

STUDIES IN THE LIFE OF SOLOMON

STUDY #6 — PROVERBS 2:1-15

TEXT:

- v. 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,
v. 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,
v. 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,
v. 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,
v. 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.
v. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
v. 7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,
v. 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.
v. 9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.
v.10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
v.11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.
v.12 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,
v.13 who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways,
v.14 who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,
v.15 whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

INTRODUCTION:

(Cowboy Curmudgeon and Other Poems by Wallace McRae)

Another Cowboy For Justin Wagner

To the top of his ears, his hat's jerked down.
There's an old-time crease in its dusty crown.
He knows the score and the culture's rules
And suffers insufferable frauds and fools
With inscrutable eyes below brim-covered frown.
He patiently watches life's tales unfold.

He don't say much. It's not that he's shy.
He's watching, and judging, the world going by
As he hunkers down on dusty boot heels,
Sifting and sorting the emotions he feels
As the other hands preen and prophesy
With studied poses and stories bold.

He's away from the ranch and chores and care
Behind the chutes at the county fair.
He's seen the fed steers and 4-H hogs;
Heard the carnies prattle like demagogues.
Now he judges the buckles the roughstockers wear
Adding to or subtracting from narratives told.

The hands josh him a bit. He smiles at the joke.
Shakes his head, "no thanks," to a chew or a smoke.
He knows his place. He's satisfied there
On the rim of the circle the bronc riders share.
Though a bit out of sync, he's sure 'nuff cowpoke.
His time's a comin'. His story's not told.
The torch'll be passed. He's eight years old.

p. 41

(Cowboy Curmudgeon and Other Poems by Wallace McRae)

What Kind of An Outfit You Got?

"She's as good a country as lays outdoors."
 You'll hear it all over the West.
 The platitudinal rhetoric soars,
 Wherever they're from is the best.

Oh, the skies there are always the bluest.
 The grass, though it's sparse, wondrous strong.
 Their neighbors and friends are the truest.
 And droughts never last very long.

You betcha there's plenty of water.
 Each BLM hand is a pard.
 Noxious weeds stay away like they oughter.
 Ain't no dandelions in his yard.

He's never known one rustling suspect. Not one!
 His real estate taxes are low.
 There's team-roping practice each Sunday for fun.
 Soft breezes blow balmy and slow.

Trophy bucks graze each canyon and swale.
 Hungry fish lurk in shaded pools deep.
 His ranch? It just happens to be up for sale.
 Buy it quick and he'll let 'er go cheap.

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Although I'm pushing fifty
I'm as solid as a rock,
And the life of every party
Until almost nine o'clock.

p. 115

(A 3rd Serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul: 101 More Stories to Open the Heart and Rekindle the Spirit compiled by Jack Canfield & Mark Victor Hansen)

I realized that the funny, crunching noise I heard each night as I climbed the stairs was really my knees. I had seriously considered adding potty training to my résumé as one of my greatest accomplishments. Bran flakes had become a part of my daily routine—and not because they were my favorite cereal. I held Tupperware parties just so I could count how many friends I had.

p. 109

(If Mama Ain't Happy, Ain't Nobody Happy! by Lindsey O'Connor)

I have lived the words of Erma Bombeck: "Do I have it all yet? I hope so. I'm half-dead."

p. 196

A friend of mine said the other day:

"At my age I spend most of my time doing two things:

1. Trying to remember people's names, and
2. Trying to find a bathroom."

In our last episode of the LIFE OF KING SOLOMON, the Lord appeared to him and offered him whatever he would like to have. Solomon thrilled the heart of GOD by asking for:

WISDOM and

KNOWLEDGE.

I felt at this point we needed to pursue the whole subject of WISDOM. We can do that by looking at Solomon's writings.

On this occasion, we are going to be studying Proverbs 2:1-15. We will be looking at the subject:

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM.

I think Solomon had in his mind to be like Job, who describes his former days in:

Job 29:21-23

"Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. After I had spoken, they spoke no more; my words fell gently on their ears. They waited for me as for showers and drank in my words as the spring rain."

As we pursue the SUBJECT OF WISDOM in these 15 verses in Proverbs 2, let us be DULY WARNED by the words of the Lord through Jeremiah the prophet in:

Jeremiah 9:23,24

This is what the Lord says: "Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches, but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord.

Swindoll, in his book, Active Spirituality, says:

In our image-conscious, hurry-up lifestyle, hitting the high spots is in vogue—doing just enough to get by. No big deal . . . it's okay to ignore depth in your life so long as you project an image that says you've "got it all together."

Nonsense! People who really make a dent in society are those who peel off the veneer of shallow superficiality and live authentic lives that have real spiritual depth.

p. 18

Alden says:

Chapter 1 ended with the teaching that wisdom grants her rewards to those who follow her . The next three chapters are an expansion of that truth. Here and there the author digresses to give a warning against an immoral woman (2:16ff.) or an excursus on creation (3:19-20), but basically the theme is the one so well expressed in 4:18: "The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter and brighter until the full light of day" (NIV).

p. 31

Warren Wiersbe titles this section "The Path of Wisdom and Life" in his book Be Skillful:

A newspaper cartoon shows an automobile balancing precariously over the edge of a cliff, with an embarrassed husband at the wheel and his disgusted wife sitting next to him. Meekly, he says to his wife, "Honey, there's got to be a lesson here somewhere."

There's a lesson there all right, and it's this: *The only way to end up at the right destination is to choose the right road.* If you've ever made a wrong turn in a strange place and found yourself lost, then you know how important that lesson is.

The metaphor of life as a journey is a familiar one; it is found in the Bible as well as in classical literature. *The Odyssey* of Homer describes Ulysses' ten-year journey from Troy to his home in Ithaca, and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an account of Christian's journey from the City of Destruction to the heavenly city. The Bible frequently exhorts us to choose the right path, but the contemporary world thinks there are "many ways to God" and any path you sincerely follow will eventually take you there.

