

Where to Dig

Based on Proverbs 2:1-9 | Finding Wisdom: Where Do We Look?

"If you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord." — Proverbs 2:4-5

SERMON SUMMARY

This second sermon in the Proverbs series took up the question of where wisdom is found. To frame it, the sermon opened with Oak Island — a spit of land off the coast of Nova Scotia where, since 1795, people have been digging for a legendary buried treasure. Six lives and tens of millions of dollars have been spent over more than 230 years. The digging is intense, the clues are tantalizing, and the treasure may or may not be there.

The image captures two truths: first, that real treasure demands real effort — you pour your life into finding it. And second, that effort spent digging in the wrong place yields nothing. The question of wisdom is not just how hard we are searching. It is whether we are searching in the right place.

The Text: A Father's Second Lecture

Proverbs 2 is the second of ten extended lectures in the first nine chapters of the book — a father teaching his son with increasing urgency. The language of seeking escalates: accept my words, store them up, turn your ear, apply your heart, call out for insight, cry aloud for understanding, look for it as for silver, search as for hidden treasure. This is not a casual request. It is an invitation to pour out a life in pursuit of something of immense worth.

Proverbs 2:3-5 "If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God."

Proverbs 3:14-15 "She is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her."

Four Places Where Wisdom Is Found

1. The Humble Learning of God's Community

The opening language of Proverbs 2 — "accept my words, store up my commands" — points to wisdom as something taught. It is received from those who have gone before. The Queen of Sheba traveled to learn from Solomon. Proverbs itself is an ancient textbook of accumulated wisdom. The book repeatedly calls the student to listen: "Walk with the wise and become wise" (Proverbs 13:20). Wisdom is not only taught but caught — absorbed through proximity to wise people and a posture of humble receptivity toward the community that has gone before us.

2. Careful Observation of God's World

Proverbs 6:6 sends the student to watch an anthill: "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise." Proverbs 24 describes a man who passes a neglected field and draws a lesson about poverty from the overgrown weeds and collapsed walls. Wisdom is found in attentive, unhurried observation of the world God made — the natural world and the human world. Watching a friend's affair implode, seeing someone ruin their

life with alcohol, noticing how things work and don't work in God's creation — these are all laboratories of wisdom for those paying attention.

3. Daily Obeying God's Word

Proverbs 2 says that seeking wisdom leads to the fear of the Lord — and that the Lord gives wisdom from his mouth. What is in God's mouth? His word. Psalm 19 echoes this: "The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple." Tim Keller observes that Proverbs is essentially the law of God — the Torah — applied to daily life. Wisdom is not merely reading and processing Scripture. It is putting it into practice. Obeying it. The fear of the Lord that begins wisdom is deepened and confirmed in daily obedience to his word.

4. Trusting God Through Suffering

This fourth place is the least intuitive — but the sermon made a careful case for it. Proverbs 3 says: "The Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in." And the broader wisdom tradition — Job, Ecclesiastes — honestly acknowledges that righteous people suffer, that the wise and the fool can share the same end, and that time and chance happen to all. Suffering, when received under God's providence rather than resisted or fled, becomes a school that no other classroom can replicate. Tim Keller: "Almost every other culture and religion has understood — if you don't suffer, you will not be wise. Virtually everyone who is wise says: I learned the most through my failures, my mistakes, through bad things that happened to me."

Proverbs 3:11-12 "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."

Four Places We Look Instead — and Why They Don't Work

The sermon then named four corresponding wrong places we tend to dig, each a contemporary failure that mirrors one of wisdom's right sources.

- Instead of humble community, we dig in individualism. The Oxford philosopher's article — "most of your opinions aren't yours" — urged readers to throw off inherited wisdom and build their own moral framework from scratch. Conan O'Brien at Harvard put it more bluntly: every phone is algorithmically programmed to celebrate you and you alone. We have become the heroes of our own stories, digging furiously in our own little holes, and finding them empty.
- Instead of careful observation, we choose distraction. Microsoft's annual work trend index found that workers are interrupted every two minutes, experiencing 275 distractions per day — and that each distraction takes 23 minutes to recover from. The average adult spends seven hours per day on screens; Gen Z, nine hours. We no longer observe ants, know our neighbor's name, or notice the freckles on our child's face. We have traded the world for an algorithm.
- Instead of daily obedience, we pursue self-expression. Bible reading among Christians hit its lowest point ever in 2024 — and even the modest recovery in 2025 came alongside declining trust in Scripture. A Calvin University senior wrote of the contempt for confessional Christianity he observed: what is treated as courageous among his peers is not deeper obedience but distance — distance from inherited authority, from Scripture, from anything that makes costly claims on how we live.
- Instead of trusting suffering, we pursue comfort. The features we prioritize in a minivan — heated seats, entertainment systems, crash ratings, lane departure warnings — are a window into our deepest desire: to be comfortable and safe. Our flight from pain is a flight from wisdom. When suffering comes unbidden, it strips away false idols, teaches dependence on God, and opens us to truths that prosperity never could.

