

The Way of Wisdom

Text: Proverbs 2

Introduction: King Solomon, the son of David was Israel's third king. The Bible says that "Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father" (1 Kings 3:3).

On one occasion, at Gibeon, "the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night" (1 Kings 3:5). And here's what the Lord said: "Ask what I shall give you" (1 Kings 3:5). Now, that's a pretty good deal, isn't it? To have the God of the universe show up to you in a dream and tell you to ask of Him whatever you want.

I wonder what you would ask for. A new car? A bigger house? A fat bank account? Maybe your request would be more basic. Good health. A restored relationship with someone you love. Maybe just happiness in life.

Listen to how Solomon responded: "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant David my father, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you. And you have kept for him this great and steadfast love and have given him a son to sit on his throne this day. And now, O Lord my God, you have made your servant king in place of David my father, although I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of your people whom you have chosen, a great people, too many to be numbered or counted for multitude. 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?" (1 Kings 3:6-9).

Solomon asked God for wisdom. Wisdom to govern God's people. Imagine if our political leaders today truly prayed a prayer like that.

The Bible says that "It pleased the Lord that Solomon asked this" (1 Kings 6:10).

And here's what God said: "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none

like you shall arise after you. I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days" (1 Kings 6:11-14).

Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave him wisdom. And much more.

How many of you know that we need wisdom too? It's important that we know where to go for the wisdom that we need. That's where Proverbs 2 comes in.

Go ahead and turn in your Bible to Proverbs 2. It begins on page 494 in the black pew Bible in front of you. If you don't own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read Proverbs 2...Pray)

"God, give us wisdom. Help us to receive your words. Help us to treasure up your commandments. Make us attentive to the wisdom of your Word this morning. Incline our hearts to understanding. God, motivate us to call out for insight, to raise our voices for understanding. May we seek it more than we seek riches. May we search for wisdom like we would search for a hidden treasure. God, we want to understand the fear of the Lord. We want to find the knowledge of God. God, we know that you are the source of wisdom. You give it generously to all who ask.

We want to walk in righteousness and justice and equity. Lead us on every good path, O God. Deliver us from evil. Make us aware of those who would seek to lead us astray. Help us to resist them, and in doing so, resist the devil that he might flee from us. God, we want to walk in the way of the good. We want to keep to the paths of the righteous. Would you help us? One day we want to inhabit the promised land that you have prepared for us. We want to remain in it for all of eternity. Protect us from the wicked. Cut them off. Root them out. Use your Word and this sermon to do this good work in our lives today, we pray, in Jesus' name, amen."

Though there are other human authors of Proverbs, the first verse of the book identifies Solomon as the author of the section in chapter 2 that we are considering this morning. You'll also notice in verse 1 of chapter 2 that Solomon addresses this section of the book to his son. He writes, "My son." In fact, I counted at least 27 times in the book of Proverbs that the author directly addresses his son. And as we read the chapter, you can see how this might be something that a father would write to a son.

I think about some of the proverbs that I received from my grandfather as a young man. You've heard of Chinese proverbs and African proverbs. Well, my grandfather grew up in New Market, VA, so you might say that these are Valley proverbs from the Shenandoah Valley.

- When we would go fishing, if I wasn't catching any fish, it was because I wasn't holding my mouth right.
- When I went off to college, he warned me that if anyone offered me drugs, I was to tell them to stick it where the sun doesn't shine. Of course, he said it in a bit more colorful way.
- My sister and I both got married within six months of each other, and with both of our marriages pending, he told me of the importance of gainful employment saying, "You can only live on love for so long. Eventually you have to eat."

Well, as beneficial as those words of wisdom may be, Solomon has something a bit more beneficial to say here in Proverbs 2.

I. If you seek wisdom... (Proverbs 2:1-4).

A. The conditional word "if" is used three times in the first four verses of the chapter.

- 1. Verse 1 – "IF you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you..."**
- 2. Verse 3 – "IF you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding..."**
- 3. Verse 4 – "IF you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures..."**
- 4. Solomon is talking about wisdom. Verse 2 says, "making your ear attentive to WISDOM and inclining your heart to understanding."**
- 5. So, words, commandments, wisdom, understanding, and insight are all used here as synonyms for wisdom.**

B. It's important for us to recognize that wisdom is different from information.

- 1. We live in a day when all the information we could possibly want is right at our fingertips.**
- 2. But it often seems that wisdom is in short supply.**
- 3. Wisdom isn't knowing the right information; it's knowing what to do with the right information.**
- 4. I like what David Mathis said on this point in a recent sermon on Proverbs 2, "It's no accident that in the history of God's first-covenant people, law comes first; later, proverbs. First, Moses; later, Solomon. The first need is clear revelation and instruction from God.... But you can't treat every scenario in life. The clarity of the commandments is vital, but the instruction from God needs to be internalized, to become part of his people, shape them, form them, condition them so deeply that as they encounter daily scenarios that don't have clear commandments, they can discern God's will in that particular moment."**
- 5. The point that Mathis is making is that we absolutely need to know the Ten Commandments and all of God's law. We need that information. But we also need to know how to apply the commandments and all of God's law to everything we face in life. That's wisdom.**
- 6. The Bible doesn't have a specific command about what you should do when your parents reach a point in life where they are no longer able to care for themselves on their own. But it does say, "Honor your father and mother." Wisdom is knowing how to apply that command with your parents in your particular situation.**
- 7. The Bible doesn't have a specific command about who you should marry or what job you should take or whether you should rent or buy a home. But the Bible does contain instruction concerning marriage and family and work and money. Wisdom is knowing how to apply the Bible's instruction on each of these topics in your particular situation.**

8. If you didn't see it before, surely you see it now, we **NEED** wisdom. You need wisdom. I need wisdom.

C. Now, I want you to notice the verbs that Solomon uses here concerning how one might interact with wisdom.

1. Verse 1 – Receive and treasure.
2. Verse 2 – Make your ear attentive to and incline your heart to.
3. Verse 3 – Call out for and raise your voice for.
4. Verse 4 – Seek and search for.
5. Notice that they all require an active posture toward wisdom. Even “receive” seems to imply that you have to actively receive wisdom. It doesn't just happen. You don't just become wise. It's true that age and experience can be helpful in the pursuit of wisdom, but you don't just become wise because you get old. I'm sure we've all known some unwise old people. And by contrast, you've probably said of someone, she's very wise for her age.
6. The point is that if you want to be wise, which I hope you do, you have to seek wisdom. Receive it. Treasure it. Make your ear attentive to it. Incline your heart to it. Call out for it. Raise your voice for it. Seek and search for it.
7. Another thing that stands out to me about these verbs is the intensity of them. Call out for wisdom. Raise your voice for it. Seek it. Search for it as for hidden treasure. If I gave you a map with a big X on it, and I said, “X marks the spot. Where the X is on the map, there is buried there a hidden treasure worth millions of dollars,” what would you do? I assume you would go there immediately and begin digging. By hand even if you had to, right? You would do whatever it takes to uncover the hidden treasure and cash in on its value. That's the approach Solomon tells his son he should have toward wisdom. Whatever it takes.
8. The intensity of the verbs highlights the value of the wisdom that we seek, doesn't it? It's more valuable than silver. It's worth more than hidden treasure.

9. I also notice the persistence of the verbs Solomon uses. If I told you, “There's a penny on the ground,” you probably wouldn't even bother bending over to pick it up. If I told you, “There's a dollar on the ground,” you would probably pick it up, but you wouldn't do anything too crazy to get it, would you? No, it's just a dollar. But if I said, “There's a stack of hundred-dollar bills at the bottom of that pool,” you would dive right in immediately, and you wouldn't stop until you had recovered the whole stack.
10. That's the kind of persistence we need when it comes to wisdom. We don't stop calling out for it and seeking and searching for it. Throughout our lives we continue pursuing it with both intensity and persistence.
11. There's a story concerning the Greek philosopher Socrates that gets retold every so often, but almost certainly didn't happen. According to the story, there was a young man who once approached Socrates seeking wisdom. The young man said, “O great, Socrates, I come to you for wisdom.” Socrates responded by taking the young man down to the sea. Socrates asked the young man, “What did you say that you want?” The young man said, “Wisdom! I want wisdom.” So, Socrates grabbed the man and dunked him under the water.” When Socrates let the young man up from the water, he asked him again, “What do you want?” Again, the young man said, “Wisdom! I want wisdom.” So, Socrates grabbed him and dunked him under the water again. After he let the young man up from the water, Socrates asked again, “What do you want?” “Wisdom! I want wisdom!” the young man responded. So, Socrates dunked him under the water again. This time Socrates held the young man down under the water for an unusually long amount of time. When Socrates finally let him up, the young man was choking on water and gasping for air. Socrates, feeling he had made his point, asked the man, “Now, what do you want?” The young man responded, “Air! I want air!” According to the story, Socrates responded, “When you want wisdom as much as you wanted air,

then you will have it.” While the story likely never happened, it does illustrate the kind of intensity and persistence we ought to have in our pursuit of wisdom.

Because look at what Solomon says. If you seek wisdom...

II. ...then God will give you wisdom (Proverbs 2:5-11)

A. Verse 1, IF. Verse 3, IF. Verse 4, IF. Verse 5, THEN.

- 1. IF you seek wisdom, “THEN you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God” (vs. 5).**
- 2. Now, proverbs are not promises. That’s especially important to note in other places in the book. But proverbs are statements about how life in this world works.**
- 3. If you want wisdom, you have to seek it. And if you seek it, you will receive it.**

B. Why? Because it is the Lord who gives wisdom.

- 1. Look at verses 6-8. (Read vs. 6-8)**
- 2. In the New Testament, James writes, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5).**
- 3. So, while proverbs are not promises, we can hear in God’s Word through James that if we lack wisdom and ask God for wisdom, He will give it.**
- 4. See, God loves to give good gifts to His children. Jesus said, “How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!” (Matt. 7:11).**
- 5. God is the giver of wisdom! But...**

C. How does God give us wisdom? Does He just open up our heads and our hearts and pour it in? No. Let me tell you how He does it.

- 1. First, in response to prayer.**

- a. You see that in the text, don’t you? If you CALL OUT for insight. If you RAISE YOUR VOICE for understanding.**
- b. Who do you call out to? Who do you raise your voice to? God! And what is calling out to God? Prayer!**
- c. Wisdom starts with prayer.**
- d. Again, James says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ASK GOD.”**
- e. So, how does God give us wisdom? First, in response to prayer.**

2. Number 2, through His Word.

- a. In verse 1, Solomon says, “Receive MY words.” He says, “Treasure up MY COMMANDMENTS.” But what we’re really talking about here are GOD’S WORDS. GOD’S COMMANDMENTS.**
- b. Look at verse 6. It’s from God’s mouth that knowledge and understanding come.**
- c. Where do we get God’s words? From the Bible. This book is breathed out by God. All 66 books of it.**
- d. All Scripture is breathed out by God. No prophecy was every produced by the will of man. No men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. This is God’s Word.**
- e. So, what do we do with it? How do we get wisdom from it? Receive it. Treasure it. Make your ear attentive to it. Incline your heart to it. Call out for it. Raise your voice for it. Seek it. Search for it as for hidden treasure.**
- f. If you want to be wise, Sunday morning at 10:45am can’t be the only time you crack open your Bible. You have to read it on your own. And read it with brothers and sisters in Christ. And read it again. Study it. Meditate on it. Seek to understand it. The more you feed your heart and your mind the Word of God, the more you will grow in wisdom. You can’t help but be changed by it.**
- g. God gives us wisdom through His Word.**

3. **He also gives us wisdom through His Spirit.**
 - a. **If you are a follower of Jesus, you are indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. God has taken up residence inside of you.**
 - b. **Listen to what the Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God” (1 Cor. 2:12).**
 - c. **This is why there is a kind of wisdom that is unique to God’s people. There is such a thing as human wisdom. We might call it common sense. But Paul is talking about more than that. He’s talking about spiritual wisdom. The kind of wisdom that only comes to God’s people through the indwelling Holy Spirit.**
 - d. **That’s what you and I need. And that’s what God gives through His Spirit.**
4. **God also gives us wisdom through His people.**
 - a. **And I want to camp out here for just a bit.**
 - b. **Remember, we said that in verse 1, Solomon addresses His Son. How many of you had a believing father growing up? Your dad was a Christian, and he acted like it most of the time? That’s me. My dad is a faithful follower of Jesus. He loves the Lord and taught me to love and follow the Lord as well.**
 - c. **If, like me, you were blessed to have a believing father growing up, I hope you realize just what a blessing that is. Far too many people in this world do not have a dad whole loves the Lord, loves them, and teaches them to love and follow the Lord. Take some time before the end of today to give thanks to the Lord for such a dad. And if your dad is still living, take some time to thank him and let him know how much you appreciate him.**
 - d. **If you’re a dad with kids still in your home, I want to encourage you to take seriously your responsibility to lead your children in wisdom. Teach them to hit a ball. Teach them to work on the car. Teach them to operate the lawn mower. Those are all great things. But more than those things, teach them to walk in wisdom according to God’s Word.**
 - e. **And kids, if you have a godly dad who loves the Lord, listen to him. Receive his words. Treasure up his commandments. Be attentive to him. Incline your heart to him. Call out to him. Ask him to help you walk in wisdom. Seek his wisdom. Search for it as for hidden treasures.**
 - f. **I also want you to know that if you don’t have a wise father... Maybe you did, but he’s now with the Lord. Maybe your father wasn’t such a great dad. He didn’t love the Lord. He didn’t teach you to love and follow the Lord. If you don’t have a wise father, you can find that among God’s people in the church. The family of God. There are godly men in this church who would love to be like a spiritual father to you. To teach you wisdom. To help you walk in wisdom.**
 - g. **Men, if you’re not investing in children of your own. Who has God placed around you in the church for you to come alongside and help as they seek to walk in wisdom?**
 - h. **This is why it’s so essential for all of us that we truly plug ourselves into the life of the church. We need one another. It’s not enough for you to come here on Sunday, sit through a service, and then go on about your life the rest of the week. You need brothers and sisters to come alongside of you and help you as you follow Jesus. We need spiritual fathers and mothers who will lead us in paths of wisdom. We need to be that spiritual father or mother for others.**
 - i. **(Sunday School)**

D. The result of God giving us wisdom is seen beginning in verse 9. (Read vs. 9-11)

- 1. Don't you want to understand righteousness and justice and equity, every good path? I do.**
- 2. Don't you want wisdom to come into your heart? Don't you want knowledge to be pleasant to your soul? I do.**
- 3. Oh, how I need discretion to watch over me. Oh, how I need understanding to guard me.**

Brothers and sisters, if you seek wisdom, then God will give you wisdom. And...

III. Wisdom will deliver you from evil (Proverbs 2:12-19).

Verses 12-19 highlight two dangers specifically. Two sets of voices that can pull you toward ruin and death.

