

THE SEARCH FOR WISDOM

Proverbs 2:1-8

Dear friends in Christ Jesus who is the power of God and the wisdom of God, dear fellow redeemed.

Before we read our text, it would be helpful to know a little about Hebrew poetry. Frequently in the poetry of the Old Testament (such as Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes), the inspired writers use a device call “parallelism.” Hebrew parallelism presents two similar or “parallel” thoughts to help the reader understand a single truth. This helps clarify what the writer intends to say. For instance, a familiar example of parallelism on God’s protection might be from Psalm 46 (v.7) ***“the LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.”*** Other times, the holy writers might place opposing thoughts next to each other to help us understand one single truth. For instance, in Proverbs 12:15 we read, ***“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice.”***

In our text from Proverbs 2, you can find a number of parallel thoughts. Verses 1 through 4 present parallel statements about searching for wisdom, verses 5 and 6 present parallel thoughts about where wisdom is to be found, and the second half of verse 7 through 8 tell us what God does for His people through the wisdom He supplies. With that, let’s hear those God-breathed words of wise King Solomon in Proverbs 2, verses 1 through 8:

My son, if you receive my words
and treasure up my commandments with you,
² making your ear attentive to wisdom
and inclining your heart to understanding;
³ yes, if you call out for insight
and raise your voice for understanding,
⁴ if you seek it like silver
and search for it 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;
⁷ he stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
he is a shield to those who walk in integrity,
⁸ guarding the paths of justice
and watching over the way of his saints. (ESV ©2001)

So far God's Word.

BEGINS BY STANDING IN AWE OF THE LORD BY FAITH

When is the last time you read a news article, a social media post, or watched a news report and wondered, "*What is going on in the world? This doesn't make any sense!*" Maybe it is same-sex couples recently featured in children's cartoons and on Sesame Street. Maybe it is the ongoing genocide of babies who are being killed in their mother's womb through abortion. Maybe it's the current popular race theory that concludes someone can be a racist simply because of the color of their skin (which is the very definition racism).

These are the times of which Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 3 as our society is "*always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.*" (2 Timothy 3:7) We live in a time that has access to seemingly limitless information through the internet. Unlike our great-grandparents who may have only had a 7th or 8th Grade education before they were put to work on the farm, free schooling is readily available through high school and even college level. While people are always learning, it seems they are never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth. Instead, we're told that there is no absolute truth. What might be true to you is not true to them and that each person needs to discover their own truth.

Why is that? Why is there so much information available in our world but so few seem to know what is true? It is because their pursuit of wisdom is flawed from the start. The Bible simply puts it this way: "*The fear of the LORD is the BEGINNING of wisdom.*" (Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 1:7 and 9:10) The search for wisdom begins with the fear of the LORD.

What is "the fear of the LORD"? It is not "fear" in the sense of "being afraid of God." "Fear" in these verses and in the verses of our text, means to have a "reverent awe" for something.

Maybe a modern-day courtroom would be a good example of "reverent awe." If you have ever been in a courtroom during a trial, you may have realized there was a certain level of "fear" of the judge. You weren't necessarily afraid of the judge, but you realize the judge has

a great deal of authority. Simply by his or her declaration, someone could be sent to jail or set free. And so when the judge enters the courtroom all rise and stand in with a certain amount of “fear” of this person who is presiding over this trial.

To “fear the LORD” is to stand in awe of the One who made the heavens and the earth, the One who knit you together in your mother’s womb and made you who you are. The “fear of the LORD” is to be in awe of the God who sees all and knows all, and the One before whom we all must stand on the Last Day.

To “fear of the LORD” is also to be in awe of God as we make our way to the cross. We stand in humble awe of the God who would punish His beloved Son to save us from our sins. We are in awe of Jesus who has the power to walk on water and raise the dead, and yet He cries out from the darkness of the cross, “***My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?***” We bow our heads in humble awe as we see Jesus, the sinless Son of God, breath His last and die. We are in awe that God would do this for unworthy sinners like us!

The “fear of the LORD” then takes us to the tomb of Jesus on Easter. There we stand in awe with the women, as we hear the proclamation of the angels, “He is not here. He has risen just as He said.” We are in awe of the crucified and risen Lord who took away our sin and overcame death for us by rising from it.

This is the “fear of the LORD.” In reverent awe we worship our God who made us and the whole world around us, who took away our sins and overcame that great enemy of death for us. We are in awe of the God who has promised that whoever believes in His Son Jesus will not perish but have everlasting life.

This is where all wisdom BEGINS. Without the fear of the LORD, there is so little in our world that makes sense. There is no wisdom in evolution because one concludes that there is no god and that we are no different than the animals—just more highly evolved. Without the fear of the LORD, our daily living doesn’t make any sense because we don’t know why we are here. Without the fear of the LORD, we don’t know where we are going because there is no hope for eternal life.

So if there is no fear of the LORD there is no wisdom. As King David wrote, “***The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’***” (Psalms 53:1) Ultimately, nothing makes sense without the fear of the LORD. When there is no “fear of the LORD,” man only lives for himself or herself and for what feels right and true to them at that moment. The search for wisdom begins with awe for the LORD by faith.

BY HEARING AND LEARNING GOD'S WORD

But that’s only the BEGINNING of wisdom. Fearing the LORD, Solomon then calls on us to keep searching for wisdom. Using parallel concepts in verses 2, 3, and 4, he writes about

using our ears to listen for it, our hearts to understand it, our voice to call out for wisdom, and seeking wisdom like one who searches for hidden treasure.

The God who made heaven and earth, the God who made you, the God who gave His Son to die for you, does not keep His heavenly wisdom hidden. As you call out and listen for wisdom, the LORD speaks it. Verse 6 is very important, ***“The LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”*** This is parallelism. The LORD gives wisdom. And how does He give it? “From His mouth.” God has spoken His heavenly wisdom in the Bible.

God speaks to us in His Word. ***“All Scripture is breathed out by God.”*** (2 Timothy 3:16) ***“For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*** (2 Peter 1:21) God has given you a book FULL of wisdom.

All God’s wisdom takes us to the cross. At the cross we see both God’s eternal love and divine justice meet together. We see God’s love for us as He gives His Son into death for us. And we see God’s divine justice as He pours out His wrath on sinless Jesus, punishing Him from the sin of the world. ***“The word of the cross is (foolishness) to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:18) To those who are called, the believers, ***“Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”*** (1 Corinthians 1:24) On the cross the wisdom of God is on display as God carries out His eternal plan to save us.

In the Bible, the wisdom of God shines from page to page as we see His plan for our salvation play out. We find more parallelism in verse 7 and 8 as we hear how God uses His wisdom to protect His believers: ***“He is a shield to those who walk in integrity, guarding the paths of justice and watching over the ways of his saints.”*** God is a shield to protect us, guarding the paths of righteousness we walk on by faith, and watching over our going out and our coming in.

From the wisdom of God’s Word, we learn that we are not here by accident, but part of God’s grand design and plan. From God’s Word we learn heavenly wisdom about marriage and child rearing. While God’s Word doesn’t tell us about career choices, He does talk to us about seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, confident that He will provide for our daily needs. He doesn’t tell us which job to take, but He does talk about working with all our might for the Lord.

By hearing and learning God’s Word, we are hearing and learning God’s Wisdom. God’s wisdom takes us to the cross, where we stand in awe of Almighty God who loved us and gave Himself for us. That is where wisdom begins—standing in awe of the LORD by faith and then gaining more wisdom from the mouth of God who speaks to us through His Word. In these especially confusing times we live in, may God bless our search for wisdom as we cry out to Him for understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. **Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer**