



PURSUING WISDOM

God promises to provide His wisdom to those who search for Him.

PROVERBS 8:6-21

God offers wisdom by which to live life and glorify Him. He has revealed Himself in nature (Ps. 19:1), in His written Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and in Jesus (Heb. 1:1-4). Even though God has taken the step to reveal His wisdom, God's people cannot be passive when it comes to pursuing it. He reveals His wisdom, and simultaneously we must pursue the revealed wisdom of God. This pursuit is critical to spiritual maturity and growth.

If you were granted the opportunity to gain wisdom in one area of life, what would it be and why?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVERBS 8:1–9:18

Proverbs 8:1–9:18 concerns the necessity of pursuing the wisdom of God. Solomon emphasized several important truths in this passage. First, he taught that God’s wisdom is valuable, powerful, and obtainable. God’s wisdom is of infinite value because God is of infinite value. Second, Solomon proposed that as a result of its infinite value, the wisdom of God is to be pursued with great and sustained effort.

Solomon personified wisdom as a wise woman calling out to her neighbors: “People, I call out to you ... Learn to be shrewd, you who are inexperienced; develop common sense, you who are foolish” (8:4-5). Solomon pictured foolishness as a woman who is “gullible and knows nothing” (9:13). He contrasted a wise woman with a foolish woman in comparing the person who is pursuing the wisdom of God to a foolish and unwise person. Solomon contrasted the wisdom of God and the foolishness of worldly wisdom.

The choice between wisdom and folly is presented as two houses. Wisdom lived in one house, and she invited Solomon’s son to a banquet that she had prepared (9:1-5). Folly lived in another house, and she also invited everyone to come to her house. There they could join her for a meal that consisted of nothing more than water and bread (9:13-18).

Solomon’s persistence in calling God’s people to pursue wisdom was reminiscent of his own pursuit of wisdom at the beginning of his administration. Rather than asking God for great wealth and notoriety at the beginning of his rule, Solomon asked for wisdom and discernment. (See 1 Kings 3:7-9.) God was pleased with Solomon’s request and, as a result, gave him not only wisdom and discernment, but great wealth and notoriety.

Read Proverbs 8:6-21, looking for the action words. How do the actions point to the value of God’s wisdom?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

VALUABLE (PROV. 8:6-11)

⁶ Listen, for I speak of noble things, and what my lips say is right. ⁷ For my mouth tells the truth, and wickedness is detestable to my lips. ⁸ All the words from my mouth are righteous; none of them are deceptive or perverse. ⁹ All of them are clear to the perceptive, and right to those who discover knowledge. ¹⁰ Accept my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than pure gold. ¹¹ For wisdom is better than jewels, and nothing desirable can equal it.

VERSES 6-9

Solomon called to his students: *Listen, for I speak of noble things, and what my lips say is right.* Solomon repeatedly called his students to sit up and take notice, to listen, and to adhere to what he was saying.

Solomon was focused on calling God's people to pay attention because he knew that sinful man's attention span is short. We need continual reminders to pursue the things of God. Further, Solomon's instructions were right because they were from God; therefore, he wrote: *my mouth tells the truth, and wickedness is detestable to my lips.*

We need continual reminders to pursue the things of God.

Solomon encouraged the pursuit of the wisdom of God by reminding God's people that His instructions were righteous—*none of them are deceptive or perverse.* In other words, Solomon was not attempting to deceive anyone but was passing along the great principles and precepts of God's truth as the most valuable things in all the world. Sin obscures the obvious, the true, and what is truly beautiful. Wisdom removes the fog of ignorance. Solomon reminded God's people that God's teachings of wisdom *are clear to the perceptive, and right to those who discover knowledge.*



What might a person pursue instead of God’s wisdom in an effort to find truth? What are the limits of each thing you listed?

BIBLE SKILL: *Notice repeated words or phrases in a Bible passage.*

Read Proverbs 8:6-21 out loud and notice the number of times in which the pronoun “I” is repeated. How does the voice of wisdom speaking directly to God’s people make the appeal to be wise more compelling? Jot down the ways in which Solomon’s approach in the passage has a positive effect on the appeal. Also, make note of the ways that the appeal can be misunderstood.

VERSES 10-11

Solomon portrayed God’s wisdom as more valuable than any earthly acclaim. He declared that godly wisdom is more valuable than *silver* or *gold* and *is better than jewels*. In fact, *nothing desirable can equal it*.

When God’s wisdom is pursued first, the other issues of life tend to become more manageable and understandable.

More than wealth, power, or notoriety, the pursuit of the wisdom of God is the most valuable commodity in an otherwise materialistic world. Solomon turned things on their head by placing the value of the pursuit of God’s wisdom above all other pursuits. Solomon’s admonition to pursue first God’s wisdom was a foreshadowing of Jesus’ call for His followers to “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). Because wisdom is valuable, it must be pursued with great passion and

persistence. When God's wisdom is pursued first, the other issues of life tend to become more manageable and understandable.

Why might someone not consider God's wisdom to be a priceless treasure? What do you cherish about it most of all?

POWERFUL (PROV. 8:12-16)

¹² I, wisdom, share a home with shrewdness and have knowledge and discretion. ¹³ To fear the LORD is to hate evil. I hate arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech. ¹⁴ I possess good advice and sound wisdom; I have understanding and strength. ¹⁵ It is by me that kings reign and rulers enact just law; ¹⁶ by me, princes lead, as do nobles and all righteous judges.

VERSES 12-16

Fearing God puts a person on the path to being wise (see 1:7). To ***fear the LORD*** means to revere, respect, trust, and submit to God. Fearing God in this way is the difference between growing wise or becoming foolish.

