

The Wisdom of Pursuing Wisdom – Proverbs 2.1-6

**1 My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you,
2 So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;
3 Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,
4 If you seek her as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;
5 Then you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.
6 For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

PRAY: Father in heaven, we rejoice that we can hear and read and learn from Your precious word this morning. We bow before You, as our King, and ask that You would grant us wisdom to understand and apply Your word, which is our life, and thus grow in our love for You. Fill us with Your Spirit; give us teachable hearts, ready to apply Your word, for we ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. Amen.

Intro: I am not sure many of you know what the official name of the Duff family homeschool is. You have to have a name when you fill out the Rule 13 forms for the state. Well, we chose this passage in Proverbs as what we want our schooling to be about. And we had the kids learn this and repeat it. So we ended up calling ourselves, “The Wise Guys Homeschool”, because this passage is all about wisdom, and the pursuit of the wisdom that pleases the Lord.

And we have put that on our forms for many years now. We started our children’s education in Japan about 25 years ago, and then moved back to the US in 1992 and began homeschooling in NE.

In pursuing biblical wisdom, we are pursuing Jesus Christ, and that is what we wanted our children’s education to be about. We wanted them to grow in wisdom, which meant they would be seeking the Lord. And in pursuing Jesus Christ, they would be increasing in wisdom, the wisdom which is from above (James 3.17).

By the way, our first home business was called “Hidden Treasurers” also from this passage. And it turns out that our treasures were so hidden that not many bought very much from us!

This passage in Proverbs 2 was written by Solomon, and it was revealed to him to give to his sons, and to us, to grow in wisdom, to understand what wisdom is, and how to be active in the pursuit of wisdom. In fact all of Proverbs is about growing in wisdom, in the application of biblical principles.

This morning my goal is to encourage us all to plant our roots deep into the heart of God's word, and to treasure it.

In these 5 verses, which is a long conditional clause, the "if" parts of the conditional are verse 1, which includes v 2, and then in v3, and v4. And the "then" part of the conditional statement is in verse 5. And I will be focusing on the verbs, the action words, in this passage, because we are looking at the pursuit of wisdom.

v1. My son, if you receive my words, And treasure my commands within you...

Solomon begins by reminding his son of his role as a father, by imploring his son (and others around him) to receive his words, this revelation from the living God, and to accept them. This is the beginning of the process – to receive what is taught, not reject it.

Receive means you accept something from someone else and it becomes yours, temporarily or permanently. And in terms of receiving gifts, the giver doesn't expect them to be given back! We are to keep what has been bestowed. To accept them permanently.

And in this case, not only to receive and to keep, but to treasure! Which is the next action word. V1b:... **treasure my commands within you..**

Treasuring something is a whole lot more than just receiving it. You have a whole lot more *involvement* and *desire* and *ownership* when you treasure something. You received it, and then you realized its worth, its incredible value. And so you *hold on to it*, you *fear losing it* or *forgetting it*, and you *look at it a lot*, *keep it near you*, and *talk about it*, and *think about it all the time*, you *hide it* (in your heart!), and *guard it*!

If you treasure something, you don't readily give it up! You see how

wonderful and valuable this treasure is, so you cling to it, or hide it maybe, or protect it from being lost.

And a wonderful treasure makes you want more, and hopefully makes you realize how much you have, so you give some of that treasure to others! You have so much that you know you can't contain it, so you give it. It is so much - how can you keep it all?! The Lord Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive.

And we have, in the word of God, what is beyond all treasure and all wealth! We have God's own words. Given to us! To keep, and to give!

And we have a treasure in the word of God that we barely comprehend. If we realized more what a treasure the word of God is, the commands of the living God, which are infallible, powerful, then we would do whatever it takes to get more!

It is an infinite treasure, it never ends, and the more we get now, the more we will continue to enjoy it in heaven. And in sharing it we lose nothing. He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep (just for himself) to gain what he can not lose.

David Ps 119:162 **I rejoice at Your word As one who finds great treasure.** This word is a treasure! How grievous that it can become tiresome for us! That we don't see the treasure that it is. That most of us have had available to us all our lives.

Ps 19.10: **More to be desired *are they* than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.**

Job said: (Job 23.12): **I have not departed from the commandment of His lips; I have treasured the words of His mouth, More than my necessary *food*.**

Job treasured God's commands more than his necessary food. He could forget about his food, but he could not depart from God's word. In a similar way, the Lord said (Jn 4): "**My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me.** And like Him we should say, My purpose is to know and to do the will of God.

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, in the midst of being treated cruelly for speaking the truth, the word of God, to his people, said” **Your words were found, and I ate them, And Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart..** May that be so for us!

David said: (Ps 119.131): **I opened my mouth and panted, For I longed for Your commandments.** He panted like a very tired and thirsty animal would. With great desire to have his thirst satisfied, his thirst for the word of God.

