

Proverbs 2:1-22

Everyday Wisdom: The Benefits of Wisdom

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(S1) Have you ever had someone try to **sell** you something? What's the **typical pattern** a **salesperson** uses? First, they tell you all the **amazing benefits** of their service or product. "Our miracle product..."

...will lower cholesterol..."
...will help you burn fat and lose weight..."
...will keep your information safe and secure..."
...will give you better gas mileage..."
...will make you happy and content..."

And **then** once you're convinced they show you the **price tag**...

"For only four payments of \$999.99..."
"If you only eat Subway for breakfast, lunch, and dinner every day..."
"If you sign up for our monthly never-ending subscription-based service..."
"Your monthly car payment can be as low as..."
"If you sign your life and soul over we will..."

The typical pattern is—here's the **benefits** and **then** here's how you get them. Today, I want to **reverse** that **pattern**. First, I want to tell you how to **get wisdom**, and then I want to tell you its **benefits**. This is the **pattern** our **passage** takes and I like it because when I finally tell you the benefits of wisdom you'll be able to **weigh** in your own mind if it's worth it. So first...

(S2) How to get wisdom:

Wisdom is "skill for living", but **living God's way** instead of our own way. Once again the **father-figure** in Proverbs is teaching his son (who we can all put ourselves in the place of) how to get wisdom. He tells him **four ways** to get wisdom (not four **different** ways). You should do them **all** if you want to get wisdom.

Proverbs 2:1-5

1 My son, if you accept my words
and store up my commands within you,
2 turning your ear to wisdom
and applying your heart to understanding—
3 indeed, if you call out for insight
and cry aloud for understanding,
4 and if you look for it as for silver
and search for it as for hidden treasure,
5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord
and find the knowledge of God. (NIV)

The first way to get wisdom we find in verse one.

(S3) 1. Belief in God's Word (v1)

The **father-figure** says, “My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you...” The **author Solomon** is talking about a father’s words found in the book of Proverbs, but he’s also talking about **God’s whole Word**, the **Hebrew Scriptures** (what we call the **Old Testament** today). The word for commands (mitsvah) can also mean the laws God gave his people Israel (Gen 26:5; Exod 26:28).¹ So it’s like Solomon or the father-figure is saying, “My son, if you want wisdom, believe in God’s Word.”

Each one of us comes to a **turning point** in our lives where we have to **decide** the **final rule** for our lives. Is it going to be God’s **unchanging perfect words** and **commands** that although they are **hard** we know they are **good, true, and best**? Or are we going to choose our own **feelings** and **intuitions** and **desires** and what the **world says is best**? God’s Word offers us a **firm-foundation** for our lives, a foundation that won’t let us down. But if we choose anything else we’re choosing something that might say **one thing today** and a **different thing tomorrow**. Eggs are good for you. Eggs are bad for you. **Drink** coffee. Coffee is bad for you. Drink more **milk**. Drink **soy** milk. Drink **almond** milk. How about with the serious things? **Divorce** is bad. Get a divorce if it makes you **happy**. Divorce is actually detrimental to society. **How many** issues can you think of where **10-20 years** ago everyone said one things and now today people say just the opposite? That is **shifting sands**, that’s **stormy waters** (James 1:5-8). I want to build my life on the **rock** of God’s Word that never changes. *First, we get wisdom by believing in God’s Word.*

(S4) 2. Memorization of God’s Word (v1)

We’re still in verse one. What does it mean to “store up” something? Did any of you prepare for **Y2K**? So **kids**, a long time ago everyone was worried that when the clocks on our computers turned from **December 31st 1999** to **January 1st 2000** there was going to be a **computer meltdown** that would cause **food shortages** and **financial errors**—the **apocalypse**. So to prepare people stored up **canned** food, **powdered** food, **dried** food, and water and drinks that wouldn’t go bad. Our family bought **powdered peach drink**. So **by golly** if the world failed we were still going to have our powdered peach drink. And when Y2K came and no one but **Blockbuster** video had problems we still had our peach drink and it **tasted good**.