The Surprising Reversal: Wisdom Is Also Looking for Us

The sermon's most beautiful turn came near the end. Proverbs 2 calls us to cry out for wisdom. But Proverbs 8 shows wisdom herself calling out — raising her voice to all mankind. We search for wisdom. But wisdom is also searching for us. And the wisdom that cries out for us is ultimately the God who came to seek and save the lost.

Proverbs 2:6 says: "For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." Wisdom is ultimately not earned by our effort. It is given. Discovery and revelation are inseparable. And what, in the end, is the treasure at the bottom of the search? Colossians 2 answers: in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. When we learn from community, observe the world, obey the word, and pass through suffering — what we find at the end of each path is the same person: Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God.

Colossians 2:2-3 "...that they may know the mystery of God, namely Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Key Takeaway

Wisdom is hidden treasure — and it demands the effort of a lifetime to find. But we are digging in the wrong spots: in our own individualism, our own distracted screens, our own flight from authority and suffering. The right places to dig are the community of God's people, the world God made, the word God speaks, and the school of suffering under his providence. And at the bottom of each of those holes is the same thing: Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Take your time. Listen well to each other. There are no wrong answers — only honest ones.

1

The Oak Island treasure hunt has consumed 230 years, six lives, and tens of millions of dollars — because the searchers are convinced something valuable is there, and they know roughly where to dig. What would it look like for you to pursue wisdom with that same intensity? What holds you back from that kind of pursuit?

2

The sermon described wisdom as something both taught and caught in the community of God's people. Who has been a source of wisdom in your life — someone you learned from by being around them, not just listening to them? What specifically did you catch from them that you couldn't have gotten any other way?

3

"Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise." Wisdom requires attentive observation of the world around you — the natural world and the human world. When did you last truly observe something — a person, a situation, a pattern in creation — and draw wisdom from it? What gets in the way of that kind of attention?

4

The sermon cited a study showing that Bible reading hit its lowest point ever in 2024 — and that even modest recovery came with declining trust in Scripture. Where are you personally in your relationship with God's word right now — not just reading it, but trusting it and obeying it? What is your honest answer?

5

Tim Keller said: "You don't really learn to trust God until you're drowning. You don't really come to see that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have." Has suffering ever been a source of wisdom for you — teaching you something you could not have learned any other way? What did it teach?

6

The sermon named four places we dig instead of the right ones: individualism, distraction, self-expression, and comfort. Which of these four is your most natural default? Where do you find yourself digging most often when you need wisdom?

7

Colossians 2 says in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. The sermon said that at the end of every right search — community, world, word, suffering — what we find is Jesus. How does that reframe the practice of seeking wisdom from a self-improvement project into something else entirely?

LIVING IT OUT

Wisdom is a treasure that demands a lifetime of digging — in the right places, with the right posture, for the right prize.

In Your Inner Life

- Read Proverbs 2:1-9 slowly each morning this week. Notice the escalating verbs: accept, store up, turn your ear, apply your heart, call out, cry aloud, look, search. Ask yourself honestly: does my pursuit of wisdom have that kind of intensity? What would it look like if it did?
- The sermon said wisdom is both taught and caught, sought and given. Spend time this week in Psalm 119:97-105 — the great psalm of delight in God's word as a source of wisdom. Let it be a prayer: make me love this the way the psalmist does.
- Sit with Colossians 2:2-3 — "in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Ask: is Jesus the treasure I am actually digging for? Or am I using wisdom-seeking as a self-improvement project with Jesus as an add-on? Be honest.

In Your Closest Relationships

- The sermon said wisdom is caught in community — through proximity to wise people. Identify one person in your life, older or wiser than you, whose way of living you admire. Make a specific plan to spend time with them this week or this month. Come with one question you actually want their wisdom on.
- The sermon noted that workers are interrupted 275 times a day and that the average person spends seven or more hours on screens. This week, choose one meal or one shared activity with someone you care about and put your phone away entirely. Practice the observation that wisdom requires.

- Is there a relationship in your life where you have been a "fool" in Proverbs' terms — certain you know what's right and resistant to input? Name it honestly. Ask God for the humility that wisdom begins with and take one small step toward openness this week.