Jesus made it clear that in this life we can take only one of two ways, and each of them leads to a different destination. Everybody has to choose either the crowded road that leads to destruction or the narrow road that leads to life (Matt. 7:13-14). There's no middle way.
pp. 34-35

Lange, in his commentary, quotes Melancthon:

"He admonishes how we may make progress (in wisdom): for he combines two causes: 1) God's aid; 2) our own zeal."
p. 57

Lange also quotes Stöcker:

The rounds upon which one must, with divine help, climb up to the attainment of wisdom are seven: 1) eager hearing; 2) firm retention; 3) attentive meditation; 4) unquestioned progress; 5) due humiliation; 6) devoted invoking of God's help; 7) tireless self-examination.
p. 57

Warren W. Wiersbe in his one volume Bible commentary, With the Word, says:

Wisdom is not only a person to know (chap. 1) but also a path to walk. The word *path* is used seven times in this chapter. It suggests to us that life involves direction, decision, and determination, just like walking a path. God will do His part (vv. 6-9) if you do your part (vv. 1-5).
p. 413

Lowth says:

In short, here are both promises and threatenings to excite us to the study of wisdom; together with good directions to make our proceedings successful; which are principally these. First, our own *diligence*; secondly, *dependence upon God for help and assistance*; thirdly, *a due value of that which we seek*; fourthly, *avoiding such things as will plainly seduce us*; and, lastly, *putting in practice what we know*, that we may know more: for want of which many learned men have proved worse than the most ignorant. Most of these are the sense of the beginning of the chapter; and the last of them in the sense of ver. 10, 11.
p. 8

I think it would be good for us to take just a few moments to meditate on the full passage from a couple of contemporary translations.

Let us first hear our passage in God's Word:

Proverbs 2:1-15

My son,
 if you take my words [to heart]
 and treasure my commands within you,
 if you pay close attention to wisdom,
 and let your mind reach for understanding,
 if indeed you call out for insight,
 if you ask aloud for understanding,
 if you search for wisdom as if it were money
 and hunt for it as if it were hidden treasure,
 then you will understand the fear of the Lord
 and you will find the knowledge of God.
 The Lord gives wisdom.
 From his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
 he has reserved priceless wisdom for decent people.
 He is a shield for those who walk in integrity
 in order to guard those on paths of justice
 and to watch over the way of his godly ones.
 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—
 every good course [in life].

Wisdom will come into your heart.
 Knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
 Foresight will protect you.
 Understanding will guard you.

[Wisdom will] save you
 from the way of evil,
 from the person who speaks devious things,
 from those who abandon the paths of righteousness
 to walk the ways of darkness,
 from those who enjoy doing evil,
 from those who find joy in the deviousness of evil
 Their paths are crooked.
 Their ways are devious.

pp. 783-84

Let us hear it one more time in The Contemporary English Version:

My child, you must follow and treasure
 my teachings and my instructions.
 Keep in tune with wisdom
 and think what it means to have common sense.
 Beg as loud as you can for good common sense.
 Search for wisdom
 as you would search for silver or hidden treasure.
 Then you will understand what it means to respect
 and to know the Lord God.

All wisdom comes from the Lord,
 and so do common sense and understanding.
 God gives helpful advice to everyone who obeys him
 and protects all of those who live as they should.
 God sees that justice is done,
 and he watches over everyone who is faithful to him.
 With wisdom you will learn
 what is right and honest and fair.

Wisdom will control your mind,
 and you will be pleased with knowledge.
 Sound judgment and good sense will watch over you.
 Wisdom will protect you
 from evil schemes and from those liars
 who turned from doing good to live in darkness.
 Most of all they enjoy being mean and deceitful.
 They are dishonest themselves, and all they do is crooked.
 p. 755

Let us dig into the text now, and see what we can learn for ourselves from these verses.

v. 1 My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles these FIRST SIX VERSES:

THE PURSUIT OF WISDOM (2:1-6)

Eight verbs are used in these verses: **accept . . . store up** (v. 1), **turning . . . applying . . . call . . . cry** (v. 3), **look . . . search** (v. 4). The objects of these activities are the teacher's **words** and **commands** . . .

p. 909

Wisdom hangs on THREE "IFs" in these first four verses. It is conditioned here upon the words:

"IF YOU ACCEPT MY WORDS AND STORE UP MY COMMANDS WITHIN YOU."

Down in verse 3, it is conditioned upon:

"iF you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding."

and In verse 4, it is conditioned upon:

"IF you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure."

Psalm 119:130 (King James Version)

The entrance of your words gives light;
it gives understanding to the simple.

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.

The KEY TO WISDOM in verse 1 is:

our "AQ", or "ACCEPTANCE QUOTIENT."

Am I willing to put myself under the authority of the Word of God and to memorize and hide it's precepts in my heart?

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man
who does not walk in the counsel
of the wicked
or stand in the way
of sinners
or sit in the seat of mockers.
But his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.
He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither.
Whatever he does prospers.

Joseph Parker says:

The tone of entreaty of this verse is very remarkable. The father is by no means sure that the son will listen to him as he comes before the child in an attitude of supplication and appeal. The child can say No to the father, and the creature can repel the approaches of the Creator. As the father in this verse pleads with the son, so the Father of mankind pleads with his rebellious creatures. Not only may it be said, Like as a father pitieth his children; it may be added, Like as a father pleadeth with his children, or suffereth for his children, or is deeply interested in all that concerns his children, so the Lord, etc.

p. 20

Garrett says:

This whole text hinges on an enormous "if" clause (vv. 1-4). The "if" represents a decision that every young man must make. He can either go in the way of Wisdom and find life, true love, and most importantly God, or he can turn his back on her and find only bitterness, isolation, and death. One cannot opt out of making this decision or choose a little of one and a little of the other. If the church, however, fails to present this stark decision to young people, many will go in the wrong way and never even know they had a choice.

p. 74

Garrett says of these first 4 verses:

. . . [they] describes the attitudes the reader ought to bring to the quest for Wisdom. First, the student should listen attentively to the teacher (vv. 1-2). That is, he must accept the teachings as valid, commit them to memory, and focus all his attention on them. Second, he must yearn for Wisdom in a way analogous to that of the supplicant pleading to God or the king for deliverance from trouble (v. 3). Third, he must seek it as one seeks for lost money or hidden treasure (v. 4; Job 28; cf. Luke 15: 8-10).

p. 75

George Santa, speaking on "*Receive my sayings*," says:

—Let them be the seed cast into the ground of "an honest and good heart"—a heart prepared by God. Read the Book of God as one who sat at the feet of Jesus, and heard His Word. Like the Bereans, "received the word with great eagerness"; like the Thessalonians, with reverential faith, acknowledging its supreme authority. *Treasure my commandments within you*. Carry them about with you as the choicest treasure for greater security, as your furniture always at hand for present use. Let the heart be the hiding place for the treasure. Satan can never snatch it there.
pp. 16-17

Baxter suggests of these proverbs that:

They are meant to be read lingeringly, ponderingly, memorisingly. Not, however, that the memorising of them is to be a forced work, like the memorising of rules in the learning of a language. Proverbs are meant so to aid the memory as to be difficult to forget. It is wonderful how these Scripture proverbs light up with significant wisdom, and how unforgettably they engrave themselves in the mind when they are read musingly and fairly often.
p. 138

Derek Kidner titles this first section:

Wisdom, hard won. This is the essential counterpart to 1:20 ff., where wisdom was clamouring to be heard. Here it is the pupil who must clamour (3). Yet the search, strenuous as it must be, is not unguided. Its starting-point is revelation—specific (*words*) and practical (*commandments*); its method is not one of free speculation, but of treasuring and exploring received teachings so as to penetrate to their principles (see the verbs of 1-5); and its goal, far from being academic, is spiritual: *the fear of the Lord*. . . . *the knowledge of God* (5). With these two phrases verse 5 encompasses the two classic Old Testament terms for true religion—the poles of awe and intimacy.
p. 61

The TWO VERBS in the conditional phrase of verse 1 are:

1. "ACCEPT" and
 2. "STORE UP."
-
1. "ACCEPT MY WORDS" and
 2. "STORE UP MY COMMANDS WITHIN YOU."

