

Acquiring Wisdom

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[0 : 00] If you were given a choice of being known as a wise person or a foolish person, which would you choose?

Now obviously, no one in here, surely no one in here would say, I want to be known as a fool. Have you ever thought, and I know many people in this room, you have read through the book of Proverbs probably many times.

Have you ever thought about how the book of Proverbs is written? Time after time, we are giving the readers a choice of which kind of person we will be.

Either a wise person or a foolish person. God's purpose in giving us the book of Proverbs is to make us wise.

That's what He wants to do as we do our study in this book. But if we reject the Lord's wisdom, that's the same thing as choosing to be known as a fool.

[1 : 15] Because as Proverbs goes, those are the only two choices. The person who listens to the Lord, who seeks to honor Him and obey Him, that's the wise man or woman or young person.

But the person who doesn't care about listening to the Lord. You don't have to hate God. Just be indifferent. Ignore Him. Ignore His Word.

Ignore Him. And that's the kind of person Proverbs calls a fool. This morning, I want you to turn with me to Proverbs chapter 2, which very plainly tells us how anyone can acquire godly wisdom and be known as a wise person.

It's going to be here. Very obvious as we read through it. But as you turn to chapter 2, I want to do a quick review of what we looked at in chapter 1, which really introduced us to the concept of biblical wisdom or godly wisdom.

Either way is accurate. It's been three weeks since we did that. But instead of me just sort of reviewing quickly some of the things that we looked at, my notes from last time, I want to use something that Dwayne Garrett, in his New American Commentary on Proverbs, pointed out about biblical wisdom.

[2 : 49] Three characteristics that will be on the screen. Number one, biblical wisdom is practical. He's talking about, as he introduced the topic of wisdom, in chapter 1, specifically verses 3 through 7, biblical wisdom is practical.

It includes the idea of common sense. Someone who is wise, as Proverbs teaches us to be wise, will be someone who demonstrates good common sense. The ability also to cope with daily problems.

And that's what Proverbs is filled with. Guidance on how to deal with the people you live with. Guidance on how to manage your money.

Proverbs gives us wisdom about our words. Things that we shouldn't say, as well as the kind of things we should say to avoid problems, to make life better in our home or just around people.

Biblical wisdom is very practical. Number two, biblical wisdom is intellectual. We've got to think. God gave us a mind that he intends us to use it in studying his word, studying life, and developing good biblical wisdom.

[4 : 14] This has implied, the fact that it's intellectual, in words like understanding, in knowledge, in insight. Solomon's own fascination with natural history, for example, gives us a good example that God expects us to observe, to learn, to study.

Look in 1 Kings chapter 4. It says, he described plant life, talking about Solomon now, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls.

He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world who had heard of his wisdom.

Solomon was a man who was given wisdom by God, as we'll see in a moment. But Solomon had a keen mind. He was just interested in life, how life worked.

And he studied, he observed, and he wrote about it. Biblical wisdom is practical. It's intellectual. Biblical wisdom is also moral.

[5 : 25] And it involves self-control. Back in chapter 1, this is a summary of chapter 1, sort of. This is indicated by words like righteousness, doing what's right, justice, equity, or fairness.

A person who is wise, as God teaches us about wisdom here, is someone who seeks to put into practice what they learn from God's Word.

Someone who seeks to do what's right because it is right, and because that's what pleases God. We can summarize how wisdom is described in the beginning of Proverbs chapter 1 like this.

A wise person has correct knowledge, that's intellectual wisdom, understands how to apply that knowledge to life, that's practical wisdom, and demonstrates godly character in all things.

Moral wisdom. A wise person, according to Proverbs 1, acknowledges God as the source of his or her wisdom and seeks to honor God in the way they use it.

[6 : 42] Honor God in all things. A wise person also, and we're going to see this throughout, we're going to see it some in chapter 2 later on, a wise person also recognizes that he or she will always be surrounded by people who reject this wisdom, who do not care about God, who actually reject God and His truth.

And such people, they're not just in our lives, they're trying to influence our lives. They're tempting us to look at life and live life their way, their way that rejects God and His wisdom and His ways.

