

Our GPS for Right Living

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[0:00] Well, there's a certain kind of person that I've found myself more and more over the last several years just very compelled to be around. This type of person seems to navigate his or her life just extremely well.

This person is not free of trials and tribulations. In fact, maybe they have more than your average person, and yet they seem to just have this fluid ease about the way that they deal and interact with life.

It's just really compelling for me. You know, there's been many people recently on this pulpit, and we have leadership in this church, people that just, I want to be around because they do life in a certain way.

And what's interesting about this is it doesn't require being a certain age. Young and old can qualify for this. Rich and poor, really scholarly academic types, and the simple-minded people who just kind of, you know, maybe they're not a brilliant scholar, but yet they can still possess this type of life that's so compelling.

All shapes and sizes of people possess this kind of life. And we could probably describe it in any number of ways. There's a lot of ways, resourcefulness, certain giftedness of living, maybe according to the world more of a street smartness, full of common sense, full of life experience.

[1:35] We're compelled to be near them, aren't we? We want to know what they have. We want to know what their secret is to living life in a way that just seems to make things go easier, smoothly. They roll with the punches, you could say.

We want to know what is that secret? How can they make this crazy, chaotic thing called life seem so easy? How can the trials and tribulations they have encountered not render them unstable, ineffective, bitter, fearful, anxious?

Well, friends, I think the common denominator in all of these people is wisdom. But not just any kind of wisdom, right?

There's plenty of people in the world who are great businessmen and make tons of money because they're wise in a certain business sense of that word. There's salesmen that can push a product with such ease and grace that you're lining up to buy that vacuum.

You can even be a wise thief, right? If you have enough knowledge to not get caught and to get the things that you want and steal them, you can be wise in one sense.

[2:44] But that's not the wisdom I'm talking about this morning. I'm talking about biblical wisdom. This wisdom we see always has to do with righteous living. It's a from-above wisdom, as James calls it, that is first pure and peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere.

It's a wisdom whose source is the Lord, and it's one-directional from Him to His people. It's a wisdom that is to be received by grace.

I believe that it's this wisdom that the Bible teaches that allows God's people to navigate life well, to live rightly before the Lord.

Now, this wisdom is the major concern of the book of Proverbs. I invite you to open there this morning. Let me read just the first introductory verses of chapter 1 to get us kind of a grounding for where we're headed, and then we'll spend our time in the second chapter of Proverbs.

But this is how Solomon opens this book of wisdom. The Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. To know wisdom and instruction.

[4:07] To understand words of insight. To receive instruction and wise dealing in righteousness, justice, and equity. To give prudence to the simple, knowledge and discretion to the youth.

Let the wise hear and increase in learning. And the one who understands obtain guidance. To understand a proverb and a saying, the words of the wise and their riddles.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction. So we can now flip over to chapter 2, and let me just say that we find in the first several chapters up through chapter 9 of Proverbs, a lot of lectures from a father to his son, teaching wisdom, instructing his son the way to go.

So parents, I think immediately you can relate to this urgency, I imagine. In knowing that your children are going to go out into a world that's full of disorder and disarray and sin and wickedness and brokenness.

And you feel the urgency. You want your children to know wisdom. You want them to know the way to go. So that they will be upright. So that they will live their lives well.

[5:22] You can feel the desire present in this passage from this father, concerned with his own son's well-being. You want to see your children walking rightly with the Lord, making good decisions.

That's the emotion I think we see as we come to this text. But it's not just for fathers to sons or mothers to daughters or parents to children. It's not just to show us how a parent should instruct a child.

It's not simply for the young in the room. No, this passage is here for all of God's people. This is the emotional and urgent appeal of a heavenly father to his spiritual children.

As God's children, this is the appeal I think that God makes for us today as we come to this passage. It's this. Since wisdom is so valuable, you should make it your priority to acquire it in abundance.

Stockpile it for a rainy day. There's no expiration date of wisdom. Invest your spiritual disciplines to cultivate it in your lives. Gift it generously to other people so that they would be blessed too by wisdom.