The FOCUS is on:

1. THE MIND and
2. THE WORD.

I am reminded again of:

2 Kings 22:19

Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord . . .

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Effort must be expended for one to become wise. Getting wisdom involves openness, retention, hearing (with the **ear**), applying (with the **heart**; cf. v. 10), requesting, and diligent searching.
p. 909

Isaiah 1 describes the opposite response and the consequences involved:

Isaiah 1:2-6

Hear, O heavens! Listen, O earth! For the Lord has spoken: "I reared children and brought them up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows his master, the donkey his owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand." Ah, sinful nation, a people loaded with guilt, a brood of evildoers, children given to corruption! They have forsaken the Lord; they have spurned the Holy One of Israel and turned their backs on him. Why should you be beaten anymore? Why do you persist in rebellion? Your whole head is injured, your whole heart afflicted. From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness—only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil.

(Shepherding the Church into the 21st Century by Joseph M. Stowell)

Only four out of every ten adults will read any portion of the Bible outside of the church during the week.

Those people who do read will commit about one hour to Bible reading during the week. Those people will actually spend more time showering, commuting to and from work, watching television, reading the newspaper, eating meals, or talking on the telephone. Obviously, the Bible is not a high priority in the lives of most people.

p. 21

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Read it through; pray it in, live it out; pass it on.

—George Gritter

p. 14

The Bible is alive, it speaks to me; it has feet, it runs after me; it has hands, it lays hold on me.

—Martin Luther

p. 15

(The Victorious Christian Life by Dr. Tony Evans)

The biblical writers held the pen; God authored the text. From Genesis 1:1 to the last verse in the Book of Revelation, from "pillar to post" and from cover to cover, this book is the absolute, uncompromising, authoritative, inerrant Word of God.
pp. 40-41

(They Walked with God by James S. Bell, Jr.)

The advantages of a deep knowledge of the Bible are more than can be numbered here. It is the Storehouse of the Promises. It is the Sword of the Spirit, before which temptation flees. It is the all-sufficient Equipment of Christian usefulness. It is the believer's Guidebook and Directory in all possible circumstances. Words fail to tell how glad, how strong, how useful shall be the daily life of those who can say with the prophet: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart."

But there is one thing, which may be said last, because it is most important and should linger in the memory and heart, though all the other exhortations of this chapter should pass away as a summer brook. It is this. It is useless to dream of making headway in the knowledge of Scripture unless we are prepared to practice each new and clearly-defined duty which looms out before our view.

F. B. Meyer

(06/12)

Committing a great truth to memory is admirable; committing it to life is wisdom.

William A. Ward

The wise don't expect to find life worth living; they make it that way.

Anonymous

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

v. 2 turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding,

In verse 1, we were focusing on the MIND. In verse 2 we are focusing on:

the "EAR" and

the "HEART."

Our KEY VERBS in verse 1 were:

"Accept" and

"Store up."

The KEY VERBS in verse 2 are:

"TURNING" and

"APPLYING."

"TURNING YOUR EAR TO WISDOM" has to involve:

DESIRE,

HUMILITY, and a

DECISION.

A CHOICE is involved in:

"ACCEPTING,"

"TURNING," and

"APPLYING."

This CHOICE has got to be PRECEDED BY AN INNER DESIRE for this to happen.

Matthew Henry says:

Solomon, having foretold the destruction of those who are obstinate in their impiety, in this chapter applies himself to those who are willing to be taught. In this chapter we are taught both how to get wisdom and how to use it when we have it that we may neither seek it, nor receive it in vain.
(transcription)

J. Vernon McGee speaking on the phrase "incline thine ear", says:

"Incline thine ear"—keep your ear open. Something is to enter the head through the ear gate, but its final destination is the heart. When the Word of God gets into the heart, it brings understanding.
p. 9

PRECIOUS LITTLE

"A great teacher is teachable. If he is not, he will have precious little to teach. Flee from the teacher who knows it all, unless the teacher is God. I know teachers who, in their first year of teaching, made lesson plans for their courses and have used those same plans, unaltered, for years. They are not great teachers."

—R. C. Sproul
(quoted in World, Jul 17, 1993)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

James 3:14-17

But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

Thus far in the study we have been considering these

FOUR IMPORTANT VERBS:

1. "ACCEPT my words,"
2. "STORE UP my commands,"
3. "TURNING your ear to wisdom," and
4. "APPLYING your heart to understanding."

v. 3 and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding,

This is the SECOND "IF" clause in this chapter. The first is back in verse 1:

"IF you accept my words and store up my commands within you,"

and now :

"IF YOU CALL OUT FOR INSIGHT AND CRY ALOUD FOR UNDERSTANDING."

Whereas, the FOCUS is on the WORD in verse 1,

and on the INNER DESIRE in verse 2 to have a listening EAR and a sensitive HEART,

NOW we come to the TONGUE as it verbalizes the

PRAYER FOR WISDOM in verse 3.

The TWO VERBS in verse 3 are:

"CALL OUT" and

"CRY ALOUD"

Job 28:12

But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?

Job 28:20

Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?

The ANSWER is given in:

Job 28:23

God understands the way to it and he alone knows where it dwells,

1 Peter 2:2,3 (King James)

as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Colossians 2:3

in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

I'M OK, YOU'RE OK

A little boy prayed, "Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am!"

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(The Promise by Tony Evans)

If you have been praying and yet God is silent, let me give you some good news. Whenever God is silent over an extended period of time, it is generally because He has a big one coming through the pipe.
p. 291

Jeremiah 33:3

'Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.'

v. 4 and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure,

We come to the THIRD "IF" clause in these four verses.

The FIRST one is in verse 1:

"IF you accept my words and store up my commands within you."

The SECOND is in verse 3:

"and IF you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding."