Now, let's look in chapter 2. Let's read first verses 1 through 5 and think about what he is telling us here. Solomon is telling us here the way to acquire wisdom.

Look at it. Look at it. My son. A lot of Proverbs is written like this. It's like a wise father instructing his son or his children.

That's how this chapter starts. And you'll see it throughout the study, throughout the book. My son, a wise father who cares about his children.

[8 : 05] A wise father who wants what's best for their child. We need to think about it as God speaking through this author. God, our Heavenly Father, speaking to us.

He loves us. He cares about us. He wants us to live life in the best possible way. And in this book of Proverbs, we're going to find a lot of the very practical ways to live such a life.

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 hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

We'll come back and read more in just a little bit. These verses describe the attitudes that we must have if we're interested in becoming wise.

Look again in verses 1 and 2. We acquire wisdom by being teachable and listening to wise teachers. 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, we acquire wisdom by wanting to be taught, by being willing to be taught.

[9 : 44] We acquire wisdom, let's think it first here, by listening to God's Word. God is speaking through this author, this gracious, loving, caring Father.

If you receive my words, we need to think about it as receiving God's words, as treasuring up His commandments ourselves. You know, in Psalms chapter 19 and verse 7, we read this about God's Word.

The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. I don't know if you ever just stop and think about why did God give us His Word. God gave us His Word to reveal Himself, who He is, how He is, and how we can have a right relationship with Him.

He also gave it to us to inform us how we can have a right relationship with other people. God's Word, if we'll read it, if we'll listen to it, if we'll apply it, seek to do it with His help, God's Word will make us wise.

Psalms 119 is the longest chapter in the Bible, and the whole point of that long psalm is to help us understand the importance of, the value of God's Word, and studying it, seeking to understand it, so that we can live the way that God tells us to live.

[11 : 12] Now, this idea of seeking to acquire wisdom by being teachable, by listening to wise teachers, we need to listen to wise teachers in every realm of life.

I'm going to guess that everybody in this room, you've got people in your life that you know, you consider them to be very wise. I mean, there may be a family member, may be a family friend, may be a teacher, a coach.

There's someone in your life that they're just, they're just wise. They've got a good understanding, good common sense. They've got good experience.

And when they talk, you listen. Well, that's an indication that you are a wise person to recognize wisdom wherever it's found. Even in maybe some bad examples, there are some good lessons to be learned from bad examples.

And if we're going to be wise, we've got to learn to be teachable. We've got to learn to listen, whether it comes from God's Word or whether God brings us His truth in other forms.

[12 : 18] We need to learn to listen and learn from everyone and everything. Number two, we acquire wisdom by asking for it. Look in verse three. Yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, that's what Solomon did.

He asked God to give him wisdom. Look at it in 1 Kings chapter three. He said, Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people that I may discern between good and evil.

For who is able to govern this your great people? When Solomon succeeded David as king over Israel, he asked God. God said, What do you want?

I'll give you whatever you want. And Solomon's response was, I want to have understanding. I want to have knowledge. I want to have insight. I want to have the wisdom to be the best king I can possibly be for these people, for this nation, for your glory, for your people.

He asked God for wisdom. And then look at how God responded. Chapter three, verse 12. Behold, I now do according to your word.

[13 : 35] Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall rise after you.

Solomon asked for wisdom and it pleased God to give him wisdom. God desires to give us wisdom. But I want you to look again at verse three very carefully.

Asking God for wisdom is not just a part of a routine prayer or just some kind of, you know, sort of laid back, Lord, I'd like to have kind of thing.

Note how verse three describes this request. Call out for insight. Raise your voice for understanding. This is an intense desire.

A desperate cry for wisdom. Most people in this room, you pray before a meal. You ask a blessing. Now I know I'm not going to question anybody's commitment, sincerity.

[14 : 45] I know sometimes when you bow your head and you pray, you're very sincere. You're acknowledging God is giving you what you've got and you're thankful. But let's just be real honest.

Sometimes some of our blessings we're just going through the motions. I mean, you're looking at what's on the table. You're concerned. You're hungry. You want to eat. Let's just get through this blessing and eat.