Having the wisdom of God means loving what He loves and detesting what He detests. For that reason, everyone who values His wisdom will ***hate evil***. To hate evil is to hate ***arrogant pride, evil conduct, and perverse speech***. God's wisdom gives believers an option that goes against the evil we see in the world.

Having the wisdom of God means loving what He loves and detesting what He detests.

God will give us His wisdom when we study His Word, go to Him in prayer, and seek the advice of mature believers in Christ. The understanding we gain can enable us to make sound judgments. Strengthened by His wisdom, we won't be overwhelmed when faced with circumstances that seem daunting for us.



How does fearing God lead to gaining wisdom? Can you gain true wisdom without a fear of God? Explain.

There is no greater power in the world than the knowledge of God. Solomon stated these four truths to help us understand the power of God's wisdom:

- God's wisdom *possesses good advice*.
- God's wisdom is *sound*.
- God's wisdom gives God's people *understanding*.
- God's wisdom gives God's people *strength*.

In other words, God's wisdom equips His people with sound reason, clear thinking, sufficient knowledge, endurance, patient strength, and faith.

In verses 15-16, Solomon seems to become autobiographical, as if reflecting on his own experience as king. God's wisdom, when he adhered to it, was the very thing that gave him success. He personalized wisdom by saying, *It is by me (wisdom) that kings reign and rulers enact just law; by me, princes lead, as do nobles and all righteous judges*.

Solomon recognized that God's wisdom impacts all of the functions of government, of a free and orderly society. There is wisdom for the executive in *kings who reign*; there is wisdom for the legislative in *just law*; and there is wisdom for the judicial in recognizing *righteous judges*. Solomon desired to show the power of God's wisdom by demonstrating how it applied to every dimension of life, even to leading a nation.

OBTAINABLE (PROV. 8:17-21)

¹⁷ I love those who love me, and those who search for me find me.

¹⁸ With me are riches and honor, lasting wealth and righteousness.

¹⁹ My fruit is better than solid gold, and my harvest than pure silver. ²⁰ I walk in the ways of righteousness, along the paths of justice, ²¹ giving wealth as an inheritance to those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

VERSE 17

Some people might perceive that God's wisdom is only for the already wise, the educated, the intellectual, or the high and mighty, and not for the humble or the average person. Solomon promised that the person seeking God's wisdom would find it no matter his or her background. Further, Solomon asserted that the person who lives by God's wisdom will experience God's blessings, including the avoidance of self-destructive patterns of living.

To pursue the wisdom of God is to pursue God's written Word.

Where is this wisdom to be found? The wisdom of God is found in the Word of God; to pursue the wisdom of God is to pursue God's written Word. In 2 Timothy 3:16, Paul stated: "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness." To pursue God's wisdom requires the knowledge of God's Word. The degree to which a believer knows and embraces God's Word is the degree to which that believer is advancing in his or her pursuit of the wisdom of God.

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Scriptures*

All Scripture is totally true and trustworthy (Ps. 119:140).

In verse 17 Solomon outlined a clear promise for the seeker of God's wisdom: *I (wisdom) love those who love me, and those who search for me find me.* The wisdom of God loves the seeker who pursues her. As we seek God in His Word, He blesses us with wisdom. Further, Solomon promised that those who seek wisdom will find it. God does not play cat and mouse with His wisdom. He gladly rewards the seeker with the knowledge of Himself.

How does knowing that God shares His wisdom motivate you to pursue it?



VERSES 18-21

If the wisdom of God is valuable, powerful, and obtainable, then what is gained when the believer pursues and embraces God's wisdom above everything else? In verses 18-21, Solomon outlined the rewards and benefits of pursuing God's wisdom. What is remarkable about the wisdom of God is that it is comprehensive in its impact:

- God's wisdom makes people rich in the things of God.
- God's wisdom enables people to live with *honor*. (In contrast, pursuing riches leads to dishonor and ruin; Jer. 17:11; 1 Tim. 6:10.)
- God's wisdom gives people *lasting wealth* that does not fade.
- God's wisdom offers people His *righteousness*.
- God's wisdom is better than *solid gold*.
- God's wisdom is more valuable than *pure silver*.
- God's wisdom enables people to *walk in the ways of righteousness*.
- God's wisdom calls people to move along the *paths of justice*.
- God's wisdom provides *an inheritance* to the godly.

THE WISDOM OF PURSUING WEALTH THAT LASTS

- "With me are riches and honor, lasting wealth and righteousness" (Prov. 8:18).
- "Hope placed in wealth vanishes" (Prov. 11:7).
- "Wealth obtained by fraud will dwindle" (Prov. 13:11).
- "Wealth is not forever" (Prov. 27:24).
- "A greedy one is in a hurry for wealth; he doesn't know that poverty will come to him" (Prov. 28:22).
- "Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:19-20).
- "Instruct those who are rich in the present age not to be arrogant or to set their hope on the uncertainty of wealth, but on God" (1 Tim. 6:17).

IN MY CONTEXT

- God’s wisdom can be trusted as true.
- God’s wisdom comes through fearing Him.
- God’s wisdom can be found and acted upon.

What roadblocks keep you from seeking true, godly wisdom? What actions do you need to take to remove these roadblocks?

Discuss as a group the characteristics of a wise person based on Proverbs 8. How can the group foster these characteristics within the group?

What are you doing to better place yourself in a position to discover and act upon God’s wisdom? Who can hold you accountable for taking action and how?

Prayer Needs

