

Proverbs 2 • The True Source of Wisdom

Introduction

It's a variation of the "nature or nurture" argument: Does someone have to be born with wisdom or can they learn it? Or is it a separate gift that God only gives to a select few? As with most things in our Christian walk, it's critical to understand what the Bible means by each term it uses. Whereas our earthly education might define "wisdom" as the ability to answer every question on a quiz show, God's Word provides a much different context and definition, which fully explains where wisdom comes from and who can/can not obtain it.

¹My son, if you will receive my words
And treasure my commandments within
you,

²Make your ear attentive to wisdom,
Incline your heart to understanding;

³For if you cry for discernment,
Lift your voice for understanding;

⁴If you seek her as silver
And search for her as for hidden
treasures;

⁵Then you will discern the fear of the
LORD
And discover the knowledge of God.

[Read v.1-5]

Q: What are all the actions listed in v.1-4 that we are supposed to take regarding wisdom?

1. **"receive** my words" (v.1)
2. **"treasure** my commandments within you" (v.1)
3. **"Make** your ear attentive to wisdom" (v.2)
4. **"Incline** your heart to understanding" (v.2)
5. **"cry** for discernment" (v.3)
6. **"Lift** your voice for understanding" (v.3)
7. **"seek** her" (v.4)
8. **"search** for her" (v.4)

Q: What do all these things have in common concerning us personally?

A: They are all actions on our part—behavioral choices, if you will, that we consciously make.

Q: How does this contrast with the false notion that wisdom is a "gift", something uniquely bestowed on specific individuals by God?

A: While it's true that such a gift was bestowed on Solomon, this was a rare situation. The repeated teaching throughout Scripture is that wisdom is something one works for, most often in the choices of their behavior and faith. All of the actions listed here are steps **WE'RE** supposed to take. There's no hint of it being a gift.

Q: If we choose to behave accordingly, what will be the result according to v.5?

1. "Then you will discern the fear of the LORD"
2. "And discover the knowledge of God".

In other words, the fruit of biblical wisdom is not just intellectual power or general knowledge, but to come into a personal relationship with God that places us in the right alignment with **HIS** sovereignty and character.

*"God understands its way,
And He knows its place.
For He looks to the ends of the earth
And sees everything under the heavens.
When He imparted weight to the wind
And meted out the waters by measure,
When He set a limit for the rain
And a course for the thunderbolt,
Then He saw it and declared it;
He established it and also searched it out.
And to man He said, 'Behold, the fear of the LORD, that is
wisdom;*

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And to depart from evil is understanding.”
Job 28:23-28

Application: What kind of wisdom have you asked of God? Was it for things that were more “earthly” or “heavenly” in nature? Why is biblical wisdom the best possible thing for us? [Hint: It provides benefits both for this life and the one to come.] Give a brief definition of “wisdom” as it would be defined by these verses.

⁶For the LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth *come* knowledge and
understanding.

⁷He stores up sound wisdom for the
upright;

He is a shield to those who walk in
integrity,

⁸Guarding the paths of justice,
And He preserves the way of His godly
ones.

⁹Then you will discern righteousness and
justice
And equity *and* every good course.

[Read v.6-9]

Q: What are the 3 things God provides according to v.6?

A: “Wisdom”, “knowledge”, and “understanding”.

Q: According to v.7, for whom are these intended? What kind of person is the recipient of God’s wisdom, knowledge, and understanding?

A: “...the upright” and “those who walk in integrity”. In other words, those that are obedient to His will and ways.

Q: What does God actively do for such individuals? What are the actions listed in v.7-8 assigned to God?

A: “a **shield**”, “**guarding the paths**”, and “**preserves the way**”. They all describe God’s reciprocal response to our faithfulness, to help us continue in that faithfulness.

Q: According to v.9, the end result of a life submitted to God and in turn nurtured by Him produces wisdom that can “discern righteousness and justice and equity and every good course”. What do these 4 things have in common? Are they the sum total of all the wisdom of the whole universe?

A: They are the result of being able to see and interpret all things according to God’s standards, what **HE** deems to be right, just, fair and good—not what the world might believe those things to be.

Application: How well do we know how to judge something according to God’s standards? Do you see the connection between spiritual discernment and personal faithfulness? Why is it difficult to apply God’s wisdom and standards when one is personally unfaithful in their walk?

¹⁰For wisdom will enter your heart
And knowledge will be pleasant to your
soul;

¹¹Discretion will guard you,
Understanding will watch over you,

¹²To deliver you from the way of evil,
From the man who speaks perverse
things;

¹³From those who leave the paths of
uprightness

To walk in the ways of darkness;

¹⁴Who delight in doing evil
And rejoice in the perversity of evil;

¹⁵Whose paths are crooked,
And who are devious in their ways;

[Read v.10-15]

Q: What is the basic contrast provided in these verses?

A: The contrast of the one that continues to walk on God’s path versus the one that leaves it. To remain on God’s path is to be delivered from evil, to stray from it is to be delivered over to evil and its effects.

Q: Why is this a mini-picture of biblical wisdom? How does this sum up what’s been discussed so far?

A: Since wisdom is the result of personal choices—of whether or not to follow God’s will and ways—we see that the “wise” choice would, of course, be to stay with God on His course because to choose otherwise leads to darkness and sin.

¹⁶To deliver you from the strange woman,
From the adulteress who flatters with her
words;

¹⁷That leaves the companion of her youth
And forgets the covenant of her God;

¹⁸For her house sinks down to death
And her tracks *lead* to the dead;

¹⁹None who go to her return again,
Nor do they reach the paths of life.

[Read v.16-19]

Q: How could this comment on the ill-effects of adultery possibly relate to this teaching on biblical wisdom?

A: Physical relationships are one of the most common biblical illustrations to describe spiritual faithfulness/unfaithfulness. Just as adultery does not come about by chance but by one's personal choice, so does faithfulness. It's a teaching that biblical wisdom is defined by one's relationship with God, not by mere facts and information.

Application: *How can one pursue a right relationship with God at the same time they are pursuing a sinful physical relationship on earth?*

²⁰So you will walk in the way of good
men

And keep to the paths of the righteous.

²¹For the upright will live in the land
And the blameless will remain in it;

²²But the wicked will be cut off from the
land

And the treacherous will be uprooted
from it

[Read v.20-22]

Q: What is the contrast between the wise—the one obedient to God—and the foolish—the one that lives according to his own way?

A: The "wise" is said to "walk in the way", "keep to the paths", "live in the land", and "remain in it". The "fool" or "wicked" is "cut off" and "uprooted".

Q: So what is the best, visible evidence that God's wisdom is not just in us, but at work?

A: The quality of our spiritual walk; the degree to which we embrace and enact His will and ways while actively shunning those of the world.

Overall Application

*While God has been known from time to time to grant a special dispensation of wisdom to a Solomon or Daniel, the fact is that it's available to everyone willing to work for it. Consider that rarely are there people who are really good at something without having committed time and energy and practice to it. A person with "natural ability", if examined carefully, is someone who likes what they're doing so much that they practice it over and over and over again. One of the common characteristics of great Christian teachers is that they spend a **LOT** of time in God's Word. Like many things in life, biblical wisdom is often the result of how much or little we put into it. Sadly, if we spend more time watching television than reading our Bibles, the depth of our wisdom will reflect it.*

Consider James' definition of wisdom, and see how it compares with Solomon's in that both it's origins and results are spiritual:

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

James 3:17