

VALUE WISDOM

DEVOTIONAL READING: Proverbs 2:12-22
BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 39; Proverbs 2

PROVERBS 2:1-11

1 My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;

2 So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;

3 Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;

4 If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;

5 Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.

7 He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.

8 He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.

9 Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

10 When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;

11 Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.



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Earthly Father's Plea

2:1a. If the *son* will *receive* his father's *words*, then a certain reward will follow. The second clause clarifies what it means to *receive* these words. If the son will not listen to his father, he cannot expect to receive these blessings.

1b. The hiding of Scripture is for the purpose of having those items available to use whenever needed to provide the wisdom that only God's Word can supply.

2a. To *incline* one's *ear* creates an image of actively listening to whoever is speaking. Other passages tell how God's people failed to hear His teaching and for that reason came under His judgment. Here the son is encouraged to listen closely so that he will miss nothing that *wisdom* has to say.

2b. Becoming wise involves more than just one's ears. Biblically, the *heart* describes our ability to reason, think, and consider spiritual matters. Each person must "keep [his or her] heart" (Proverbs 4:23).

3. The son is now challenged to engage his *voice* in the pursuit of *knowledge* and *understanding*. His crying out will represent an intensifying search; the son is to be consumed with a desire for wisdom.

Solomon uses metaphors to describe the necessary quest *for understanding*. We are to raise our voices and clamor for it. Wisdom longs to be heard. Now it is we who are to call out for her.

4. To illustrate how passionate the son's desire for wisdom must become: he must become as earnest in his quest for wisdom as many are for *silver* and *hid treasures*.

The drive for material wealth often drains the desire for wisdom. Jesus tells a parable (Luke 12:15) to illustrate how the obsession

with material wealth and success can blind us to the things of God. People "trust in uncertain riches" (1 Timothy 6:17) when their trust should be in God. He is the source of wealth that riches cannot provide: wisdom.

Job uses a similar comparison when he describes man's quest for wisdom (Job 28:1-11). "The fear of the Lord—that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding" (28:28).

We are to go on a treasure hunt for wisdom. Wisdom must be sought. The wisdom of God is sometimes counterintuitive because it goes against our impulses of self-preservation, self-importance, and greediness.

5a. This verse gives the conclusion. If the son will dedicate himself fully to the search for wisdom, he will come to *understand the fear of the Lord*.

5b. Having understood, the son will discover the key to *knowledge* (Proverbs 1:7). Wisdom and knowledge are found in a relationship with the Lord that acknowledges Him as their source. The Lord himself is the end of the quest. There are always new adventures and insights to receive as one learns to trust the Lord (Proverbs 3:5, 6).

Secular culture fails to consider God at all when searching for the source of wisdom. But God's wisdom has always been scorned by the unbelieving world. This truth adds to the wonder of the gospel message, particularly as seen in the cross of Jesus.

Heavenly Father's Word

6. God's *wisdom* results in fulfillment by leading people to develop the qualities emphasized as being necessary for a good life. Both *knowledge* and *understanding* have to do with learning God's character and recognizing what He desires.

The reference to the *mouth* of the Lord highlights His spoken and written Word as the source of wisdom. God's inspiring

KEY VERSE

For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. —Proverbs 2:6

our Scriptures gives them authority that mere humans writing on their own cannot achieve. Jesus countered one of the devil's temptations with the words, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Certainly, we need physical sustenance. But without knowledge from God, we are spiritually starving to death.

7a. The idea of laying up may bring to mind Jesus' words about storing up treasures in Heaven (Matthew 6:20). Whereas Jesus will call His disciples to store up for themselves, here the Lord himself is the one who lays up *sound wisdom* as a treasure *for the righteous* (compare Psalm 84:11).

One never outgrows the need for the Lord's wisdom. But a person must be willing to admit that need and express a humble dependence on what the Lord has provided in His Word.

7b. A *buckler* is a shield (example: Genesis 15:1). It is usually buckled around the arm of the soldier to provide a means of defense against a sword, a spear, or an arrow. The soldier is then able to use his free hand to carry his own weapon into battle.

The Hebrew word translated *uprightly* may in noun form be rendered "integrity" (example: 1 Kings 9:4). The individual has set foot on a path from which he or she does not intend to deviate.

8. To keep in this context means that the Lord watches over *the paths of judgment*. The word *judgment* refers to God's righteous standards. The Lord never abandons *the way of his saints*; He guides and keeps them in His care in every circumstance.

The word *saints* is often associated with holiness or being set apart in some

way (1 Samuel 2:9; Psalm 97:10). Here it signifies those who are distinguished by their commitment to live by the wisdom that comes only from the Lord.

9. As an individual follows the Lord's direction and receives His help in life, he or she gains experiential understanding of the qualities the Lord views as *good: righteousness, and judgment, and equity*. Understanding these three virtues allows the people to pursue right and just relationships.

10. *Heart* and *soul* are difficult to distinguish in terms of what they specifically designate: both refer to the inner person, to his or her motivations.

Wisdom and *knowledge* must be internalized to the point that they impact the spiritual makeup of an individual.

11. The promise of preserving and keeping the person who lives by godly wisdom uses the same verbs found in Proverbs 2:8. The father will find nothing more satisfying personally than to see his son walk in a way that marks him as one of those who is faithful to God.

Proverbs 2:12-22 continues the description of the benefits of wisdom, especially in keeping the son from certain evildoers and one type of individual in particular. One is the "evil man" whose "paths" and "ways" travel in the opposite direction from the way of wisdom (2:12-15). The other is the "strange woman" whose words are seductive and flattering but whose path leads to certain death (2:16-19).

The chapter concludes with another appeal to the son to "walk in the way of good men, and keep the paths of righteousness" (2:20) and with a contrast between the upright and wicked (2:21, 22).

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God's wisdom never depreciates in value.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

VALUE WISDOM

Into the Lesson

1—What type of treasure hunts have you enjoyed in the past?

2—Sometimes our searches are not games but rather are vital parts of life. What are some of those?

Treasure hunts and similar games are fun, but we all participate in much more serious searches. See what Solomon taught regarding the nature of the most important search.

Into the Word

Read Proverbs 2:1-11. Solomon uses four different words to describe a hidden treasure we must seek. The four words are similar, but they have slightly different meanings.

Define each word, then explain its importance in the context of the lesson text:

Wisdom

Knowledge

Understanding

Discretion

Into Life

1—How do devices like life preservers save lives?

2—How do we use phrases like “being a real lifesaver” in a figurative way?

3—When has godly wisdom been a lifesaver to you? In other words, what are some times when applying Bible truth helped you avoid disaster?

Keep a journal of occasions when godly wisdom has “preserved” you.