

June 14, 2020

Lesson 2

THE VALUE OF WISDOM

ADULT/YOUTH

ADULT/YOUNG ADULT TOPIC: Seeking Meaning

YOUTH TOPIC: Seeking Wisdom as a
Special Treasure

CHILDREN

GENERAL LESSON TITLE: Godly Wisdom Pays Off

CHILDREN'S TOPIC: A Special Treasure

DEVOTIONAL READING
Proverbs 2:12-22

ADULT/YOUTH

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 39; Proverbs 2

PRINT PASSAGE: Proverbs 2:1-11

KEY VERSE: Proverbs 2:6

CHILDREN

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Genesis 39; Proverbs 2

PRINT PASSAGE: Proverbs 2:1-11

KEY VERSE: Proverbs 2:6

Proverbs 2:1-11—KJV

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.

Proverbs 2:1-11—NIV

MY SON, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,

2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—

3 indeed, if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

5 then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.

6 For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

7 He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—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.

10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

UNIFYING LESSON PRINCIPLE: People search for life’s meaning through wealth, wisdom, or other worldly things. What is the best method to use to search for meaning in life? Wisdom’s treasure is more valuable than riches because it can center a person’s heart, will, and thoughts toward a knowledge of God.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Upon the completion of this lesson, the students will be able to do the following:

1. Understand that the search for the wisdom that comes from God is more important than striving for wealth or any other temporal gain.
2. Yearn for the wisdom that comes from God more than they desire wealth or fame.
3. Make a consistent effort to center their hearts, wills, and thoughts in the wisdom that comes from God.

AGE-LEVEL POINTS TO BE EMPHASIZED

Teachers of ADULTS and YOUTH

- Like other Old Testament Wisdom books, Proverbs defines *wisdom*, explains how to find it, and describes the benefits of living by it. Unlike the books of Ecclesiastes and Job, Proverbs keeps the reality of unjust suffering in the background and presents a more optimistic view.
- Proverbs affirms that “the fear of the LORD” will lead to relative security, a good reputation, and meaning in life.
- In Hebrew, Proverbs 2:1-22 is one elaborate sentence of twenty-two lines, corresponding to the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet.
- Although the parent speaks (see Proverbs 2:1), he points beyond himself and advises the son to listen to “wisdom” and “understanding,” which come from the Lord.
- Proverbs 1 and 2 affirm the reciprocal relationship between humans and wisdom. Whereas Wisdom “cries out” and “raises her voice” (1:20-21), the

parent urges the son to do the same in his search for insight and understanding (2:3).

- The long “if” condition beginning in 2:1 offers the son two “then” outcomes resulting from wisdom: relationship with God (verses 5-8) and positive relationship to humans (verses 9-11).

Teachers of CHILDREN

- Wisdom is viewed as a gift from God given to God’s people.
- People need to seek wisdom throughout their lives.
- Wisdom can be elusive if persons fail to learn from the knowledge and guidance that God offers.
- Allowing the senses to embrace wisdom fully creates the environment for which wisdom will thrive and grow from within.
- Desiring to follow God’s plan and actions instead of our own is critical in practicing wisdom.
- God provides a way for the just and the faithful to remain focused on God’s purpose rather than on pride and greed.

THE CHRONOLOGICAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

It is generally accepted that King Solomon wrote the book of Proverbs. This is the traditional view. King Solomon was a wise king who was known to have more than three thousand proverbs and sayings, according to 1 Kings 4:32. Proverbs 2 is one of such attributed to the wise king.

No one is certain about the date of the writing, but it is widely believed that the book of proverbs was written and compiled sometime between the tenth and sixth century BC. Scholars also agree generally that Moses was the author of the book of Genesis. The accounts in Genesis 39 take place in Mesopotamia around the period when the Israelites lived in small communities and were relatively new in the region. This precedes Moses entirely. If there was anyone qualified to write the history of the Israelites it was Moses, who was instructed in Egyptian education and was also called by God to lead His people. Moses would have put his learning, historical knowledge, and his ability to commune with God to work, just as he did.

THE GEOGRAPHICAL AND CULTURAL SETTING OF THE LESSON

King Solomon was said to have been the wisest man to have ever lived. He is said to have spoken three thousand proverbs. The cultural setting of the book of Proverbs is a very rich one. Some of the proverbs in the book emanated from various cultures, which include ancient Greek and early Egyptian. Some were said to have been copied from Greek and Persian periods during the post-exilic era. This may be true, as it is often the trend that people sometimes attribute more to great men than they actually achieved. Some of them were

recorded in the book of Proverbs. The book of Proverbs has God at its center, and it tells people to live their lives in a way as not to offend God. It advises people to trust in God and live their lives right so as to please God.

Proverbs 2 in particular speaks on human infidelity and admonishes that we follow wisdom and understanding. It speaks about the protection and other benefits that wisdom brings us as we see in Proverbs 2:9.

