Sunday Sermon Notes

Sunday, 6 September 2026

The Lord Gives Wisdom

Proverbs 2:1–6, ESV

The book of Proverbs does not pretend that every saying is an iron-clad law that has no exceptions. Proverbs are general truths, true as a rule, other things being equal. Live by them and life tends to go well. Ignore them and life won't. That is why this book spends so much time drawing a line between the wise person, the fool, and the scoffer.

Why Wisdom Matters

The Difference Wisdom Makes

Look at the fruit. The wise person is marked by calm, controlled action and a peaceful response. Relationships tend to be beneficial. Life is in balance and wisdom informs us as to how to do that. When wisdom is practiced work, money, and home are not constantly at war with one another. There is a kind of quiet that settles over a house where wisdom is practiced.

The fool lives the opposite pattern. Anger is close to the surface. Speech and action run out of control. Stress becomes the climate of the day. Relationships stay conflicted. Life is unbalanced. Work and money produce turmoil, and the home suffers friction and conflict.

Then there is the scoffer. He is not merely unwise; he is hostile toward wisdom. With vehemence he rejects it. He is sure he is smarter than the instruction in front of him. He will not personally apply a challenging truth. He dismisses at once the need to learn and to listen. Correction feels like a personal offense, and he is skilled at rationalizing bad attitudes and bad behavior.

Be patient and humble; scripture warns us not to think of ourselves as already wise.

"Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil."
Proverbs 3:7

"Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." Proverbs 26:12

"Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered." Proverbs 28:26

A person who is convinced he already has the answers is in a more dangerous place than the obvious fool.

We Cannot Direct Our Own Steps

"Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live." Ecclesiastes 9:3

A heart that is full of evil and madness cannot be trusted to make its own decisions. The person who separates himself from God's wisdom is not merely independent; he is, in the Bible's language, evil and insane. We do not have in ourselves what we need to steer a life.

Jeremiah said it plainly:

"I know, O LORD, that the way of man is not in himself, that it is not in man who walks to direct his steps." Jeremiah 10:23

Paul said the same of ministry and of the Christian life:

"Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God." 2 Corinthians 3:5

Even Solomon, when he began to reign, confessed,

"I am but a little child. I do not know how to go out or come in." 1 Kings 3:7

So, the first question is not whether we would like a little more insight for going from good to great. The first question is whether we are willing to admit that we are clueless and in need, or whether we will keep thinking that we have all the answers and are pretty locked on.

What Wisdom Is, and Why We Need It

Wisdom, at its simplest, is making the best decision and taking the best action in every circumstance. That is why everything depends on it. Marriage, money, speech, work, parenting, conflict, and the ordinary choices of a Tuesday morning all live or die by whether we have it.

The wisdom of God is not a hobby for religious people. **It is the operating system of the universe.**

An electronic device does not invent its own way of working. A phone, a laptop, a tablet, all of them run because someone wrote an operating system and built the machine to obey it. Programs that honor that system open, save, connect, and shut down as they should. Programs that ignore it freeze, crash, drain the battery, or fight the very device they are trying to use. You can force a workaround for a while. You can install what does not belong there. You can even treat the warnings as optional. The machine still has a code. Reality does not negotiate with the app that refuses it.

God's wisdom is like that, only larger. It is not a religious add-on you download if you are in the mood. It is the code on which the universe already runs. Gravity, seasons, sowing and reaping, the way truth steadies a home and folly tears one apart, none of that is random. Creation was written to operate by wisdom. So, a life that will not submit to it is not brave and independent. It is a program at war with its own machine.

"The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens." Proverbs 3:19

Everything God made, He made by wisdom. If the world itself runs on that operating system, then a life that refuses it is trying to run against the grain of reality. We need wisdom because we were made to live by it.

Wisdom's Source

Where Wisdom Comes From

It comes from God.

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction." Proverbs 1:7

"For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2:6

Wisdom is not trick or a technique. It is a gift that proceeds from the mouth of God. If we know what it is, good decisions and right action, and why it matters, because everything depends on it, and where it comes from, God Himself, then the remaining question is the one the preacher spent most of his time answering: How do I get it?

How Do I Get It?

Proverbs 2:1–6 is built as an "if…then." Verses 1–4 are the conditions. Verse 5 is the result: you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. Verse 6 explains why the result comes: the Lord gives wisdom. It does no dishonor to the text to set those conditions in a logical sequence. If you want wisdom, this is the path Solomon lays down.

My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:1–6

Want It: Incline Your Heart

The first movement is desire. "Incline your heart to understanding." But here we meet a problem we cannot solve by trying harder. How can I make my heart want wisdom? I cannot, and neither can you. Jeremiah tells us why:

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" Jeremiah 17:9

Paul said it in Romans 3: there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God.

"No one understands; no one seeks for God. There is no fear of God before their eyes." Romans 3:11, 18

The proverb says, incline your heart. Paul says, nobody does. So, we are shut up to another word from Paul:

"For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure." Philippians 2:13

Notice carefully what he says. God is at work not only in the doing, but in the willing. If you are going to desire God's will, God will have to do that work in you. That is why prayer is not optional. It is a necessity.

