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“Wisdom: Don't Leave Home Without It” Proverbs 2

Introduction

The book of Proverbs is a call to wisdom. After the opening preface of Proverbs 1:1-7, there is a ten-fold call to wisdom given to the reader in the first 9 chapters:

“Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching,” (1:8)

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you,” (2:1)

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments,” (3:1)

“Hear, O sons, a father’s instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight,” (4:1)

“Hear, my son, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.” (4:10)

“My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.” (Proverbs 4:20)

“My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding,” (5:1)

“My son, if you have put up security for your neighbor, have given your pledge for a stranger,” (6:1)

“My son, keep your father’s commandment, and forsake not your mother’s teaching.” (6:20)

“My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you;” (7:1)

One of the primary truths that we learn from this ten-fold call to wisdom is that wisdom begins in the home. Proverbs is written by a father to his young son! He pleads with his son to get wisdom! Seek wisdom! Wisdom is the ability to skillfully live in God's world. Foolishness is seeking to live in God's world without God.

This call to wisdom is in the context of the home primarily. When I was a boy and young man, the American Express Company ran an ad campaign urging people to buy “American Express Travelers' Checks: Don't Leave Home without Them.” Well, here Solomon is urging his young son to pursue wisdom and to make sure he doesn't grow up without it.

In the first call for wisdom (1:8-33), we learn about three vital relationships that foster wisdom or foolishness. First, Proverbs teaches us the role of parents: A wise father and a godly mother will seek to instill wisdom in their children. They will be the primary teachers of wisdom to their children. While Proverbs is essentially a father calling his

young son to pursue a wise life, both mother and father are to impart wisdom to their children (1:8, 4:3-4; 2 Timothy 1:5).

In our modern culture, often times school teachers are seen to be the main source of wisdom for our children. Most children will spend far more time listening to their teachers than they will their parents and many educators teach with a worldview that is anti-God. In addition to teachers, fellow students and friends as well as the media are the biggest influence on shaping the worldview of children. But this is not God's plan. Teachers, friends, and the media are not to be the primary shapers of our children's worldview. The model of Proverbs as well as the rest of the Bible is that parents are to be the primary instructors of their children in preparing them for the responsibilities of adult life.

"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise." (Deuteronomy 6:6-7)

"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)

Parents are fully responsible for the training of their children and for the influences under which they allow their children to come.

We see a beautiful picture of a father instructing his son in the book of Proverbs. And in this instruction we see that children are to learn the skill of careful, attentive listening. "Hear, forsake not, receive, do not forget, be attentive, accept, treasure up!" Children, learn the value of being excellent listeners. Listen to the wise counsel and teaching of your parents and it will prepare you well for the future.

Parents teach! Children listen! That is the cry of Proverbs 1-9! In the first call to wisdom in 1:8-33, we learn about one of the dangers that young people face growing up: the appeal of ungodly companions who promise excitement, financial gain, and a sense of community. Proverbs has much to teach about the role of friendship. We will pick up the theme of friendship in another message but oh how important it is that parents are involved in the friendships that their children develop. How critical it is that parents are engaging their children in every day life! How vital it is that we don't financially enable our children to engage in sinful behavior and develop friendships with the wrong crowd.

Beginning in 1:20, then we read the call to wisdom and we are introduced to the role of "Lady Wisdom":

"Wisdom cries aloud in the street, in the markets she raises her voice; at the head of the noisy streets she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks: "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge? If you turn at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my spirit to you; I will make my words known to you. Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock

when terror strikes you, when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently but will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way, and have their fill of their own devices. For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”” (Proverbs 1:20–33)

This is the call of Lady Wisdom. Later we will meet Madame Foolishness as well who also calls aloud in the streets of life. After this call for wisdom in general, the author of Proverbs addresses the pursuit of wisdom (2:1-4) and the benefits of wisdom 2:5-22).