PROMINENT CHARACTER(S) IN THE LESSON

Joseph: one of Jacob's sons. He was sold into slavery by his brothers and got into Egypt; and thrown into prison after he stuck to his belief in God and came out to be prime minister in all of Egypt.

LORD: The term *LORD* in the Bible is used to refer to Yahweh; the book of Proverbs teaches and guides people to live right according to Yahweh.

Potiphar: the master of the house Joseph was a servant in. It was his wife who lied against Joseph after Joseph refused to sleep with her.

Potiphar's wife: a powerful seductress who was married to Potiphar.

Solomon: the generally accepted author of the book of Proverbs. Proverbs 1 is attributed to him. He was king in Israel, and he is said to be the richest and wisest king ever.

KEY TERMS IN THE LESSON

Ear (verse 2)—Hebrew: *ozen* (o'-zen): a part of the body; of human beings, a channel through which to hear words; hearing.

Fear (verse 5)—Hebrew: *yirah* (yir-aw'): reverence; dread; a fear.

Heart (verse 2)—Hebrew: *leb* (labe): inner man; mind; will; heart.

Knowledge (verse 6)—Hebrew: *daath* (dah'-ath): premeditation; skill; truth; knowledge.

Search (verse 4)—**Hebrew: *chaqar* (kha-w-ka’r)**: to search; ascertain; examine; find; investigate; “searchest” (KJV).

Words (verse 1)—**Hebrew: *emer* (ay’-mer)**: speech; utterances; sayings.

TOPICAL OUTLINE OF THE LESSON

I. Introduction

- A. The Benefits of Wisdom
- B. Biblical Background

II. Exposition and Application of the Scripture

- A. Three Conditions
(Proverbs 2:1-4)
- B. Seven Promises
(Proverbs 2:5-9)
- C. Byproducts of Obedience
(Proverbs 2:10-11)

III. Concluding Reflection

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The Benefits of Wisdom

Proverbs 2 focuses on the benefits of following wisdom. The author seeks to admonish people to follow God’s laws. The whole theme of Proverbs centers around godly wisdom. Here, we are exposed to the benefits that come from following godly wisdom and doing God’s will, such as is found in Proverbs 2:7-8—“He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless, for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones” (NIV).

In Genesis 39, Joseph had to choose between gratifying his flesh and following God’s wisdom. He chose to follow God’s wisdom despite the power he knew Potiphar’s wife could wield against him. But the benefits of following God’s wisdom always come; so, his experience in prison was the beginning of a glorious chapter in the life of Joseph, who later on became the second most powerful man in all of Egypt.

B. Biblical Background

Proverbs 2 has its background in the cultural Jewish belief system that saw knowledge as knowledge that comes from God. The Israelites had a tradition of seeking God’s face in everything and anything. There was the Urim and Thummim, which were often used, and people could also consult prophets. We can see this in Genesis 28:1-12, in which King Saul went to a medium to help him consult the prophet Samuel just so he could know God’s mind. The idea of wisdom’s being the best guidance as seen in Proverbs 2 is not far-fetched.

In Genesis 39, Joseph chose to follow this wisdom, knowing that sleeping with Potiphar’s wife was against the will of God. It did have consequences, but God is always the eternal shield and protection. Joseph was elevated later on.

II. EXPOSITION AND APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURE

A. Three Conditions

(Proverbs 2:1-4)

MY SON, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures.

The first verse of chapter 2 begins in the same manner that Proverbs 1:10 begins—with the warm and familiar salutation of a father to a son, or of a mentor to a mentee. These words may be from Solomon directed toward his son Rehoboam, or they could be taken as generic instructions for anyone who desires wisdom. Unfortunately, not everyone is willing to accept wisdom—often because they feel they already have enough knowledge. The acceptance of knowledge is a matter of the will. Retaining knowledge is accomplished through concentration, memorization, practice, and perseverance. In order to retain or “store up” wisdom we must become doers of the Word and not hearers only who deceive themselves (see James 1:22).

Exactly what does it mean to turn one’s ear to wisdom and to apply one’s heart to understanding? It means taking the time to listen to the truth that comes from a tried and trusted source. The first step is to listen. When we speak, we can only share what we supposedly already know. But when we listen, there is at least a possibility that we may learn something new. Wisdom is often personified in the Proverbs and is presented in the feminine gender as a relationship to be desired: “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not,

and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee” (Proverbs 4:5-6).

It has been said that “everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.” A thorough understanding of ourselves can lead to a better understanding of others. Some common reasons for miscommunication and misunderstandings include the presence of the following: assumptions, speaking without completely listening or thinking, anger, hurt, fear, frustration, or outside distractions. True insight will not happen automatically. It must be called out and sought out and applied to the everyday situations of life.