We've all been there. We've all done that. We know what that kind of prayer is. Or maybe you want to pray before you go to bed at night. And so you lay down and you say your prayer there in the bed. You'll never remember ending it because you went to sleep.

We all know what it's like to pray, but we don't really mean it. We're just going through the motions. We're just saying words. That's not how we pray.

Really anything from God. Let's don't kid ourselves. But especially wisdom. This is an intense, serious cry. God, give me wisdom.

[15 : 52] Imagine how you would respond if you were on the deep end of a swimming pool. 12 feet of water. And all of a sudden, you got a cramp in your leg.

I don't know if you've ever had that happen to you, but many years ago, I had a youth group. And we were in a pool. And there were people around, thankfully. I was young. I was 21 or so years old.

Never had a cramp in my life in the water. I've always heard that. And I thought, you know, if you're old and decrepit, you know, you may have a problem, but the old cramp, you can make do if you're strong, young, and healthy.

I had a cramp that just, my leg just locked down in that deep water. The guy next to me, his name was Joe. I said, screamed, Joe, help.

And I was struggling, scrambling. I reached over there. I never have hugged a man like I hugged that man. And I didn't apologize. I was desperate.

[16 : 56] I was panicking. I needed help, and I let him know, and everybody in that pool knew. I was serious. It was intense. If we really want something, need something, and are desperate for something, we will cry out for it within our very soul.

We will cry out for it, and God will know, we will know, we mean business. That's what Solomon is saying here. If you really want wisdom, then show God, express yourself to God, inwardly, outwardly, as if you want him to really rescue and save you from your foolishness and your ignorance.

You know, we're told in James chapter 1 that if we ask, if we lack wisdom, we should ask God. But even in that passage, we're told we've got to be serious about it. It's not some ho-hum prayer.

Look at it. In James chapter 1, beginning in verse 5, if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it'll be given to him. But let him ask in faith, without doubting, with no doubting.

For the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. James is basically telling us here, if you're not going to pray sincerely, wholeheartedly, if your heart and soul and mind is not in it, just don't pray.

[18 : 39] Because it's a waste of breath. And that includes the prayer for wisdom. We've got to truly want it. And let God know we mean business in the way that we ask Him.

But that's not all Solomon says along this line. He goes on in verse 4 to stress this point by pointing out that we must pursue wisdom wholeheartedly because we actually value it.

Look at verse 4 again. If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you'll understand. Think of people who are just money crazy or just materialistic to the core.

It just seems that they just eat, drink, sleep, it's all about money, it's all about things, inquiring things. Do whatever it takes, break their health to get more.

And there's never enough. Think about how some people will go to great extremes to get a football ticket or a basketball ticket or a concert ticket by camping out in the rain, in the cold so they'll be in line and be sure that they get one.

[19 : 59] We know what it looks like. There's things in our life that we truly go all out to pursue. The question is, do you pursue wisdom like that?

Or will you pursue wisdom? Will you so value having God's insight, having discernment that comes from Him that you will do whatever it takes to pursue it, to seek it?

You value it that highly. You know, in thinking about what is being said here, we need to not only just want it this badly and put forth such an effort, but we need to learn to seek wisdom, acquire wisdom wherever it is, wherever we are in life.

Solomon and the other writers of Proverbs, as I said earlier, they studied life. They observed things in nature, in this world. They were able to teach on many subjects.

They were able to teach about having a work ethic. They were able to warn about debt. They were able to talk about things like our words, our character, our relationships.

[21 : 22] That's because they studied life. They studied people. They understood as well as what God had given them wisdom-wise. If we want to be wise people, we need to learn to open our eyes, have a teachable spirit, and learn from all kinds of people and all kinds of experiences.

Let's not forget, as we saw three weeks ago, and we see again in verse 5, the key to acquiring wisdom is to fear God. Look here in verse 5 again. When we pursue wisdom this way, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

The key to understanding or the key to acquiring wisdom is to fear God. What we're talking about here is learning to honor God as the holy God that He is, respecting Him, showing reverence toward Him, honoring Him in all that we do.

And the more we do this, the more we demonstrate this reverential fear, the closer we become to God, the better that we know Him, the stronger our relationship will be.