How often do we *hunger* and *thirst* and *pant* for the word of God, and treasure it in a way that makes us want to always be near it?

The Lord said, “**Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.**” We can live physically with bread, but we can not live in the spirit without every word that is from the mouth of God.

...where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6.21) Our hearts will naturally be fixated on that which we treasure. You should treasure your husband or wife, and your family, and this body, and your salvation in Christ, all of which you received by the good hand of God, like His word.

And we only know those blessed things are treasures because His word shows us what a treasure they are! We don’t even know what a true treasure is, without His word, and we know of our greatest treasure, the Lord Jesus, by His word.

Col 2.2-3: speaks of the Father, and also the Son: **in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

In Matthew 13.44 Jesus was speaking to His disciples: **..the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.**

This man took everything he had and bought the whole field; he didn’t want the field, but he wanted the treasure in it! So because of joy over this treasure, he sold all he had and bought the field.

How would you feel if you found a treasure buried in a field. Parables have one point and it is not wise to stretch the meaning here. But this man knew a treasure when he saw it, and he did what he needed to do to get it. And we know that the disciples did forsake all and follow Jesus, who is the true treasure of the kingdom.

How much will we give up to get more of the treasure of God's word? I think for most of us, it comes down to time. Time given to discipline ourselves to hear, read, study, memorize, and meditate on this word, the 5 ways to take it in.

Proverbs 3.13-15: **Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom, And the man *who* gains understanding;
14 For her proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold.
15 She *is* more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.**

Happy is the person who finds wisdom, like the man in the parable who found a treasure he would give his all for. There is no comparison between anything else of value, anything else you may desire, with the treasure of the word of the kingdom, with the wisdom of God.

Video of Chinese Christians who received their own Bible for the first time; and just wept and held on to it as the treasure it is. Int'l Christian Concern "Missionary Footage Captures Emotion of Chinese Christians Receiving Bibles for the First Time.

I think if you had asked them at that point, or most any time, if there was anything else they desired, more than the word of God, they would just say No!, if they could even answer. They would probably just shake their heads. Our persecuted brethren know how desperately they need the word, and what a treasure it is.

I am humbled every time I see this, and almost whenever I think of it, and I grieve that I don't see the preciousness of the word of God maybe as they do. I take it for granted. May the Lord forgive me, and cause me to rejoice and give thanks for His wonderful, powerful, word.

I'd like to address the younger ones here briefly. I guess most here are younger than me. Those kids still living at home. You have received the word from your parents, and from this church, for many years; you have accepted it, and have been greatly blessed to grow up hearing it.

And I would ask you to pray, that you would also treasure it for yourselves. That for each of you, the word of God would become the joy and delight of your heart, and that you would accept the responsibility and calling, as children of the covenant of grace, to treasure it. It is your life. May you each long for it with all your heart.

Deut 32.46, 47: **“Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law. 47 For it *is* not a futile thing for you, because it *is* your life..** The word of God is not a futile or vain part of our lives-it is our life!

Let's, all of us, ask the Lord to give us hearts which treasure His commands!

Verse 2 then shows some of the indicators that we do want to receive the words of the Lord, and that we do treasure His commands within us.

v2. So that you incline your ear to wisdom, And apply your heart to understanding;

First, we should always incline our ear to hear when wisdom speaks.

Do you remember the EF Hutton commercial? EF Hutton gives investment advice. Two men are speaking at a party, with many others in small groups around the room chatting. And one man says, “My financial advisor is EF Hutton, and EF Hutton says” and then the whole room is suddenly quiet as everyone inclines their ears, to listen to the advice. So they can hear and benefit from this advice.

To incline your ear, or some versions have, “turn your ear”, is an expression which means you do what it takes to hear. You strain to

listen. You take steps to get your ear so that it can hear. You want to learn what the Lord says.

You pay close attention to learn and grow in wisdom. And this expression, “incline your ear”, is often connected in scripture with applying the heart.

Psalm 119.112: **I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes, (to apply them) forever, to the very end.** Now there is a good vow to make. (Of Lawful Oath and Vows in Ch. 22 of the Westminster confession)

In Psalm 119:36: David asked the Lord’s help in this: **Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness (to selfish gain).**

And the answer to this prayer will always be that we will be led by the Spirit, to go to the word, and listen to what the Lord is saying in it.

David was asking God to give him a heart which was inclined to listen to the word of God, and obey it.

And we also must pray that He would give us hearts to incline our ears to His word, which we will then apply.

Have you asked the Lord lately to give you a heart to listen to His word? You must listen to His word if you intend to apply it, and thus please the Lord.

We understand the word of God, and have power to apply it, by the leading and power of the Holy Spirit.