The THIRD is here in verse 4:

"AND IF YOU LOOK FOR IT AS FOR SILVER AND SEARCH FOR IT AS FOR HIDDEN TREASURE."

You have the FINAL TWO VERBS of the series of eight:

"IF YOU WILL LOOK FOR IT" and

"IF YOU WILL . . . SEARCH FOR IT."

Verse 1 focuses on the MIND and the WORD.

Verse 2 focuses on the INNER DESIRE and the EAR and the HEART.

Verse 3 is focusing on PRAYER and the TONGUE.

Here in verse 4 it is on:

the EYE and

a PASSIONATE PURSUIT.

Matthew Henry said:

We must be willing to take pains. We must seek it as silver, preferring it far before all the wealth of this world and laboring in search of it as those who dig in the mines, who undergo great toil and run great hazards with indefatigable industry and invincible constancy and resolution in pursuit of the ore. Or as those who will be rich, rise up early and sit up late and turn every stone to get money and fill their treasures. Thus diligent must we be in the use of the means of knowledge, following on to know the Lord.
(from transcription)

Parker says:

Hear how the process develops: "incline thine ear," "apply thine heart," "criest after knowledge," "lift up thy voice;" now comes the exercise of energy. The student is to seek for wisdom as for silver, and to search for her as for hidden treasures.
p. 21

Lange quotes Starke when he says:

As the children of the world turn their eyes upon silver and treasures, run and race after them, make themselves much disquiet to attain them, though after all they are but shadows and vanity; so ought the children of God to use much more diligence to attain heavenly wisdom, which endures forever, and makes the man who possesses it really prosperous.
p. 57

Wiersbe says in his book Be Skillful:

Obtaining spiritual wisdom isn't a once-a-week hobby, it is the daily discipline of a lifetime. But in this age of microwave ovens, fast foods, digests, and numerous "made easy" books, many people are out of the habit of daily investing time and energy in digging deep into Scripture and learning wisdom from the Lord.
p. 36

Alden says:

We could expand on this comparison; note how scarce these treasures are. Also notice how much effort is necessary to find and excavate these jewels; and how these jewels can be used; like wisdom, these treasures are not usually discovered by a casual observer or chance passerby. They are excavated and enjoyed instead by the diligent, devoted, and determined.
p. 32

George Lawson says:

We every day see with what anxious diligence men seek for silver. They fatigue their bodies, and waste their spirits; they destroy their health, and expose their lives; they even wound their consciences, and expose themselves to shameful deaths and everlasting misery, that they may load themselves with shining clay. Shall the professed disciples of the great Teacher set less value upon knowledge, than other men set upon silver? David well knew the value of this knowledge, and esteemed it above thousands of gold and silver. Job prefers it to everything that dazzles with its lustre the eyes of mortals.
p. 30

Bridges says:

This habit of living in the element of Scripture is invaluable. To be filled from this Divine treasury; to have large portions of the word daily passing through the mind; gives us a firmer grasp, and a more suitable and diversified application of it.
p. 15

The Lord says of Himself through Jeremiah the prophet:

Jeremiah 29:13

You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

Ephesians 3:18,19

may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God.

Romans 11:33

Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!

v. 5 then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

You have the little word "THEN" appearing here in verse 5, and it appears again in verse 9.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The three "ifs" in verses 1, 3-4 are followed by **then**, which introduces the result. Seeking and valuing wisdom lead to a person's understanding (discerning) **the fear of the Lord** and knowing **God**. This is the same truth stated in 1:7. **The Lord** is the source of that **wisdom** (cf. James 1:5). As a person fears the Lord, he gains wisdom, **knowledge** (cf. Prov. 1:4; 2:10), **and understanding** (cf. vv. 2-3, 11).
pp. 909-10

Matthew Henry says:

We shall know how to maintain our acquaintance and communion with God; "Thou shalt know how to worship Him aright, shalt be led into the meaning and mystery of every ordinance and be enabled to answer the end of its institution. Thou shalt find the knowledge of God which is necessary to our fearing Him aright."
(transcription)

Garrett says:

Both parts describe the greater insight that comes from Wisdom, but the first emphasizes understanding of God and his ways, while the second focuses on proper and careful behavior in life.
p. 75

1 Corinthians 1:30

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

The benefits here in verse 5 are within:

"YOU WILL UNDERSTAND THE FEAR OF THE LORD" and

"YOU WILL FIND THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD."

1 Corinthians 2:9,10

but just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

v. 6 For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.

Delitzsch says:

The thoughts revolve in a circle only apparently. He who strives after wisdom earnestly and really, reaches in this way fellowship with God; for just as He gives wisdom, it is nowhere else than with Him, and it never comes from any other source than from Him.

p. 77

Parker says much the same thing:

He is not one of the fountains of wisdom occupying an equal position with a thousand other fountains; he is in very deed the one fountain of wisdom, and there is none other. Elsewhere we may find partial revelations, broken experiences, hints of meanings, temporary satisfactions, but until we have discovered the Lord, and set him always before us, we shall be working without a centre, and having no centre we shall have no certainty that the light in which we work will continue to illuminate us.

p. 23

Kidner says:

Wisdom, God-given. What you *find*, then (5), is what He *gives* (6); discovery and revelation are inseparable. This paragraph goes on to show that to know the Lord is also to know how to live . . .

p. 61

James 1:5

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

(Finishing Strong: Finding The Power To Go The Distance by Steve Farrar)

Yet my statement is going on five years old, and I haven't changed one word of the original two-minute composition. Here it is.

——**Don't screw up.**——

That's it. It's not real long, it's not real sophisticated, it's not real polished, and it's not real religious. But it is *real*. As I look over the rest of my life, I don't want to screw up. Do you? Of course you don't. I don't know any man who wants to screw up. Yet men screw up all the time. My goal for the second half of my life is not to screw up in a major way.

- I don't want to screw up my marriage.
- I don't want to screw up my relationship with my kids.
- I don't want to screw up my integrity.

p. 51

v. 7 He holds victory in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

THE MORAL BENEFITS OF WISDOM

[are found in Proverbs] **2:7-10**. Wisdom gives positive, health-inducing moral benefits. It keeps one from evil and contributes to holiness. Wisdom is a matter of the heart, and of moral conduct, not just of intellectual attainment. This is made clear by the words **upright** and **blameless** (cf. v. 21), the **just**, and **faithful ones** (from *hesed*, those who are loyal to God). Elsewhere in Proverbs the word for **victory** is translated "sound judgment" (3:21; 8:14; 18:1). In 2:7 it means success, the *result* of sound judgment. Like **a shield** (cf. Ps. 3:3) God protects those who by His wisdom are morally upright, those who are His (cf. Prov. 1:33). Moral living enables a person to be equitable with others, to do what is **right and just and fair** (cf. 1:3).
p. 910

Proverbs 1:33

but whoever listens to me will live in safety
and be at ease, without fear of harm.