We “stored up” to **avert disaster**. Likewise, God calls us to “**store up**” his **Word** within us to **avert disaster** in our lives. How do we do that? By **memorizing** the Bible. This is one of the reasons we have a **foundation verse** at Cornerstone for every sermon series. We want to encourage each other to “store up” God’s Word in our own hearts because God uses it to **strengthen us**, give us **hope**, and teach us **how to live**. **Cut** the foundation verse out of the **bulletin**. Put it on your **mirror** or in your **Bible**, somewhere you will **see it** and **memorize it**. Memorize **other verses** too, one’s that will remind you of hope and God’s love and promises. *Second, we get wisdom by memorizing God’s Word.*

(S5) 3. Acceptance of God’s Word (v2)

Proverbs 2:2 says to turn our ears to wisdom and apply our hearts to understanding. Do you ever get in a disagreement and the person you’re fighting with says, “**You’re not listening to me!**” Sometimes that’s true. One person is **not paying attention** because they’re too busy **talking** or **thinking**. But **usually** that means “You’re not **agreeing** with me.” Proverbs 2 is saying to get wisdom we need to **hear** it with our **ears** and **accept** it with our **hearts** and **agree to it** with our lives. We need to **open ourselves up** and let God’s **Words** and **ways sink deep** into who we are. In Hebrew culture the heart was the **core** of a person, their **true identity**. We don’t want God’s Word to go **in one ear and out the other**, but go in through the **ear**, **through** the **mind**, and down deep into our **heart**. When I **prepare sermons** that’s one of the things I think about. I want God’s Word to **affect me first** but then I want it to affect **you all too**. We don’t want to just sit here and hear without listening or agreeing. *Third, we get wisdom by accepting God’s Word.*

(S6) 4. Ask God for it (prayer) (v3-4)

This is perhaps the simplest way to get wisdom, ask God for it. Verse 3 tells us to “call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding” (NIV). If you want wisdom, pray that God will give you some. Sometimes prayer is the **only step we take**. We ask God for wisdom but we don’t try to memorize and understand his Word. Prayer goes hand and hand with God’s Word. It’s like **peanut butter and jelly** or **eggs and bacon** or since we’re in **New England** it’s like **fish and chips**. **God’s Word and prayer** together make a **delicious wisdom platter**. If you want wisdom, ask God for it.

(S7) James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. (NIV)

I’ve been listening to **teachings** on Proverbs by **Dr. Bruce Waltke** from BiblicalTraining.org. I **recommend** checking it out if you want to grow in your **understanding of the Bible**. One of the points Waltke makes is that wisdom isn’t just knowing how to make the **right decision**, but wisdom is a **character quality**. When you and I pray for wisdom it’s **not only** that we would make the right choice (it is that) but it’s also praying that God would **make us into the kind of people** who would make the right choice. It’s praying God would **develop** our **character** so we choose with **integrity** and **discernment**.

(S8) So **how do we get wisdom**? *First, by believing in God’s Word. Second, by memorizing God’s Word. Third, by accepting God’s Word, and fourth, by asking God for wisdom through prayer.* Now I’ve told you how to get wisdom, but what are the benefits of wisdom? What **makes it worth doing** all those things? What makes it worth signing up?

(S9) The benefits of wisdom:

The point of these things is not just to do them for the sake of doing them, but for the sake of **something greater**. Did you ever watch those old Mastercard commercials? A **man** and **woman** walk into a **gas station**. As the gas station **attendant** rings up their purchases he says:

chips: \$3
frozen beverage: \$2
gas: \$31
starting a new life together: priceless...

But then the woman shakes her head “no” so the gas station attendant tries again.

rekindling a fire that never went out? (she shakes her head again)
satisfying a much-needed slushy fix?... Priceless.

So what’s the **priceless** things we are seeking by pursuing wisdom? **God himself**.

(S10) Knowing God (v5-6)

Verse 5 says if we seek wisdom, “then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” The fear of the Lord is believing that God’s “**threats are real** and his **promises are true**”.² **Jesus’ death** on the **cross** and **resurrection from the grave** shows us that God’s **threats are real**—that if we don’t **deal** with our **sins** he will **put us to death**—but that his **promises are real**—that if we put our faith and trust in him he will **forgive** us of our sins and **cleanse** us from all **unrighteousness**. It’s as we come to understand **who God is through Christ Jesus** that we begin to actually know God.