This is one long sentence in the original Hebrew. It as if this father takes a deep breath and seeks to persuasively convince his children of how important it is to pursue wisdom and then lays out the ensuing benefits of a life given to pursuing wisdom. The sentence begins with several “if’s” followed by two “then’s” and then proceeds to develop the benefits of wisdom even further. Here is the sage’s plea to seek wisdom!

“My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up sound wisdom for the upright; he is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech, who forsake the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness, who rejoice in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious in their ways. So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life. So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous. For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.”
(Proverbs 2)

Regarding the pursuit of wisdom, this call tells us what we must know to have true wisdom, how we must get it and what we will receive when we get it.

Wisdom: what you must know

- You must know you you are (1a)

To develop true biblical wisdom, you must know certain things, the first being you must know who you are. This isn’t the proverbial worldly wisdom which says, “Young man, know yourself.” Rather it is a call for true biblical humility that acknowledges that wisdom lies outside yourself. “My son, if you receive my words. . .my commandments.”

Wisdom is, and starts with, the humility to accept the fact that you don't have all the right answers, and the courage to learn to ask the right questions. James calls this “the meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). Wisdom begins by saying, “I am the person who needs God's counsel!”

- You must know what to value (1b)

Secondly, you must know what to value: “if you treasure up my commandments with you.” You must value godly wisdom! You must value parental instruction and teaching or you will never seek wisdom and you will live a life in God's world apart from God. What do you treasure? What do your children see you treasuring? Do you treasure, young person, the Word of God, the wisdom of godly instruction, the gold mine of biblical truth? We hear so much today about “values”—the word has almost become meaningless, but what do you treasure—knowing what to treasure is part of wisdom. Our culture values appearance, status, acceptance, wealth, knowledge, prestige, moral freedom, and power. No other worldview puts a premium on godly wisdom other than true biblical Christianity.

- Who to listen to (2)

Thirdly, wisdom means you must know who to listen to: “making your ear attentive to wisdom.” Who did you listen to primarily this week? Were they sources of biblical wisdom? To whom or what are you bending your heart? Godless philosophers or self-help experts, friends who tell you to ditch God, family members who think you are ridiculous for raising your family God's way, co-workers who ridicule your moral convictions, or the latest advice columnist or psychologist who are practicing atheists or agnostics. Who has your ear? Who has your heart? Listening is both an external as well as an internal activity. That's a critical question in pursuing wisdom.

Are you a good listener when it comes to God and His Word? What you listen is so critical! What counsel you seek after will largely determine the course of your life. The ear of your heart is the pathway to the ideas that shape your worldview. You have to guard it so carefully. The ideas that you hear have consequences—the ones you hear in music, the ones you hear in class, the ones pitched so cleverly in movies, the ones you read about in media. Moses and Jesus remind us:

“And he said to them, “Pay attention to what you hear: with the measure you use, it will be measured to you, and still more will be added to you.” (Mark 4:24)

“Hear therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey.” (Deuteronomy 6:3)

- What to ask for (3)

Pursuing wisdom also begins by knowing what to ask for: “yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding.”

What are you asking God most for in your life right now? Success, a conflict-free life, money, physical healing? Are you asking for wisdom? Are you crying out to God for

insight? “Cry” and “raise your voice” both imply that we understand that we lack the resources to deal with the challenges of life. Both imply that wisdom doesn't always come quickly and easily. But we must ask for the right thing: wisdom.

- What to give your energies to (v. 4)

Fifthly, if you want wisdom, you must know what to give your energies to. Seeking for something like silver and searching for it as for hidden treasure implies much energy, much focus, great intensity. We give so much of our energies (time and mental) to getting ahead in life, making our lives easier, meeting our needs, and avoiding problems. But if we want to be wise, we must know what to give our energies to. comes down to priorities—to what will we give our best strength, efforts, and abilities?