(Thoughts on Leadership: Thoughts and Reflections From History's Great Thinkers by Forbes Leadership Library)

I've never known a man worth his salt
 who in the long run,
 deep down in his heart,
 didn't appreciate the grind,
 the discipline. . . .
 I firmly believe that any man's finest hour--
 this greatest fulfillment to all he holds dear--
 is that moment when he has worked his heart out
 in a good cause
 and lies exhausted on the field of battle--
 victorious.

VINCE LOMBARDI

p. 56

(Holiness by J. C. Ryle)

He sees his own many sins, his weak heart, a tempting world, a busy devil, and if he looked only at them he might well despair. But he sees also a mighty Saviour, an interceding Saviour, a sympathizing Saviour—His blood, His righteousness, His everlasting priesthood—and he believes that all this is his own. He sees Jesus and casts his whole weight on Him. Seeing Him, he cheerfully fights on, with a full confidence that he will prove more than conqueror through Him that loved him (Rom. 8:37).

p. 57

(Heaven Help Us! Truths About Eternity That Will Help You Live Today
by Steven J. Lawson)

Ray Stedman, the noted pastor and author, once traveled to England to be the featured speaker at a Bible conference. The sanctuary was unusually filled that night with people, eager to hear the Word of God preached by this renowned speaker. The chapel had never been so packed!

As the service began, the jubilant congregation was singing heartily to the Lord. You could just feel the Spirit's presence! One of the songs they were singing was the now popular—but then, unknown—chorus, “Our God Reigns.”

Stedman was seated on the platform next to the host pastor, singing along with the congregation. As he looked down at the song sheet, he began to smile. Then chuckle. Finally, he began to laugh.

Why was Stedman laughing?

The words on the song sheet prepared for this special occasion had been mistyped. Instead of singing, “Our God reigns,” the congregation was singing—at the very top of their lungs—“Our God resigns.”

We laugh, but don't we do the same?

Although we probably have never sung those exact words, we have lived that way. When our world is turned upside-down, sometimes we live as if God has resigned and is no longer on the throne.

We need to see what John saw and remind ourselves that God is enthroned and reigning!

Let us never forget.

He's still on His throne!

pp. 99-100

Psalm 84:11

For the Lord God is a sun and shield;
the Lord bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does he withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.

v. 8 for he guards the course of the just and protects the way of his faithful ones.

In verses 7 and 8 there are FOUR THINGS that He does in response to giving us wisdom:

1. "HE HOLDS VICTORY IN STORE FOR THE UPRIGHT,"
2. "HE IS A SHIELD TO THOSE WHOSE WALK IS BLAMELESS,"
3. "HE GUARDS THE COURSE OF THE JUST," and
4. "[HE] PROTECTS THE WAY OF HIS FAITHFUL ONES."

J. Vernon McGee says:

Many Christians are out in the fog today; they wonder where to turn. It is obvious that the problem is that they are so far from the Word of God. This Book gives us what He is saying. The Word of God is like a foghorn. It "preserveth the way of his saints." That is what He will do, and He will not do it haphazardly. You must come to the Word of God.
p. 11

v. 9 Then you will understand what is right and just and fair—every good path.

Once again we have a verse that starts with the word: "THEN," just like we did in verse 5.

Micah 6:8

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Matthew Henry says:

We will conduct ourselves aright toward all men.

(from transcription)

Garrett says:

Verses 9-11 describe the moral discernment by which the wise both escape immoral behavior and gain competence.

p. 75

Proverbs 3:5-7

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.
Do not be wise in your own eyes;
fear the Lord and shun evil.

Proverbs 3:13

Blessed is the man who finds wisdom,
the man who gains understanding,

Proverbs 4:18

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn,
shining ever brighter till the full light of day.

WHY ON EARTH ARE YOU HERE?

"I wonder why doughnut shops and service stations can create tidy statements of purpose while so often I just muddle through."

With so many roles and opportunities available to us today, we risk wandering around aimlessly unless we seek that "central passion" that moves us. This is the benefit of a personal mission statement.

A mission statement may begin broadly. Perhaps we will draw inspiration from the Apostle Paul who wrote, "Therefore glorify God in you body" (1 Cor. 6:20), or from the Westminster Catechism which says, our "chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever." Yet the question still remains: How do we narrow this down?

God has uniquely gifted each of us with natural and spiritual gifts. Perhaps the most important question to ask is, "What activities bring me the most joy?" Bear in mind Frederick Buechner's insight: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and world's deep hunger meet."

Remember that life is a pilgrimage. "Set out for a particular direction rather than a predetermined destination," and be prepared for detours. This requires trust in God, openness to risk, and occasional failure. At times we may sense we have strayed too far from the path. Then it is time to ask, Do I need to adjust my work schedule? Do I need to build in more time for reflection or relaxation?

Sometimes our daily work coincides with our giftedness. That is a blessing. At other times, our job is far removed from what we love doing, and we despair of opportunities to use our gifts. We can learn from Brother Lawrence who writes, "We ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed." Ask God what He wants you to learn in your circumstance. You may feel like a bird, trapped in someone's hand, but remember whose hand it is that holds you.

"Why on earth are you here?" by Maxine Hancock.
Clarity, May/Jun 1994 (Vol 1, No 2). pp. 61-65

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

TRY THE SPIRITS

"It is no sin to doubt some things, but it may be fatal to believe everything."

—A. W. Tozer
(quoted in Berean Call, Dec 1995)

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Can We Save the Evangelical Church? by Bill Hull)

Let's say I am placed in a pitch black room with a snow white carpet and charged with the task of finding a dark spot on the carpet. I could search for minutes, days, or months and find nothing. Even if I ran my hand over the dark spot hundreds of times, I would have no way of knowing I had found it. Suppose someone comes in and turns on the light. Immediately, I see the dark spot on the snow white carpet! Once the light is on, it is easy. In the same way, I can have the right information but, if I do not have a means of seeing it, then it is useless to me. When the church's mind and eyes are illuminated by the Holy Spirit, he turns on the light, and we get insight. We see it as God sees it.

p. 21

(The Seven Laws of the Harvest: Understanding the Realities of Sowing and Reaping by John W. Lawrence)

The “Earnest Worker” has quoted S. D. Gordon as saying, “There are seven important things we ought always to remember about sin. The first is that “sin earns wages.” The second, “sin pays wages.” The third, “sin insists on paying. You may be quite willing to let the account go, but sin always insists on paying.” Fourth, “sin pays its wages in kind. Sin against the body brings results in the body. Sin in the moral life brings results there. Sin in contact with other people brings a chain of results affecting those others. Sin is the most selfish of acts. It influences to some extent everything we touch.” Fifth, “sin pays in installments.” Sixth, “sin pays in full, unless the blood of Jesus washes away the stain.” Seventh, “sin is self-executive, it pays its own bills. Sin has bound up in itself all the terrible consequences that ever come.”

