

Chasing Wisdom: Knowing a Good Deal – Proverbs 2:1-22

When we shop here in America, we don't often have to haggle over pricing. Most prices are set and you either purchase it or you don't. Every time I take a trip to Nepal, we spend a portion of one day going to the market area of Kathmandu the capital city. There are whole streets of shops, carrying all sorts of goods and many of them have basically the same items for sale. But the prices are very much negotiable.

One of my favorite experiences in the market happened 3 years ago when I went with my friend Chad. All the shop owners there want to sell to Americans and so we get a lot of attention when we go into a shop. In this particular shop the guy really wanted to sell Chad a wooden chess board. So, he kept bringing out boards that were pretty much all the same and trying to convince us what a great deal each one was. It became comical as the entire floor of the shop was soon filled with chess boards. (Picture)

The phrase you hear all the time from the shop owners is, "This is a good price. This is a good deal." What's funny about this picture is that I don't think Chad ended up buying a chess board from this guy. But, in the price haggling in the market there are moments when the price will go down enough where it qualifies as a good deal. But to determine if it's a good deal you have to know if the item itself is worth spending money on. Often in these market shops the quality of the items just isn't high and they aren't worth spending the money on.

You and I won't chase wisdom if we don't consider it worthwhile and I think this is a lot of our problem. We know it's important, but the value isn't high enough in our eyes to reach the point of putting forth much effort. We don't believe it's a good deal. Proverbs 2 is the second lecture from the father to the son in Proverbs and in this one he gives no commands to his son. He doesn't tell him what to do to chase wisdom. He simply lays out the worth and benefits of wisdom and tries to convince his son and us that it's a good deal to go hard after it.

So, we'll be looking at the whole chapter today and here's what we will see. **2 Actions that Result from Knowing the Worth of Wisdom.**

1. Hunt Down Wisdom Because It's Valuable (vv. 1-11)

I'm going to get a little nerdy on you to start this morning because I want you to see how amazing the Bible is. This lecture is a poem, and it's beautifully and intentionally put together. It has 6 stanzas to it, and it divides into 2 parts that each convey a different point. The first word in the first 3 stanzas all start with the same letter in Hebrew and the first word in the last 3 stanzas all start with the same Hebrew letter.

Notice in the first stanza, verses 1-4 how many times you see the word "if". Acquiring wisdom is not automatic. There's an "if" to it and the first four verses lay out what chasing wisdom requires of us. And then we get the glorious results of this pursuit. Look down to the first word of verse 5 and then the first word of verse 9. These results continue with the second three stanzas in the poem and it's a little more difficult to see in English but notice the beginning of verse 12, verse 16, and verse 20.

Going back to verses 1-4 what are the "ifs" the father lays out for his son? Let me read these verses. Notice how comprehensive the pursuit of wisdom is. It involves our ears, our hearts, our voices, and even our physical bodies searching for hidden treasure. You can also see that the pursuit of wisdom intensifies from verse 1 to verse 4.

Verses 1-2 are more passive. You receive, treasure, and listen well. But then, verses 3-4 are much more active. You call out and raise your voice. But you don't just ask for it, you go try and find it. To seek silver requires know how, exploration, possibly digging and doing a physically demanding task.

Not much in our lives today requires this sort of effort. It's all so easy. Search for silver? The hardest search most of us have engaged in was trying to find toilet paper at the beginning of Covid. This is the complacency we read about at the end of chapter 1 in verse 32. This complacency causes us to forfeit a sense of value.

In the mid 1800's when the California Gold Rush happened people were willing to make a dangerous, cross-country trip that took a long time and upended their

lives because there was the prospect of finding something so valuable it would radically alter the future. Is wisdom really this valuable? Look at verse 5.

Here's the ultimate pay off. Is it worth upending your life to pursue wisdom? Yes it is because wisdom leads us to God and comes from God. Look at verses 6-8. It's a spiral that moves in an upward direction. We go hard after wisdom, and we begin to truly know God. That knowledge of God gives us more wisdom because God dispenses wisdom and then that wisdom grows us deeper in our relationship with God.

But the heart of it is a real hunger for knowing God personally. What does it mean to be a Christian? Why are you here this morning? Well, people answer that question in many different ways. It means having my sins forgiven, being a good person, having biblical morals, working for the good of other people, reading my Bible, praying, raising my kids right, and a host of other answers that could distract us from the main thing.

If we would find God amid all the religious externals we must first determine to find Him, and then proceed in the way of simplicity. Now as always God discovers Himself to "babes" and hides Himself in thick darkness from the wise and the prudent. We must simplify our approach to Him. We must strip down to essentials (and they will be found to be blessedly few). We must put away all effort to impress, and come with the guileless candor of childhood. If we do this, without doubt God will quickly respond. When religion has said its last word, there is little that we need other than God Himself. The evil habit of seeking God-and effectively prevents us from finding God in full revelation. In the "and" lies our great woe. If we omit the "and" we shall soon find God, and in Him we shall find that for which we have all our lives been secretly longing.

It's worth the effort to chase wisdom because you get God. You know Him. You grow in your love for Him. You experience what Tozer called the throbbing heart of NT religion. God Himself.

