

Abiding Fruit

Informing the Mind & Inflaming the Heart

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The Beginning of Knowledge Proverbs 1:7

The Proverbs teach us how to attain wisdom. The Proverbs urges us to be wise and to be wiser still. Wisdom becomes personified in Proverbs 8. Great rewards are promised to those who pursue wisdom (8:12 – 21). Wisdom is united to knowledge and these, indeed, cannot be separated from each other. It is possible, for example, to memorize the Proverbs and not have the heart affected by them. Thus a person could still lack wisdom though they could recite the Proverbs. Wisdom is behavior informed and changed.

The beginning of knowledge is the fear of the Lord. We live in a world where knowledge is rampant, yet the fear of the Lord is minimal. Why is this so? It is so, because our knowledge is not rightly regarded, and where we have the right knowledge we have not let it change us.

Wisdom is a gift from God (Prov. 2:6). Only the foolish despise wisdom and instruction. Wisdom is knowledge, and knowledge is wisdom if balanced before God. True wisdom is equated with fearing the Lord. The poor woman in some rural area without access to all modernity can be the wisest woman on the face of the earth if she is instructed by the Lord. This applies to all of us wherever we are.

The fear of the Lord is having the right regard for God. We do not treat Him as if he were like us. We do not act as if he is just a buddy who we can call upon in dire circumstances. Wisdom and fear are married together. The brash descend upon God with carving knives caring not that with His mere breath He can destroy them. Arrogance is vanity and ignorance. It is not wisdom. We live in the age of knowledge. Our age is unlike any other ever known. The world of cyber now carries its own authority and every man, woman, boy and girl has attained that which is right in their own eyes. Authority, which once we regarded as delegated by God, is now hijacked by ourselves. We have become idol worshippers of ourselves as we promote our desire to be heard. It is a pandemic. Self promotion is the name of the game. To be wise today is to get your message out there or yourself out there. The world, and dare I say the Church has become a god.

In order to bring some meaning to this issue, we should say that it is important that others hear and learn. The path to wisdom however, is not easy. Can we say confidently that we fear the Lord? Yet balance is always required in the midst of extremes. We favor however, the opinions of men before the God. Instead of seeking God alone first, we seek answers from man because it is easy to have, and easy to dispense with if we don not like it. So we move on to someone else's point of view. God does not have points of view.

It may be that we may call upon God (Prov. 1:28, 29) but He does not answer us (like the prophets of Baal seeking aid for Baal). Why does God not answer? It is because we have hated knowledge, and because we have hated God's knowledge we do not fear the Lord (Prov. 1:29). We need to desire the Lord. We need to hear the Lord when He speaks to us. We do not need to rush. We must be like Elijah trembling as God approaches.

The person who finds wisdom (Prov. 3:13) is blessed. The reward is far superior or silver or gold. The promise of long life is in wisdom's right hand and riches and honor are in her left hand (Prov. 3:15, 16). She

is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her (Prov. 3:18). The beginning of wisdom is to get wisdom (Prov. 4:7).

Surely wisdom is the ability to live a godly life in an ungodly world. The Proverbs offer us practical advice on all the affairs of life. They teach us how to relate to God, to country, to our neighbors, to conduct business, to handle money, to confront sin. They are instructors in righteous living. The Proverbs offer promise that we must take as general rather than always as specific. To do so will leave us frustrated. They are guidelines to righteous practical living.

According to 1 Kings 4:32, King Solomon spoke 3,000 proverbs and 1,005 songs. There are only about 800 of his proverbs in the Book of Proverbs. Of all men, Solomon was certainly qualified to comment on life. God gave him wisdom beyond any other person. He had this wisdom because God gave it to him, and because he asked for it before any other thing as a necessary factor in being able to rule his people.

This wisdom would bring glory to Israel, and benefits beyond their imagining. Ecclesiastes 12:9 tells us that Solomon collected and edited many proverbs. We do not know much of some of the other authors of the proverbs (Agur – 30; Lemuel – 31). Some of Solomon's proverbs were collected together by the scribes of King Hezekiah (25 – 29).

The wisdom that we find personified in Proverbs 8 is fully realized in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The incarnate Lord Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24, 30). The wisdom of Proverbs 8 is divine (8:22 – 31). It is the source of all life – physical and spiritual (8:35, 36 – see also 3:18). It is righteous and moral wisdom (8:8, 9). It is freely available to all to receive (8:1 – 6; 32 – 35). Colossians 2:3 tells us that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

The book of Proverbs aims at imparting to us moral discernment (1:2 – 6). It seeks to impart a mental perspicuity and perception (1:2, 6). The word for wisdom (*hokhmah*) means “skill” and the word for instruction (*musar*) means “discipline.” You cannot perfect any skill without discipline. Once you achieve the level of skill required in any undertaking, freedom comes to create and make something beautiful or to use that skill to accomplish something purposeful. What we need above all things is the skill to live a life of practical righteousness before the Lord in every area of life. It is easy to see that such an achievement require discipline. There must be willingness to learn. We live in a time when we are not students under Jesus, but all are masters that crave to be heard themselves. We must develop experience through the rigors of a willing discipline.

The book of Proverbs can help prevent a life of ungodliness and at the same time provide us with the remedy we need to deal with our sins. It is the wise person who will hear and listen and gain in learning, thus becoming a person of understanding. From this understanding, true counsel will flow. You cannot learn this in a classroom or in a church. You may learn that it exists, but you can only acquire this knowledge at the feet of Christ – who is our wisdom. The starting place is the fear of the Lord, and that is only the beginning of knowledge.

We must not be foolish and despise this knowledge, nor must we think that we can achieve this by some shortcut. In all labor there is profit (Prov. 14:23). Painstaking toil like a farmer breaking hard soil will reap great benefit. The issue is pursuit. Will we pursue what the Proverbs promise us? Will we lay hold of true wisdom and learn with discipline? The life of being a disciple of Jesus is a life that is on a very narrow way that Jesus called hard (Matt. 7:14).

If all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are in Christ, then it is Jesus that we must seek. It is not the things about Him, but Him. He is our wisdom. We are his disciples in His school of learning. To begin in this school, let us start by fearing the Lord.