The more we pursue wisdom this way and truly love God and fear God and honor Him and listen to Him and obey Him, the more we will have this wisdom that's being promised here.

[22 : 51] Let's be clear about this matter, about how we acquire wisdom. there must be a relationship with God in order for this to happen. There must be this relationship with God where we have this reverential fear for Him.

We actually know Him as our Heavenly Father. We love Him. We desire to experience His presence and power in our lives.

Do you have that kind of relationship? Second thing I want us to look at this morning, the reason we should acquire wisdom, I want us to say that in verses 4 through 6 or 6 through 8 rather.

6 through 8. 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.

Think about what's being said there. Acquiring wisdom makes life better. Acquiring God-given wisdom makes life better in every way.

[24 : 06] I want you to look closely at verse 6 again. For the Lord gives wisdom. From His mouth come knowledge and understanding. Biblical wisdom is not something we can acquire on our own.

It's not like acquiring general knowledge. It's not like learning about anything else in life. You know, a person can be brilliant but never acquire biblical wisdom.

Highly intelligent people, they can gain an understanding of complex matters by their research, by their study, by their experimentation.

But even a highly gifted scientist or a technological genius will never become wise just by studying wisdom. They may have a lot of understanding but they'll never experience God-given wisdom apart from the relationship with God and it coming from Him.

Biblical wisdom comes from God and it's given by God. But here's what I want you to understand. The key to experiencing this kind of wisdom is this.

[25 : 21] It only comes to those who truly want it and will pursue it. It'll never happen by accident. Look at how it's all stated here in what we've been reading.

I want you to note the word if in verses 1, 3, and 4. In verse 1, my son, if you receive my words. Verse 3, yes, if you call out for insight.

Verse 4, if you seek it like silver and search for His hidden treasure. God gives wisdom to those who listen to His word, call out desperately to Him and go all out, do whatever it takes to acquire it.

Now, without understanding of what it takes to acquire godly wisdom, will you ever have it? You can answer that question.

You know yourself. Remember from the beginning, from God's perspective, there's only two kinds of people in this world. Those who are wise, those who are seeking to become wise, and those who are fools, those who are content to ignore God and ignore His truth and ignore His wisdom and just be foolish.

[26 : 50] Now, which one are you? Your life shows it. Which one do you want to be? It's your choice over and over again.

Proverbs lays it out, the way of wisdom, the way of a fool. Which will you choose? Let's look at the final section of this chapter, the benefits of acquiring wisdom.

I want you to look with me at a few examples of how wisdom benefits all who actually pursue it. In verses 9 through 11, we see that wisdom will prepare us to live life in this world as God's good and holy people.

Look at it. Beginning in verse 9. Then you will understand righteousness, justice, and equity. Every good path. See what he's talking about. If you will listen to God, if you will receive His wisdom, if you will pursue it, if you will cry out for it, He will give it to you.

Then, verse 9, you will understand righteousness, and justice, equity, every good path. For wisdom will come into your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

[28 : 12] Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will guard you. Wisdom, the wisdom of God, it will enable you to live in this world and be discerning.

It will enable you to live in this world and know what's good, what's better, what's best. It will enable you to see stumbling blocks.

It will throw up red flags at people and poor choices that can harm you, that can ruin your life. Wisdom, having it, developing it will make a difference in how we live.

It will help us to live the good and godly life. Secondly, wisdom will protect us from falling under the influence of ungodly people. Developing God's wisdom in just a general way, having that knowledge will protect us, help us to be on guard against the influence of ungodly people.

Look at two things. First, verses 12 through 15. People who try to undermine our godly character and personal integrity. Look at verses 12 through 15.

[29 : 30] Delivering you from the way of evil, from men of perverted speech. Perverted speech is not just someone who uses profanity or talks about some form of perversion.

Perverted speech is any kind of speech that is contrary to the truth of God. Delivering you from the way of evil. Wisdom will do this. 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. Having biblical wisdom will just help us to understand shady people and shady dealings.

It'll throw up the red flag. Flash the red warning light when people come to us talking about ways to get around the truth.

talking about ways to deceive somebody. Talking about ways to avoid punishment for our crimes.