No wonder the Word so strongly admonishes: “My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Proverbs 1:10). As Charles H. Spurgeon so well expressed it: “Put your foot down where you mean to stand, and let no man move you from the right. Learn to say ‘No,’ and it will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin.”

pp. 51-52

(The Finishing Touch: Becoming God's Masterpiece: A Daily Devotional by Charles R. Swindoll)

Believers throughout church history—the early church Fathers, the Reformers, the Puritans—have been inspired by these lists to reduce spirituality to two lists known as "the seven sins and the seven virtues" of saintliness. The former includes pride, envy, anger, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lust. The latter includes wisdom, justice, courage, temperance, faith, love, and hope.

Even though it finds its origin in one whose life was not centered on Christ our Lord, Mahatma Gandhi's own list of "seven deadly sins" in the form of contrasts deserves our attention: Wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character, commerce without morality, science without humanity, worship without sacrifice, politics without principle.

Now, there's a list deserving of more than thinking over. Try carrying them out.

I dare you!

p. 29

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

Man is pretty much a fool—
 When it's hot he wants it cool,
 When it's cool he want's it hot,
 Always wanting what it's not.

p. 73

"THEN YOU WILL UNDERSTAND" THREE THINGS:

1. "WHAT IS RIGHT,"
2. "WHAT IS JUST," and
3. "WHAT IS FAIR."

Those three things are found on:

"EVERY GOOD PATH."

v.10 For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

Having such **knowledge** from God gives inner joy or pleasure.
p. 910

Philippians 2:12,13

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Alden says:

From God's mouth to our ear and into our heart wisdom comes, resulting in our becoming wise. Such a result is expected, yet another result is a pleasant surprise; knowledge will also give us pleasure. We are reminded here of a line from the catechism: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." Glorify, yes. Fear, yes. Serve, yes. But enjoy? Yes! Nearness to God is a rewarding, fulfilling, and happy experience. Ignorance is bliss is not a Biblical proverb for though it may be true sometimes, this verse surely states the opposite; knowledge is bliss.
p. 33

Gaebelein says:

When wisdom entereth the heart and the soul rejoiceth in true knowledge, what blessed consequences will follow! There is preservation and deliverance. The way of the evil man, the proud, the ungodly and their crooked ways hold out no attraction to those who love and seek wisdom.
p. 13

H. A. Ironside says:

Wisdom and knowledge entering into the heart and becoming pleasant to the soul, give that discretion which preserves from evil; and the understanding, or discernment that keeps from false ways.
pp. 31-32

CONSISTENT

Little Freddie was telling all, as he was discussing his new teacher. "She's mean, but she's fair," he said.

"How's that?" asked his mother.

"She's mean to everyone," He replied.

Three men are my friends. He that loves me, he that hates me, he that is indifferent to me. Who loves me teaches me tenderness. Who hates me teaches me caution. Who is indifferent to me teaches me self-reliance.

—Parin

A man begins cutting his wisdom teeth the first time he bites off more than he can chew.

—Herb Caen

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

All the water in the world, however
hard it tried,
Could never, never sink a ship
unless it got inside.
All the evil in the world, the
wickedness and sin,
Can never sink your soul's fair craft
unless you let it in.

—A. C. Hoffman

p. 32

v.11 Discretion will protect you, and understanding will guard you.

We have had FOUR DIFFERENT WORDS here used in verse 10 and 11:

1. "WISDOM WILL ENTER YOUR HEART,"
2. "KNOWLEDGE WILL BE PLEASANT TO YOUR SOUL,"
3. "DISCRETION WILL PROTECT YOU," and
4. "UNDERSTANDING WILL GUARD YOU."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary titles

**THE PROTECTION OF WISDOM FROM IMMORAL PEOPLE
(2:11-22):**

Wisdom is valuable; therefore it should be sought after (vv. 1-4). For one thing it guards from wicked men (vv. 12-15) and wicked women (vv. 16-19) and keeps one going in the right paths (vv. 20-22).

A general statement about wisdom's protection (v. 11) links verses 7-8 with verses 12-15. God protects (v. 8), and the **discretion** He gives also protects.

p. 910

Kidner says:

The process is that wisdom and knowledge, when they become your own way of thinking, and your acquired taste (10), will make the talk and interests of evil men alien to you (12-15).

p. 62

Two feet on the ground are worth one in the mouth.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Learning from Mistakes

A young man of 32 had been appointed President of the bank. He'd never dreamed he'd be president, much less at such a young age. So he approached the venerable Chairman of the Board and said, "You know, I've just been appointed President. I was wondering if you could give me some advice."

The old man came back with just two words: "Right decisions!" The young man had hoped for a bit more than this, so he said, "That's really helpful, and I appreciate it, but can you be more specific? How do I make right decisions?"

The wise old man simply responded, "Experience."

The young man said, "Well, that's just the point of my being here. I don't have the kind of experience I need. How do I get it?"

Came the terse reply, "Wrong decisions!"

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

(Abba's Child: The Cry of the Heart for Intimate Belonging
by Brennan Manning)

An old anecdote is told about a farm boy whose one skill was finding lost donkeys. When asked how he did this, he answered, "I just figured out where I would go if I was a jackass, and there it was."

p. 169

(The Essential Abraham Lincoln by John Gabriel Hunt)

Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust in the best way all our present difficulty.

(Abraham Lincoln in his First Inaugural Address,
March 4, 1861)

p. 221

(Just One Fool Thing After Another: A Cowfolks' Guide to Romance
by Gladiola Montana & Texas Bix Bender)

"Never spur a willing horse."

p. 53

"When the horse dies, get off."

p. 77

(I'm So Glad You Told Me What I Didn't Wanna Hear by Barbara Johnson)

The husband and wife were both late for work on Monday morning and were frantically hurrying to get dressed when the zipper on the back of the wife's dress got hopelessly stuck. She struggled to free it, but the dress was one of those slim, fitted styles, and try as she might, she just couldn't get a good enough grip on the zipper to work it loose.

She asked her husband to help, and with an exasperated sigh, he hurried over to her, grabbed the zipper, gave it a mighty yank—and broke the tab off! The woman was livid. "You *broke* it?" she cried, squirming around to see her back in the mirror. "This is my favorite dress, and you've broken the zipper!"