[6:48] Again, since wisdom is so valuable, you should make it your priority to acquire it in abundance. So let me read this text for us and pray and then we will dive in to see what it says.

This is Proverbs chapter 2. 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.

[8:25] 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. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we are so grateful for this morning.

We're so grateful that Your Word instructs us. Father, I pray that we would all leave here desiring wisdom more after what Your Word instructs us to do this morning.

[9:36] God, would You feed Your people. Graciously be with us. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. So to go through this passage, we're really just going to follow the Father's logic in instructing His Son.

Along the way, we're going to see the conditions of this appeal He's making, and then we're going to see some benefits of that, and then we're going to see the Father's conclusion based on what He knows to be true.

So conditions, benefits, conclusion. The conditions we see right up front, verses 1 to 4.

Notice all the ifs. If you receive my words. Verse 3, if you call out for insight. Verse 4, if you seek it like silver. The Father's saying, there's effort involved in what I'm trying to tell you.

My son, you've got to put forth some work here. I think the progression kind of goes like this. First, there needs to just be a desire.

[10:45] We should ask ourselves right up front, do I desire wisdom? Is it in my heart of hearts to yearn for this good thing, this biblical wisdom that instructs me how to live rightly before God?

The Father makes the appeal in verse 2 saying, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding. See that? It's listen to these instructions.

Listen to my words. And He calls them commandments, not because He's a mean kind of dictator father, but He's received them from the living God.

They're God's commandments. Through the Father to the Son. Make your ear attentive to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding. Stretch out your heart.

Desire wisdom. And we see in verse 3 that there's a progression. Now it's, yes, if you call out for wisdom. Hear wisdom. Where are you, wisdom? Wisdom, I need you.

[11:49] Raise your voice for understanding. Oh, give me understanding. Then it goes on even further in verse 4.

Seek it. Right? If you seek it like silver, search for it as for hidden treasures. See, wisdom is valuable. It's like silver.

And at this point, he's probably not saying the second best metal, like, so then there's silver, but then there's gold. No, he's probably saying, here's the most precious thing I can think of. Seek it like that.

Seek it like silver. It makes me think of Indiana Jones. I've been thinking about these movies a lot this week. You've got this, Harrison Ford plays this archaeologist.

He's this professor at this university where the students don't seem to be the brightest bulbs in the drawer. And it seems like he does that so that he can kind of sustain this side hobby of his of seeking these artifacts.

[12:54] Right? And he's being chased by Nazis and tanks and, you know, all these crazy animals, lions and these other guys with guns and everybody wants him dead.

And he's trying to get these artifacts. Right? And he's even willing to face his most deepest fear. Snakes. There's a point where he gets lowered down into the pit of these vipers.

He hates snakes. He says it over and over throughout these movies. It's kind of corny. But he says, I hate snakes. I hate snakes. But he's willing to go into a den of snakes in order to find these religious artifacts.

That's the picture I think this proverb gives us when we want to kind of capture what it means to seek wisdom. Seek it like that. Seek to obtain it like that.

With ears. With a heart inclined towards it. With a mouth that cries out for it. With arms and legs and eyes that search for it. That's the conditions of acquiring wisdom.

[14:04] Of obtaining it. You've got to put forth the effort. You can't be the couch potato looking for it. I feel it right, young people in the room, to mention this.

That you're in a really good time of your life to determine to seek this out. I think there's many of us who would be able to say with a hint of sorrow that I wish I would have found wisdom sooner.

I wish I wouldn't have waited so long to get right with this. Don't let it slip by. You've got it right before you. You're in a great church.

You've got good parents. You've got a lot of people that love you. This is instruction for you. So now let me keep moving us down here.

We come to verse 5 and we see the first of three major benefits of seeking wisdom. If you seek it, if you incline it, you're not understanding.

[15:12] If you call out, verse 5, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Well, I thought we were just talking about wisdom. Where's this knowledge of God stuff coming from?

