbs is known as Israel’s wisdom literature.

In biblical times, Israel’s leadership consisted of three different groups of leaders: the prophets, the priests, and the wise men. The wise men were a distinct class, perhaps associated with the scribes. The wise men were often involved in the politics and moral issues of the day and were usually skilled writers. Many of them were probably government officials. Generally, the wise men were far less prominent and authoritative than the other leaders. Earnest seekers of life’s lessons, they drew informal disciples from the common people. The wise man often dispensed his wisdom both in a public forum and to those who sought him out privately.

In the Old Testament, the first person who was called “wise” was a woman from Tekoa (2nd Samuel 14:1–20). Another wise woman is mentioned in 2nd Samuel 20:14–22. Job was a wise man from this period (Job 29:7–25). Solomon, of course, is the quintessential wise man of the Bible. But there were many other wise men and women who are unnamed in the Bible.

The teaching of the wise men (or women) was often done in public places (Proverbs 1:20– 21), such as the town gate. Later, formal schools were formed where pupils would gather as the wise man shared his wisdom. These teachings were often prefaced with “my son,” directing the words of wisdom to any individual who would take heed. The wise men employed imagery, allegory, personification, and even riddles and fables to direct their listeners toward wisdom.

Background

The word “wisdom” generally implies such ideas as skill, experience, knowledge, or good judgment. The Hebrew word used in Proverbs for wisdom is *chokmah* (khok-maw’), meaning “wisdom,” “experience,” or “shrewdness.” This word can refer to technical skills or special abilities, but *chokmah* is also the knowledge and ability to make the right choices at the opportune time. This kind of wisdom, based upon the fear of the Lord (Proverbs 1:7), is the type of wisdom believers should desire.

Throughout the Old Testament and specifically in the book of Proverbs, wisdom is connected to such words as “commands,” “precepts,” and “laws.” In the New Testament, we realize Jesus has become the fulfillment of all wisdom. As believers today, we understand “keeping the commandments” or “obeying the law” is accomplished through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Following a list of rules will never draw us into the place where we can find the hidden treasures of wisdom.

How can we approach Proverbs with the light we have as New Testament believers? Here’s the gist of it: We cannot have true wisdom without knowing the Wisdom-Giver. In 1st Corinthians 1:30, the apostle Paul says that Jesus “is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.” Jesus is wisdom! When we pray for wisdom, we are praying to know Jesus better! What a concept! He is all in all. Only in Him will we find what we need to live a victorious, vibrant Christian life. In Him “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3).

In Depth

1. Wisdom: What Is It? (Proverbs 2:1–5) Godly wisdom is the ability to apply God’s Word and His will to everyday situations. Wisdom is not gained by attending seminars, reading books, or taking college courses. So how do we gain wisdom? Wisdom comes from a daily, consistent, purposeful application of God’s Word to everyday circumstances.

Wisdom also comes from experiencing life, with all its joys and sorrows. Many believers and unbelievers have the kind of wisdom gained from trial and error (i.e., a “learn-from-your-mistakes kind of wisdom). But godly wisdom is a direct byproduct of walking in the Spirit. This wisdom for living is bestowed upon us as a gift from God (Proverbs 2:6; James 1:5).

There are, however, some prerequisites to receiving wisdom. We must first desire wisdom. Small children will often plug their ears to block out something they do not want to hear. Sometimes, Christians, too, will childishly close their minds and their spirits to the Holy Spirit, not wanting to receive wisdom. Proverbs 2:1 says, “If thou wilt receive my words” and thereby implies that a teachable spirit is necessary if a person is to receive wisdom.

When we have received wisdom, we are told to “hide” it in our heart (2:1; Psalm 119:11). The Hebrew word used here for “hide” is *tsaphan* (tsaw-fan’), which means to treasure or store up. Many people today are focused on accumulating wealth; therefore, making more money and obtaining more “stuff” is a driving compulsion. Some will spend every waking moment and every available cent in search of more. Yet, as believers, we are exhorted to expend our time and resources to gain the riches of wisdom.

Verse 3 instructs us to cry out for knowledge and understanding! Pray for wisdom. Call out to God for His will in every situation. Be diligent in searching the Scriptures. That's the second prerequisite for gaining godly wisdom: We must be willing to do what it takes to acquire wisdom. It will take time to search God's Word. It will take time and perseverance to pray for godly wisdom. It will take a quiet heart to hear the voice of the Spirit. But to gain the treasure, we must be willing to dig (v. 4).

When we do find wisdom, we find God (v. 5). We begin to understand His nature. We stand in awe of who He is. We have found the treasure. The advantages of wisdom are numerous: deliverance from evil men (2:12), blessings (v. 21), divine guidance (3:6), happiness (v. 13), long life (v. 16), riches and honor (v. 16). The list could go on and on. But the overarching prerequisite to and reward for gaining wisdom is a burning desire to know God.