[30 : 45] Reaping what we sow. Proverbs will help us, prepare us for the people who are going to ruin our lives if we listen to them. It happens.

It happens every day. Are you equipped to hear the people who really don't care about you, who just want to use you and abuse you and they will if you're not discerning, if you're not wise.

But also, there's a second kind of person or people. People who try to undermine your marriage and sexual purity. Look at verses 16 through 19.

So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth she's married, and forgets the covenant of her God she claims to be a woman of 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.

[31 : 55] Godly wisdom will help us to be on guard against a man or a woman who has the desire within them to undermine our marriage, our commitment to our spouse.

You know, there are men and women who are not faithful to their own husband, not faithful to their own wife, have no respect for marriage, nor your marriage, nor your spouse.

And sometimes they come on in subtle ways, sometimes they come on in ways that's not easily recognizable, but a person who is wise with godly wisdom will be discerning, will be able to pick up on clues and guard themselves, guard their marriage, guard their sexual purity if they're not married.

Biblical wisdom helps us to live life in every kind of way. It'll keep us on guard, help us to be on guard, and recognize people of all stripes who will hurt us and ruin our lives.

Wisdom, one more thing, will guide us along the good and godly life that ends in the presence of God. Look at verse 20. 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.

- [33 : 22] They'll be in the presence of God 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.

Wisdom will guide us along the way in life that is good, that pleases God, that satisfies ourselves, that will help other people, and it'll bring us eventually into the presence of God, where by God's grace, through faith in Jesus and being faithful to Him, we can hear on judgment day, well done, my good and faithful servant.

That's wisdom's goal, to lead us that way. Now, as we conclude this morning, I'll remind you of what we saw in the first study of Proverbs three weeks ago, and then again last week.

When it comes to seeking anything from God, including wisdom, the place to begin and end is with Jesus Christ. It's in Jesus that we find God's greatest wisdom as Jesus Himself made known, and I want to show you again as we've done the last two times.

Matthew chapter 12, verse 42. The queen of the south will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it. For she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now one greater than Solomon is here.

- [34 : 52] That's Jesus. The book of Proverbs teaches us much about wisdom, about truth, and about life. But the ultimate truth, the ultimate life, the ultimate wisdom is found in Jesus.

And so I want you to understand that in order for you to be truly wise as we're learning about in Proverbs, is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you don't have that, I want to encourage you this morning.

That is what you need to hear more than anything else. You cannot experience, acquire, develop the wisdom of God unless you first have a right relationship with Jesus Christ.

If that's your need this morning, admit that to God. Turn from your sin and call upon Him to save you now. Mean it. Be serious about it. That's the beginning of wisdom.

That's the beginning of truly fearing God having a right relationship with Him in this world right now. Final thought. We're given a choice in Proverbs of being wise or being a fool.

- [36 : 03] In light of what we've learned in this passage this morning, which choice have you made to this point in life? And then, which choice will you make today and every day?

You see, seeking and acquiring and developing biblical wisdom is not a choice that you just make one day and that's it. It's a daily, sometimes hourly choice.

I want to encourage you this morning as Proverbs will just say over and over again, there's two paths before you. The way of wisdom, the way of a fool.

Choose which path. You have been on a path. Choose the right one, the way of wisdom to go from your own today.

Let's pray together. Dear God, dear God, no one in this room would willingly choose the path of a fool.

- [37 : 19] But dear God, help us to see that if we are not choosing you, your ways, your wisdom, your truth, we are choosing the path of a fool.

So help us, dear God, to hear you this morning that wisdom can be ours through faith in Jesus, through a right relationship with you where we honor you, love you, and obey you.

Help us to see, dear God, this morning wisdom is a gift of your grace. But it's a gift that you require us to want, desire, intensely seek, because we value it that much.

Dear God, help us right now to respond, each one of us. Help us to choose wisdom and whatever else that involves for us individually this morning.

In an attitude of prayer, you just be still and listen to the Lord and you respond to Him. I would be happy to pray with you, talk with you during this time. I'll be here at the front as the music plays and we're just listening to the Lord and we respond to Him.