Where's this fear of the Lord coming from? What I find interesting here is that if you're not seeking wisdom in the right place, you're never going to find it.

That's what this says. You can't go to the world. You can't turn on the news. You're not going to search Wikipedia and find the wisdom that the Bible wants people to have.

You have to go to the source. See that in verse 6? For the Lord gives wisdom. Benefit number one, theological benefit. God gives wisdom to people who seek after it.

Real wisdom. Lifelong wisdom. Righteousness. And justice and equity. Good wisdom. So you see that obtaining wisdom is a spiritual endeavor.

[16:23] You cannot find it apart from God no matter how much you want, no matter how much science may tell you otherwise. You cannot find true wisdom apart from God.

I find it so amazing. We see what this tells us here about God. Here's the benefit. If you seek wisdom, you'll learn the fear of the Lord and then look who God is in this. It's glorious. Verses 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 for those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice, watching over the way of His saints.

This is a really good God. He really loves His people. To do all of that for those that incline their ear to wisdom, who search it out. Friends, this is a God worth worshiping, devoting our lives to.

He's glorious. He's really, really good. I find it helpful to imagine just for the briefest moment the alternative if God did not impart wisdom.

[17:41] Where would we turn? There's no wisdom trees in our backyard. We can't buy it at the local 7-Eleven. The old dead philosopher isn't going to tell you how to get it.

God must give wisdom. The biblical wisdom that leads to right living, God alone provides. I want to help us with a commentator who has defined this fear of the Lord.

I think it's just so helpful. This is what we're talking about in verse 5 when it says, understand the fear of the Lord. He writes this, the fear of the Lord is the reverent confession and reverential acknowledgement.

Here's the content of that. That Yahweh is the creator and sustainer of all life and the true giver of wisdom. It's a confession and acknowledgement that God has wisdom and he gives it.

He's the only one. He goes on, this fundamental confession anchors the possibility of coming to understand all other elements of wisdom that accrue and to enjoy the blessings that accrue from its possession.

[19:11] So if you don't fear the Lord, if you don't confess him as the majestic creator of all things, forget about it. You're not going to find wisdom. Only the sustainer of life knows all things and can give it.

knowledge of God is kind of similar to that. It's not simply an intellectual knowledge that is being talked about in verse 6 here.

Again, it's this personal intimacy, this relational knowledge that leads again to right living, excuse me, right living, carrying out God's desires for our lives.

There's one final benefit that we see here in 12 to 19.

Kind of got dual figures in it, but it's all under this heading from verse 12, delivering you from the way of evil. Oh, excuse me, I skipped over something.

[20:14] Back up. Forget everything I just said there. Second benefit. See in verse 9, it's a practical benefit for obtaining wisdom.

If you're seeking wisdom, verse 9, then you will understand righteousness and justice and equity every good path. I don't know about you, but life's hard.

Life's confusing. Life's messy. I need something that's going to get me to understand every good path, how to navigate the complexities of this life.

I need it. I desperately need it. If we're honest, we all do. That's what it says if you seek wisdom, if you prioritize obtaining it in abundance, you will understand righteousness and justice and equity every good path.

Why is that? Why will pursuing wisdom lead to understanding every morally good path? Again, just like in the theological benefit, we have our answer in what follows verses 10 and 11, because wisdom will come into your heart.

[21:22] Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will guard you. That's why you'll understand every good path, because you'll have wisdom.

It'll be in your heart. And knowledge, that'll be pleasant too. This seems to me to be conversion language.

Language that's speaking of a spiritual awakening wrought by God. I don't know how wisdom will enter my heart unless God, the source of wisdom, puts it there.

And I don't know how knowledge of Him and His good purposes and His righteousness will ever happen unless He changes my heart to desire those things to. And I love what it says after that. I love it. Discretion will watch over you. Understanding will guard you. Did you see that there's a connection with verse 8? We see God as a shield and He's guarding the paths of justice.

[22:25] He's watching over the way of His saints. And then verse 11, discretion will watch over you. Understanding will guard you. See, the writer here makes no qualms about saying, God will guard you and wisdom will guard you.

Because ultimately, they're coming from the same origin. It's the same source. God gives wisdom. God guards. He's making a very close connection.

You can't have this practical benefit of wisdom without the foundational and supreme theological benefit. If you don't have God, again, you can't have morality.

You're not going to know justice unless God instructs you in justice. These benefits are closely linked. You can't divorce them from each other and expect that you're on the path of living and on the way of wisdom.

So now, now benefit 3 in verses 12 to 19. It's the benefit of deliverance. It's actually, it really butts up against verse 9 and this every good path because not only is that in a positive light but then this, this other benefit, this delivering you in verse 12 and you see that same thing again in verse 16.

[23:47] So you'll be delivered. The benefit of wisdom is that you'll be saved from really bad, destructive people in the way of evil.

I remember a men's meeting at Crossway a few years back where the speaker said these words and they've stuck with me because I think they're sobering reality of something that's really, really true.

He said this almost at the outset. You're only one bad decision away from ruining your life. It's hard to wrap my mind around that and I don't want to accept that maybe sometimes but but these verses here they seem to they caution us against something that we need to really take heed of.

The benefit of deliverance. You see again this dual purpose there's evil men in verses 12 to 15 and then you've got this strange woman in 16 through 19. These evil men notice that the first thing said about them is they're talking too but their speech is perverted.

It's not the speech of good words and insight it's perversion. These men go from speaking a certain way to acting a certain way. They reject paths of righteousness to walk in ways of darkness.

[25:24] That's bizarre to me. If you give me the choice between a lighted path that has no trip hazards that has a cleanly swept ground or you give me a path that's full of darkness and trip hazards and boogeymen who go thumping the night I'm taking the lighted path.

These guys reject it. They reject it. They're morally reprehensible in their speaking.

They forsake wisdom. They choose folly. And by choosing the paths of folly they become folly. See that in verse 15?

Their paths are crooked and they themselves then are devious. They're bent themselves because they choose bent paths. It's all rooted in a bad heart.

They've chosen folly and they rejoice and shout joyfully to do evil. New Testament I think would call them the people the enemies of the cross of Christ in Philippians 3 where Paul says that their God is their bellies they glory in their shame and they have hearts and minds set on earthly things.

[26:45] Same category of people. So I think it's for this reason that wisdom has to come into our hearts to deliver us from men like this.

There's many paths of evil but there's one way of evil. It's a way that we cannot turn to. I think it's obvious that we can not take too much time to reflect and come up with any number of people and philosophies in this world of ours that endorse this type of living rejecting paths of uprightness for darkness.

The Father's appeal is Son, stay away from those. And we see similarly now this strange woman who appears in 16 to 19 ESV says forbidden and adulterous.

You can see probably there's some footnotes strange foreign woman. Why is she strange? What's foreign about this woman? Is it because she's Syrian and not an Israelite?

I don't think that that's what it's speaking about but morally foreign. She's ethically strange. She in the same way has a speech but her words are not perverted.

[28:17] They're smooth. They're flattering. They're slick. They make ears feel nice. This word smooth I find interesting. It's taken from the same word that's used to describe the five stones that David picked out of the brook to sling at Goliath.

Really good that stones are aerodynamic and slick and smooth. Really bad when people have words that are smooth. They're deceitful.

They're ruinous. Notice in verse 17 that this woman is forsaking the companion of her youth. Her spouse.

she's forgetting the covenant of her God. She made vows to her husband in front of God and she's forsaking them in order to welcome this adulterous relationship.

But notice her end and notice the end of those who go with her. 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.

[29:31] It's a scary situation friends. It's a way of evil that has men and women on it who are interested in choosing ways that reject God's goodness His righteousness.

People who at times may be a lot more compelling to associate with than we may admit. Avoid it. wisdom delivers you from these people.

Wisdom delivers you from the way of evil. I think it's helpful in talking about this adulterous briefly to remind us all of Jesus' words in the Gospel of Matthew.