So let’s boldly ask Him to make us children who will listen and obey; to give us hearts for His word. Have you asked that of Him lately?

And just as it is our privilege, as His children to ask for this, it is also our responsibility to take action by the faith He gives. This is part of what it means to apply our heart to understanding.

I’d like to suggest a way to do this, an application. Turn in Psalm 119. Psalm 119 is organized with 22 eight-verse sections with each

letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Please look at verses 97-104. You might have been worried I was going to read it all!

I am not sure how many times as Christian I have done this, but I would take 22 days, usually during my morning devotions, to read and pray through one eight-verse section, asking the Lord to *give me a much deeper love for His word, to make me a man who longs for His word*, and thus for Him, with all my heart.

And every time I have done this, He has blessed me, by His grace, in turning my heart to Him, and giving me a deeper love for His word. How will he not also with Jesus freely give us all things, freely give us what He knows we need?

Each time I have done this He has taken my “mustard seed faith” and given me a greater delight in, and hunger for, and thankfulness for, His precious word.

(example: go through verses 97-104)

And I have done this with others. Maybe you can commit to doing this with another person - your spouse, a child; or with your family in family devotions, having each person read and pray a bit about that verse.

Those 22 days can change your life, because God uses His word to conform you to His image.

And crying out, together with fasting, that the Lord would give you a great love for His word, and thus for Him, humbles us, and honors the Lord. And you are certainly praying according to His will in this.

v3. Yes, if you cry out for discernment, And lift up your voice for understanding,

The “yes” here is for reinforcement of what he just said. It’s like saying “Amen” to what was just said, and then clarifying it even more. It is an “if” statement, but is the continuing of the “So-that” actions from verse 2, because you receive the words of the inspired speaker, and treasure the Lord’s commands.

So we have gone from receiving and treasuring, which show the desire for wisdom. Then to further actions which help you to attain wisdom and grow in desire for it: inclining and applying. And now to crying out, and lifting your voice.

If you cry out for discernment, and lift your voice for understanding,...

Notice that action words have increasing intensity and desire. Crying out means you are eager to grow in wisdom enough to make it known, and probably more than just once. You steadily cry out or lift your voice. And it's not like you're just saying "can I have a little more" in a quiet voice.

You aren't like Oliver Twist (the Dickens character) who went up to the master of the orphanage and said, in a timid voice, "Please sir, I want some more".

No, you are insistent and bold; you cry out until you know you are heard. You keep asking.

The Lord told a parable in Luke 18 to emphasize that we ought always to pray and not lose heart. The unjust judge gave in to the widow, not because of her claim was just, but because he was worn out by her "continual coming".

Brothers and sisters, our God is not so! Our God hears every cry of His children, and will answer as a perfect, loving Father would.

If you are not growing in discernment and knowledge, have you been crying out for it? Have you verbally cried out, in faith, to the Lord who loves you, for an increase in wisdom? For a love for His word?

Psalm 119.169: **Let my cry come before You, O Lord;
Give me understanding according to Your word.**

You are crying out to the One who wants you to cry out to Him, who can fully answer your request? This is a fervent expression that You trust Him to hear you, and to act.

And there is an aspect of crying out and lifting your voice that relates to the asking of others, who can help you to grow in wisdom, and grow in your love for the word.

Have you asked someone recently to help you grow in discernment and understanding of the word of God? Have you asked your elders, your parents, close friends? If you haven't, what stops you from doing that? Is it busyness, is it pride, is it fear?

Those aren't adequate reasons to withhold asking of the Lord, and of those He gives who can help, what He wants you to ask. And which He can supply according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus!

The final actions (in this passage) in our pursuit of wisdom, that you take because you treasure the commands of the Lord, : v4. **If you seek her (wisdom and understanding) as silver, And search for her as for hidden treasures;**

First you seek the wisdom of the Lord like silver. One commentary said: "You search for it like a prospector panning for gold, like an adventurer on a treasure hunt".

In the scriptures, silver and gold are often referred to as the most valuable means of exchange, and of storing wealth. And it still, of course, is a valuable commodity today.

Highly refined silver was sought by those who could buy it, as a means of preserving wealth, and as a trustworthy medium of exchange. In society then, it was recognized by all for its value, and so people would seek to acquire it, and to store it up.

Are you storing up the word of God? **Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You. (Ps 119.11)**

RC Sproul Sr. said: "The word of God can be in the mind without being in the heart, but it can not be in the heart without first being in the mind."

Many of the articles of the tabernacle and the temple were made of silver, because it was pure and beautiful, and on an earthly level, one of the most valuable commodities. And so it was also given as an

offering to the Lord.

Psalm 12.6: **The words of the Lord *are* pure words, *Like silver tried in a furnace of earth, Purified seven times.***
Very pure; the dross is removed seven times. And the word of God is perfectly pure.