In Your Daily Life and Work

- "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise." This week, go outside — deliberately — and observe something in the created world with unhurried attention. An anthill if you can find one. A field, a garden, a sky. Ask: what is this showing me about how God made things to work?
- The sermon said wisdom is found in observing the human world too — watching a friend's poor choice and drawing a lesson, seeing consequences unfold in someone else's life. Without gossip or judgment, reflect on one pattern you have observed in the lives of people around you and ask: what is this teaching me about how to live?
- Identify one area of your work or daily life where you have been relying on habit, instinct, or a system rather than genuine discernment. This week, bring intentional attention to that area. Ask: what does wisdom actually look like here, in this specific situation?

In Your Faith Community

- The sermon noted that profession of faith is an invitation to all four places of wisdom: humble learning in community, observant living in the world, daily obedience to the word, and trusting God through suffering. How are you currently doing in each of these four? Which one is strongest? Which needs the most attention?
- The sermon mentioned Matt Punt — a young man from the congregation facing extraordinary suffering. If there is someone in your church community going through something painful right now, reach out this week. Not with answers. With presence. And if the moment allows, ask them what they are learning in it.
- This is the second of three orientation sermons before the series applies wisdom to specific areas of life. As you prepare for the next few weeks, identify one area — speech, money, work, relationships, alcohol — where you most want wisdom. Write it down. Bring it to the series.

A Word to Carry

We have been digging in the wrong holes. The treasure is not found in our own individualism, our distracted screens, our flight from authority, or our desperate comfort-seeking. But here is the good news: even as we search, wisdom is calling out for us. And the God who calls is the God who seeks and saves the lost. The treasure, when you find it, is a person.

SERVICE CHALLENGE

Wisdom is found in community — taught and caught through proximity to those who have gone before. This week, be that source for someone else.

This Week's Challenge: Pass On What You've Learned

The father in Proverbs pours his wisdom into his son. Somewhere in your life, you are the one who has gone before. This week, find someone younger or less experienced and give them something you have learned.

Step 1 — Name Someone.

Think of one person in your life who is younger in age, faith, or experience — and who is facing something you have navigated before. A decision, a season, a kind of suffering. Write their name down.

Step 2 — Share What You Actually Learned.

Not a lecture or a polished lesson — just honest testimony. What did you learn from your own experience — including from your failures and suffering — that this person might need to hear? Wisdom is caught through honesty, not performance.

Step 3 — Point Them to the Right Places.

In the conversation, name at least one of the four right places: a community to lean into, the world to observe carefully, the word to dig into, or the suffering to trust God through. Help them see where to dig, not just how hard.

Step 4 — Pray With Them.

End by asking God together for the wisdom James 1:5 promises: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." Let prayer be the acknowledgment that wisdom is ultimately given, not earned.

Step 5 — Come Back and Share.

If you're in a small group or Sunday school class, come ready to share briefly what happened. When we share what wisdom we have been given, it multiplies. That is exactly how the community of the wise works.

Optional Extended Challenge

- Read James 1:1-8 and 3:13-18 this week — the New Testament's most concentrated teaching on wisdom. Notice how James connects wisdom to trials (chapter 1) and to peaceable, humble living (chapter 3). How does James complement what Proverbs 2 teaches about where wisdom is found?
- Take 30 minutes this week to sit outside, without a screen, and simply observe. Notice the natural world. Notice the neighborhood around you. Let your attention wander slowly and unhurriedly. At the end, ask: what did I see? What might it be teaching me? Write down one observation and the wisdom it suggests.
- This week, find and read the parable Jesus tells in Matthew 7:24-27 about the wise and foolish builders. Ask: what "house" am I currently building — and on what foundation? How does the image of digging down to bedrock connect to the image of searching for hidden treasure in Proverbs 2?

Closing Prayer Guide

Whether you're using this in a group or on your own, close by praying through these four things:

- Give thanks — that wisdom is not only something we seek, but something that seeks us; that the God who calls us to search is the same God who comes to seek and save the lost.
- Confess honestly — the wrong holes we have been digging: the individualism, the distraction, the distance from authority, the flight from suffering. Name your particular hole.
- Ask for the right posture — humility before the community of God's people, attention to God's world, obedience to God's word, and trust in God's providence through suffering. Ask God to make you the kind of person who looks in the right places.
- Pray James 1:5 together — "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him." Ask. Specifically. By name. For the decisions in front of you this week.

"You don't really come to see that Jesus is all you need until Jesus is all you have."

— Tim Keller | From This Week's Sermon