Do you want to **know about God** or **know God**? You might know a lot of things about your **favorite celebrity** or **professional sports athlete**, you might know what **movies** they’re in or their **batting average**, but that doesn’t mean you know them.³ There’s a **simple test** for if you know them. Do they **know you**? If I

were to walk up to **Tom Cruise** or or **Tom Brady** and if I were to **name drop your name** what would they say? “Oh yeah. I know him!” Or more likely... “Who?”

Come with me **one step further**. If I were to walk up to **God** and to name drop your name what would he say? “Oh yes, I know her. I love her very much.” Or “Who?” We seek wisdom because we’re seeking God. We want to know him. But the next verse tells us this is **only possible** by **God’s grace**.

Proverbs 2:6

For the Lord gives wisdom;
from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

We can only know God **if God wants to know us**. We can only **acquire** wisdom if God wants to give it to us. It’s both an “**as we seek**” and an “**as he gives**” kind of **exchange**. We seek to obey and know God and God gives us a relationship with him. Or put it in the **reverse**. God gives us a relationship with him **and so we obey** and know God. *What’s the **priceless benefit of wisdom?** **Knowing God himself.***

The benefits just keep growing out of this. If you know God you’re part of the family and God protects you.

Proverbs 2:7-8

7 He holds success in store for the upright,
he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
8 for he guards the course of the just
and protects the way of his faithful ones.

(S11) God’s protection (v7-19)

God’s wisdom grants us protection from **potential disasters**. I don’t mean **natural** disasters but rather God’s wisdom **protect us from ourselves**, from bad things we might do. **God’s wisdom protects us from:**

- **(S12) Committing injustice** (v9-11) - Sinning against others by treating them **unfairly**. If God gives us his wisdom we will want to treat others with **fairness** and **equity** even at **cost** to ourselves.
- **(S13) Wicked men** (or women) **who love sin** (v12-15) - We talked **last week** about “those who take advantage of others for their own gain.” As God grants us wisdom and **character like his** we **won’t** be **drawn** to them but will **recognize** them for who they are.
- **(S14) Unfaithful women** (or men) **who break their marriage promise** (v16-19) - Verse 16 says that “Wisdom will save you [...] from the **wayward woman** with her **seductive words**.” (NIV) Sometimes beauty might cause a break in marriage vows but often it is words, **words of affirmation** and **acceptance**. It’s a **listening ear**. **Emotional adultery** comes before acting it out. God gives us wisdom so we know how to stay away from relationships that lead to this kind of **disaster**.

But there’s one more benefit to wisdom.

(S15) A forever home with God (v20-22)

Proverbs 2:21 says, “For the upright will live in the land, and the blameless will remain in it;” (NIV) It’s an **interesting** way to close this passage in Proverbs because it’s a reminder to the **Israelite** people that they get to stay in the **promised land** if they **obey** God and keep his commandments (Exod 20:12).

But **where’s** the **promise for us?** The **benefits** of wisdom are **knowing God**, protection from **mistakes** in this life, and an **eternal home** with God in the **life to come**. Hebrews says that the heroes of our faith “were

longing for a **better country**—a **heavenly one**” (Heb 11:16). If that’s you, if you’re longing for a better home, **pursue wisdom**. Seek God by **believing** his Word, **memorizing** it, **accepting** it, and **prayer**.

Last **Saturday** a **team** from Cornerstone went and helped **build a home** for two families in **Lowell** through **Habitat for Humanity**. We spent most of our Saturday working on **trim in the bedrooms** and a **sump-pump** in the **basement**. As part of the deal to become homeowners those receiving the homes have to put in **400 hours** of **labor** themselves. It’s not easy. It takes **effort**. Their house is a **gift**, but a gift they **help work for**. **Wisdom is a gift, but it’s a gift we help work for**. **Knowing God** is a **gift**, spending **eternity** with him is a gift, his **protection** is a gift, but it’s a **gift we seek** by **seeking wisdom**. **Seek wisdom** and find your **forever home** with God.

Proverbs 3:5-6

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways submit to him,
and he will make your paths straight. (NIV)

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon, which includes endnotes and references. Read our story here.⁴

¹ These references come from Tremper Longman III's commentary on Proverbs. See also Exodus 24:12, Leviticus 27:34, Numbers 36:13, and Deuteronomy 30:10.

² This is one of Bruce Waltke's ways of explaining the fear of the Lord.

³ I believe Waltke may have used an illustration like this. It's not original either way.

⁴ All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.