

The Value of Wisdom

Proverbs 2

Proverbs 2:1-6 - *“My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding. Yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her 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.”*

Background Notes

In Proverbs 1, after the introduction, we saw the important Precepts of Wisdom. Do you remember the three Precepts in our last talk?

1. Revere God. Proverbs 1:7 - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise instruction and wisdom.”*
2. Respect authority. Proverbs 1:8-9 - *“My son, hear the instruction of your father and do not forsake the law of your mother, for they will be a graceful ornament on your head and chains about your neck.”*
3. Resist temptation. Proverbs 1:10 - *“My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent.”*

In Proverbs 2 we look further at the important topic of wisdom: finding the way of wisdom and following the way of wisdom. The “Precepts of Wisdom” are expanded in Proverbs 1-9, and the “Proverbs of Solomon” in chapter 10. Following the precepts of wisdom means walking in the way of Wisdom. Walking in the way of wisdom pleases God, and it has great benefits. But following the way of wisdom is not automatic, and it is not easy.

Doctrinal Points

1. Following the way of wisdom requires great effort.

Several requirements are demanded from anyone who desires to walk in the way of wisdom (v1-6).

- **Have a strong desire for God’s wisdom.**

How many of us seek wisdom, as they would search for treasure? That can't be said of many people, including many Christians. Many of us seek entertainment, long life, success, money and power. But what about wisdom from above? Do you desire that? How do we get wisdom from above?

- Be open to asking for and receiving wisdom.

The requirements of being open to asking for, receiving and obeying God's wisdom are seen in verses 2-3: *"So that you*

- incline your ear to wisdom, and

- apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you

- cry out for discernment, and

- lift up your voice for understanding..."

- Prioritize prayer and study of God's Word.

Serious Bible study and prayer require effort - more time and effort than just a quick prayer and short devotional reading each day. How many would agree that digging into a study of God's Word and having a solid prayer life is not automatic? And it's not easy?

Think of the effort that people put into looking for hidden treasure. According to verse 4, that's the kind of effort that's needed to follow the way of wisdom. Only then will we begin to understand more of the mind of the Lord (v5). And only then will we have true wisdom and knowledge and understanding (v6). Colossians 2:3 says, *"In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."* Do you want to follow the way of wisdom? Are you willing to put in the effort required? Following the way of wisdom requires great effort.

2. Following the way of wisdom realizes great benefits.

Proverbs 2:7-22 - *"He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk uprightly. He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints. Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you.*

Understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; from those who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and who are devious in their paths; to deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house leads down to death, and her paths to the dead. None who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life - so you may walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness.

For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it; but the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it."

At the beginning of verse 7, we see one of the greatest benefits of walking in the way of Wisdom: **more wisdom!** *"He stores up sound wisdom for the upright. He is a shield to those who walk uprightly"* (v7). Go to godly people, and you will receive wise counsel.

Verses 7-8 give us the benefits of God's protection: *"He is a shield to those who walk uprightly. He guards the paths of justice, and preserves the way of His saints."* As we walk in the way of wisdom, God protects us from the evil in this world and from the fiery darts of Satan (Ephesians 6).

Putting on the full armor of God is essential to walking in the way of wisdom. Ephesians 6:10-18 - *"Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age,¹ against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.*

Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Putting on the full armor of God is walking in the way of wisdom and following the precepts of wisdom. And the best way to protect your children from the evil that is in this world is to teach them the precepts of wisdom from God's Word.

Another benefit of wisdom is discernment - the ability to discern between right and wrong, and the discretion to avoid people and situations that lead us astray: *"Then you will understand righteousness and justice, equity and every good path. When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you. Understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil, from the man who speaks perverse things, from those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness; from those who rejoice in doing evil, and delight in the perversity of the wicked; whose ways are crooked, and those who are devious in their paths"* (v9-15)

Many people, including Christians, find themselves in sinful situations today that they would never have dreamed possible. Why? They didn't follow the precepts of wisdom, so they didn't have the discernment to make the right choices. They didn't follow the way of wisdom, so they didn't have the moral strength to avoid the wrong people and wrong situations.

The believer who follows the teachings of wisdom has moral integrity, and is able to resist the temptations of sexual immorality (v16-19). *"To deliver you from the immoral woman, from the seductress who flatters with her words, who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. For her house leads down to death, and her*

paths to the dead. None who go to her return, nor do they regain the paths of life..."

From the context, the tempter is an adulteress who has left her marriage vows, attempting to ensnare men who are vulnerable in this area (v17). She uses flattery to manipulate them with subtle words. The only way to escape her is to walk in the way of wisdom. If you start down the path to the immoral woman's house, you'll never return. For a few moments of physical pleasure, the road leads away from God - to death.

The contrasting destinies of the wicked compared to the righteous are seen in verses 20-22. The wicked will be cut off and uprooted from the Promised Land while the righteous will live and be blessed in the Land. *"...walk in the way of goodness, and keep to the paths of righteousness. For the upright will dwell in the land, and the blameless will remain in it. But the wicked will be cut off from the earth, and the unfaithful will be uprooted from it."*

"The righteous will live and be blessed in the land" applies to believers today. According to Ephesians 1, if you follow the way of wisdom, you will enjoy all the spiritual blessings that God offers the believer. Unbelievers will never be able to access those spiritual blessings. Following the way of wisdom realizes great benefits.

Practical Application

Let wisdom have her positive "snowballing effect"!

There was a hill behind my elementary school with a perfect slope. When we had snow in the right consistency, during recess we would start a bunch of snowballs rolling down the hill. It was absolutely amazing how big those snowballs would grow before they rolled to a stop - much bigger than we were! And that's a good illustration of how great the "snowballing effect" can be.

Although the term "snowballing" is often applied in the negative sense of things growing worse and worse, it can be used in a positive sense as well. One of the benefits of following the way of wisdom is that **wisdom snowballs!** You receive **more wisdom!** *"He stores up sound wisdom for the upright."* It grows bigger and better!

With more wisdom, you will be stronger and more able to follow the precepts and way of wisdom. The good cycle will continue to grow bigger and better in a positive "snowballing effect"! So - let wisdom have her "snowballing effect"!