He says that if you even look with lust in your heart, you set your eyes on a woman with lust in your heart, you've already committed adultery. First and foremost, it's a hard issue.

Wisdom delivers from the flattery and the seduction of adultery. So basically in these benefits, we've seen the progress, the essence of this is get wisdom so you'll know every good path so that you'll be saved from evil.

[30:51] Finally, we look at the summary of the Father's instruction, verses 20 to 22. Let me just read these for us.

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.

There's two ways displayed here. Only two. The way of moral uprightness, integrity, wisdom, the way of wickedness and treachery and folly.

Proverbs is not ultimately concerned about who's going to live and who's going to be thrown out. I don't believe. It's much more concerned about who will live and who will die.

I think that's what we see here in verses 21 and 22. The righteous, the upright, they'll live. The wicked, treacherous, they'll be cut off and they'll be rooted out.

[32:07] They will die. That's why wisdom ultimately is so important because it's a life and death situation that we face. So why seek wisdom and devote the effort to it?

Our lives are at stake. Our lives are at stake. So we've looked at this father's appeal to his son for wisdom. It's not son get wisdom.

It's not club him over the head and dumb kid get wisdom already. It's an appeal, it's a persuasive argument. He says, you've got to put forth effort, you've got to go get wisdom my son. You hear the emotion, the urgency in my voice. You see the benefits of wisdom. You see what comes your way when you seek it and you find the fear of the Lord and you know every good path and you're delivered from this evil and wickedness.

Friends, wisdom is priceless. We cannot esteem it too highly. We cannot gather too much of it. [33:26] It's not going to weigh us down. It's going to lighten us. It's going to free us to live life well. So let me encourage you, prioritize it well.

Prioritize your life so that you might acquire wisdom in abundance. It's that valuable. It deserves that much of our thinking and our lives. I just have three brief points of application to close here. First, I realize that there may be some in this room who do not have a relationship with this God who gives wisdom. And maybe you've been hearing this talk on wisdom and you are compelled to say, well, wisdom sounds pretty good.

My life doesn't seem to work out very often and I don't know how to navigate things and I seem to be walking this path with evil men or with this strange woman.

Let me encourage you then, my friend. Go to the source of wisdom. Humble yourself to fear the Lord. He will give you a new life, a new heart.

[34:43] New hope and an ability to live your life with wisdom. That's what Jesus did when He hung on the cross. He secured wisdom for His people.

He's good. He's so good. You can trust Him with everything and you can bank on the fact that if you come to Him and you bow your knee to Him, He will give you wisdom. You will know how to navigate this life and you will be welcomed into the next.

with open arms. For those of us brothers and sisters in this room, let me just ask you this question. Will you today prioritize or reprioritize the obtaining of wisdom and abundance?

this? It's for the sake of your families, marriages, friends, your coworkers, your neighbors, those people that you haven't even met yet. For the sake of the Lord, tells you how to live rightly before Him and before man.

Will you prioritize it today? That's what this text persuades us to do. Just one final practical way that I think we can do that this morning.

[36:00] I've been looking forward to for a while now the resuming of our sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. We have in this scripture from Matthew 5 through 7 the very words of wisdom incarnate.

Jesus tells us how to live rightly as kingdom citizens. And when we get back there, friends, let's together purpose to listen to His words, to hang on them, to find life in them.

He tells us that the one who obeys Him, who listens to His commands, is the one who builds his house on a rock. The one who forsakes it is build his house on sand. There's wisdom, there's folly. Jesus has the words of wisdom. Embrace them because they have life. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank You for so kind of a text that would call us to love and adore and pursue wisdom with all of our lives.

And we thank You that You didn't just command us, but You laid out these benefits for us and You told us what ultimately is at stake. God, for each of us, would You grow our desire for wisdom more and more for a lifetime.

[37:30] Particularly, Lord, those young people who have an opportunity to live most of their lives from here on out with wisdom. God, would You just make it possible to acquire wisdom from Your mouth.

Give us understanding, we pray. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.