A. First are evil men.

- 1. Look at what wisdom does when you have it beginning in verse 12. (Read vs. 12-15)**
- 2. We need to know that we have a very real enemy. Satan. The devil. The evil one.**
- 3. And he seeks to do his work through those whom Solomon calls "men of perverted speech," men who "forsake the paths of uprightness," men who "walk in the ways of darkness," men who "rejoice in doing evil," men who "delight in the perverseness of evil," "men whose paths are crooked," men who "are devious in their ways."**
- 4. Solomon is a man writing to his son, so he's talking about evil men. But these characteristics aren't unique to men, are they? Ladies, you know women who could be described the same way.**
- 5. Solomon is talking about friends. People you might associate with. People who don't propel you toward godliness. Instead, they tempt you toward sin. You know what I'm talking about.**

- 6. Wisdom protects you from people like that. Because wisdom helps you see them for who they are. It helps you resist them. It helps you get away and stay away from them.**
- 7. So, the first voice is that of evil men.**

B. The second voice is the forbidden woman.

- 1. We're introduced to her in verse 16. (Read vs. 16-19)**
- 2. This is the first time we meet the forbidden woman in Proverbs. She shows up many more times as the subject of the father's warning.**
- 3. She competes with Solomon for his son's affection and attention with her "smooth words." Her words rival Solomon's words and more importantly the Lord's words.**
- 4. Solomon's warning here to his son is certainly a warning against sexual sin. But it's not just that. We know that sexual sin and spiritual sin are tied together throughout the Bible. Adultery and idolatry are closely connected throughout Scripture.**
- 5. The point is where sin leads. Look at verse 18. Her house sinks down to death. Her paths to the departed. None who go to her come back. Nor do they regain the paths of life.**
- 6. And how do we avoid following this path to destruction? Wisdom.**

And that's the final thing I want you to see this morning. That...

IV. Wisdom will lead you to life (Proverbs 2:20-22).

A. That's true here in this life.

- 1. Look at verse 20. (Read vs. 20)**
- 2. Do you want to know how to live the good life? I assume you do. No one says, "What I really want is a bad life."**
- 3. I'm going to let you in on a little secret. I'm going to tell you the secret to a good life.**

4. **It's not a college education. It's not a good job. It's not exciting vacations. It's not lots of money. It's not lots of stuff.**
5. **It's wisdom. Godly wisdom. Biblical wisdom. Wisdom that only comes from God. The God who made you. The God who loves you. The God who saved you. The God who knows how life in this world was designed to be lived.**
6. **Wisdom will lead you to life here in this life.**

B. And wisdom will lead you to life in the life to come.

1. **Look at verse 21. (Read vs. 21)**
2. **Now, undoubtedly Solomon's son would have heard "inhabit[ing] the land" as a reference to the land of Canaan, the land of promise.**
3. **But as God's new covenant people, God has promised us a land as well. A new heaven and a new earth. A place where we who are in Christ will dwell with God forever. He will dwell with us, and we will be His people. God Himself will be with us as our God. It's a land where God will wipe away every tear from our eyes. Death will be no more. No mourning. No crying. No pain. A land where the former things of this life will have passed away. What hope! The upright will inherit the land! Those with integrity will remain in it.**
4. **But look at verse 22. (Read vs. 22) That's the warning. The wicked will be cut off from the land. The treacherous will be rooted out of it.**

Conclusion: See, Solomon is presenting his son with a choice. And it's the same choice we all must make in life. The way of wisdom or the way of folly. The way of wisdom leads to life, and the way of wisdom leads to death.

The way of wisdom is Jesus.

Listen to what Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1.

Verses 22-24: For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom,²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Verse 30: And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God.

How many of us have ever done something foolish? You said something you shouldn't have. You did something you shouldn't have. Maybe it seemed right in the moment. But afterward, it was very clear just how foolish you had been. For many of us, our foolishness runs deep.

And our foolishness would have naturally led to us being cut off from the land. Cut off from God. It would have led to us being rooted out.

But for Jesus. The perfectly wise one. Who came as wisdom personified, and lived in perfect wisdom, and died in our place to pay for all the foolish things we've said and done.

See, the only path to God's wisdom is through God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through repentance and faith. Turn from your sin and place your complete trust in Jesus.

He will forgive you. He will save you. And through relationship with Him, He will enable you to walk in wisdom. To walk in the way of the good. To keep to the paths of the righteous. So that you may be upright in him and inhabit the land. So that you may have integrity and remain in it.