Seeking wisdom begins by determining what we must know. But next wisdom involves knowing what you must do. It is crucial to know what you have to know, but next you have to act, you have to make a commitment to it. It is like learning how to ride a bike or learn some new sport. The first thing you have to find out is what you need to know in order to master some new ability. But then there comes a point where you have to make a commitment—to learn to do it. And so you commit to getting on that bike, no matter how many times you are going to fall, no matter how many times you feel like giving up, you are going to pursue this goal. And that is exactly what Solomon calls us to do in regard to wisdom: make a commitment to do something.

Wisdom: what you must do

- Be attentive to it (v. 1)

Let's go over verses 1-4 one more time and gather more truth. To seek wisdom, you must first be receptive to it. You must throw out the welcome mat and receive wholesome words and biblical truth. You must passionately embrace truth, like the man of Psalm 1 who delights in the law of the Lord, like Joshua who won't let the book of the law depart out of his mouth or mind, like Job who treasured God's Word more than his necessary food, like the Thessalonians who diligently received the Word as it was indeed the Word of God, and like the Bereans who diligently searched the Word after hearing it preached. Your spirit must be attentive to godly wisdom!

- Earnestly pursue it (v. 2)

Then you must earnestly pursue it. How? Well, you treasure it up which implies advance preparation. That is, you consistently pursue wisdom, you consistently study God's Word so that it is readily accessible when you need it later on. You don't wait for the crisis to hit! No, you prepare in advance and store it up like Joseph stored up the grain for the times of famine. “Treasuring it up” implies memorizing with deep affection the “sound bites” of wisdom that you hear from Scripture and from godly people so that when the occasion arises, you are more than ready to meet a need.

Secondly, you earnestly pursue it by “making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart toward understanding.” That is you bend your ear and your heart to truth. Both speak of obedient attentiveness to wisdom.

Bending takes a lot of work. Recently, I asked somebody to bend a hinge back into place that had become bent on a kitchen cabinet door. My friend took it home and put it in a vise and worked on it for awhile and repaired it for me. It took a lot of pressure and some time. That is what it means to “incline your heart toward understanding”. Our hearts, because of sin, are bent in a certain direction. But God wants us to bend our hearts toward wisdom! And that is a long process of un-selfing, of de-lousing ourselves of our foolish inclinations. Of course, when Proverbs speaks of the heart, it refers to our very being—our intellect, reason, emotions, and will. So to seek wisdom we must stretch our entire being toward God and His Word and bend it away from the godless worldviews of our day.

It is what Joshua called Israel to do: “*He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.”*” (Joshua 24:23)

So where is the bent of your heart? Who or what are you listening to? Lady Wisdom or Madame Folly?

And then verse 4 describes an earnest pursuit. “Seek it like silver! Search for it as for hidden treasures.” Have you ever searched for something relentlessly? If something is really valuable, we will search for it with great effort, won't we? Some people spend much of their lives trying to find someone like their birth parents or a former friend. Recently I lost something that was worth about \$200. I knew for certain that I had it just 12 hours before I noticed it was gone and I looked everywhere for it. A few weeks afterward, I spent a lot of time searching for some medicine (small pills) that I had for our dog. We thank God for doctors and scientists who devote their lives to searching for cures for diseases.

In 1849 thousands of men were willing to leave their comfortable homes to travel to far-away California, where they lived in tents and spent day after day in back-breaking labour, all because they hoped to find a few nuggets of gold. Would that we approached our personal Bible reading, the sermons we hear at church, and Bible classes with the same fervor. Merely going through the motions of religion will not make you wise. You must fully exert yourself and dig deeply.

Just as the gold miner had to use a pick to dig deep for the gold found in California, so you must be prepared to dig deeply into God's Word. Slow down and meditate upon what you read. Use the tools God has given you (i.e. a concordance and Bible commentaries like this one) to dig deeper into the Scriptures. Memorize it and fill the vault of your mind with wisdom!