Unfortunately, as the man tried to help with the zipper his wife squirmed and turned frantically, trying to get out of the dress, and the poor man was tickled. *That* didn't help matters one bit! Finally the wife gave up, jerked open a dresser drawer, pulled out a pair of scissors, and pointed them at him with a glacier-forming stare.

The husband thought at first she might be planning to attack him with the weapon, but instead she barked at him, "You'll have to cut me out of it."

He quickly snipped away the dress and the wife rushed to find something else to wear, then the two of them headed off to work in opposite directions, both in a state of frustration.

The wife was still fuming when she returned home that evening and found his car parked in the garage with a pair of familiar-looking, denim-clad legs sticking out from beneath it. When she thought of her ruined dress, she momentarily considered kicking those long legs that protruded from under the car. Then a better idea came to her. She bent down, grabbed the tab of his trousers zipper, and roughly zipped it up and down half a dozen times.

She secretly enjoyed hearing him bang his head on the car's axle and cry out in alarm as he reacted in shocked terror. Smiling with satisfaction, she went on into the house . . . and was ASTONISHED to see *her husband* standing in the kitchen, cooking supper.

"What are you doing in HERE?" she croaked.

"I'm cooking your favorite dinner. I thought it would be a good way to apologize," he said sweetly.

"Wh-wh-who is that out there in the garage under your car?" she managed to stutter.

"Oh, that's our new neighbor. He came over to help me work on the transmission."

pp. 178-9

"DISCRETION WILL PROTECT YOU, AND UNDERSTANDING WILL GUARD YOU."

Here is a statement from a National Donut Chain:

"FREE: Three Muffins

When You Buy Three At The Regular

Half-Dozen Price."

(from transcription)

"DISCRETION WILL PROTECT YOU, AND UNDERSTANDING WILL GUARD YOU."

v.12 Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

The ways and words of the wicked . . . are perverse (2:12). "Perverse" and **perverseness** (v. 14) are the same word in Hebrew. Coming from the verb "to turn, turn from, overturn," they suggest something that is "turned away" from the normal. This Hebrew word occurs eight times in Proverbs . . . and only once elsewhere (Duet. 32:20, "perversity"). Such people turn away from the **straight** (lit., "upright"; cf. Prov. 2:7) **paths** to **dark** (i.e. evil) **ways**. They even enjoy their perversity, their **crooked . . . ways**.
p. 910

Garrett says:

The corrupt man speaks words that are "perverse" (v. 12). That is, he justifies his way of life with a distorted set of values in order to persuade others to join him.
p. 76

UNDERGIRDED BY GOD

While walking along the shores of the Dead Sea one day, a man lost his balance and fell into the water at a point where it was rather deep. Never having learned to swim, he was panic-stricken. In desperation he began to thrash about with his arms and legs, fearing he would sink and drown. At last completely exhausted, he felt he could do no more. Crying out to God for help, he prepared for the worst. What a surprise awaited him; for as soon as he relaxed the water bore him up. He had forgotten that the Dead Sea is so full of salt and other minerals that if a person lies still, he can easily float upon its surface. He will not drown as long as he resigns himself to the buoyancy of the water. This simple story has a profound lesson for us who are the Lord's children. His everlasting arms will uphold us if we simply relinquish our unnecessary fears and cease from our own carnal efforts. The safety and serenity offered by such complete reliance on Him will quiet our hearts even in our most desperate hours of difficulty. The eternal God is a never-failing Help when we flounder in the sea of trial and sorrow.

(From InfoSearch 3.51)

Alligators for Sharks

"Are there any alligators in this river?" asked the man in the water. "No, not a single one," assured his friend who was standing near. The swimmer was still disturbed. Again he asked: "If there are no alligators, what are those gray forms then? Are you sure they are not alligators?" "Certainly," replied his newly made friend who was standing on the bank. "There are no alligators down there. Those gray forms you see are sharks that have chased the alligators away."

There is the tendency for persons nowadays to think that modern technology, education, psychology, medicine, etc. can solve all of our problems. So often, though, all we do is swap alligators for sharks.

(From Parson's Bible Illustrator 1.0)

v.13 who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways,

"Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse."

They "LEAVE THE STRAIGHT PATHS TO WALK IN DARK WAYS."

Psalm 119:105

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path.

Psalm 119:133

Direct my footsteps according to your word;
let no sin rule over me.

1 John 1:5-7

And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

(The Victorious Christian Life by Dr. Tony Evans)

It's fairly obvious that the world no longer holds truth in high regard. Out in the world, games are being played; there's a lot of shuckin' and jivin' going on. But there's not much truth.

p. 158

(Time-Out Leadership by Donald Luce)

Choose where you are going. Keep moving. Keep developing. Dedicate yourself to worthy lifework. You will find that happiness and contentment stay as long as you are moving toward something notable.

p. 304

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

I sense an attitude in students and even in older Christians . . . to commit themselves to anything as "long as they feel good about it" and are having a "beautiful" experience. Such an approach to life seems as dependable as a roof shored up by a wet noodle.

—Katie Funk Wiebe

p. 44

v.14 who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil,

Wisdom is going to:

"SAVE [US] FROM THE WAYS OF WICKED MEN."

These men are CHARACTERIZED BY THE FACT THAT:

1. "THEIR WORDS ARE PERVERSE,"
2. "THEY LEAVE THE STRAIGHT PATHS TO WALK IN DARK WAYS,"
3. "THEY DELIGHT IN DOING WRONG," and
4. "THEY REJOICE IN THE PERVERSENESS OF EVIL."

(Time To Get Serious: Daily Devotions to Keep You Close to God
by Tony Evans)

That's the problem with sin. My friend, if you are looking at things you ought not to look at, imagining things you ought not to imagine, or planning things you ought not to do, remember that you are not seeing the whole picture. And it's what you don't see that will get you.
p. 125

(Prayer, Praise & Promises: A Daily Walk Through the Psalms
by Warren W. Wiersbe)

But sin has marred God's image in man. His mind can't think God's thoughts; his emotions are wrapped up in sin; his will is rebellious, and his spirit is dead.

(Day 16)

v.15 whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways.

WOW! What a description:

their "words are perverse,"

they "leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways,"

they "delight in doing wrong," and

they "rejoice in the perverseness of evil."

the RESULT of all that is:

their "PATHS ARE CROOKED" and

they "ARE DEVIOUS IN THEIR WAYS."

We could say:

"THEIR WALK IS CROOKED AND THEIR WAYS ARE DEVIOUS."