Solomon prayed that the Lord would incline Israel's hearts to Himself (1 Kings 8:58). The psalmist prayed,

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"Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!" Psalm 119:36

Our prayer must be just that honest: "Make me want to want You. Make me want wisdom. My heart is deceitful and desperately sick. I need Your help." If the heart is ever going to lean toward the Word of God, God will have to lean it. We start there, praying that the Lord would make us want His wisdom. And as He does, He also gives power to pursue it.

Cry Out for It

Solomon puts the pursuit two ways. First, ask for it. "If you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding." Look at the language. He does not say, make a polite request. He does not say, mildly mention that you might like a little wisdom. What does it mean to cry for something? It does not mean to whisper, or mumble, or get around to saying it when it is convenient. It means to shout and to do it now.

Why do you shout? Why do you yell? Why do you scream? There is a difference between asking for an extra packet of Chick-fil-A sauce and calling out for help because the house is burning and you cannot get out. The difference is not vocabulary. The difference is desperation. Solomon is saying: yell for wisdom! Cry out for it as if you were trapped in a burning house, or had fallen down a well, or had broken a leg and could not move. Cry out to God, who gives wisdom to those who ask. And cry out to wise people. Ask others to help you learn it.

Seek It as Silver

The second way he puts it is search. “If you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures.” Would you go through your Bible more often? Would you look more carefully, if someone said, I have put a link and a passcode to a million dollars in your Bible? That is how he says we are supposed to search for the treasure of wisdom. It is in the Bible. The Word makes us wise.

It is also, by the way, in the world. You can look around and learn. You can watch people. “I see what he did. Look what happened to him. I do not want to do that.” God has not hidden wisdom only on a page. He has scattered enough of it in ordinary life that a humble observer can still be taught. But the primary mine is scripture, and we are told to dig as if silver were down there.

Absorb It: Attend, Receive, Treasure

Wanting and pursuing wisdom are not enough. We must take it in. One way Solomon says that is, “make your ear attentive” (Proverbs 2:2).

You might sometimes see someone who is hard of hearing do a strange thing. Sitting with his wife during a song, if she is on his left and she says something, he turns all the way around and points his right ear at her mouth. It looks odd. Why not just lean in? Because his left is his bad ear. When she speaks into the ear that does not work, he does not understand her. So, he has to make his ear attentive. That means turning the head, which is uncomfortable. It means pointing the good ear toward the voice. It means drowning out distraction. It means watching her mouth when hearing still fails. It means writing it down or it will be forgotten. In other words, it takes trouble, difficulty, discomfort, and effort to make an ear attentive. That is what God is asking of us with His wisdom.

He also says we must fully and gladly accept it. “If you receive my words.” There is a difference between “I hear you” and “I am listening to you.” Those two sentences do not mean the same thing. “I hear you” can mean it went in one ear and out the other and will have no impact on anything I am going to do. “I am listening” means I am taking it in, considering it, and letting it land. That is what we must do with the wisdom God gives.

Finally, we must highly value it. Treasure the commandments within you. Care more about the wisdom of God than about a retirement account. Care more about it than about the photo album of the children that can never be replaced. Care more about it than Colonel Sanders cared about his secret herbs and spices. Until wisdom is treasure to us, we will treat it like optional advice and then wonder why our lives look like the fool’s.

Three Things to Do

What does this look like when the service is over? Three commitments.

1. Desperately pray for a humble, attentive, receptive heart that treasures wisdom.

   Pray this way because the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Apart from the help of God, wisdom will never go there. Apart from God's help, it cannot. Ask Him to give you the heart Solomon describes, humble enough to admit need, attentive enough to turn the good ear, receptive enough to receive the words, and hungry enough to treat wisdom as treasure.

2. Ruthlessly make pursuing wisdom your priority.

   There is nothing more practically important than beginning the day focused on God, making Him, in a literal way, the first thing we do, the first thing we pursue, the first thing we attend to. Show Him you are serious about putting Him first by putting Him first at the beginning of the day. A life that says wisdom matters and then gives God only the leftovers of attention is still living like a fool, only with better vocabulary.

3. Jealously commit daily space to dig for wisdom.

   We are not serious about receiving wisdom until we have committed time in the day to digging for it. You can say all day long that you are a dedicated exerciser, all in, committed, it is very important to you, and then add, "I get to it whenever I can fit it in. Sometimes I do. Sometimes I don't. But listen, I'm committed." No, you are not committed until you have carved out, and jealously protected, time to mine the wisdom of God.

This is not surplus-level Christianity. It is not a little half-attention every now and then. Getting the wisdom of God is not easy. The verses look simple enough on the surface; they could not appear to be any plainer. And still someone can sit with Proverbs 2 for two weeks, and then think, I do not know what to do with that. I am lost. I feel foolish. I do not know how to do this. If the passage that tells us how to get wisdom still requires digging from the one who teaches it, then none of us will receive it by accident. To have it, we must dig for it.

Does this apply to me?

Paul tells us plainly where wisdom is found.

"In whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Colossians 2:3

This Week

Lord willing, the Wednesday class continues: **How to Have a Personal Relationship with God**. This week's passage is John 15.