- Pray for it (v. 3)

Another action step in seeking wisdom is to pray for it. “Call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding.” Plead with God, “Open my eyes that I behold the wondrous things out of your law.” (Psalm 119:18). Like a newborn baby insistently cries with a need that only a mother can satisfy, so we ought to come to God's Word for

wisdom and seek it from godly people. We must appeal to God to supply the blessing of wisdom in the place of bankruptcy of our foolish hearts!

God is the source of all wisdom. *“God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”* (Job 28:23–28)

So James tells us, *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.”* (James 1:5–6)

- Keep at it (vv. 1-4)

Here's something else we must do! Keep at it! Keep at it! Keep listening, keep praying, keep pursuing it. Don't give up finding out how God wants you to skillfully live your life in His world by applying His truth to your life. You are never too old to gain more wisdom! Keep at it. Maybe you aren't growing in wisdom because you haven't been really putting the effort in that is necessary to gain it. Maybe you just expect the gold to be lying right on the ground in front of you instead of being willing to dig for it. Or maybe you have been valuing other things, thinking you had what you were seeking, but now you find it to be fool's gold. Well, repent and keep seeking true wisdom.

- Seek wisdom in Christ

- Jesus lived wisdom (Luke 2:41-50)

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. . . And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:46–47, 52 ESV)

- Jesus is wisdom (1 Cor 1:30; Colossians 2:3)

“And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God. . .” (1 Corinthians 1:30)

“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Colossians 2:3)

- Jesus is the way to wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-8)

“Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Corinthians 2:6–8)

"As Christians read the book of Proverbs in the light of the continued revelation of the New Testament, they are confronted with the same question as the ancient Israelites, but with a different nuance. Will we dine with Wisdom or with Folly? The Wisdom who beckons us is none other than Jesus Christ, while the folly that attempts to seduce is any created thing that we put in place of the Creator" (Romans 1:22-23).

- Jesus supplied wisdom (Ephesians 1:17; James 1:5; Matthew 12:42)

Through the Father, Jesus gives us a spirit of wisdom and revelation. He is the one who is greater than Solomon.

Children, young people, young adults, seek wisdom. Pursue it! Us older folks, let's keep at it also. Let's incline our heart more and more toward Christ and His Word. "The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psalm 19:7). *"Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers, for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the aged, for I keep your precepts."* (Psalm 119:98–100)

Wisdom: what you will receive with it (vv. 5-22)

We have learned from the first four verses of this call to wisdom what we must know and what we must do to be wise. The rest of the chapter tells us what we will receive if we gain wisdom. I will only briefly mention these because we already have dealt with these themes or we will do so in subsequent messages.

- You will know God personally (vv. 5-8)

If you seek wisdom, *"then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. [you will embrace true reality and have a personal and experiential knowledge of God—the nature of true wisdom] For the LORD gives wisdom ; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding; he stores up [stores it up for the hour we need it; see v. 1 treasure up—same word] sound wisdom [resourcefulness] for the upright; [vv. 1-5 teach us that wisdom is product of intense personal discipline; here it is a grace of God—reality is it is both. Just as God gave Goliath into David's hand but David had to go into the battle, just as God was going to give the Promised Land to Israel but Israel had to take it in battle, so God promises to give wisdom to those who seek it diligently. Seek wisdom and you find God; seek God and you will find wisdom] he is a shield [lighter, more mobile, moveable shield-- Genesis 15:1; Psalm 84:9-11] to those who walk in integrity [wholly submissive to God], guarding the paths of justice and watching over the way of his saints [hesed—his godly ones, loyal ones, covenant people]."* (Proverbs 2:5–8)

- You will experience transformation (vv. 9-11)

"Then you will understand righteousness [a word speaking of the character of God] and justice [God's perfect rule and his correct judgment] and equity [God's impartial and fair care over what he has made], every good path [track of a wagon wheel—vv. 15, 18, 20; Psalm 23:3: the paths of righteousness]; for wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul [it will penetrate to the very depths of the soul. Your ways, thoughts, reasonings, and choices of wisdom and knowledge will captivate

the mind, control the emotions, and conduct the will] ; discretion will watch over you, understanding will guard you, ” (Proverbs 2:9–11).