2. Wisdom: Why Do We Need It? (3:1–6) Proverbs 3:1 instructs us not to forget God's law. Practically speaking, this means we must keep our focus on God. The treasures of God are not attained by lackluster performance. Believers must be diligent in seeking, reading, and meditating on God's Word; spending time in prayer; and heeding the Spirit. Does this guarantee we will have a long, peaceful life? Proverbs 3:2 seems to intimate that it does. Generally, of course, one can expect to reap the benefits of living a wise and prudent life. But we can't make it into a linear equation because life does not work that way. We can all think of examples to illustrate the inequity and disappointments of life.

So, what is the point of gaining wisdom? As with all spiritual issues, it is a matter of the heart. If our only motive for achieving wisdom is to obtain the "perks," then we're headed for disillusionment. We must be able to see further than that. As we focus our eyes on Jesus, He begins to mold us into His image. The wisdom that flows from Him becomes a way of life, a fiber of our very being as believers. We are then able to go forth as workers in the harvest, as builders of God's kingdom. We seek after wisdom so that we may be servants.

As we seek to know the God of wisdom, more of His characteristics will blossom within us. Proverbs 3:3 mentions mercy and truth. Along with the wisdom of God comes the knowledge of how to respond in every area of our lives, including our relationships with others. If we approached every person with mercy and truth, conducting ourselves with wisdom, we would be getting closer to the way Jesus lived. In fact, verse 4 says that if we do so, we will find favor with God and man. The rewards of wisdom may not be minutely predictable, but they are worth searching for.

In verses 5 and 6, we find a summation of what the writer of Proverbs has discussed so far: Trust in the Lord because He is able to care for you. In other words, God is sovereign. We must always acknowledge Him in every area of our lives. Though we seek His wisdom, He is the One who enables us to apply it. He is the One who gives us life and directs our steps.

Verse 5 says we must trust in the Lord with “all” of our heart. In verse 6, the emphasis is on “all” once again: “In all thy ways acknowledge him.” God desires complete obedience and surrender. But acknowledging God and accepting His direction in one’s life requires humility. Humans tend to think more highly of themselves than they should. As we search for and gain the wisdom of God, we must not become “wise in our own eyes” (v. 7). When we choose to go our own way, we work against God, accomplishing His will in our lives. But when we trust Him completely, He directs our paths according to His perfect plan.

3. Wisdom: What Are Its Rewards? (vv. 13–18) The word “happy” is used at the beginning and end of this passage. These verses describe the true joy of someone who has learned the secret of godly wisdom: complete dependence upon God. To rest upon God’s Word in the time of crisis, to know the Savior intimately, and to possess inner peace throughout life’s trials is truly more valuable than silver or priceless gems.

The benefits gained from this kind of wisdom are worth more than what could be gained from silver or gold (v. 14). This verse is not to be looked at in a materialistic sense, but in a spiritual sense. God’s will is for every believer to grow in the knowledge of Him (2 Peter 3:18). We are to be consciously striving for the kind of wisdom that effects change and growth within ourselves and others. This wisdom brings joy that transcends the happiness attained by wealth or any other earthly pleasure. In fact, verse 15 says nothing we could desire compares with wisdom. That’s quite a statement! But even Job, one of the venerable “wise men” of the Bible, affirms wisdom is far more precious than gold or silver, coral or pearls, rubies or sapphires or onyx (Job 28:1–28). Nothing else in this world can compare to personally knowing the sovereign God. The person who pursues this relationship gains peace (v. 17) and happiness (v. 18).

Wisdom is personified in verses 15–18, depicted as a woman holding the treasures of wisdom in her hands. In her right hand she holds life, and in her left hand are riches and honor (v. 16). Verse 17 says, “Her ways are ways of pleasantness.” The word “ways” in Hebrew is *de-rek* (*deh’-rek*), meaning “course of life” or “mode of action.” In other words, the person who gains wisdom will enjoy the peace and “pleasantness” of knowing God as a way of life. This daily and lifelong pleasure far outweighs the pleasures or treasures of this world.

Godly wisdom is a “tree of life” to the believer (v. 18). If we feed from this tree, we will gain abundant life. We will find wisdom’s treasure—a deep and abiding relationship with the Wisdom Giver, God Himself.

Liberating Lesson

In today's world, we have many avenues for gaining knowledge. Formal education, online courses, books, speakers, and the news media all contribute to an overload of information. How does wisdom differ from knowledge? As believers, how can we exercise godly wisdom in everyday situations? How can we encourage others to seek the priceless treasure of wisdom?

Application for Activation

Plan some quiet time this week to begin your search for godly wisdom. Identify situations or areas in your life where you need wisdom. Ask God for specific wisdom for those scenarios.

Take Aways

Closing Prayer

Week of 10 Dec 2023
Daily Bible Readings



Monday - 2nd Samuel 13-15

Tuesday – 2nd Samuel 13-15

Wednesday 2nd Samuel 13-15

Thursday – 1st King 1-2

Friday – 1st King 3-5

Saturday - 1st King 6-7

Sunday – 1st King 8-9