The act of mining for silver was then, and still is now, a process that requires a great deal of patience and perseverance in order to be successful. Anything that is of significant value requires a commitment of time and energy in order to obtain. This includes educational astuteness, athletic skill, financial wealth, and mature spiritual insight. Surface knowledge is common and readily available, but godly wisdom is below the surface and must be pursued with great purpose and intentionality in order to be realized.

B. Seven Promises

(Proverbs 2:5-9)

Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding. He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly. He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints. Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.

The Bible uses the word *fear* at least three hundred times in reference to God. A healthy fear of God is a positive kind of reverence because it enables us to resist the temptation of so easily giving in to our own sinful nature. Martin Luther distinguished between what he called a servile fear and a filial fear. *Servile fear* is the kind of fear displayed by a prisoner for his tormentor in a torture chamber. *Filial fear* comes from the Latin concept in which we get the idea of family. It refers to the healthy fear and respect that a child would have for his or her father.

The value of knowledge and wisdom depends on the source and origin of the knowledge and wisdom. Proverbs 16:25 (NIV) declares that “there is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.” Human, self-made knowledge is undependable and may only be applicable in certain situations. God’s Word is “God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (NIV); God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Success is not always immediately distributed to those who are worthy. Working toward success is the price that is paid for the eventual reward of success. Preparation prepares the successful person to not only have success but to maintain and sustain the success. Obedience to God and dependence on God allow us to walk in and live in the particular level of wisdom that we have obtained. Living a blameless life keeps us from having to be concerned about telling the truth because we are living the truth.

God is responsible for protecting those who walk in the ways of righteousness. God provides protection to the upright and offers

an alternative to temptations and snares which would seduce them from or deter them from the paths of judgment. The focus is often on goodness and mercy’s following us, but the word picture used here is of a lead soldier who gets out in front of a caravan or entourage in order to be the first to warn of, encounter, and engage a potential enemy.

The saints, or the faithful ones, mentioned in this verse are God’s faithful worshippers (*chasîdîm*), a term used in the Pentateuch (see Deuteronomy 33:8) for their zeal in God’s service (see Exodus 32). The word *saint* implies dedication to God, just as Israel was a “holy nation” (Exodus 19:6). A saint is not one who is perfect, but one who is faithful, devout, and God-fearing.

Three similar terms are used here to emphasize the point of one of the rewards for the faithful. The three related terms that serve as a reward for the just is the understanding of what is *right*, *just*, and *fair*. The opposites of these terms are that which is *wrong*, *unjust*, and *unfair*. A righteous perspective is needed in order to correctly understand the difference between these. To be just is to think, speak, and act in conformity with what is morally upright or good.

C. Byproducts of Obedience (Proverbs 2:10-11)

When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.

Yet another picture is offered here of the reward for living a life that is pleasing to the Lord. Psalm 119:11 (NIV) records what happens when wisdom enters the heart: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not

sin against you.” This is one of the best passages of Scripture to highlight the importance of memorizing the Word of God. When the Word enters our hearts, it does a powerful work internally and it does not return void, but accomplishes the purpose for which it was created. Memorizing the Word of God helps us to be ready for the Holy Spirit to recall that word at the appropriate time. Joshua 1:8 further enlightens us regarding the powerful advantages available when we internalize the Word of God: “This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success” (NASB).

Discretion is defined as the quality of having or showing discernment or good judgment. This involves but is not limited to caution and reserve in speech and the ability to make responsible decisions. Our using discretion can help to preserve us and to keep us away from life’s various traps and distractions. Understanding and

applying this characteristic can be extremely helpful in business settings, in social settings, and in family life.

III. CONCLUDING REFLECTION

There are some types of clothing that can only be worn during certain seasons of the year. However, there are other types of clothing that are considered “all-season” and can be worn year-round. Wisdom is one of those all-season types of garments that can and should be worn all throughout the year. The type of wisdom that we need for living comes only from God. An ounce of wisdom is worth more than a pound of wealth or fame. One need not grow old in order to appreciate and utilize the power of wisdom in life.

PRAYER

Lord, thank You for the gift of wisdom. May this powerful trait permeate our thoughts, our speech, and our actions for as long as we shall live. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

(June 8-14, 2020)

The Value of Wisdom

MONDAY, June 8: “Work for the Good of All” (Galatians 6:1-10)

TUESDAY, June 9: “Live Together in Harmony” (Romans 15:1-6)

WEDNESDAY, June 10: “Wisdom Is Walking Together in Love” (2 John 4-11)

THURSDAY, June 11: “Joseph Resists Temptation” (Genesis 39:6b-18)

FRIDAY, June 12: “Wisdom Saves from Temptation” (Proverbs 2:12-19)

SATURDAY, June 13: “Walk on Just and Good Paths” (Proverbs 2:20-22; 4:24-27)

SUNDAY, June 14: “Following Godly Wisdom Pays Off” (Proverbs 2:1-11)