But you also get the ability to navigate daily life in justice, righteousness, and equity. Look at verse 9. And this will be intrinsic to your person, not something

you have to look up in a book. Look at verses 10-11. Notice the language in verse 11 that “knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.”

This upward spiral of growing in wisdom and finding God and growing in wisdom will change what you long for and desire. In other words, your taste will change. What your heart delights in will change. I was once in a conversation with a guy who was struggling with pornography and I told him, listen, if you will commit yourself to this fight there will come a point when you will find more pleasure in sitting down and reading your Bible than in getting online and finding porn. He replied, I just don’t know how that could be the case. I know I shouldn’t do this, but the pleasure side of it is not something that can change.

Do you remember what Lady Wisdom called out to the simple in Proverbs 1:22? They loved being simple but here as we pursue wisdom it comes into our hearts and becomes pleasant to us. Our passions, longings, and desires change. What we find appealing switches. C.S. Lewis said that we are enslaved to these weak desires and we are messing around instead of pursuing true delight and joy.

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased”

But having our desires changed requires an act of trust to start. It requires a turning to God and believing the promises and benefits of hunting down wisdom, even when we initially want the exact opposite of wisdom and we delight in our simplicity, foolishness, and sin. And the benefits will continue to unfold in daily life as God protects us through our own growing wisdom. Look at verse 11 again which leads us right into our second action that comes from knowing the worth of wisdom.

2. Hope in God’s Protection through Wisdom (vv. 12-22)

We’re going to move quickly through this section which has 3 stanzas. Remember, this is a lecture from a father to a son, and he identifies two major temptations for

young men, but these translate into all of our lives. First, wisdom protects us from the temptation of crooked friends or influences. Let's read verses 12-15.

There's a perpetual temptation for us to jump in with the crowd and it's easy to be influenced by those who are successful, charming, and seem to have it all together. And yet, wisdom will protect us from following these men down a twisted path because we can see that they are following the ways of darkness.

Second, wisdom protects us from getting involved in any form of sexual immorality. Look at verses 16-19. Now, the "forbidden woman" here is probably both a real woman and a metaphor for foolishness. Foolishness is personified throughout these chapters as a woman who tries to seduce this young man. But, the reality is that going against God's design for human sexuality is huge temptation for all of us. Wisdom will protect from this. Why?

Wisdom recognizes that the Bible speaks to sexuality, not because the biblical authors and prudes and Christians think sexuality is taboo. God has built sexuality into us as human beings as a powerful connection tool and gift. It matters very much what we do with our sexuality. God has designed sexuality for marriage between a man and a woman and anything outside of that is unwise and destructive. Wisdom protects in this area because it sees God's purposes and knows God's love for us and wants to live in line with God's design.

Finally, look at the last stanza in verses 20-22. Wisdom will keep you on the way of the good but notice the contrast between the upright inhabiting the land and the wicked being cut off from the land. In Israel in the OT, the promised land was the place where God's covenant promises were experienced and received. It was the place that had the temple where God dwelt and had a relationship with His people. It was the place of blessing for them.

But this is no longer the case for us today. We don't inhabit the land in the middle East. But the glorious news is that the land of Israel, with God dwelling in it, looked forward to something even greater in the NT. God would come to live with His people and take up residence as a human being in Jesus Christ. And then, after

Jesus died to rescue humans from sin and bring them to God, the Holy Spirit comes to dwell with and in His people.

Inhabiting the land looks forward to the time when we will dwell with God on the new earth, but we experience the initial blessings of that now because of Jesus. And so, to walk in wisdom and pursue wisdom for us means abiding in Jesus Christ. Listen to John 15:7.

So, do you recognize a good deal when you see one? All the benefits of wisdom are laid out here for us to see clearly with God at the center. Is it worth your time to chase it? The answer is clearly yes. Let's pray.

Sermon Reflection Questions – 10/11/26

- Tell us about a time you recognized a genuinely good deal and how did you know it was worth it?
- Verses 1-4 involve our ears, our hearts, our voice, and our physical body searching for treasure. Why does the father make the pursuit of wisdom that comprehensive? Why not just say 'listen carefully'?
- The father's argument in verses 1-4 is that wisdom is worth hard pursuit. Honestly, does it feel that way to you right now? Why or why not? What's one change you could make to seek wisdom as silver?
- What's something in your life that requires you to work hard to seek? Where do you find complacency has become a problem for you?
- The sermon gave some options that we at times place at the center of our faith, having my sins forgiven, being a good person, working for the good of others, etc. If there's one thing that can supplant the knowledge of God in your life, what tends to be the 'and' in your faith?
- Describe a time when your tastes or desires genuinely changed, something you once wanted that you no longer want, or something you now love that you once didn't. What shifted??
- The C.S. Lewis quote said that God finds our desires not too strong but too weak. Do you find this to be accurate? What desires in your life override your pursuit of God?

- What would be a modern-day example of a crooked man described in verses 12-15? What makes these kinds of people appealing or hard to see clearly?
- How does wisdom protect us from misusing our sexuality?
- How does the promise of the upright inhabiting the land (v. 21) apply to Christians today?