There will be a transformation in your life if you gain wisdom. Christ and the Word will become attractive to you and attracting to others. Wisdom and knowledge will be as the smell of freshly baked bread, like skilled music to the ears, like a great inheritance to a family with no home, like kind words to a wounded heart.

You will be changed in your desires and longings. It would be like me starting to love asparagus. I don't particularly dislike asparagus. Chris enjoys asparagus. And I have to admit that when she makes it and sautés it right then I like it. But I don't desire it. Give me the choice between having a nice, juicy angus hamburger or asparagus and I will take asparagus. Now if I started loving asparagus that would be a transformation. And when you gain wisdom, you gain God and He changes you! Transforms you!

- You will be delivered from evil
 - Evil men (vv. 12-15)

If you seek wisdom, it will rescue you, literally extricate you, from much evil—from the “way of evil”—which is described also as perversion, darkness, perverseness, crooked and devious.

Verses 12-19 address the two major temptations young men face: 1) violence and crime which offer a feeling of power and easy money and 2) seemingly uncomplicated sexual pleasure offered by women. Again, we will cover these much more in-depth in future messages on friendships and purity.

Evil men are described as “*... men of perverted speech [which reveal perverted hearts], who forsake the paths of uprightness [the straight paths] to walk in the ways of darkness [morally speaking, who rejoice [they have perverse joy and delight] in doing evil and delight in the perverseness of evil, men whose paths are crooked, and who are devious [twisted/distorted from their original design] in their ways.*” (Proverbs 2:12–15)

- Evil women (vv. 16-19)

“So you will be delivered [same word as verse 12 meaning “rescued] from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words [her method always involves flattering speech and physical attraction], who forsakes the companion of her youth [a quitter] and forgets the covenant of her God [unfaithful]; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.” (Proverbs 2:16–19)

This is a topic that dominates other calls to wisdom such as in chapters 5-7. This woman is strange [unfaithful], smooth, and swerves from her partner, from her covenant pledge, and from the right path.

But in this passage we learn that wisdom delivers one from such a woman for wisdom teaches us her methods, recognizes her true character and realizes where she will lead you. When you see her as she really is, she will not be a threat to you.

Much more could be said and will be said in a later message.

- You will walk in good tracks (v. 20)

“So you will walk in the way of the good and keep to the paths of the righteous.” (Proverbs 2:20). The forbidden woman will take us on paths that lead to death, but here we can walk the path of the righteous. Once again “paths” refer to the well-worn tracks of a cart drawn by oxen or in our day it is like walking on a trail with a well-worn path even if it is narrow path or walking in the vineyard or through a field of corn where the paths are clear.

The implied teaching is that there are only two paths—no middle, gray ground. You will walk in the paths of the righteousness (v. 20) or in the “crooked paths” (v. 15).

- You will enjoy God's favor (vv. 21-22)

Finally, you will enjoy God's favor. *“For the upright will inhabit the land, and those with integrity will remain in it, but the wicked will be cut off from the land, and the treacherous will be rooted out of it.”* (Proverbs 2:21–22).

In the Older Testament, one of the blessings of God was to dwell in the land of Israel; to be expelled from the land was to be excommunicated from the blessing of God. So, wisdom brings God's favor!

Are you living wisely in a foolish world? What are you doing to gain wisdom in your life? Where do you need to change your thinking and what you value? Who are you listening to? Are you devoting yourself to pursuing wisdom? Do you see the benefits of such a life. Oh, that we would be seekers of wisdom, seekers of Christ, in a broken and foolish world.