The Bible Knowledge Commentary says:

"Crooked" translates [iqqš] . . . ("twisted") which is also used in 6:12 ("corrupt") which is rendered "perverse" in 11:20; 17:20; 19:1; 28:6 and "wicked" in 22:5. Their deeds are distortions of morality.
p. 910

Matthew Henry says of "crooked":

. . . a great many windings and turnings to escape the pursuit of their convictions and break the force of them. Some sly excuse, some subtle evasion or other their deceitful hearts furnish them with, for the strengthening of their hands in their wickedness. And in the crooked mazes of that labyrinth, they secure themselves from the arrests of God's Word and their own consciences for they are froward in their paths—that is, they are resolved to go on in them, whatever is said against it. Every wise man will shun the company of such as these.

(transcription)

(The Message: Proverbs by Eugene H. Peterson)

Proverb 5

Mark well that God doesn't miss a move you make;
 he's aware of every step you take.
 The shadow of your sin will overtake you;
 you'll find yourself stumbling all over yourself
 in the dark.
 Death is the reward of an undisciplined life;
 your foolish decisions trap you in a dead end.

p. 22

(Amazing Grace: 366 Inspiring Hymn Stories for Daily Devotions
by Kenneth W. Osbeck)

HIGHER GROUND

Johnson Oatman Jr., 1856-1922

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

How sad it is to observe someone who has never lived up to his real potential. It is tragic to watch an individual who has great ability that is never used simply because he or she lacks the incentive to pursue a worthy goal. Similarly, it is disappointing to see a Christian fail to evidence spiritual growth of any kind. Scripture teaches that Christian maturity or Christlikeness is a process in which we advance from one level to the next, step by step. But the secret of such development is to have an intense desire to fulfill the purpose God has for our lives.

"Higher Ground" has been a favorite with many Christians since it was first published in 1898. It expresses so well this universal desire for a deeper spiritual life, continuing on a higher plane of fellowship with God than we have ever before experienced.

The author of this stirring text was Johnson Oatman, Jr., a businessman who wrote 3,000 gospel songs in his leisure time. Oatman was ordained by the Methodist Episcopal denomination but never pastored a church. His hymns were always well received, even though he was paid no more than \$1.00 for any of his texts.

The music for "Higher Ground" was composed by Charles H. Gabriel, music editor of the Rodeheaver Publishing Company. He wrote the music and sometimes the texts for more than 8,000 gospel songs, many of which were especially popular in the Billy Sunday-Homer Rodeheaver campaigns from 1910-1920. This song was used often in the great camp meetings of this era and the singing of it would often bring forth shouts of "Glory, hallelujah!"

I'm pressing on the upward way; new heights I'm gaining every day--Still praying as I'm onward bound "Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

My heart has no desire to stay where doubts arise and fears dismay; tho some may dwell where these abound, my prayer, my aim is higher ground.

I want to live above the world, tho Satan's darts at me are hurled; for faith has caught the joyful sound, the song of saints on higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height and catch a gleam of glory bright; but still I'll pray till heav'n I've found, "Lord, lead me on to higher ground."

Chorus: Lord, lift me up and let me stand by faith on heaven's table-land; A higher plane than I have found--Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.

For Today: Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Philippians 3:12-16 Reflect on some particular area of life that with God's enablement could be lived on a higher level.

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(A Gentle Thunder: Hearing God Through the Storm by Max Lucado)

Let's pray. You and me. I'll show you the way; you fill in the blanks.

Precious Father, I praise your name. You have reclaimed so much in my life. I was lost, and you found me. I was confused, and you guided me. I had nothing to offer, but still you loved me.

I confess that I still need help. I have a part of my life that needs your touch. Satan is battling for a garden in my heart. Don't let him win. Drive him out. He is a liar and has been since the beginning. Please defeat him. I'll give you the glory.

Father, here is the area where I need your strength

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CONCLUSION:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: It is in the written Word, the Bible, and the Living Word, Christ, that we find the wisdom of God.

LESSON #2: If we would have His wisdom, "we must accept his words and store up His commands within us."

LESSON #3: Choice is involved in accepting and turning and applying.

LESSON #4: Desire, humility, and decision are all involved in the acquisition of wisdom.

LESSON #5: We must "call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding."

LESSON #6: If we would gain wisdom, we must "look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure."

LESSON #7: It is "the Lord [who] gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding."

LESSON #8: When we have wisdom "we will understand what is right and just and fair."

LESSON #9: "Wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul."

LESSON #10: The fake the superficial and the shallow will depart with the coming of God's wisdom.

LESSON #11: Wisdom protects us from the "wicked . . . whose words are perverse, who leave the straight paths to walk in dark ways, who delight in doing wrong and rejoice in the perverseness of evil, and whose paths are crooked and who are devious in their ways."

LESSON #12: The walk of the wicked is "crooked," and their ways are "devious."

(Inspiring Quotations compiled by Albert M. Wells, Jr.)

The man in Roman times who took up his Cross was not going out to have his life redirected; he was going out to have it ended.

—A. W. Tozer

p. 58

"I know not the way!" despairing
I cried.

"I am the Way," Jesus kindly
replied.

"I'm searching for Truth!" was my
heart's plaintive cry.

"I am the Truth," was His gentle
reply.

"I'm longing for Life! Oh, where
can it be?"

"I am the Life. Thou shalt find it
in Me!"

—Flora Smith

p. 102

Let's hear, one more time, our verses in The Message by Eugene H. Peterson:

Make Insight Your Priority

Good friend, take to heart what I'm telling you;
 collect my counsels and guard them with
 your life.
 Turn your ears to the world of Wisdom;
 set your heart on a life of Understanding.
 That's right—if you make Insight your priority,
 and won't take no for an answer,
 Searching for it like a prospector panning for gold,
 like an adventurer on a treasure hunt,
 Believe me, before you know it Fear-of-God will
 be yours;
 you'll have come upon the Knowledge of God.
 And here's why: God gives out Wisdom free,
 is plainspoken in Knowledge and
 Understanding.
 He's a rich mine of Common Sense for those who
 live well,
 a personal bodyguard to the candid and sincere.
 He keeps his eye on all who live honestly,
 and pays special attention to his loyally
 committed ones.

So now you can pick out what's true and fair,
 find all the good trails!
 Lady Wisdom will be your close friend,
 and Brother Knowledge your pleasant
 companion.
 Good Sense will scout ahead for danger,
 Insight will keep an eye out for you.
 They'll keep you from making wrong turns,
 or following the bad directions
 Of those who are lost themselves
 and can't tell a trail from a tumbleweed,
 These losers who make a game of evil
 and throw parties to celebrate perversity,
 Traveling paths that go nowhere,
 wandering in a maze of detours and dead ends.

pp. 12-13