Psalm 119.140: **Your word *is* very pure; Therefore Your servant loves it.** We should love the word of God because it is pure.

Psalm 119.72: **The law of Your mouth *is* better to me than thousands of *coins of gold and silver.***

Proverbs 3.13-15: **Happy *is* the man *who* finds wisdom, And the man *who* gains understanding;
14 For her (Wisdom's) proceeds *are* better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. She *is* more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her.**

This wisdom of God in His word is far more precious than all the things we desire; everything we desire put together is no comparison to finding the Lord's wisdom.

Proverbs 16.16: **How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.**

So we are to seek wisdom like silver, but wisdom from God is much more valuable than silver. There is no comparison. Silver one of the most valuable items on earth, is nothing compared to getting more of the wisdom of God in the word of God.

We are to acquire it whenever we can, to be looking for chances to get it. In the commodities market, when the price of silver is advantageous, we buy some more.

And so we can and should pray: Ps 119.18: **Open my eyes, that I may see Wondrous things from Your law.** We should really pray like that any time we open the word.

In the US, and in this church, we have extreme freedom now to grow in wisdom through the word of God. We have advantages that few in history have had to receive the word, and to learn it.

By the grace of God, the results of these actions, of this pursuit, yield more fruit than you can fathom.

What efforts could you possibly expend which would yield more treasure, more lasting treasure, more valuable treasure, than those taken by faith to get the wisdom from above, in the word of God? And all these action words apply to our seeking of the Lord Jesus.

So, if you receive the words of the Lord, if you treasure them, if you incline your ear to the wisdom of the word, if you apply your heart to understanding, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek for wisdom like silver, and search for wisdom as for hidden treasures, then the result will be, by the grace of God:

v5.you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.

All your effort - all the actions you take, all the time you spend, and all the work you do to get wisdom, results first of all in a fuller understanding of the **fear of the Lord**. You will begin to grasp even more how awesome is our God, and that wisdom is - to fear Him.

Matthew Henry said: "Those who earnestly seek heavenly wisdom, will never complain that they have lost their labour (labor in vain); and the freeness of the gift does not do away with the necessity of our diligence." It is a free gift, AND we are to be diligent in pursuing it.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. They are so connected that if we grow in wisdom, it means also that we are growing in the fear of God. If we are weak in an understanding of the fear of God, we are lacking in wisdom.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction. Prov 1.7

A person who says there is no God, and does not fear Him, is called

a fool.

Foolishness and wisdom are opposites, and to grow in wisdom is to decrease in foolishness.

To grow in the fear of the Lord, in awe of His holiness and power, is to grow in wisdom.

You know you are growing in wisdom when you desire the Lord, and His word; you are in awe of both.

And you know you need to cry out for wisdom, if you do not have that desire for Him and for His word. The Lord Jesus is wisdom **from** God, He is the wisdom **of** God.

1 Cor 1.24: **Christ... the power of God and the wisdom of God.**

1 Cor 1.30: **But of Him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God...**

The Lord Jesus is the source of wisdom because He is wisdom, and His word is given to make us wise unto salvation.

And finally if you are active in pursuing the riches of wisdom, you will find the knowledge of God. What a true treasure! The knowledge of the God - who is unsearchable without His grace, and whom we will be seeking for eternity.

Rom 11.33: **Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out!**

And what joy to expend your life, and all its energy in the pursuit of the wisdom of God, which is to know the Lord, and to grow in the depth of riches we have in Christ, and which we know through His word!

Verse 6 (here in Prov 2) tells us **...the Lord gives wisdom, From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

In James 1.5 we are told that **If any of you lacks wisdom, let him**

ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

If the Lord wants to give us wisdom, if He wants us to ask and wants to give wisdom liberally and without reproach, we should not hesitate to ask, to seek, and to knock. **If you then, being evil** (being a sinner), **know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!**

If you actively pursue wisdom, by His grace, according to His word, **you will understand the fear of the Lord, And find the knowledge of God.** That is wisdom, and it is worth pursuing with all that is in you!

Pray: Father in heaven, we thank You for Your goodness and grace in giving us Your precious word, and for sending the Lord Jesus, who is our wisdom. O that we would love you and fear You and delight in Your word. And we praise You for the Holy Spirit who enables us to understand and apply Your living word. Give us hearts to become lovers of Your word, to treasure Your wisdom, that we might understand the fear of the Lord and find more of the knowledge of You, for we ask this, according to Your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

Charge: Brothers and sisters in Christ, take action to grow in love for the word and for the Lord. He takes our feeble steps of faith and blesses us beyond all comprehension, by giving us an understanding of the fear of the Lord, and helping us to find the knowledge of God.

The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face shine upon and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen